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CAPACIOUS

JOURNAL FOR EMERGING AFFECT INQUIRY

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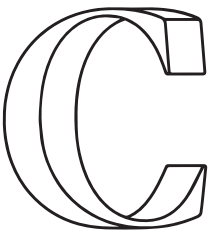

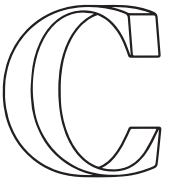

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EDITORIAL TEAM

ca·pa·cious
kəˈpāSHəs/

adjective
having a lot of space inside; roomy.

Capacious: Journal for Emerging Affect Inquiry is an open access, peer-reviewed, international journal that is, first and foremost, dedicated to the publication of writings and similar creative works on affect by degree-seeking students (Masters, PhD, brilliant undergraduates) across any and all academic disciplines. Secondarily, the journal also welcomes contributions from early-career researchers, recent post-graduates, those approaching their study of affect independent of academia (by choice or not), and, on occasion, an established scholar with an 'emerging' idea that opens up new avenues for affect inquiry. The principal aim of *Capacious* is to 'make room' for a wide diversity of approaches and emerging voices to engage with ongoing conversations in and around affect studies.

This journal will champion work that resists:

- the critical ossification of affect inquiry into rigid theoretical postures
- the same dreary citational genealogies
- any too assured reiteration of disciplinary orthodoxies

The journal will always encourage the energies and enthusiasms, the fresh perspectives and provocations that younger scholars so often bring to bear on affect within and across unique and sometimes divergent fields of intellectual endeavor. *Capacious* seeks to avoid issuing formal 'calls for papers' and 'special theme issues.' Submissions to this journal are accepted at anytime and are welcome to pursue any and all topic areas or approaches relating to affect.

Our not-so-secret wish is that essays and issues will forever remain capacious and rangy: emerging from various disciplines and conceptual [t]angles. Indeed, our aim for every journal issue would be that its collected essays not really coalesce all that much, but rather rub up against one another unexpectedly or shoot past each other without ever touching on quite the same disciplinary procedures, theoretical presuppositions or subject matter.

Capacious shall always endeavor to promote diverse bloom-spaces for affect's study over the dulling hum of any specific orthodoxy. From our own editorial practices down through the interstices of this journal's contents, the *Capacious* ethos is most thoroughly engaged by those critical-affective undertakings that find ways of 'making room.'

EDITORIAL BOARD

An elaborate floral arrangement, chromolithograph, c. 1870, after H. Briscoe.
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Lauren Berlant
Robert Kozloff, The University of Chicago, 2014

FORMAT AS INFRASTRUCTURE: ANN CVETKOVICH ON LAUREN BERLANT

Ann Cvetkovich
CARLETON UNIVERSITY

Writing as Archival Practice: A Lecture/Writing, Theory/Practice Workshop Hybrid

What can scholarly writing learn from contemporary forms such as creative non-fiction, lyric essay, graphic narrative, or mixed media? Part lecture, part discussion and part group-writing workshop, this event will draw from Cvetkovich's ongoing research projects, including a book on the current state of LGBTQ archives and the creative use of them by artists. These models will serve as a point of departure for collective writing exercises done in the real time of the workshop. In particular, we will focus on the list, series, or collection as models for writing practice. Questions to be pursued include the following: How can one organize an archive or a collection of objects, photographs, texts, or other artifacts in multiples or series to serve as the basis for research and writing? What do various forms of writing—at the level of both sentence and structure—do to represent, describe, or remediate data or evidence, and how can such work place pressure on conventional models of data and evidence? How can developing a writing practice not only address methodological and intellectual/theoretical questions but make it easier to get work done? We will write periodically throughout the event, by ourselves (with our objects) and collaboratively, with each other.

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> An object can be anything: an idea, a thing in the world, a text you want to engage, a problem. If possible, please bring an artifact, and we will produce ways to think about its place in a larger series or collection (actual or still imaginary) that can serve as a platform for transforming what you and others can think about it.

That's the description, co-written with Lauren, for a collaborative event we did in 2016. I was in town for a lecture at the Art Institute and she suggested I do something at the University of Chicago—but immediately it got complicated—in that way that could happen with her (or me with her). I didn't want to do a full lecture, but she wanted something with more structure than people just showing up for an open discussion. She mentioned that Katie (Stewart) had done a lecture that was segmented with pauses for people to write, and I thought that sounded like a great idea, especially since the relay with Katie would be meaningful (I have liked to keep Public Feelings under the radar, working behind the scenes through informal networks of friends and fellow travellers).

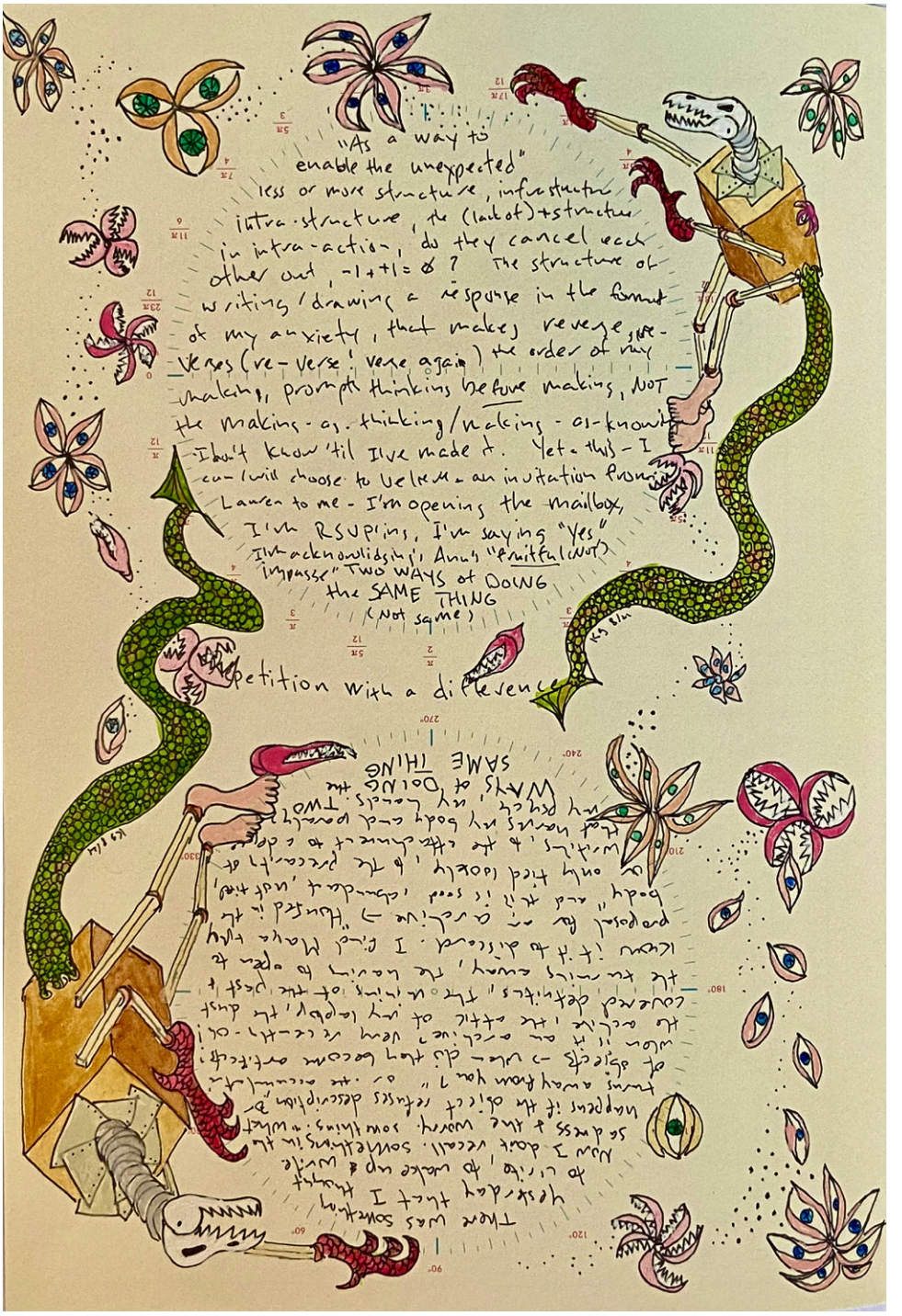
I've never had someone edit the abstract for an event! Lauren insisted we have one—so I managed to write something—and then she revised it. The title "writing as archival practice" is mine, but she came up with "lecture/writing, theory/practice workshop hybrid" to describe the format—trying to find a name for something that didn't yet have a fixed form. The text went through some different iterations as she, never satisfied, kept restlessly revising—my 'good enough' in tandem with her 'not good enough,' her desire for more structure matched with my desire for less. She also shifted the sentence order to lead with the opening questions—a simple, but effective, cut to the chase. And she's the one who specified that "an object can be anything" and added the expansive list that includes "a thing in the world" or "a problem," in a gesture towards her own investments in the category of the object—and the nature of engagement or attachment. The workshop's invitation to write ekphrastically in relation to objects led her to ask, what happens if the object refuses description, or turns away from you?, in a version of the anti-social or inconvenience of others that includes objects as well as people. I'm still unpacking that piercing question.

The event itself went well in part because of the provocations already present in the description as a result of our exchanges. Inspired by what I imagined Katie's hybrid format to have been, I enjoyed chunking my material into little 10-minute mini-lectures oriented around clusters of Powerpoint images. I liked the pauses

for writing that allowed me to collect my thoughts. Although, as so often happens in workshops, we didn't have enough time for people to share their own writing, their questions were sharper for the experience of writing together in the same room. And the accumulation of objects that people brought and laid out on the table constituted an archive, or an altar, or a little world, and another collective writing prompt. I've used the same format subsequently in different locations and always acknowledge Lauren's part in making the format into a higher version of itself through her persistence in naming and describing it.

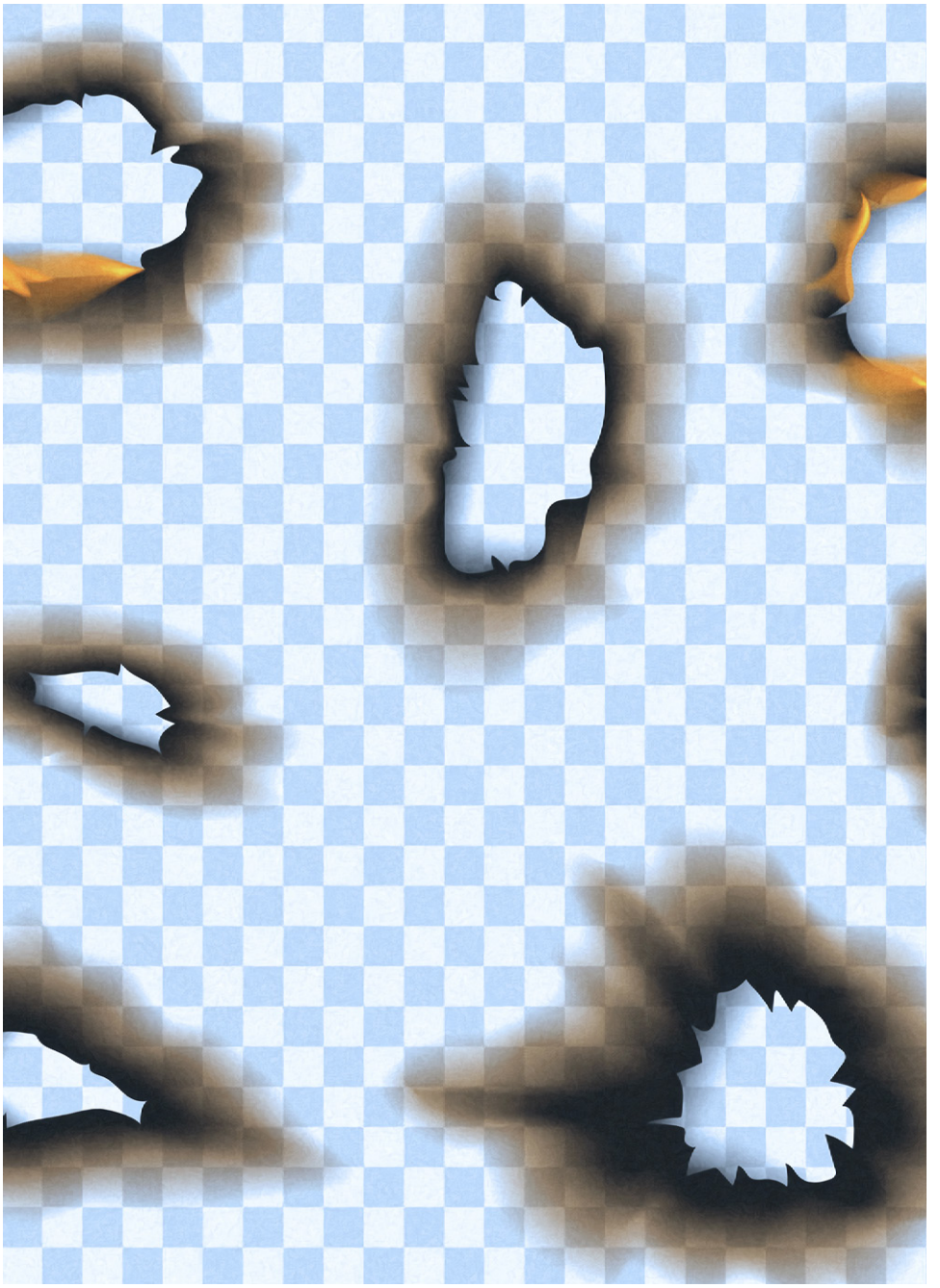
Public Feelings Austin and Feel Tank Chicago have generated many collaborative formats over the years: the MLA panel that started with questions that became writing prompts; the Austin group's panel of 5-minute micro-essays for the 2007 Chicago conference on "Anxiety, Urgency, Outrage, Hope"; and, of course, the 500-word writing salons that were a source for *The Hundreds*. I think of these experiments with format as a practice in what Lauren called "infrastructure" — another version of her ceaseless labor to make space for different ways of thinking and being in the world. Format as infrastructure includes facilitation, another kind of affective labor we both cared about—no doubt going back to our early days in graduate school as feminists raised up in an era of consciousness-raising groups that morphed into reading and writing groups. Although I always wanted less structure and she seemed to want more—as a way to enable the unexpected, the surprise, the not-quite event—they were also two ways of doing the same thing.

It seems appropriate to write about this workshop for *Capacious* because the journal and the other forms of infrastructure that Greg and others have created around affect studies lives up to its name in welcoming unconventional and experimental formats. In Lauren's hands, the workshop description is itself a genre of writing that provides opportunities for thinking that isn't just rote or boring. Among the many ways in which we will be able to continue to think with Lauren, even without her tangible presence, will be to follow the unpredictable shapes and lines of inquiry she has left in the form of prompts, formats, and open questions, including "topics we don't know how to write questions for."



Two ways of doing the same thing (eating repetition with a difference)
Kay Gordon, 2021

Earning my life/feeling prime (only divisible by myself)
Kay Gordon, 2021



Fire vector image (VectorStock preview)
worldofdots, 2020

CAPACIOUS

FIELD NOTES FROM COVID TIME: TEACHING NORMATE BURNOUT CULTURE THROUGH ENERGY, DISABILITY, AND RACE

E Cram
UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

This is exhausting. I can't quite remember just how many times this utterance coursed through my conversations with students, colleagues, and friends in the duration of "COVID time." That phrase—"COVID time"—brackets but one temporality: a sense of a before times juxtaposed to a haze of uncertainties. Of course, even before we were witness to the compacting crisis of COVID, institutional barriers to access, ongoing police terror, fascist insurrections, and climate barbarity, many of us were already exhausted. Reflecting on the feelings of technology frustration experienced by U.S. academics, Ellen Samuels and Elizabeth Freeman (2021) note the range of access made possible by the onset of COVID and then suggest "that all of us now are living in crip time" (246). In the early days of March 2020, when much of the United States shifted into various kinds of lockdowns or self-quarantine, Twitter embodied all of the contradictions of the moment. How to cut your hair. How to start a mutual aid network in your

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neighborhood and town. Sourdough starters. Jar canning for newbies wary of botulism. How to safely protest. How to be more productive working from home. Seed shortages derail your garden plans. In the face of it all, I have a hard time letting go of *how*, as the certainty of routine became unmoored, it generated an emergent feeling that perhaps anything could be possible—these were days of despairing, but they also felt like something more that cannot be named.[1]

Shifting between the rank individualism of "how can you optimize this time," and the radical potential of confronting the consequences of "normal life," one of the struggles of the pandemic became engaging with the banal and extraordinary care labor needed to survive these 'choose your own adventure' crisis maps. In this moment of coronavirus capitalism, "ideas lying around" offer compasses of all kinds (Klein, 2020). In the early days of the pandemic, we were witness to the dynamics of what Naomi Klein (2007) calls "the shock doctrine," logics of opportune exploitation of public disorientation. Still, the capacity to survive was and continues to be afforded by workers assigned to the front lines of the crisis, consigned as 'essential.' Where I currently reside in Iowa, many of these essential workers included migrant laborers concentrated into the assembly lines of meat packing plants. The carelessness of managers—refusing closures or relief, and some making bets on how many people would become ill—enabled COVID's rapid spread throughout plants in Waterloo, Marshalltown, and Tama (Shepherd 2020). As some of the worst outbreaks in U.S. industrial agriculture, these struggles over working conditions also parallel a much longer history of labor and racial justice in Iowa (Yeung & Grabell 2020). At some point—and *in spite* of an *insurrection on the national g-damn capital*—it felt as if the potential for reimagining a whole way of life faded, and we were pushed back into the crushing despair of 'normalcy.' I get it—I, too, want again to savor tenderness and touch. But I also want so much more.

And so "COVID time" also indexes a jumble of public feelings under the sign of burnout: exhaustion, fatigue, languish, despair, and grief. In 2019, the World Health Organization newly classified 'burnout' as a medical condition, specifically related to chronic work stress. In a revision to the *International Classification of Diseases*, burnout encompasses "a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been *successfully managed*" (2020, emphasis mine). The entry qualifies scope and scale: as a category of medical surveillance, burnout is simply *occupational*, relating to the work space and "feelings of energy

depletion and exhaustion…mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism…a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment" (ICD 2020). From the vantage point of medical classification, the ineffectual individual management of work-related stress made for bad workers, drained of potential energy, and no longer able to produce value. During COVID-19, warnings against pandemic exacerbated burnout function as extensions of "agentic notions of bodily management," in which body minds become "bounded by rhetorics of risk that moralize everyday corporeal practices" (Bennett 2021, 350). Management, in this case, compresses medical ableism into an endless series of resilience and mental health webinars in the absence of *actual* material transformations of work. Every endless email secretly (and sometimes not so secretly) screamed: stop fantasizing about quitting your job! Resilience seminars are the participation trophies of crisis capitalism.

While I acknowledge the medicalization of burnout is rhetorically complex for reasons of access and strategic enactments of agency, let's not kid ourselves how *stress not successfully managed* functions at the level of institutions, especially Predominately White Institutions holding on dearly to the corporatization of DEI Inc. The disability exemptions structuring this definition hold worlds of meaning. Much like its historical antecedent, exhaustion as a public feeling all too often centers *normate burnout,* a kind of cultural formation that tethers historical situations of emergence and the wide array of relations that compose a transformable present. Paired with Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's (2002) conceptualization of "normate" as "the corporeal incarnation of culture's collective, unmarked, normative characteristics" (10), we might think through normate burnout as a way to mark whiteness, hetero- and cisnormativity, and ableism in public conversations about the 'proper' management of stress and the cultivation of 'appropriate' work/life balance: in addition to surveillance of signs of mental, physical, and emotional exhaustion. These are biopolitical markers of the contemporary neoliberal workscape, yes; but "burnout" cultures also come with complex geographic histories that necessitate unmooring the term as a kind of millennial possession. Forces of energy production, depletion, and management compel understanding burnout culture's keywords, geographies, and legacies otherwise not immediately evident within its contemporary articulation.

Burnout discourse fundamentally revolves around residual and intensifying cultures of energy management, comprised of relations between an ecological body of latent energy in addition to belief about how that energy should be acquired and converted and *used* to generate value. Under conditions of capi-

talism, "energy" offers an entry point into the forms of value actualized through the transformation of environments. Energy, as those in the energy humanities argue, *is the transformation of matter so it can be used*. Indeed, as Imre Szeman (2007) instructs us, "what if we were to think about the history of capital not exclusively in geopolitical terms, but in terms of the forms of energy available to it at any given historical moment" (806)? And as I argue in my forthcoming book, *Violent Inheritance: Sexuality, Land, & Energy in Making the North American West*, energy also brings us toward multi-scalar jumps between vitality and debility, nature and culture in shaping modern forms of extractive world-making.

Acknowledging the normate as a figure that structures ongoing concerns about burnout fundamentally challenges the ability to naturalize burnout as a millennial condition, incessantly occupied by a cacophony of white cisnormative failure (Peterson 2019). In her incisive critique of the whiteness of "millennial burnout," Tiana Clark (2019) reflects: "No matter the movement or era, being burned out has been the steady state of Black people in this country for hundreds of years. There's too much to cover, and my buffering, Black millennial brain is short-circuiting the litany of inherited trauma—or should I say inherited burnout?" Moreover, the logic of burnout 'management,' largely centered within the knowledge cultures of occupational psychology, fails to envision more radical imaginations of what kinds of worlds we might inhabit otherwise. Hil Malatino (2020) captures these dynamics of burnout as a scarcity mentality that negates "basic facts of interdependency, mutuality, and subject interwovenness" (25). Without a critical analysis of energy, the normate lurks and disallows the possibilities of radical imagination.

We need conversations that shift from individual management to burnout *culture,* or the underlying values, norms, and ideas about time, energy, work, and ability that structure the meaning of productivity. Burnout's temporal orientation is rooted in a much broader web of relations ordering the contemporary world: capacity, productivity, individual mastery and comparison. Alison Kafer (2013) calls these the temporality of late capitalism. Normate burnout brings attention to a conjuncture of a world made possible through racialized labor, extractive world-making, and the modern obsession with the differential actualization of bodily energy. Sure, we can move through and beyond "work" and hating on millennials, but the stakes of mapping exhaustion in time and space are so much more. Exhaustion is a feeling, but moreover it is a process and racialized logic of capital that lives in a liminal space of making and un-making.

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Believe it or not, these are conversations made possible by a collective of undergraduate students at a public university in the Midwest. Teaching a capstone course about burnout and productivity regimes bookended my instructional experience during the pandemic. Our crises maps took us through burnout as a feeling and object of public discourse. Tracing such maps and their underlying productivity regimes, we considered the ways that organizing the world often transpired through a demand to produce things to be evaluated and used: from the array of stressors in our mediated lives (the everyday labor of vigilance and code switching), to experiences of racism at all scales, to care work, homophobia, trans antagonism, and the seemingly endless news cycle of catastrophe.

The course provenance is quite simple: in Spring 2018, I taught an undergraduate capstone on rhetoric and the body, surveying a broad range of theories of embodiment and corporeality rooted in feminist, queer, and disability studies. With this foundation, we shifted our focus into an inventory of *optimization*, a belief in the infinite potential of the body for energy management and actualization. In this course iteration, I found two readings resonate most deeply with students: Anna Katharina Schaffner's (2016) cultural history, *Exhaustion*, in addition to Kristin A. Swenson's (2010) essay "Productive Bodies: Women, Work, and Depression." Student excitement for engaging otherwise isolating emotions paralleled my own need for *Violent Inheritance* to think with others through the frameworks of queer and disability studies alongside colonial orders of energy and extraction.

Why not an entire capstone dedicated to the culture of burnout? By the time I taught a revised version in Spring 2020 and 2021, public conversations about burnout seemed to be everywhere, especially related to pandemic life. But most of these conversations typically focused on drawing discrete lines between depression and languishing, burnout and exhaustion, as if typifying emotions could invent new modes of mastery. In its most recent iteration, I had to confront two central challenges. First, how do you create a course interrogating the culture of burnout while also designing a space and flow that minimized the potential for added exhaustion? Second, how do you hold the contradictions of institutional expectations, the political environment of public universities, and a course invested in ideas that often challenged our lived reality of assessment, evaluation, and productivity? For example, how could I forget, in the week focused on the "social body" and surveillance, students pointing out the paradoxical demands of many of their course's camera policies, wherein "engagement" would be

measured by some requirement of showing up for inspection. In our collective space, they knew and appreciated our syllabus "policy:" "you have the right to make a decision about your visual presence." And so amidst the groans, I interjected with a throughline from lecture: "Do you remember that image I talked about? With the tower and the cells? It sorta feels like, in this zoom room, your name/image boxes are cells and I'm the tower. What do you think about that?"

As someone raised by the feminist classroom and formally trained in the dispositions of cultural studies, those felt contradictions cannot be resolved *by* me. Rather, my feminist mentors taught me "learning" takes many forms, contradictions are meaningful and generative, and part of my role as a participant/facilitator/mentor is to name them *as such,* highlight their historically constructed nature, and create an environment that made space for all sorts of questions and push back. I get feedback from students that echo their appreciation: *I am vulnerable but I feel safe*. Providing the opportunity for these affective encounters, in any classroom (virtual or otherwise), is seemingly basic yet profound. As I told my students during our last meeting, "I really think we can bridge our own experiences with hard ideas—that's learning, too." We departed again, with big questions, after a semester of foregrounding mutual consent conversations about pace and flow, what capacity we had to talk, and more specifically, how we could center care as a way of doing things interdependently. To riff from a student's final project, we were finding a way to inhabit a *Declaration of Interdependence*. We reflected once more, with a few big questions and statements:

> Who are you outside of attempts to define your value?
>
> When was the last time you asked for help?
>
> Are you resilient? What does that word mean for you in the pandemic?

Students, specifically, held all the big feelings as they reflected on our space where we held each other, and fostered a space of vulnerability:

> This class made me feel less isolated from the difficult time of pandemic, knowing others felt similar struggles.
>
> This is the most connected I have ever felt.

Lectures

"Genealogies of 'Burnout Culture': Energy, Optimization, Neurasthenia"

"The Social Body: Malleability, Social Control, Rebellion"

"Does Burnout Culture relate to American Eugenics? How to Ask Questions about Cultural Formations"

"Writing the Burnout: Embodied Writing and Standpoint Reflection"

"Productivity Regimes: Scientific Management Theory, Mechanization, Waste Motion"

"All about the Self: Wellness Culture, Self-Help, and the Politics of Rest"

"Radical Dreaming: Seeds, Roots, & Imagination"

READINGS & THEMES

Demystifying Burnout, Contemporary and Historical Discourses

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Endnotes

1. Much has been said (largely in the Twitter sphere) about the uses and abuses of comparisons between COVID-19 and the early years of the HIV crisis. Though we should be wary of the comparisons in terms of etiology and transmission, I do believe larger lessons might live in cultures of intimacy (particularly amongst imagined communities of queer and trans people who have always developed lived theories of intimacy in a world of various kinds of "social distance") in addition to the intensity of political emotions. For example, I often thought of Deborah Gould's recollection of hope and despair in ACT-UP organizing. The "something that cannot be named" might be some kind of feeling oriented toward futurity but not about linear progress, where crisis is an opening and a set of possibilities to organize and imagine. Mariame Kaba's mantra of "hope is a discipline" best captures this complexity for me.

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A crocus: entire flowering plant with separate bulb and floral segments, watercolour, unknown, nd.
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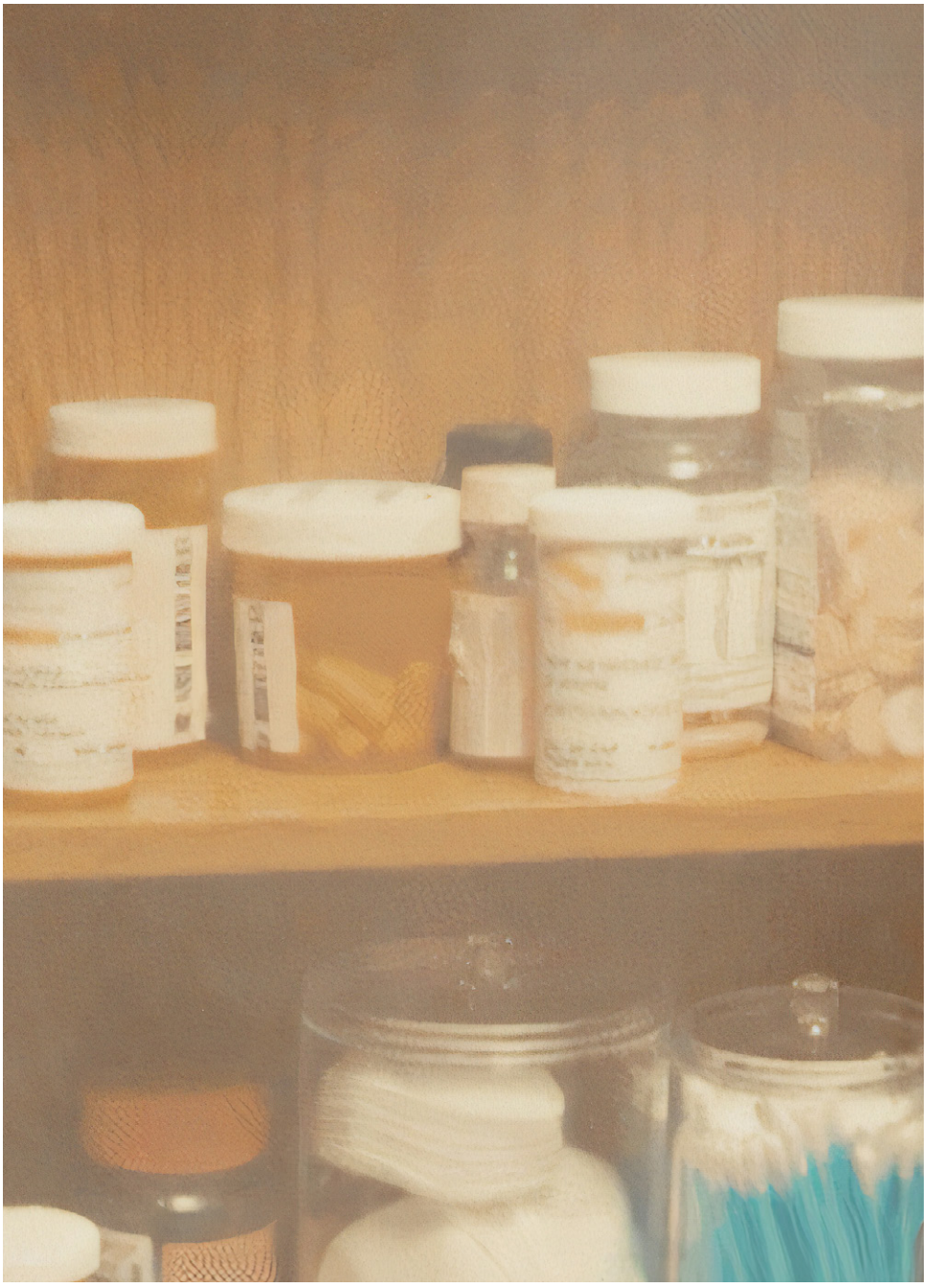

Chilling, Work It Out
Manifest Destiny Down: SPACETIME, 2020 (giphy.com)

CAPACIOUS

LEARNING FROM A 'LOST YEAR': AN AUTOTHEORETICAL JOURNEY THROUGH ANXIETY AND PANIC

Kathryn J. Strom
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, EAST BAY

ABSTRACT

I thought I knew my theory. In the summer of 2018, however, I experienced a mind-body implosion that put me out of commission for approximately twelve months. During that year and afterward, unable to engage in the theorizing and writing I loved—unable to do anything but feel—I discovered that there was a difference between knowing and thinking-feeling theory. In this auto-theoretical essay, I explore the corpo-affective dimensions of anxiety and panic and the discovery of my own deeply entrenched humanist orientations, weaving theoretical discussions of posthumanism with blended poetry and narrative.

KEYWORDS

anxiety, panic, academia, affect, posthuman

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I fell in love with rhizomes in my teacher education doctoral program. Deleuze & Guattari's (1987) rhizomatics became much more than a way to make sense of my data or frame my findings in a way that honored the multifaceted complexity of teaching: I considered it a philosophy by which I wanted to live my life. Over time, I expanded my theoretical focus to include other thinkers like Rosi Braidotti, Karen Barad, and Donna Haraway, and began to define my worldview as *posthuman*, a neo-materialist onto-epistemological perspective (that is, an integrated theory of knowing-being; Barad, 2007) that emerges out of the convergence of critiques of rational humanism and anthropocentrism (Braidotti 2013/2019). Posthumanism is a theory of immanence that moves our collective reference point from isolated human individuals to multiplicities of human-nonhuman, material-discursive elements, or "ensemble[s] composed of zoe-logical, geological, and technological organisms...a zoe-geo-techno assemblage" (Braidotti 2019, 47), which fundamentally disrupts the logical binaries that are at the heart of western civilization in its current form: body/mind, self/other, person/world, human/nonhuman, and so on (Deleuze & Guattari 1987). This frame is about connection, proliferation, mobility, flux, (r)evolution, replacing *either/or* with *and, and, and* (Deleuze & Guattari 1987). Posthumanism is about valuing heterogeneity, or no, even more than that, it argues that difference is the natural state of things. It is about exploding into lines of flight, rupturing the status quo, creating war machines. And, importantly, the strand of posthumanism that I follow is critical, insisting on power analyses and disrupting normative thinking/practices that perpetuate inequities (Braidotti, 2013)—something that was missing in some of the other complex, non-linear frameworks I had investigated while pursuing my doctorate.

Posthumanism also foregrounds *affect*, a concept typically left out of research because it so completely defies capture and/or representation by traditional means. Affect, in the neo-Spinozan interpretation, is a relational force (Braidotti 2019), a virtual intensity that is both pre-personal and very personal (Gregg & Seigworth 2010), that arises from encounters between bodies (both human and more-than-human; Dernikos, Lesko, McCall, & Niccolini 2020). Affect changes a body's capacity to act (Massumi 1987/2015; Stewart 2007)—it moves us (Hickey-Moody 2013) and makes us feel (Shouse 2005). Bodies have affective power—the ability to affect and be affected by (Braidotti 2019)—and that power is what defines us and

the assemblages we are embedded in and connected up to. Accordingly, Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 257), taking up a well-known Spinozan statement, offer:

> 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, either to destroy that body or to be destroyed by it, either to exchange actions and passions with it or to join with it in composing a more powerful body.

I had no substantial preparation in philosophy before diving into Deleuze and Guattari, and their work is pretty difficult to comprehend both language- and content-wise (St. Pierre 2016; Strom 2018). I especially had a hard time wrapping my head around the idea of affect as a force or intensity and how that differed from the more psychological use of the term to denote emotion. I even purposely avoided writing about it when I could, because I felt was not able to explain it to myself adequately, much less to anyone else. Instead, I focused in on a few concepts that helped me think differently and that I was confident I could bring into mainstream scholarship as lines of flight.

As a result, I have spent the last eight years or so working with what amounts to a pretty small slice of Deleuze's oeuvre, his collaborations with Guattari, and the texts of a few key posthuman thinkers. I plug this knowledge into my work on the scholarship of teaching and learning: I analyze data with it, I apply it to theorizing my own pedagogical practice, I teach it to my own students, and I use it to illustrate alternative, complex perspectives of educational phenomena (for examples, see Strom 2015; Strom, Margolis, & Polat 2019; Strom & Lupinacci 2019). And although it took me a long time and a lot of practice, I finally 'got' the ontological shift that posthumanism entails—the shift from a dualistic, (hu)man centered universe to a monistic, immanent, *zoe*-centered one in which "we-are-all-in-this-together-but-we-are-not-one-and-the-same" (Braidotti 2017, 23). It more than resonates with me, it excites me, lights me up—it provides glimpses of different ways of doing, being, living.

I thought I 'knew' these concepts, but my concept of knowing was still grounded in the Cartesian duality of mind/body, privileging intellectual activity over embodied knowledge (Franklin-Phipps 2020; Hemmings 2012; Ohito 2016). It wasn't until I lost a year of my life—a year of no theory, a year where I could barely think at all—that I really knew it, that I viscerally felt it in a way that went beyond just intellectual knowledge. That I really grappled with what it meant to disrupt my conditioning to see the world as a rational, ordered place and myself as an autonomous individual with agency and free will, able to control my destiny

and what was happening around me. That I really understood what it meant to disrupt the idea that our minds control our bodies. That I really understood *affect in the Spinozan sense*—a phrase I have written many times in my own scholarship. Until this 'lost year,' I didn't realize how deep my conditioning to rationality and control ran. I believed what I was saying and writing about disrupting binary thinking, but I didn't understand it in the corpo-affective way (Górska 2016) I do now.

JULY 2018

Herstmonceux Castle, Southeast England
12th Biennial Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP) Conference

I sit in a student desk in one of the many conference rooms that make up Herstmonceux Castle, trying to pay attention to the end of the presentation.

I'm exhausted.
Head feels foggy.
Limbs heavy.
Face flushed.

It feels a little like a hangover, but I only had one glass of wine last night at the Castle pub after we got in.

Must be jetlag.

The presentation ends and I gratefully slide my notebook into my backpack and check the time on my phone.

1:30 pm.
Maybe I'll take a nap.

I tell T, one of the friends I'm attending the conference with, where I'm going. I shrug my backpack over my shoulders, walk into the stone corridor. Past the dining hall. Out the heavy double doors. Along the bridge over the moat.

Sun on my face.

It's hot outside—well, hot for England, courtesy of a summer heat wave blasting through Europe. My ballet flats crunch onto the gravel path that leads to the dormitories—the castle is owned by Queens University—and slip past

a small church flanked by a graveyard dotted with faded headstones. I am surrounded by the sights, sounds, and smells of the idyllic English countryside, a place I love, a place I come every two years with three of my dearest friends for the Castle conference. I hate to miss the afternoon sessions, but I feel so worn out.

I'll feel much better after a nap.

The bed and breakfast comes into view. The 16th-century Cleaver Lyng House, a handsome Tudor-style manor, looks like something out of an old storybook. I trudge up the three flights of creaky wooden stairs until I reach the door all the way at the top. Insert the old-fashioned cast iron skeleton key into the lock and let myself in.

So stuffy.
No air conditioning.

The quiet is almost jarring after the lively activity at the Castle. I dump my backpack on the floor, take out my contacts, and change into a soft t-shirt.

In the bedroom, I open the window to let air in.

I grab my headphones and sleeping mask. Slide beneath the sheets. Despite the heat outside they still feel blessedly cool. I set my alarm on my phone for two hours from now, plug in my earbuds, and scan through the apps on my phone. I open SleepStream, select "Atlantic Ocean," and fit my mask over my eyes.

Pitch black.
Waves crash.
I wait for sleep to come.
Breathe in.
Breathe out.
You are nothing more than your work
you are a fake
your work is worthless
YOU are worthless
Body flushes hot and cold.
Something Bad is Happening
Heart POUNDING. *Racing.*
Nothing feels real.
Throat tight.
Can't——Breathe. Can't——Breathe.
OHGODWHATISHAPPENINGTOME
Skin *crawling_crawling_crawling.*
Mouth full of sawdust.

Chest is so HEAVY.
Can't——Breathe. Can't——Breathe.
I'M DYING
I'M CRAZY
I'M SO FAR FROM HOME

In July of 2018 I had a series of panic attacks while at a conference in England. I realized after the first one what had happened, but I was powerless to stop the sensations that continued to course through my body for the next several days, until I finally went to see a doctor who prescribed me an anti-anxiety medication similar to Xanax. As soon as the symptoms lessened, I immediately started trying to pinpoint a reason for the attacks. *Why was this happening to me? What had caused it?* Whenever I'd been sick before, at least I'd been able to understand what was happening and why. I could identify the cause: I had a cold, or the flu, and I generally knew what to expect as the bug worked its way through my body. But with this, I had no direct cause to connect to what was happening to me—I was, literally, in my happy place, at Herstmonceux Castle, at a conference I looked forward to attending with my best friends every other summer. My body-mind seemed to have rebelled against me for no logical reason. I had no explanation for why I was feeling this way, and I had no way of knowing when or if these sensations would come back. It was terrifying.

Heart pounding.
A pulse in my stomach.
BEAT BEAT BEAT BEAT.
Icy fingers sweep up my body.
Impending doom.

That feeling you get when something really awful happens or is about to happen—the moment when it dawns on you that you've made a terrible mistake, like you've left your cell phone or keys somewhere—that's what it feels like.

Body flushes hot and cold at the same time.
Stomach drops like you are on a roller coaster.
Mind flashes, "YOU'VE FUCKED UP BIG TIME."

Although I cut my trip short and returned home, I still woke every morning with panic washing over me. I still had racing thoughts telling me I was nothing, my work was nothing. I was consumed with feelings of abject terror that had no obvious source. I could barely focus my eyes on the page to read or on my computer screen to type an email, and I had to concentrate intensely on what someone was saying to me for my brain to interpret the sounds coming out of their mouth. I felt so awful, the feelings in my body so distracting and disturbing, that most of the time all I wanted to do—all I could do—was sit on my couch and distract myself with silly TV shows until it was late enough to take something to knock myself out for the night.

NOVEMBER 2018

I am jerked out of a drugged sleep.
I'm never going to catch up.
My mind races.
I've done no writing this year.
I've done no reading this year.
I need to be able to write a literature review on posthuman theory.
On teacher learning.
On teaching practices for multilingual learners.
I don't know any of this literature anymore.
Even if I started reading an article a day, I will never catch up.

It's been months since I had the panic attacks in Europe. So much lost time, doing nothing but trying to survive each day.

Can't read right now.
My eyes won't focus on the page.
Can't write right now.
Mind is so foggy, body so tortured.
I have nothing to say.

I now think of my life as divided into two major eras: *Katie Before Anxiety* and *Katie After Anxiety.* Before, the words always flowed. I had things to say, things that mattered.

Now...
I start to panic. My heart thuds.
I just know it.
I'm never going to write again.
If I can't write, I can't be an academic.
I'm going to lose my job.

I don't know what terrifies me more: losing the ability to read and write in the ways I have come to take for granted, losing my researcher/writer voice in terms of having something to say, to contribute.

Or the more practical matter of losing my job.
The latter would immediately mean we'd have to sell our home.
Our San Francisco mortgage requires both our salaries.
And the former...there would be no 'me' left at all.
Finally, my partner comes home.
Thank god.

I hear the garage open, his car engine go silent. Footsteps thud on the stairs leading up to the house. The door creaks open and he calls hello as he enters the kitchen and shuffles through the mail.

I peel myself off the couch and go to him, moving into his body and wrapping my arms around his torso. I feel his hand on my back, patting hesitantly, trying to comfort.

I sob into his worn t-shirt.
I can't do my work right now. I don’t know what to do.
What's going to happen if I lose my job?

His chin rests on the top of my head. "You're going to get better," he tells me. "So you've lost some of your superpowers. They will come back."

I want to smile at how he characterizes my former academic talents,
but I don't have the energy.
And I don't believe him, anyway.

CAPACIOUS

My diagnosis was twofold: *generalized anxiety disorder* and *panic disorder.* It was hard to accept, and hard to explain to others—'anxiety' and 'panic' are words that are used to refer to everyday emotions that were nowhere close to describing what was happening to me. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), the main reference guide for mental health professionals, defines generalized anxiety disorder as having both mental (constant excessive, uncontrollable anxiety and worry) and physical symptoms (feeling on edge, tired, or irritated; having mind-fog, insomnia, and/or tight muscles) that interfere with living a normal life. Panic disorder is defined by the DSM-5 as having panic attacks—which can include racing/ pounding heart, sweating, shaking, tight throat, heavy chest, difficulty breathing, stomach knots, dry mouth, dizziness, hot/cold flashes, depersonalization, and fear of going crazy or dying—followed by having constant fear of another panic attack, and avoiding situations that might cause one.

Despite receiving these diagnoses and recognizing that I did indeed fit these symptomatic profiles in some ways, while also exceeding them in others, there still was no identified cause. I couldn't point to one specific thing and say, *this was it, this triggered it.* What probably happened was that multiple unprocessed traumas (stresses from my dissertation process and early-career experiences with abuse, exploitation, and bullying from senior researchers), in combination with intense burn-out and assorted financial and family stresses, produced a body-mind breakdown. Yet, I could not seem to come to terms with the fact that there was no *one thing* that I could treat or change to break out of this state of all-consuming, 24-hour-a-day anxiety and panic. None of the medications or therapies I tried seemed to help. I was powerless to stop what was happening to me, to ease the feelings inside me, to placate the voice screeching in my head that I was nothing.

JANUARY 2019

It's already one in the afternoon,
so I force myself to move from the bed to the couch.

I bring my pillow and my weighted anxiety blanket with me. Propping the pillow up on top of the large blue back cushions on the long end of our sectional, I lay down and cover myself with the blanket, distributing the weight as evenly as I can.

15 pounds of fabric, weighed down with beads, envelops me.

I'm on my back, with the blanket pulled up to my chin. I let the weight of the blanket sink into the front of my body, from neck to toes. My cat, Blue, jumps into my lap. He, too, lays on his back, his paws kneading the air as he presents his soft, furry tummy for me to stroke.

I oblige.

I used to jokingly call him the "Stage Five Clinger." Now I refer to him—very seriously—as my "Therapy Cat," and I am pathetically grateful for his never-ending desire to snuggle with me, for the tiny bit of comfort the weight of his small body provides.

Hours pass.

I don't sleep but I am not awake, either. I have no respite from these disturbing sensations.

All-consuming fear.
Shaking from head to toe.
Stomach in knots.
Mouth dry.
Pulse racing.

Some corner of my mind, maybe where normal Katie resides, produces the reminder that I need to be planning. Classes start in less than two weeks.

I can't summon the strength to move to the table, where my laptop sits, idle. It doesn't matter, anyway. My mind can't even handle simple tasks like writing a grocery list, much less something as complex as mapping out a semester-length course on critical theories.

These feelings in my body are so intense that they've taken over completely.
All I am is a mass of sensation.
All I can do is lie here.
A worthless lump on the couch.

For almost a year, I existed in a bodily-affective state where all I could do was *feel,* and I. Felt. Awful. It was the kind of awful that made me wish I was dead so I didn't have to feel anymore, the kind of awful where the limits of language make themselves felt (Braidotti 2019) because no chain of words could ever accurately express the sensations consuming me. My life suddenly had become one big dualism (the thing I loved to critique in my writing). There were two distinct eras: Katie Before Anxiety/Panic and Katie after Anxiety/Panic. Whereas Before-Katie loved nothing more than connecting with people, collaborating with them, and proliferating ideas, After-Katie didn't want to see or talk to anyone. I shrank down into myself, so distressed that all I could do was concentrate on surviving, getting through the day. If I was forced to be with other people, I seldom spoke unless I absolutely had to. Even with my husband, my best friend and life-partner of nearly two decades, I had nothing to say. Part of it was that I felt so terrible, and was so consumed with terror all the time, that I could barely form a coherent thought. Another part was that I was ashamed about the state I was in and did not want my friends and colleagues to know the true extent of my debilitation. In retrospect, this closing off of myself due at least in part to shame makes sense. The affect of shame is powerful; as Sedgwick (2003) puts it, "the pulsations of cathexis around shame...are what either enable or disenable so basic a function as the ability to be interested in the world" (97). Shame is also an emergence of a mind-body conflict (Probyn 2010): in my mind, I had always seen myself as a strong person, but that I could not get the anxiety my body was experiencing under control meant that I was weak, broken...mentally ill.

MARCH 2019

Today is one of the rare days where I have to do something for work. I force myself out of bed and sit at my dining room table, sipping water, shaking off the remnants of sleep.

I miss my coffee.

I can't drink anything with a stimulant right now. Plus, it's hard to get anything but water past my lips. My mouth is made of sand. I've been having to force myself to eat anything at all, and I have lost several more pounds in the last week. A lifetime ago, that might have made me happy. Now it just means that I will be that much weaker; it will be that much harder to move my body.

I'm going to be late if I don't get moving.

I drag myself into the shower.
My body feels weighted down, as if I might sink down through the floor of the tub.
My arms are so heavy, it's a chore to reach for the shampoo and work it through my hair.
Rinse.
Repeat with conditioner.
I am exhausted just from my shower.
And I've not even gotten to the hardest part yet.
Drying my hair.

My left arm sags under the weight of the hair dryer, and I prop it up using my right. I'm growing out my pixie haircut because it's too much of a struggle for me to dry it every day and if it's long I can just throw some gel in it and air-dry.

I forego makeup, throwing on soft black leggings and a blue striped stretchy tunic. I've always taken care of my appearance—being 'put together' is, for me, an important part of the professional image I wanted to cultivate.

Now, I'm struck by how much, how deeply, I simply don't care what I look like.

I am an "out of fucks to give" meme. Only not because I'm a bad-ass who doesn't care what people think.

I just don't. have. the. energy. to. care.

I force myself to go through the motions anyway. I have to project an outward appearance of something in the realm of 'normal' at work.

I sit silently in our faculty meeting, in the same maroon swivel chair, at the same table, in the same conference room, as I have so many times before.

Heart pumping.
Cold chills and hot flashes.

Mouth dry.
Completely exhausted.
Mind hazy.

I feel so terrible, the feelings in my body so distracting, that it's all I can do to remain in my seat. All I want is to be back in my home, hiding from the world on my couch.

Perform. Perform. Perform.
Pretend to follow the conversation.
Conjure an expression that says I'm listening.
Nod my head.
Mhmmm. Uh huh.

Just two years ago, a colleague confronted me about taking up too much space in meetings. I so dominated the talk that she felt she could never get a word in edgewise.

Then, I couldn't shut up.
I was full of ideas and enthusiasm. I cared about things.

Now, I can't seem to pry open my mouth. Nothing matters but how awful I feel.

There is a stranger occupying my body, one who must have taken a different path than me, with none of the same experiences or education or ideas, one who literally has *nothing to say.*

I feel my colleagues' concern.
During our breaks a few come up to me, inquire about my health.
Too weary to lie.
"Yeah, I'm having a hard time right now."
They don't press.

No matter how progressive we are, it's uncomfortable to talk about mental illness in the workplace.

Another colleague approaches. "Are you OK? You have been so low energy lately. Not like yourself."

Thanks, Captain Obvious. I'm not *myself.*

But instead of replying with that, I attempt to shape my lips into a smile, although it probably looks more like a grimace.

"Yeah, I'm having a hard time right now."

In June of 2019—eleven months after the first wave of attacks in Europe—I entered an intensive outpatient program specializing in anxiety disorders. One of the first things I learned in the group sessions was that I somehow needed to learn to stop trying to control the anxiety/panic, because trying to control it, or fighting it,actually *increased* the anxiety and panic. I couldn't control it, and then I would panic even more because my attempts to control it were ineffectual, and that in turn would worsen my physical symptoms, which then intensified their warning signals to the brain that OH SHIT! WE'RE IN DANGER! ABORT, ABORT! Of course, I was never in any imminent danger, but anxiety and panic cannot be reasoned with, because they are not rational; they don't operate via the binary logic we've been conditioned to live our lives by—and which I was supposedly always trying to disrupt in my research and writing. Yet, the idea that I was never going to 'get it under control' was devastating.

If I can't control it...
that means it is going to continue to get worse...
and I won't be able to work...
and then I'll lose my job...
and then we'll lose the house...
and then...
Spiral, spiral, spiral.
And ultimately...
I don't want to live like this.
I can't *live like this.*

By early July, an assemblage of factors—including learning mindfulness and self-soothing strategies in the intensive program, identifying that one of the medications I was on was producing at least some of the disturbing feelings I had been experiencing, and finding an anti-depressant that actually worked—had helped me get to a place where my body was calm enough to allow me to think

again, and I immediately began self-reflecting on my experiences of the past year and my learning in therapy in the last few weeks. Through this analysis, I recognized that although my academic life to this point had been writing about a decentered perspective in education, my clinging to humanist, rationalist onto-epistemologies was keeping me from feeling better. The idea that anxiety was something I could get over, that I could control, was actively keeping me locked in a downward spiral of anxiety and panic. I needed to put my espoused radically immanent perspective to work in a different, much more material way, as part of my treatment.

First, I worked to understand how my body and mind were connected and affected one another in the context of my anxiety/panic disorders—in other words, I combined my recent psycho-social embodied knowledge and experiences with my intellectual understandings of monistic philosophy to disrupt the binary positioning of me versus the anxiety and panic, and the hierarchical and agentic positioning of me being able to control and overcome the anxiety. Despite the many times I had written about disrupting the body/mind binary in my work, relationally decentering myself vis a vis anxiety/panic was still a revelation to me. As I sat in my therapist's office, and she mapped out the interactions between mind and body that were sending me into a downward spiral of bodily discomfort, mind-fog, and general distress, I recognized that what she was talking about was basic Spinoza: there are thoughts in the mind or feelings in the body—one doesn't necessarily come before the other—and they are connected, entangled. As the thoughts spiral, the body symptoms intensify. To placate the body, we adopt behaviors that help us avoid anything that we feel is more anxiety-inducing, doing things like laying on the couch watching TV all day, huddled under a 15-pound security blanket, for weeks on end. These avoidance behaviors produce more negative thoughts. In my case:

I should be working.
But I can't work because I feel so terrible.
Spiral, spiral, spiral.
I'm never going to write again.
I'm going to lose my job.

These thoughts translated into even worse physical anxiety and panic symptoms, which in turn fed my catastrophizing spiral. In this way, the two (body-mind) are not separately acting entities, but each is producing the other, and amplifying the responses of the other. To get myself out of these harmful patterns, I had to disrupt something in my mind-body anxiety cycle—move my body in a different way, maybe, since my mind couldn't handle much.

JULY 2019

I drive my silver Honda Fit the half mile up the street from our house and park on the steep hill near the entrance to the trailhead to San Bruno Park and Guadeloupe Canyon, curbing my wheels so I don't get a ticket.

It's the beginning of July. In another two weeks it will be exactly one year since that initial panic attack in England.

I've started a new medication, stopped another, and been attending intensive therapy classes. Something has begun to work. I still feel the sensations that have been torturing my body-mind for the past year—heart racing, difficulty breathing, stomach in knots, fear—but they are somewhat muted now, like watercolor paint strokes.

I get out of the car, zip my jacket against the chill. It's a typical mid-summer morning in San Francisco. Foggy, slight wind, mid-fifties.

I open the metal gate, walk past the sign warning hikers not to eat any mushrooms or feed any animals on the trail. I plug my earphones in and turn on a Nora Roberts audiobook.

Part of our treatment in the intensive outpatient program is learning how to meditate. I suck at it, so my therapist suggested that I try a walking meditation. And, she says, just being in nature seems to have calming properties.

My being here is also a way to practice "opposite action," which means doing something to break out of the cycles of anxiety and panic we often find ourselves trapped in. Instead of doing what has been keeping us locked in the cycle—for me, laying on my couch in a half-sleeping state for weeks on end—we do the opposite of that.

So, I'm here, at this trail that I'm lucky to have nearly in my backyard.

Ready to try anything.

CAPACIOUS

The first mile is paved black asphalt, winding through a forest. Leaves and twigs snap under my sneakers as I walk. I inhale the fresh air, counting my steps as I breathe.

In-2-3-4. Out-2-3-4.

The second mile turns onto a dirt and gravel path surrounded by thick brush on either side. I continue my breathing exercise and notice the sights and smells around me—the next step of the walking meditation.

Cool air whips my cheeks.
Dirt and gravel crunch under my feet.
Wind whistles through the bushes.
Critters scurry through the brush.
Birds chirp somewhere in the distance.
A tiny brown rabbit darts across the path.
I round a corner and begin an upward climb.
The ocean peeks out from behind the rock.
The horizon opens up.
The Bay and the downtown San Francisco skyline appears,
just visible through the veil of fog.

During the last mile, it strikes me how differently I am being constituted on this walk.

For the last year, most of my time has been spent as a
Hiding-couch-blanket-pillow-cat-Katie assemblage, a trembling, terrified mess.
Today I am Walking-forest-gravel-brush-air-fog-ocean-Katie.
And I am triumphant.
I left my house for more than therapy.
I walked THREE miles.

My lips curve into a real smile as I follow the final part of the trail back to the metal gate where I'd entered.

Getting out of the house and walking the trail close to my house not only made me feel a little better, but it also produced a different response in my brain. *Huh. If I can get out and walk three miles, maybe I'm not as bad off as I thought.* I walked the three miles every day, breathing in tandem with my steps, paying attention to my surroundings as I'd learned to do as a form of grounding in therapy.

By August, my body was strong enough to start running. I noticed that my anxiety was lessened after running the three-mile trail, and my therapist pointed out that not only was it a way to rid my body of excess adrenaline-produced energy, but it was also a form of exposure therapy. By running, I was simulating some of the physical sensations of anxiety/panic: heart racing, sweating, heavy breathing. I was giving my body-mind what it wanted—to flee perceived danger. However, I was also making new neural connections with these physical sensations, ones that produced feelings of satisfaction and pride for running every day, rather than terror that a panic attack was coming on. I recognize this exposure therapy now as what Braidotti (2019) describes as an enactment of an affirmative ethics, in confronting negative affects and "reworking them outside the dialectical oppositions" (168). In this case, the dialectical opposition was me against the feelings of anxiety and panic.

As the weeks passed, I continued to wake up with anxiety, so I would get up, have breakfast, and run. By September, I was running seven days a week. I was so elated that I was feeling better, and so determined to hold on to this success, that I made exercise in the morning my number one priority. If I had to get up at four o'clock in the morning to go to the gym and run, I did it. The affective traces of the horrible sensations and terror I endured for a year that were imprinted on my body-mind drove me, every day, to run on my trail or on the treadmill.

Gradually, I loosened my grip on the idea that I needed to control the anxiety, continuing to rework my relation to my disorder outside the dialectical opposition I had set up. I had to suspend the belief that I was an autonomous individual who could control anything/everything to do with my body (I'd already thought I had, but my conditioning to think of myself as a totally agentic being obviously runs very, very deep). To start, my therapist suggested that I "become an observer" of my anxiety. At first, I had no idea what she meant. I had been fighting the anxiety for so long, seeing it as a weakness that had to be overcome, that I didn't know any other way to interact with it. Instead, the therapist recommended, I needed to accept it. When I felt anxiety, I shouldn't fight it or try to control it; instead I should think about what I'm feeling, catalogue it, and sit with it—this was what she meant by being an observer. We practiced this, sitting in her office, engaging in activities like breathing through tiny straws to simulate some of the physical feelings of anxiety/panic, and then setting a timer for me to just sit and observe, describing out loud what I was feeling and engaging in rhythmic breathing until the sensations started to subside.

We also wrote scripts that I read to myself about the anxiety to disrupt the fear I had about it, speaking to the anxiety, saying things like, "I understand you are trying to protect me." After a few months, I had gained the embodied knowledge to finally understand that this was a relational shift. Instead of positioning myself in opposition to the anxiety and its sensations, I was coming into composition with them, accepting them as something connected to me, entangled with me, which changed my relationship with it. Eventually, I practiced these scripts so much that, when I started feeling panic, I developed a different thought pattern to respond to it. Rather than thinking "OH NO, IT'S HAPPENING AGAIN," and triggering body-mind spiraling, instead I would purposefully say to myself, "This is OK. My body is just telling me that it feels like it's in danger. It's not going to hurt me; it might feel uncomfortable for a while, but it will eventually go away." And it would—my new, non-combative connection with the anxiety produced something different. This new response did not make the anxiety magically disappear, but it did keep it at a level that I had learned to tolerate, rather than tipping into panic, and I was able to go about my day and do the things I needed to. In developing a relationship to the anxiety, I, in composition with multiple more-than-human assemblages—my trail, my medication, my assorted wellness techniques, my scripts, my therapist, and so on—had collectively reworked the negative affects that had rendered me an isolated, terrified lump on my couch, and transformed them into new forms of knowledge and affects that yielded increased relational capacities.

I spent the last year being intensely aware of my body in a way I never had before. As an academic, I had always privileged my mind over everything else and ignored my body. Prior to the onset of the panic and anxiety disorder, before that fateful 2018 trip to Europe, my body probably *was* giving off warning signs of fatigue and burnout way before my mind-body simply couldn't take it anymore and imploded. I just didn't pay attention, because my mind was where my work happened, and therefore was much more important than my body. So, I spent a year trapped in a nightmare—immobilized by bodily and mental distress, unable to do the work that I loved.

Yet, this twelve month period—which I have been referring to as a 'lost year' because I have little memory of it (but also because I produced little in the way of academic publications, which still points to the depth of my neoliberal conditioning)—also taught me about my theory in a very different, embodied, way. It taught me about the depth of my conditioning to humanist ideas regarding

the rational, agentic subject who controls their mind; the ability of the mind to control the body; and wellness—as well as humanity—as determined by my very ability to reason. It taught me about the emancipatory potential of decentering myself rather than existing in dialectical opposition to phenomena/the world, of *coming-into-composition* as my approach to life. I thought I knew this before, this relational onto-epistemology, but I only understood it on a theoretical, intellectual level prior to experiencing *feeling-Deleuze-and-Guattari*, *feeling-Braidotti*. The year of supposedly no theory actually yielded embodied knowledge production that helped me understand posthumanism as my corpo-material-affective reality.

I still experience nearly daily anxiety/panic, but it feels manageable (most days, anyway), and since I've been feeling better, I have been pushing myself to write about my experience as much as possible, as a way to connect outward—to enact an affirmative ethics by increasing my relational capacity, making rhizomes (Deleuze & Guattari 1987). Forging connections with others through my writing on social media and being able to connect with my colleagues productively again teaches me about the power of connection and proliferation, what *more* it enables me to do. It reminds me how I always want to position myself in composition with others, always connecting up and stretching outward. It reaffirms why posthumanism is a generative, positive worldview: in our relational encounters, we develop adequate knowledge of our conditions and increase our abilities to transform these conditions, which creates joy (Braidotti 2019).

It also produces in me a desire to formally share about my experiences as an academic with an anxiety disorder, as another concrete way to enact an affirmative, relational posthuman ethics. In doing so, I follow a strong feminist/queer tradition of auto/bio/theory works regarding illness (e.g., Ettorre 2005; Stacey 1997; Sedgwick 2000). However, because the *mental* health of academics is still very much a taboo topic (Price 2011; Brunila & Valero 2018), there are not many published accounts that describe experiences such as mine. Like others who have written auto-works about their experiences as an academic with mental health issues (Campbell 2018; Cvetkovich 2012; Jago, 2002), I recognize how putting this story out into the world makes me vulnerable. But, also like them, my hope that this story might help others, and my desire to push back on narratives of shame and silence around mental health issues in the academy, is stronger than my worry about any risks associated with publishing about my experiences.

Just the first presentation I gave on the topic to an academic audience (Strom 2019) shows how powerful this type of sharing can be: during the Q&A, multiple faculty members stood and disclosed their own anxiety and/or panic disorders and talked about how they were pushing back and taking care of themselves in their settings, or how they could do so in the future. Perhaps by naming what is happening to us—at least partially as a result of the toxic, cut-throat, rejection-filled culture of neoliberal academia and the ways that it promotes rational, individualistic, mind-hierarchized ways of thinking about ourselves and our work—and sharing our thinking-feeling, our embodied-theoretical knowledge, we can find ways to disrupt status quo norms/structures and create alternatives that promote healthy body-minds.

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#doomscroll, Mathew Arthur, 2021

CAPACIOUS

THINKING DOOMSCROLLING AFFECTIVELY

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If you have found yourself, like me, refreshing COVID case and death numbers on the CDC or Worldometer websites numerous times a day, the news media has recently dubbed your habit "doomscrolling," issuing a series of articles with ironically frightening headlines such as "Doomscrolling is Slowly Eroding Your Mental Health," "Your 'Doomscrolling' Breeds Anxiety. Here's How to Stop the Cycle," and "'Doomscrolling' is as Bad for Your Mental Health as it Sounds" (Dewey 2020; Garcia-Navarro 2020; Watercutter 2020). This rash of articles, framed nearly universally as an individual's mental health problem, follows a consistent pattern first explaining the practice as a compulsive searching for bad news, then discussing how this practice can create a cycle or spiral that keeps people scrolling for more, resulting in anxiety, stress, and depression, before concluding with recommendations such as avoiding social media and meditating. Psychologists and other medical professionals explain that doomscrolling is 'hardwired,' a byproduct of the evolutionary demand to pay attention to threats, yet assure us that a strong dose of individual discipline and self-control can overcome these natural tendencies of the so-called lizard brain (Miller 2020). In short, the articles present neoliberal self-help re-packaged as a solution to neoliberal dystopia.

Remarkably, none of them posit collective, political action—organizing communities, attending protests, registering voters, direct action—as a solution to all the fear, anger, and anxiety. The reporters and medical professionals they quote presume there is no need, or perhaps no ability, to stop the doom, so they recommend stopping the scrolling instead. The subtitle of *New York Times* technology columnist Kevin Roose's (2020) article—"The Internet is a pretty scary place right now. Here are some ways to make it better"—is telling in this regard. To Roose, it's not the world that's scary, it's the Internet, and the solution to a scary Internet is not to avoid it, to get out in the streets or get in some face-to-face time, but to fix it. Practice doing "nourishing things" online, such as attending streaming comedy or music shows, calling family, scheduling Zoom dates with friends, and sending direct messages on Instagram, instead of passively scrolling. Of course, Roose and others also recommend bringing "balance" to online lives by logging off, monitoring the amount of time we scroll, and downloading apps to help us meditate. It seems we should worry, "How close, how long, how much, how bad?," as Mathew Arthur (2019, x) depicts doomscrolling in the pages of the last issue of this journal, just not about the doom, only about the scrolling. If doomscrolling is "an urge that practices the body into dystopian feeling: an affective becoming-indebted to the way things are," these articles bear witness to that debt, focusing the issue on reducing the individuals' burden rather than questioning the "cruel optimism" of our attachments to doom-and-debt generating systems in the first place (Arthur 2019, x; Berlant 2011).

Maybe such framing is not so surprising after all, as Ann Cvetkovich (2012) and others teach us, mental health issues are repeatedly individualized and pathologized, casting "a social problem as a personal problem in one case and as a medical problem in the other" (15). Seeing depression as socially produced, as a public rather than private feeling resulting from histories of violent capitalism, colonialism, sexism, and racism, directly challenges this individualization and pathologization. It helps us describe "neoliberalism and globalization, or the current state of political economy, in affective terms" by re-envisioning depression as "a category that manages and medicalizes the affects associated with keeping up with corporate culture and the market economy, or with being completely neglected by it" (Cvetkovich 2012, 11–12). Such a perspective is insightful, even necessary, yet, as Cvetkovich (2012) notes, "it does not help me get up in the morning" (15). And since get up we must and, indeed, scroll we (practically)

must in order to keep up, friendly journalists retreat to the familiar templates of pathologizing diagnosis and individualizing remedy. Have you downloaded that meditation app, yet?

How might these articles change if they thought doomscrolling similarly to how Cvetkovich thinks depression, with doomscrolling conceived as a social effect of affective intensities rather than a cause of pathology? How might this allow us to describe the current media ecology in affective terms? As in media ecological theory in the Harold Innis and Marshall McLuhan tradition, doomscrolling points to a temporality (scrolling) and a spatiality (dys*topos*). Doomscrolling is a mode of keeping up with news suffused with events caused and conditioned by problems taking place at a vast scale: international pandemics, global warming, epochs of colonialism and white supremacy. In the articles, however, this temporality and spatiality are portrayed extensively—how close, how long, how much. Add up the time you spend scrolling for doom and cut it in half. We still have the doom, and the scrolling, just less of both.

Thinking doomscrolling affectively, instead, demands more than this extensive accounting. In Deluzian theory, affect is connected to the intensive rather than the extensive. Extensive properties include things like length and volume that, to summarize Manuel Delanda (2002) are "intrinsically divisible" (26). Intensive properties, in contrast, average or blend when divided because intensive properties express a relationality. For instance, there is an intensive relationship between two trains headed for a collision; they move closer together at a rate that is the product of the relationship of the two trains' speed and the distance between them. If you cut the distance in half, the rate of change to the event horizon of the collision is not fifty percent but some product dependent on the trains' new relation to each other. For Deleuze and Guattari (1987), such intensive changes cause a change in kind, "indivisible distances … cannot be divided or transformed without their elements changing in nature… Exactly like a speed or a temperature" (31). Perhaps the bump of two trains able to slam on their brakes just in time becomes instead a catastrophic collision.

Thinking doomscrolling affectively—intensively—requires, then, thinking of the relationality of the doom and the scrolling. How has social media, for instance, related doom and scrolling in a spatiotemporality unique in kind? The first thing to note here is how doomscrolling becomes an ecological condition rather than an individual pathology. Who, after all, can scroll today without encountering doom? As the saying goes, we used to have to find the news and now the news finds us. Encountering doom while scrolling is likely, nearly inevitable, without

at least some highly disciplined efforts to avoid it, efforts which still react to the potential presence of doom in our feeds. The pathological version might find some perverse sense of control or comfort from seeking out the doom, yet on social media the doom also seeks us. As I write in my book *Surfing the Anthropocene*:

> We surf… and there it is—the Anthropocene, or, if you prefer, the Capitalocene, the Eurocene and all the so-called "wicked problems" with global scopes and epochal time-scales. A news article about trash islands in the Pacific Ocean the size of Texas pops up, followed by a report about the impending devastation of global warming, stories about the corporate exploitation of big data to promote wasteful consumer spending, commentary on the oligopolistic control and manipulation of democratic governments, another video of police shooting an unarmed black man, laying bare the stark, ongoing history of institutional racism (Jenkins 2020, 2).

Affectively, not everyone finds strange comfort or, alternatively, anxiety from such generalized doomscrolling. The modes of response vary according to a number of emotional registers. People become disgusted, overwhelmed, bored, disinterested, angry; they filter the news, vent about it, block it out, troll others over it, take to calling their representatives or strapping on their marching boots. The tension, the intensity, though, remains across these emotional translations and modes of response. Doom lurks online and we may come to dread it, relish it, or some admixture in between, each indexing the same intensive changes to the media environment, to our relation to our screens.

Another aspect of this doom is related to scale. Social media not only means the news finds us but that more news does, covering a larger range of topics, from more corners of the globe. This expansion was a widely celebrated feature of the Internet in its earlier days. Commentators anticipated the breakdown of broadcast monopolies with their corporatist and statist biases and praised the expected rush of new voices and new perspectives from citizen journalists, social movements, and the oppressed. Today, the euphoria over Arab Springs has been displaced by the horror of ethno-nationalist populism and fascism. Turns out the new voices and perspectives were not only noble ones crying out for justice. Now, especially in the light of the past four years and the failed response to the COVID pandemic, people are more likely to shudder over the sheer scale of these new voices. Who hasn't been shocked by what appears to be an immense amount of stupidity, racism, sexism, and the like evident every day on Twitter and Facebook? The digital's democratic hopes have shifted into worries about information overload,

burn out, exhaustion, fake news, post-truth, and the collapse of shared realities and symbolic efficiencies. Again, the associated emotions and modes of response to these intensive alterations vary, yet the feeling of this tension remains.

The scale and presence of doom online effects another intensive change as it clashes with the speed and pace of scrolling. Typically, we scroll rather rapidly, surfing in search of content that moves us enough to respond. Studies show that skimming has become more common than reading an article through to the end, so much so that Twitter now asks whether you would like to actually open the article before re-tweeting that headline. Scrolling is a habit attuned to the scale of social media—not just the doom part but all of the nearly infinite offerings and topics that continually update to the top of the feed. We scroll in order to ensure that we don't 'miss out,' that we see the posts that really matter to us. We go faster as a response to more; scrolling is an adaptive response to a new ecology.

Yet think of the tensions generated by the clash between scrolling and doom. Problems like institutional racism or global warming are epochal, vast, called "wicked" because of their sheer complexity, the raw number of moving parts. These are problems that demand contemplation, reflection, deliberation—with the stress on *deliberate*. They will not be solved by split-second decisions or gut instinct, no matter what Malcolm Gladwell sells you. These wicked problems flash by at the speed of scrolling; the news cycle has moved from once a day with newspapers to potentially once a minute with Twitter, which journalist Dan Gillmor (2011) calls the "1,440-minute news cycle." According to Gillmor, this cycle puts pressure on journalists to be fast rather than accurate, and the same might be said of news audiences. Gone is the interval necessary to reflect, the pause necessary to process, the focus necessary to set an agenda. Problems and injustices accumulate without address or redress. By the time attention turns to a topic, the topics move on, scrolled down the feed or off the trending list.

There is a unique tension, a friction or turbulence, when Doom at such scale meets attention at such speed. This tension underwrites the commonly held belief that social media constitutes a nasty, heated, divisive space. We vent, hyperbolize, snarkify, and sling names both because we feel as if we lack the time for careful, considerate discourse (after all, we must keep scrolling or we will fall behind) and because the sheer number of problems and vast amount of seemingly misinformed people innervates affects related to overload, exhaustion, and burn out. It becomes common to feel as if we are just shouting into a void and never quite

able to catch our breath. Bifo Berardi (2009) predicted the mental consequences of this tension between such speed and scale well before social media:

> The infinite vastness of the Infosphere is superior to the human capacities of elaboration…. The infinite velocity of cyberspace, the infinite velocity of exposure to signs perceived as vital to the survival of the organism produce a perceptive, cognitive, and psychic stress… Once the organism gets overtaxed to an unbearable degree, a panic crisis may lead to collapse, or the organism might detach itself from the flow of communication, manifesting a sudden psychic loss of motivation called depression by psychologists (101–102).

This tension between doom and scrolling indicates a corrective reversal to the articles that began this essay. It is not so much that doomscrolling leads to depression but that the intensive conditions of the contemporary media ecology—the omnipresence of doom and scrolling alike, as well as the friction between their spatiality and temporality—that produces depression, at worst, and a tense atmosphere at the least. Doomscrolling is just one of many maladaptive responses to those tensions, with others including trolling, venting, and conspiracy theories to name a few. Doomscrolling is less individual pathology and more about the affective conditions of life on the public screen today, the index of a fundamental tension or intensity undergirding all of the explicit activity. How we adapt will determine whether that tension leads to collapse, as Berardi predicts, or some as yet unforeseen alternative.

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CAPACIOUS

DOING TRAUMA WRONG

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ABSTRACT

This essay is a creative intervention into what it means to be traumatized. Drawing together memoir and theory, I make a case for working through sexual trauma in ways that go against the traditional 'shape' of what trauma is thought to be and how it should be responded to. 'Doing trauma wrong' makes space for trauma as affectively labile, and welcomes sensations that are often pathologized in clinical and therapeutic work—shame, anger, and feeling 'broken'. I argue this pathologizing is integral to an historical psychiatrizing and depoliticizing of trauma, which deflects from the reality of sexual violence as systemic. I also argue that the dominant idea of trauma as a catastrophic, discrete event occludes from view sexual violence as chronic and endured by survivors as a quiet horror. Putting these ideas into practice, the writing is intended as a self-help experiment, and as a sort of 'how-to' for trauma for others, without being instructive. By laying bare on the page some of the most haunting and shameful details of my past, I hope to encourage by way of affective resonance others to embrace, or at least feel less awkward about, the inconsistencies and oddities of their own experiences. Ultimately, I hope to reduce the imperative to a seemingly self-evident happiness—a journey which is framed by normative assumptions and thrust upon sexual violence survivors in a bid to help them 'get better.'

KEYWORDS

trauma, event, affect theory, memoir, sexual violence

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This essay is a self-help experiment, and it takes place through the act of writing itself. I use writing to disrupt what I call the 'shape' of trauma, which is a hard shape to fit into. Trauma is shaped by the explanatory assertions that work their way through clinical and theoretical literatures, narrating the when, where, and how (it *should* feel) of trauma, and describing characteristics thought to be common to all traumatic experience (see Caruth 1996, and Bessel van der Kolk, 2014). If you don't fit the narrative—the shape—then you're considered to be doing trauma wrong. You're misshapen.

Because of this, the shape of trauma becomes an imperative to suffer in the right way. In cultural and social registers, there are always ideas around what counts as big or small—what is acceptable to feel bad about. What counts as dragging things out. And there's a trajectory—a need to return to normalcy irrespective of the fact that 'normalcy' is something many bodies have never had access to anyway (Crimp 1989, 6). But not trying, or being seen to try, becomes synonymous with getting in the way of your own happiness (Ahmed 2014, 50).I am writing to remind myself that I don't have to lurch around trying to fit the shape of trauma. I make a case for 'doing trauma wrong'—feeling it out as a meandering train of sensations without conforming to symptoms or narratives. I focus particularly on shame, anger, and being 'broken,' which are feelings often pathologized. They are taken to be deviations from 'normalcy'—things that need to be worked through in order to 'heal' and 'get back on track.'

I make room for these feelings by using writing to perform trauma as ongoing and affectively labile, in real-time. I describe what I sense, as I sense it: anxiety, anger, expectation. These sensations are incomplete, but they have condensed enough for me to say 'that's something like it', and write it down. And they are unstable, because my writing—as with any performance—only has life "in the present" (Phelan 1993, 146). After that, they become something else, if only slightly. Lauren Berlant (2009, 132) writes that "we are always in the process of playing catch up" to things we've read, heard—to things we've written. The same is true of this writing—it's an attempt to catch up to sensations which can't be caught, but whose impact can be traced through words—trauma as non-linear, chaotic, and difficult to put your finger on.

Disrupting the shape of trauma in this way is political work, namely because it necessarily involves disrupting the narratives that determine what fits in, and what gets left out. With this writing, I make statements about what trauma is

not, but I don't claim to know what it *is.* That's the point. I want there to be space for abused bodies to find their own conditions of possibility—to navigate trauma in ways that are meaningful to them. I want there to be room for the specifics of trauma to be understood as a felt, embodied experience (Morrigan 2019, 1).

'Doing trauma wrong,' isn't my concept, or at least, is not mine alone. There's a deep body of queer and critical race theory that I take as a point of departure, and which explores de-pathologizing trauma in relation to how it engages with Freud's vision of melancholia—which is as a profound mourning that marks bodies as absorptive and self-indulgent, unable to turn away from the source of misery (Crimp 1989, 6). Writing on living daily with the AIDS crisis, Douglas Crimp describes this in the context of public mournings of the dead—seen by AIDS activists as defeatist and sentimental. Pitched against a backdrop of public "ruthless interference with…bereavement"—a violence of both omission and silence—melancholia is constructed as a hapless, hopeless response to the crisis (Crimp 1989, 9; Cvetkovich 2003, 5). No struggle, no fight: just yielding misery.

But there's potential for melancholia, or trauma, to be a productive rather than destructive force (Muñoz, 1999, 74). It can be what David Eng and Shinhee Han (2000, describe as "conflict rather than damage" (693). In this way, "mourning *becomes* militancy"—action taken to produce new kinds of intimacies and experiences (Crimp 1989, 9). Trauma is a very singular reality, so 'doing trauma wrong' can be any sort of 'doing' that breaks from the sanctions of what's acceptable to grieve or feel angry about, and how to go about it. Negotiating existence without aligning to 'normalcy' can, therefore, relieve the passive 'victim' status. And there's space to recognize that trauma extends beyond the ordinary repertoire of negative affects, too. There's the perverse and marginal, embarrassing, unexpected, and awkward pleasures and repulsions—all are included in the erratic terrain that makes up sites of and responses to trauma.

Writing, then, isn't about documenting either helpless damage or heroic recovery from trauma—it's an experimentation with, and building of, a strange and unpredictable world. I draw a lot from Kathleen Stewart and her approach she calls "compositional worlding" (2011,4). Words that make worlds. Trauma is a world, and it comes into being as it is sensed. Writing helps me give trauma some breathing space so I can attend to it as an uninterrupted stream of something-ness, rather than a decided list of this or that. Both Stewart's 2007 text *Ordinary Affects* and her recent collaboration with Lauren Berlant *The Hundreds* are expressions of this worlding—an exercise in "following out the impact of things" (2019, x).

Presented as short anecdotes, scenes, and happenings that are seemingly as fractured as they are connected, the writing in both texts steadily usurps the idea of underlying or symbolic meaning and focuses on building intensity. When I write about trauma, I also don't ascribe it any meaning—for me, there's no theatre of the unconscious—but I do think it can be followed and traced with words, mapping out sensations. When you feel something, it's easy to step over the affective stuff in a rush to point fingers at what you think the meaning might be. You give the feeling frames of reference to help you get there more quickly: What did I do last time I felt like this? What did so-and-so say that I should do to make it better? There's nothing wrong with doing those things, but there's a lot to be said for slowing down a little so you can feel out the texture and density of sensations in their own right. Stewart (2011, 4) calls this a "sideways step"—a pause to take in the sense that something is happening without trying to narrate it too firmly.

Trying to do this with writing isn't so easy. It's impossible to truly tell trauma before it becomes after the fact—but that doesn't mean there's no point in trying. When experimenting with writing styles I lean heavily on the Beckettian tic in Eimear McBride's writing—where words erupt with such immediacy that the trauma of the protagonist seems to be written as it takes place. The violence in McBride's *A Girl Is a Half-formed Thing* is hurried, frank, direct, and disjointed. It's a style I have embraced and followed along with Ann Cvetkovich's thoughts on memoir as a technique of process-based writing. For Cvetkovich (2012, 77), the "rough edges" of memoir writing can be disruptive of the usual continuous style of academic writing, with its "careful transitions" and "literary polish" that restrict how complex topics like trauma can be engaged with. The ends, it seems, don't necessarily have to meet.

Writing in this style is important for navigating, or following, trauma in a way to try and catch it (as much as is possible) red-handed. All too often, there's someone who's looking to speak for how you're feeling—who seems to *know* what trauma is and how it should be spoken or written. What you sense might be a dryness, or an ambivalence, a twitch, but there's a point at which the opportunity to simply feel it through gets taken away. It gets given a name, and gets squared up into a narrative that's been heard before. It quickly gets folded into something like a sideways glance or a dismissive gesture.

I've often had trauma repeated back to me as a sigh. A fed up sigh. A pitying sigh. A sigh down the end of the phone: why don't you *just* do this? Why don't you *just* do that? Exasperation. *Why didn't you just leave?* As if those logics are self-evident.

The following short memoir-moments are meant to upset those logics and offer some relief. Relief here is a release from pressure, but it's also a different topography. What I write brings some things up and holds others down. One of the things that comes up is how much the trauma of my mum's death pokes through when trying to work through my sexual trauma. Mum died of cancer a few weeks before my 18th birthday, and she got sick when I was 15—just before I went through about a year of sexual abuse by a man who was much older than me, and who liked plying the teenagers of my village with drugs and booze.

Those years are particularly shadowy for me, but at the time I didn't seem to care. I'm not sure how long it took me to cry about Mum's death, but it was a while. I remember sitting down with a photo of her and trying to get myself to cry. I remember being really drunk and loud and rude at the wake. My family was furious, understandably. However, they also didn't have the full picture of what was going on. Sometimes, I think they're still furious. I feel like I've grown up a detestable body as a result. The shame I feel is a dirt that I can't wash off, and that everyone can see. It makes me acutely aware of my own skin, like everyone knows that each imperfection is my fault.

Trauma is made up of searing pitches and deep recesses. My ambivalence and rudeness demonstrates that, and it shows how trauma unfolds unevenly in complex atmospheres. It doesn't necessarily play out how you might think—grief might simply evaporate, or it might sit at the pit of your stomach for years. You might backtrack, hesitate. And shame, partly fed by these inconsistencies, is not at all alien to me or other sexual violence survivors. As such, it seems only appropriate to include my shame when writing the ongoing-ness of my trauma. Following Eve Sedgwick, I think of shame as an affect of proximity—one that is both personal and social (2003). It's uncomfortable—like brushing a sensitive tooth, it winces right through you. It's also about being visible—a spectacle—which in turn generates introspection. To feel shame is to be self-aware and socially receptive: you're looking at yourself at the same time as looking at everyone else. That connection is inseparable.

When Elspeth Probyn talks about writing shame, she describes it as an exposure before others that triggers a sense of commonality (2005, 96). It's prickly, like being under a hot spotlight. My shame, then, is what connects this essay to my readers. If you feel discomfort by reading my shame—that's the connection. You can read the writing with blushed cheeks and sweaty palms, and confront all of the twists and turns of trauma alongside me. The result is a performative intervention into what it means to be traumatized.

> The man would always tell me I smelled like sex
>
> I wasn't really sure what sex smelled like and he told me to use a douche. There are very few things in this world that feel as unnatural as irrigating your own vagina
>
> Having semen dribbling down the inside of your thigh is an awkward experience. Sometimes it happens straight afterwards when you go to the toilet. That's OK I guess. But sometimes it happens an hour or so later when you've re-dressed and are going about your day
>
> does it shoot up further sometimes?
>
> I don't know. I remember thinking it felt like the man was still inside me
>
> my stupid body
>
> you smell like sex

One of the things about being detestable is having detestable viewpoints. Writing my shame means I can bring myself to talk about them. A detestable viewpoint I have is how angry I often feel towards men. This viewpoint, however, comes with a disclaimer. Following Stewart, power isn't something that exists on its own terms—it's not something that someone owns, or something they can hold on to or have the authority to pass on (2007, 1-7). It's true that sexual violence is largely perpetuated by male bodies, but it is not true to say that male bodies are the owners and distributors of that power. Named structural forces (sexism, racism, neoliberalism) are definitely real and very pressing, but we need to be careful not to make it sound as though they have always existed—with or without us (Stewart 2007, 1). So 'men' are not powerful in that way. I truly believe this.

But sometimes I struggle to inhabit the idea. Because, when I tell a story about sexual trauma, I tell a story about men who have hurt me. Not just the man who abused me—my very own Humbert Humbert—but the surrounding men (boys) who goaded, belittled, and bullied me. And then there's the man who grabbed my vagina on the bus home from school. And there's the man who tried to kiss me when I was 14. Who I'm still too ashamed to name publicly because I'm scared of the fallout. And there's the man I dated who ended up on the register—acquitted of raping his 12 year old student. Acquitted, not charged, because she'd sent 'suggestive' text messages. And then there's the man who targeted me in a university lecture. And the man who dismissed my subsequent complaint because the man who had targeted me was a lecturer who was "going up in the world, so do you really want to take this further?"

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And there's the men who have hurt my friends. Boyfriends who have raped them. Brothers who have raped them. Fathers who have raped them. In short, it can be really hard *not* to think of men as a totalized object of power that is out to get me. That's how I end up feeling full of anger.

It is difficult to fully explore this level of anger because the shape of trauma minimizes conversations about it. A good friend said to me not long ago that "the need to appear to have your shit together just so you come across as legitimate is draining." There's not much room for anger when you're trying to be heard and recognized as valid. It also doesn't help that cultural, social, and legal spaces often overlook the chronic sites of trauma, like sexual and domestic violence, which are the ones that generate so much survivor-anger (Cvetkovich 2003, 4). Violence is often made out to be some sort of external force despite the fact that, for many, violence is something that sleeps next to them every night.

Pathologizing trauma is a way of skirting around the persistence of systemic violence. It becomes a problem-requires-treatment formula that makes you feel like *you're* the problem. In recent years I've felt pressured to identify the things that 'felt bad' in order to figure out how to get 'back on track'. The need to 'get over' the loss experienced following sexual violence is synonymous with the assumption that everything is alright, usually. It frames rape as an individual problem—violence as an anomalous hiccup in an otherwise harmonious world. This is much like, as Eng and Han (2000, 671) write, the perceived inability of American Asians to 'get over' their depressive position of needing to be seen to assimilate with the American "melting pot" despite being them also being consistently figured as eccentric and pathological to the nation. The lack of blending in with the whole isn't their individual failure—it's a "socially determined interdiction" (Eng and Han 2000, 671).

As long as you just *get along*, things will be alright—we're told. But *getting along* means not getting in the way of the world as a scene that's alright, usually. *Getting along* means coping with consistent questioning of your credibility, and overlooking persistent, insidious violence. Those who get in the way of *getting along*, Sara Ahmed (2014, 154) writes, "are often judged as 'getting in their own way.'" Because of this framing, I've always found the conversation of recovery to be pretty contrived—how would I know when I had recovered? Figuring my body as unusual (derailed from 'the track') is inescapably pathological. It's right in identifying that sexual violence is a really shitty thing to have gone through, but it's unhelpful because it sets me apart from others. It others me.

When I was a little shit, which was always, I would scream and cry and generally be

difficult

I thought I was the only one this was happening to

Mum's hand would reach back from the steering wheel to grip my kick

Such a little shit. The radio sang

Turning fifteen was my grand peak of being a shit, all braces and makeup caked. Melting in the heat of that final school year summer

I hadn't done well in my exams. I hated school. I was avoided on the bus and no one wanted to fuck me. The most I'd had was a lame fingering at the back of a school disco which, on reflection, had felt like a smear test. It didn't feel like much of a triumph once I was

sent out into the world alone

I found other kids to hang out with in my village. They were shits too and I belonged. My parents gave up on me and I retreated to the curbs the woods the

church steps where we'd sit and smoke and sniff

I never had to go home for dinner again

One of the kids I was very close to. We always said we had a connection. He had a lot going on in his life. He'd grown up in South Africa. He told me how he remembered the end of apartheid and its stretching shadow

He told me a lot about right and wrong and the ways that people should be and I listened for most of it. His mother was always drinking wine and called me darling

And his father was

one night it was really bad. I remember laughing when my friend punched the mirror

At home, Mum got sick with cancer. I didn't feel much as it was explained to me. Bowel cancer was one of the better ones to have they said and so I wasn't worried. I told my friend. We had a few tins and a smoke

We were sitting under the lights at the local shop when we met the man

there were six of us

we didn't notice him when he approached

we didn't tend to notice people

An enormous amount of censoring and deflecting takes place in conversations (or non-conversations) with family and friends, and certain practices, ideas, and feelings start to get erased. Often, there's an imperative for survivors to match up with an impossible innocence—their own personality and sexuality need to be sanitized, with no murky secrets to tell. I have a small sisterhood of survivors of sexual violence, and we've each been galvanized by our experiences in different ways. Our styles of doing trauma vary wildly. We use our bodies to connect with environments around us in ways that feel comfortable. From being hyper-tactile and with a torrid sexuality, to being nervous of contact—we have different impulses, tendencies, and fantasies.

Trauma is something that is often quietly endured with persistence, which can feel lethargic and draining, rather than shocking and horrifying. That's not, however, the same as saying sexual trauma isn't awful. My point is that awfulness doesn't have to equate with catastrophe, if catastrophe is defined as something that is sudden and acute. It can be sharp, or it can be dull and drawn out. It is, as Lauren Berlant (2011, 10) describes it, "embedded in the ordinary"—a continuous struggle rather than an exceptional event.

One of my sisterhood is an incest survivor and we have talked a lot about this anti-climactic dullness, and the dullness that's also involved in feeling 'broken'. She talked about how 'brokenness' guides her daily and long-term choices about the direction in which she wants her life to go. It made me wonder if committing to being broken can be used, like anger, to do trauma wrong—or rather, to work through it without pathologizing the stuff that doesn't fit into the traditional shape. Working with being broken doesn't have to be the same as celebrating being broken. What I'm saying is it might be possible to *do* the brokenness instead of cover it up, and to welcome that bad taste in your mouth.

To put it in to perspective—it is the imperative to 'be happy' (or 'be less broken') that's made me really miserable. I've gone through various toxic patterns of thinking, and been desperate for a rewind button (to go back and make 'better' choices, do 'better' at school, be nicer to my parents) so I might have arrived at this point in my life 'happier'. But happiness, like trauma, is also shaped. Claims to happiness, Sara Ahmed (2010) describes, are also claims to knowing in advance what happiness looks like. The 'right' happiness is about following the 'right' path—turning towards certain ways of living, and turning away from others (Ahmed 2010, 9-11). It's an instruction of normativity. Brokenness, anger, and shame wouldn't fit in here, because they are thought of as things that create unhappiness.

Claims to happiness are also claims to moving forward. And forwardness—like happiness—is thought to be self-evident. Which way is forward? It's oddly specific and vague at the same time—*a step in the right direction*. Themes of direction and forward movement are important because they have a lot to do with how trauma gets prescribed, and they are really hard work to keep up with. Survivors of sexual violence are marked as unhappy, and thought of as needing to move forward. But they're also required to choose the right forward to get to the right kind of happy. It's an instruction—*for the sake of your health*—that can leave you stumbling around, trying to find happiness only to discover there's a false crescent. It can be a teeth-grinding, sleep-stealing, cruelly optimistic anxiety. Which is pretty ironic, given the idea that 'healing' is supposed to mean you ultimately feel better.

To reduce this anxiety, I want to take the 'not normal' or 'unhappy' of trauma and turn them from pathology to possibility. Rather than searching around for an indeterminate happiness, I want to take the time to consider how the weight of trauma is carried differently—as a felt experience that's not easily located temporally or spatially. And I want to think about navigating trauma without being told which way to go. Anger, shame, and brokenness, I argue, can be productive. Part of the de-politicizing of sexual trauma involves working to deflect those feelings, because they're seen as chronic, persistent misery. But to return to Muñoz's thoughts on melancholia as productive, the suffering following sexual violence is actually part and parcel of negotiating survival. It is what Muñoz (1999, 74) describes as "a structure of feeling"—an everyday process of coping with all of the horrors of different oppressions. And not only coping, but acting. Far from a "self-absorbed mood that inhibits activism," trauma can be a way of making and keeping visible the world as a scene that's *not* alright, usually (Muñoz 1999, 74). It is an act of being willful—of refusing to *get along.*

By way of closing, I suggest that being angry is one of the best ways of doing trauma wrong. It is a way of pushing against the shape of trauma and disrupting its pathologies. The caveat is that you'll quickly become what Sara Ahmed calls a feminist killjoy, but that's not a bad thing. Feminist killjoys disagree with things that others seem to think are O.K. (Ahmed 2014, 152). They're the kind of individuals that will call out a sexist joke at the dinner table—ruining the atmosphere for everyone. Because they don't laugh along, they turn away from happiness. They *must* be unhappy.

In the context of sexual trauma, the feminist killjoy attaches herself to things that are thought to be bad for her. She does trauma wrong because she isn't aspiring to fit its shape—to grieve appropriately and to get on the road to recovery. Recovery, for her, is about staying with the brokenness and feeling around the rough edges of anger and shame. It is a strategy for re-claiming trauma—for understanding it as something that can't be characterized or universalized. It is a resistance against determined states of what it means to be traumatized, so that an individual path can be navigated. Like singing off-key, it puts you out of tune with others. You might ruin the tune, but that's okay. Ruining tunes means things have to be heard differently.

They always said that I should go in there first

Make it sound casual. Make it sound like we're not with you. Make it sound like you want to see him

the room had wooden floors and deep red walls

Evenings at the man's house were kind of nice. There was red wine and Leffe beer flowing. And chatter and Cheech and Chong on the telly which I never thought was any good. But I'd get a meal. There was a hot tub. My friends were there. I was happy

they never asked why I often stayed later than they did

And I never asked why they left me behind

One New Year's Eve we were all high on mushrooms and ketamine. Left the man conked out on his sofa and legged it with some tins. The fireworks crackled their colours and we laughed and poked each other's faces.

the night yawned but it never ended

not really

When Mum died I was late. She was putting it on I was sure of it. She'd open her eyes soon, they said they'd only been open a few minutes before. She can't have been that bad surely

But they

didn't open

I wonder if it's because she didn't want to look at me. I went home and had a bath

I didn't even wait for her to die

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Seven garden plants, including two orchids: flowering stems and floral segments
coloured etching, c. 1835, William Curtis (1746-1799)
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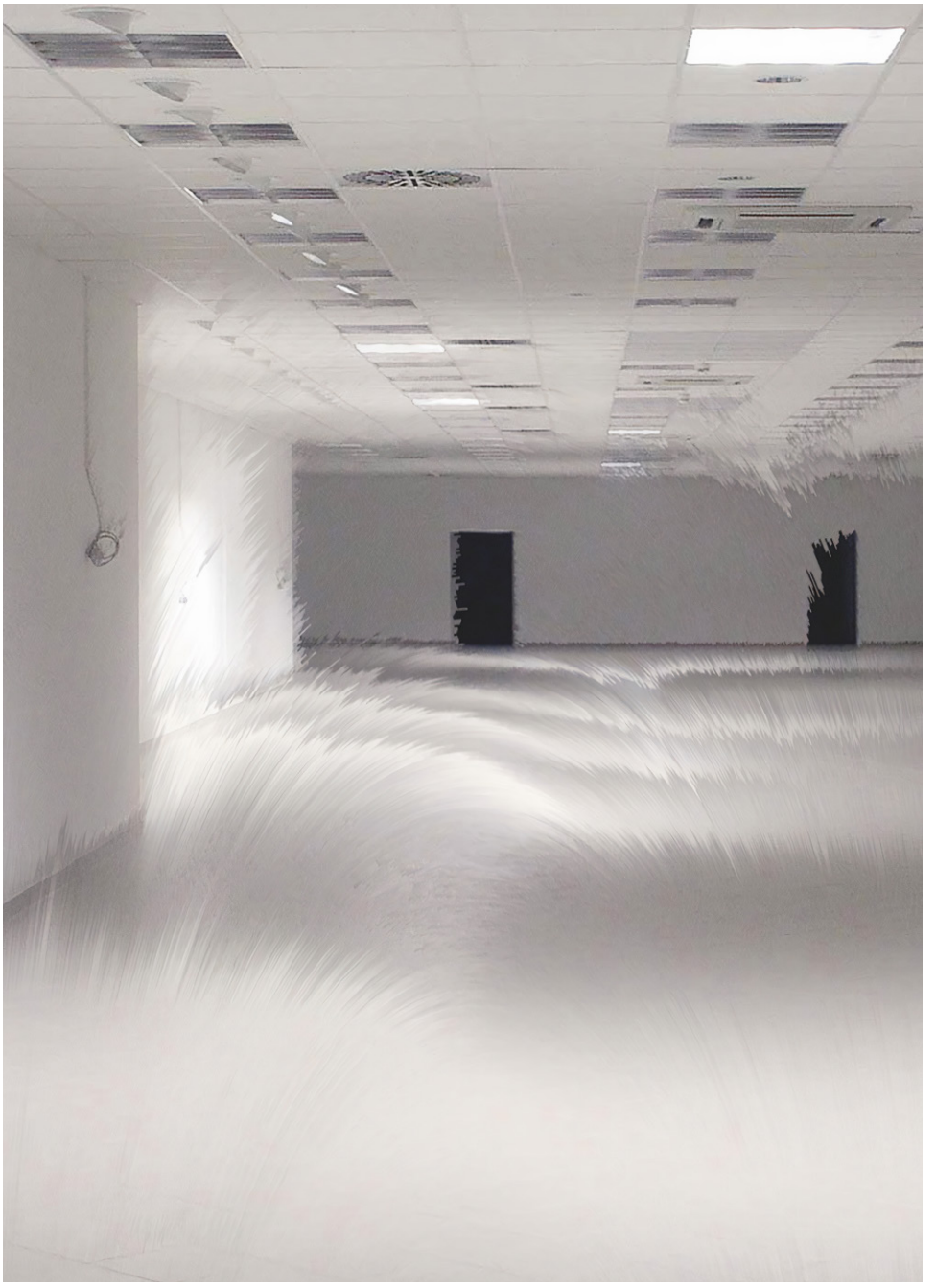

renovated_light_shadow_white, unknown, 2017

ROOM TONE

Joey Orr
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The sound of someone's breathing has become noticeable. It's not labored or erratic, but we are all standing close together without speaking and have been for more than a minute now, if I'm gauging time correctly. As the sound drifts out of focus, I shift my weight from my right foot to my left. I don't need to do this, but I do. Someone in front of me looks across the studio at something, then abruptly at something else. There's nothing special to notice where she's looking. Just the room where we've all been standing since the interview first started over an hour ago. Although in some ways the glances are connected to my shifting stance after I noticed someone breathing, these subtle gestures do not form a causal chain. They are interchanges of sorts, but not conversations exactly. They are both the conduits and artifacts of our co-presence, the inhabiting of our spatial coincidence. When we disperse, these low-level connections that mostly exist under the surface of consciousness will release, like the gentle untangling of tentacles in a submarine river, lightly touching and sending impulses to others moving into, out of, or otherwise occupying our spaces.

To my right is the artist I've been interviewing. When being recorded, studio visits are less ambulatory and try to get directly at what's critical or central to the work. People can feel very closely connected based on such truncated and impactful exchanges. But I wonder how much time we've actually spent together

if we added up all of the hours we've talked about his practice and the possibilities of working together. Days? Weeks? A month of hours? Is that possible? My colleague, whom I have worked with for years, is bent over the recording equipment. Can it require that degree of focus while we're just recording sound? He seems suddenly unfamiliar to me. I rub my eyes.

Traveling for weeks conducting studio visits and interviews for an upcoming exhibition, we had almost finished shooting the last interview, but there remained one more thing to record. So, my colleague announced, "Just going to get some room tone, now." This is a signal for everyone to be still and quiet so we can record the sound of the room. If we need to add content later or pause a voice-over while rolling video when we edit the interview, we need the same background noise from the original shoot to make every cut in the interview sound seamless. Without the sound of the original location of recording, the cuts and pauses will sound like dead air or a failure of the equipment in the final cut. So, we take a sample of the sound of the room.

It is best to have the microphones exactly where they were during most of the interview, so that the sounds of the space of the interview correspond as closely to the room tone as possible. It is also best if everyone is still present, so it is a great equalizer among the various forms of labor going on. For thirty seconds to a couple of minutes then, we all just stand or sit, more or less where we had been for the last hour or so, without speaking, while room tone is recorded. This can feel awkward, especially if the ritual is unexpected and unknown to anyone present for the shoot. The short recording of silence rarely feels short or silent.

While busily engaged in barely perceptible exchanges, each of us is absorbing a certain amount of the ambient sounds bouncing around the room, whether produced by the world outside or the building itself. Whatever is or is not happening, that moment is filled with relation, and the tone is not possible without the contours that are producing it. Like an aural fingerprint, it is an audio index not only of the room, but of our presence in the room. In fact, 'presence' is another name for it.

Breathing and other elusive signals of our presence, which can also include the emergence and disappearance of thoughts and feelings, are low-level sensations that can be exchanged with other people at varying levels of consciousness. Think

of occupying a small elevator with someone else when no one is speaking. A lot of things happen then. When you drink coffee and read the newspaper or surf the Internet with someone you are close to, you are only intermittently conscious of your behaviors and how they are impacting one another. Yet, when you speak, a context has been established. The ongoing exchange of these vitality affects creates a baseline that subtly maintains a connection with others in the present moment. It establishes a shared continuum around which more emphatic actions or emotions can register at the level of consciousness when they occur. Though largely unnoticed, we generate a kind of white noise when we are with others. It can take the form of a fleeting sound as likely as a fluctuating sensation.

Acoustic ecologist Gordon Hempton understands that silence is teeming with information. He says, "Silence is a sound, many, many sounds" (Hempton and Grossman 2010, 2). Psychoanalytic theorist and psychiatrist Daniel N. Stern knew something similar about the now-ness of the present moment. In a series of interviews, he asked people to recount something mundane, like their breakfast that day. Discrete thoughts or events were experienced as seconds-long periods of time before the onset of another string of thoughts or challenges. Stern and his interviewees would graph the sensations, thoughts, memories, and feelings in a present moment, and these ended up looking like "a symphonic musical score with many things going on simultaneously" (Stern 2004, 10). Although our present moments are commonplace and last only several seconds, they can be filled with activity (Stern 2004).

If this all sounds humdrum, it is. But we each have individual styles for dealing with these fluctuating intensities, and our affective dialects are how we establish and negotiate meaning with others. To quote Annie Dillard, "How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives. What we do with this hour, and that one, is what we are doing" (1989, 32). In this instance, however, the comparison is scaled down to its smallest interval. How we exist with each other in the always-emergent-seconds of the present moment is how we build and maintain attachments that enable us to establish mutuality with others. Our lived human experience might be considered an accretion or amplification of these micro-moments.

The recording of room tone is one of the rare instances when such experiences are intentionally and systematically documented. Of course, it was not created for the purpose of making an audio record of something as elusive as the exchange of vitality affects. When editing recordings of people's grunts and stutters and pauses into more coherent articulations, it helps smooth out the editorial cuts. The video might work without it: if you cover with the right music, for example.

But ambient sound, composed or documented, does what vitality affects do. It is a threshold around which all other actions and statements cohere. Even though it takes the form of a brief moment of silence, the expression of background togetherness gives all other interactions their meaning. This recorded present moment, like all present moments, is both fleeting and all that exists, both elusive and pervasive. Although this present moment is mundane and abbreviated, it builds relation and so is finally constitutional (Stern, 2000 and Widlöcher, 2002).

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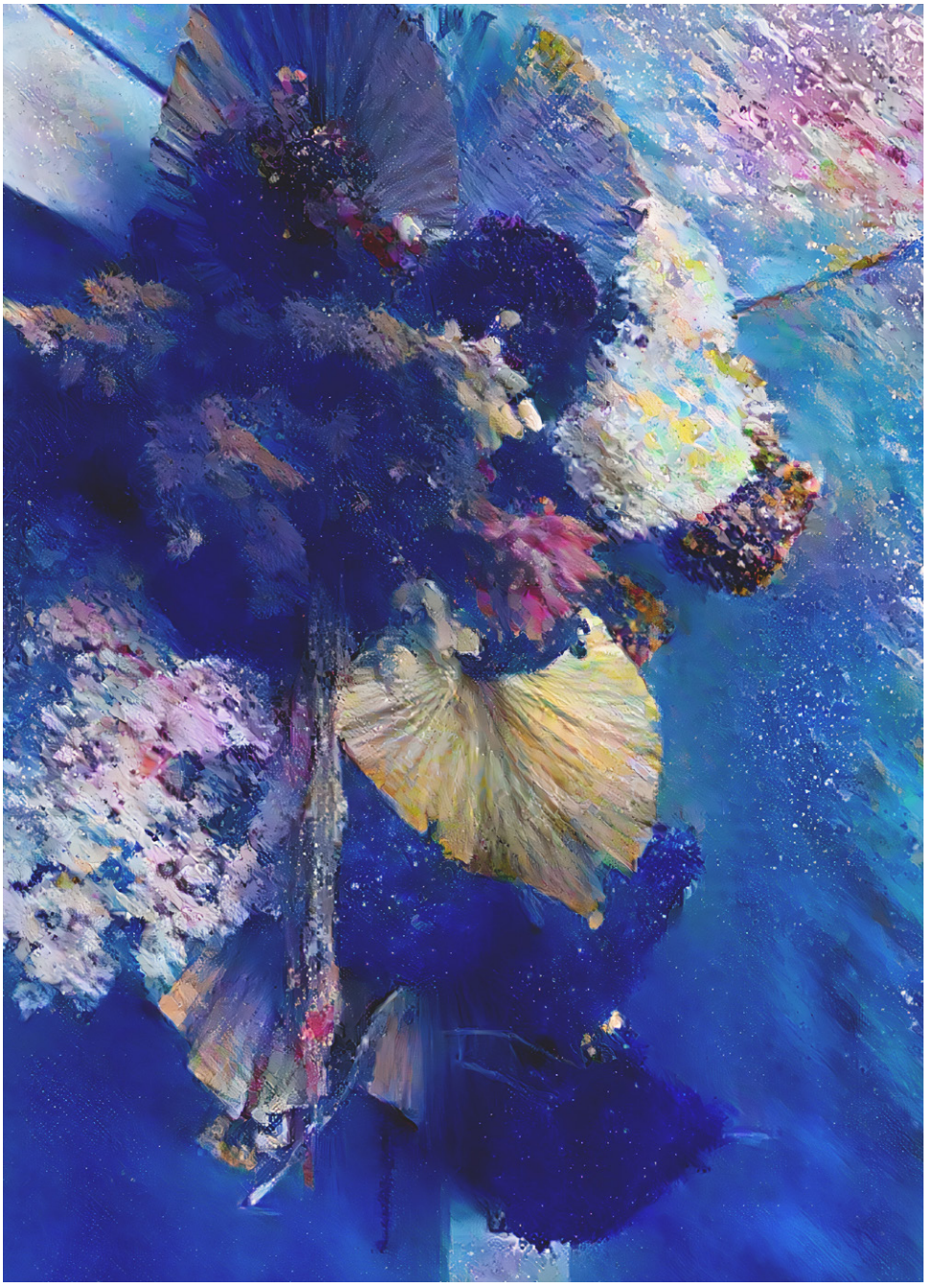
Two plants (Onoseris species): flowering stems and floral segments, coloured lithograph, unknown, nd. Public domain



Neural style transfer: *Say It!*, Cassandra Miller, 2019 × *Decorative Flowers,* Jannet Serhan, 2020

CAPACIOUS

ACCESSING BLUE IN MAGGIE NELSON'S BLUETS

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How can one simultaneously desire and fear a color? Moreover, how can this color function as an affect in a text that is completely devoid of images? These questions are central to Maggie Nelson's 2009 hybrid book *Bluets*, which focuses on tracing her relationship with and search for the color blue both physically and emotionally. Blue's function as an affect in *Bluets* proves just as ambivalent as the role it plays in Nelson's life, its significance two-fold: for Nelson herself, as well as for its ability to entice the reader, who experiences the entirety of blue's multifaceted nature second-hand through Nelson's autotheoretical narrative. *Bluets* is thus a visually non-visual text, one that, perhaps problematically, decenters the idea that we need to physically see something in order to be affected by it. Nelson takes on the challenge of transmitting the affect of blue using words instead of images, a challenge that she does not quite live up to. This is due, in part, to the potential familiarity that readers may have with the few works of art that Nelson references, and even if that is not the case, the temptation to look them up online to correlate text and image looms over the text of *Bluets*. By relying only on vague descriptions of blue objects, spaces, and artworks, Nelson's text reveals that blue is not merely an attribute of a physical object. Rather, blue also exists as a dematerialized entity, capable of invoking adoration and repulsion in equal measure.

While Nelson broadly classifies her relationship with blue as a form of love, her usage of the term subverts the conventionally positive connotation we attach to the word. For Nelson, 'love' encapsulates the two seemingly contradictory states of yearning and dread that blue invokes and marks an attempt at beginning to understand the *consequences* of the sensations that blue evokes in us. By identifying not only the struggle to accurately name these sensations but also to navigate them, Nelson's blue functions as a form of Lauren Berlant's (2018) "genre flailing," as an instance "when one's defenses are made manifestly insecure by an uncontrollable disturbance in the object's stability" (157). Nelson situates a moment that can be read as the embodiment of "genre flailing" at the beginning of the text. Here Nelson describes standing "in front of a little pile of powdered ultramarine pigment in a glass cup at a museum and [feeling] a stinging desire. But to do what? Liberate it? Purchase it? Ingest it?" (2009, 3). The reader is already shown the limits of language in moments of overwhelming bodily experience. For Nelson, blue cannot be flattened into a single reading. It is a color that demands to be "read with" (Berlant 2018), that we trace the evolution in how we respond to blue,

Figure 1. Pablo, P. (1901). *The Blue Room*. [Oil on Canvas]. Washington, DC: The Phillips Collection.

acknowledging each shift from a positive to a negative response. We can perhaps best come to understand and even appreciate blue's function in a broader social and cultural context after reflecting on how blue functions as an affect *for us*.

To "read with" blue means to acknowledge that it is more than merely a color, that our conventional perception of blue—as a primarily visual "entity" located within a range of shades we have come to accept as blue—can be expanded to include an ethereal "blueness," meaning experiences or moments in time that can be codified as "blue." Such an approach implies that blue has its own life force, "as if blue not only had a heart, but also a *mind*" (Nelson 2009, 42). It is therefore worth dwelling on a section from *Bluets* in which Nelson recalls how, in the years when she worked in an orange restaurant, she would dream of her dining room tinted a pale blue (2009, 43), for which Pablo Picasso's 1901 painting "The Blue Room" (Figure 1) forms a fitting visual counterpart. It is tempting, especially in the case of Picasso's painting, to see blue only as a physical characteristic of the room, yet such a literal reading refuses to acknowledge that both Nelson's and Picasso's rooms are "a *part* of the world […] but at the same time […] *apart* from [it]" (O'Sullivan 2001, 125). In an enclosed, predominantly blue space, the color functions differently than it does when it is small and contained, serving as the object of adoration and desire (as, above, when marvelling at a pile of ultramarine pigment). The blue of Nelson's and Picasso's rooms expands outwards and takes over the space. In these two rooms, blue's affective function can become overbearing and even parasitic. In doing so, the colour infects the space with a variety of connotations that vary depending on the viewer's own relationship with the colour. Thus, the blue of *The Blue Room* may come across as depressing and claustrophobic or cluttered, as sexual, or as spiritual. If read in tandem with the contorted female body that stands in its centre, with its yellow and green pigments that recall a bruise in the process of healing, Picasso's blue can even invoke the blueness of death seen in a corpse. When we engage with blue as an ethereal "blueness," we are no longer simply seeing blue but rather looking *past* it, allowing it to "ruin our stable sense of ourselves, cutting under the complacent surface of what we know and starting to chafe against what we feel" (Elkins 2001, 168). Only when we have successfully freed blue from the constraints of form can we acknowledge its ability to, at times quite literally, tint certain memories or associations with itself, to dominate over its own materiality as well as over ourselves.

Figure 2. Komar, V. and Melamid, A. (c. 1995-1997). *China: Most Wanted Painting*. [Medium unknown]. Beacon, NY: Dia Art Foundation.

From filing away a personal memory in a frame of a hazy shade of blue to the increasing popularity of describing one's feelings as "blue" in a variety of languages, blue toes the line between personal and collective. Blue's complex history of meaning—blue went from being associated with evil and the Antichrist to being imbued with holiness as the color of Mary—rivals its ambivalent affective power. This fluid transition across a spectrum of meanings plays into Eric Shouse's (2005) observation that, while "feelings are personal and biographical, emotions are social, and affects are prepersonal"(n.p.). It is the ease with which affects can be transmitted that makes them "such a powerful social force" (Shouse 2005, n.p.). Blue's consistent presence is perhaps best exemplified by the "Most Wanted Painting" series, created by artists Vitaly Komar and Alex Melamid. After conducting a survey in fourteen countries—eleven in Europe plus China, Kenya, and the United States—as well as a separate survey for the web, Komar and Melamid found that, based on questions asked, "most [of the countries surveyed] wanted a blue landscape, with slight variances" (Nelson 2009, 61), such as whether one preferred indoor scenes or not. Then, they painted landscapes based on the survey results. The painting the artist duo created for China (Figure 2) is a stand-out due to how overwhelmingly blue it is, to the point where the familiar boundaries of landscape are overwritten, even erased. Komar and Melamid's "Most Wanted Painting" series suggests that, by seeking a landscape, individuals also

inevitably seek blue, which is arguably inescapable in this genre. Their project can easily be categorized as feeling, emotion, *and* affect, with the variation in the details speaking to individual feelings, the genre of the landscape commenting on the social appeal of the genre, while the need for blue draws on its inarguable quality of *je ne sais quoi* that captivates the collective imagination. Blue becomes overwhelming, like in the China painting, when a personal experience becomes a collective experience: the quality necessary for blue to be transformed into an affect, allowing it to bleed outside the boundaries of the individual and color the surrounding world.

The reader's participation in this "community of blue," which Nelson similarly fosters, is complicated by the fact that, despite dealing with a visual subject, *Bluets* purposefully lacks any illustrations. Initially, this may come across as an obstacle in transmitting blue's network of interwoven affects from Nelson to her reader. However, the decision to omit visuals is in keeping with Teresa Brennan's assertion that "the concept of the transmission of affect does not sit well with an emphasis on individualism, on sight, and cognition" (2004, 14). Visuals, especially mimetic ones, tempt one to identify what is being depicted, which results in the perception of blue as an extension of the physical form, preventing the viewer from experiencing blue on its own. This is akin to what Gilles Deleuze (1990) identifies as "sense," the fourth dimension of a proposition which Deleuze argues is "aliquid" because it is "incorporeal, complex, and irreducible" (19) and "inheres [and] subsists" rather than exists (21). Just as green for Deleuze is infinite, both a physical attribute of a tree as well as a way of indirectly conveying, through connotation, the various life processes that keep a tree alive as the "tree greens" (21), so should Nelson's "community of blue" be seen as an attempt to capture the spectrum of connotations that blue invokes. It is also an opportunity for the reader to abstract themselves—from Nelson's blues, from the blues of nature and the art world—and embark on a personal journey for an undiscovered blue that is unknown to the self rather than to the world at large.

Counter to Brennan, individualism is what facilitates the transmission of affect in some parts of the book, like the dream of a blue living room. As visualization is reflexive, an extension of what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003) calls "texture perception," it arguably causes us to think of blue associatively rather than literally, for even a literally blue living room has underlying spatial practices and personal habits at play. We are therefore proceeding in reverse through Brennan's (2004) definition of the transmission of affect as the process by which "[t]he 'atmosphere' or the environment literally gets into the individual" (1), since we are not creating a physical environment so much as we are creating a charged space,

the affective power of which depends more on our own relationship with blue and whether such a space would delight or horrify us than on our preferences for what to include in it. In other words, the example given by Brennan is akin to (affectively) "reading" the room by allowing the atmosphere to harmonize one's biographical affects with their surroundings. In Nelson's *Bluets*, the lack of visuals means that the affects Nelson conveys verbally to the reader are only a starting point, rather than a definitive verdict on how one should engage with a particular blue object or space.

The omission of images also means Nelson avoids the kind of obstacles that researcher David Katz ran into when asking test subjects to match a blue from memory, as described by Brian Massumi (2002) in his essay "Too-Blue: Color-Patch for an Expanded Empiricism." The problem in Katz experiment, according to Massumi – also revealed in *Bluets* – is the assumption that "[l]anguage […is] a medium of commonality in two senses" (208) while also overlooking the fact that the "remembering of a color is not effectively a reproduction of a perception, but a transformation or becoming of it" (210). As Massumi (2002) points out, the mind will conjure things differently regardless of how familiar it is with the object in question, since an accurate recreation of blue is out of the question due to the resulting "exaggeration" (210); the reader is freed from the burden of memory for the purposes of recreation and is instead given the opportunity to consider the process of creation that the color blue, in this case, facilitates, primarily in the form of associations and affects.

Nelson's decision to omit visuals also changes how we engage with the three works of art discussed in *Bluets*: Yves Klein's 1961 "Blue Monochrome," Joan Mitchell's 1973 "Les Bluets," and Komar and Melamid's "Most Wanted Painting" series (which, for the purpose of this paper, shall count as one). All three are likely known to readers who have a background in art history, or at least a keen interest in the subject. Even then, the fact that these works are experienced through Nelson's personal and informative recollections of them, rather than through iconographic descriptions, means that readers do not experience the blueness of these artworks first-hand. The technique of "reading with" veers dangerously into the territory of feelings. This proves especially problematic considering that it is this sort of engagement with art—an overwhelming sensorial, even bodily, encounter that "switch[es] our intensive register [and] reconnect[s] us with the world"—that Simon O'Sullivan (2001) argues we should seek, albeit not actively (128). In other words,

it would be paradoxical to deliberately go looking for a specific affect, since we can predict neither what might elicit a strong response from us nor what kind of affect(s) those will be. After all, O'Sullivan (2001) argues, "you cannot read affects, you can only experience them" (126). That is not to say that Nelson renders Berlant's technique of "reading-with" into a lateral and passive experience. *Bluets* does not provide readers with a script for how to feel about the artwork Nelson discusses, nor does the book discourage its reader from seeking out the art and experiencing it for themselves. Rather, there is a limit to Nelson's "reading-with" that results from the fact that *Bluets* is a recording of the author's own affective journey and relationship with blue, a limit that is compounded by the limitations of language. Providing her reader with a spectrum of responses to specific kinds of blue, Nelson denies the reader the closure that would come from simply seeing the image on the page and taking it for granted as proof of Nelson's affective experience. It is by seeking out the image for oneself that one steps onto the same trail of anticipation that Nelson has already walked and documented in *Bluets*.

There is certainly an element of the personal to experiencing art, especially when it comes to the 'love it/hate it' verdict at the end. Yet we will never know if we might have a strong sensorial, maybe even Stendhal-like, experience with a work of art unless we not only "[t]hrow [ourselves] into looking […] ready to accept whatever [we] see" (James Elkins 2001, 173) but are also provided with the opportunity to look. The experience of turning a corner in a gallery to then be confounded by a work hanging on the opposite wall is more similar to the experience of turning the page in a book and being captivated by an image than it may initially appear.

Both experiences are characterized by this very element of surprise that comes as much from seeing something one was not expecting as it does from seeing something for the first time. Unless you have already been to that gallery and know the layout of the institution, as well as which artworks are hung in which rooms, by heart, or unless you have already flipped through the book and therefore gotten a quick preview of which images to expect, the encounter with the artwork will be a form of ambushing. Even in art books with a specific topic—for example, Abstract Expressionism—the selection of images as well as their placement still has the chance of catching even the most knowledgeable reader off-guard, who may find themselves introduced to an unusual pairing of artworks that puts a familiar piece in a new light or feel the warm flame of curiosity ignite as they encounter a new work, with the potential that their relationship to the work will transform from delight to deep infatuation over time. While it is certainly possible to simply set the book aside and look up the three artworks, the encounter with the image

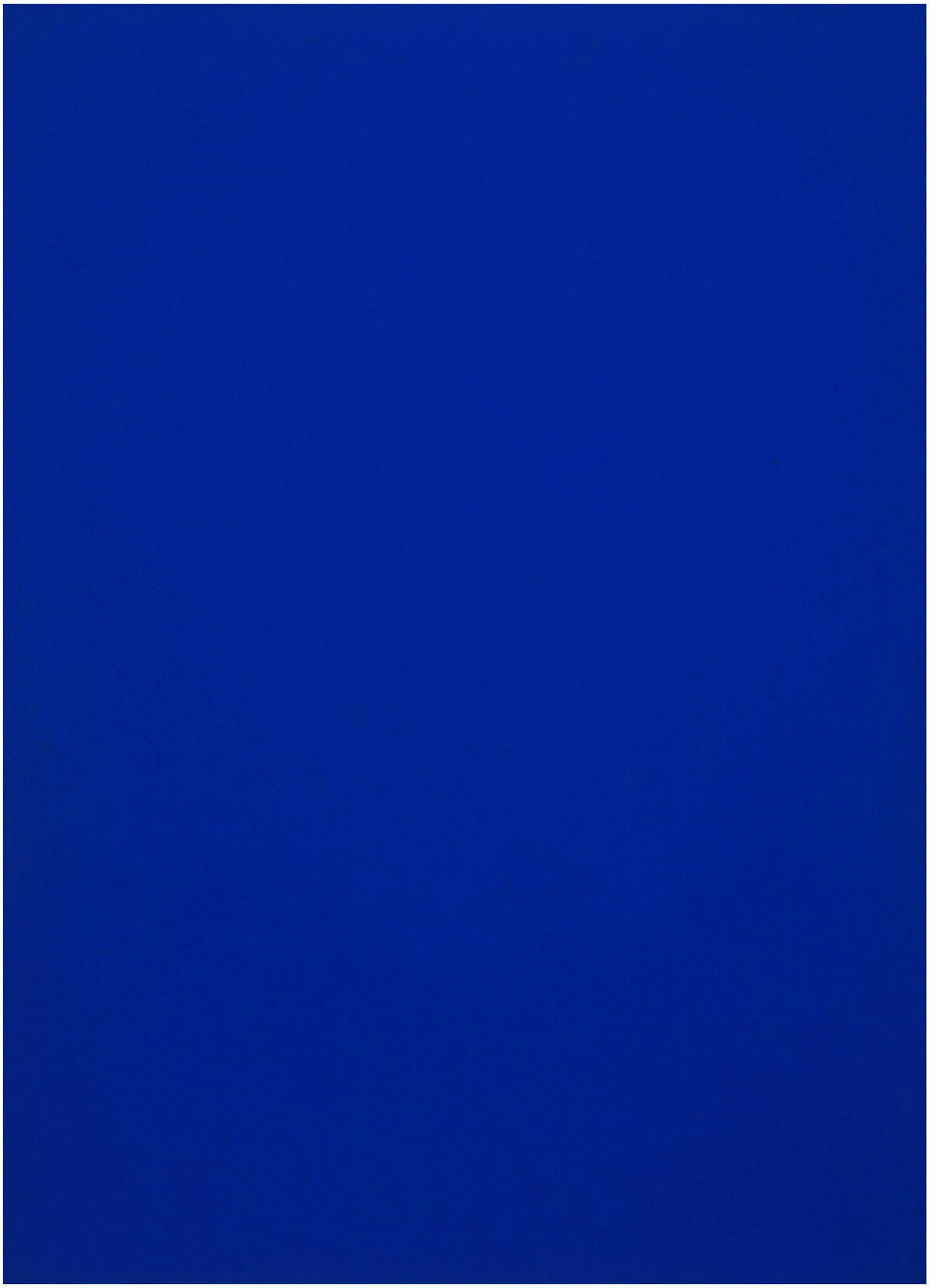

Figure 3. Klein, Y. (1961). *Blue Monochrome*. [Dry pigment in polyvinyl acetate on cotton over plywood]. New York City, NY: Museum of Modern Art.

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would lack the intimacy of seeing it revealed with the turn of the page, which is itself similar to turning the corner in a gallery and being unexpectedly caught off-guard by a work of art.

It is therefore fitting to end with Nelson's encounter with Yves Klein's infamous "Blue Monochrome" (Figure 3), which exemplifies not only blue's attractive-yet-repulsive power as an affect in both *Bluets* and the world more broadly, but also the challenge of transmitting affect through words rather than images. Nelson's observation that Klein's "blue radiate[d] out so hotly that it seemed to be touching, perhaps even hurting, my eyeballs," before concluding that the painting was "*too much*" (30), reaffirms Sedgwick's argument that "to touch is always already to reach out" (2003, 14). Unlike Nelson, who reaches out to the object directly, the reader is reaching out to the notoriety and air of myth that surrounds the painting, to its "texture," to use Sedgwick's term. The decision to omit visuals in *Bluets* should therefore be read as a way of forcing a separation between the physical and the affective, blue as an attribute and as something ethereal. Perhaps we should use Nelson's own words as guidance in this situation, for by pointing out that, "if blue is anything on this earth, it is *abundant*" (90), Nelson signals the need to move away from thinking of blue as something that can be accurately classified using numbers and letters like in a paint store, and towards an ever-changing, even omnipotent, blue.

Blue's function as an affect in Maggie Nelson's *Bluets* is multifaceted as it proves to be both a source of anxiety and a soothing reassurance: the illness and the cure simultaneously. However, it would be a disservice to the color's bountiful nature to suggest that it is primarily a source of affect for Nelson and that the reader has merely been given the privilege of insight into this complex network of feelings. In fact, blue functions differently for the reader, invoking the equally valid affects of mystery, awe, and curiosity. *Bluets* invites us to step into Nelson's position and experience blue first-hand, whether by looking at the same artworks or seeking out blue in everyday life. While Nelson has shared her own affective journey with us, to stop after reading *Bluets* without asking oneself, "Does blue have a similar kind of effect on me? If so, which shades of blue or which objects?" and then going out to search for these answers, is to settle for an understanding and appreciation of blue that has already been filtered through a personal narrative, through additional reflections and contemplations that have begun to refine blue from its rough, prepersonal state. It is only through experiencing blue directly—in part by seeing the artwork in *Bluets* for ourselves, whether in person or simply by looking them up, but also by going about our daily routines in the hopes that, one day, we might experience an event, an object, or a place that we cannot describe in any way other than as blue—that we can understand and appreciate Nelson's contradictory love affair with the color.

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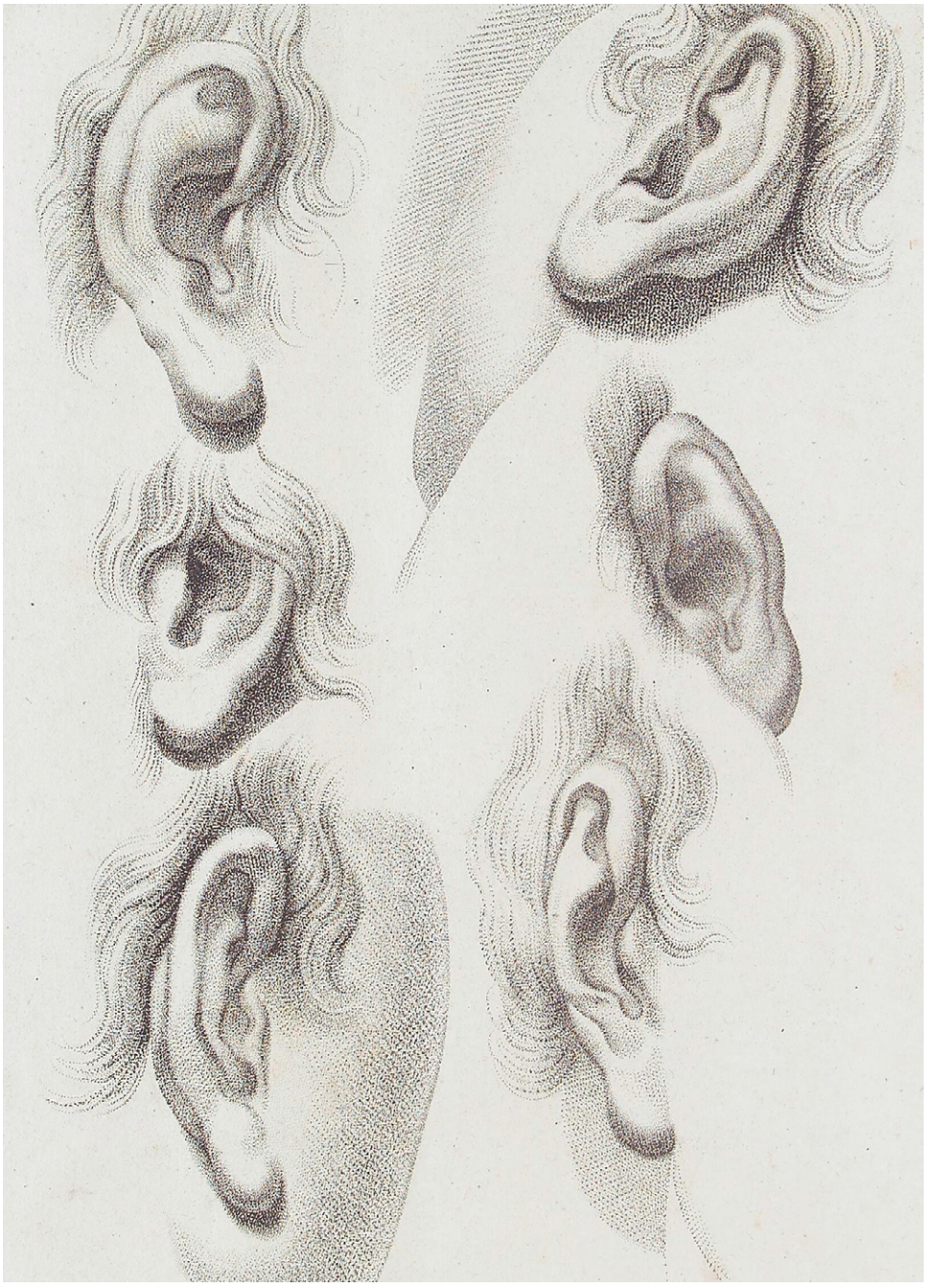
Wood sage (Teucrium scorodonia): flowering stems and floral segments,
pen and watercolour drawings, unknown, nd.
Public domain



Drawings of Ears in Cipriani's Rudiments of Drawing, 1786
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TINNITUS, EXCLUSION, RELATIONALITY (BEYOND NORMATE PHENOMENOLOGY)

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Introduction by Jonathan Sterne

Listening is one of the most fraught terms in sound studies, and it does more than its share of work in writing on affect as well. Endless taxonomies of listening proliferate; romantic stories of listening as the path to intersubjectivity (I'm looking at you, Jean-Luc Nancy!) are counteracted by horror stories of listening as a kind of aggression or dominance; claims for the universality of listening have been tempered by scholars in Deaf studies and disability studies, who have challenged the idea of any universal theory of a faculty.

In this wonderful dialogue, two leading thinkers on sound and affect consider the problem of tinnitus as a lived phenomenon, and as an intellectual problem that can advance our understandings of the politics of listening. Marie Thompson is one of my go-to writers in feminist sound studies. Her recent *Beyond Unwanted Sound* is a critique of aesthetic moralism that still exists in some corners of writing on sound—for instance, imbuing an inherent political effect (good or bad) to noise, as well as a preference for a certain pastoral model of ideal sonic culture. The book is also the closest thing I have found to a sound studies textbook that I would want to teach, even though it wasn't intended that way: it provides a grand

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tour of many of the canonical writers and examples used in the field. Marie's (and Annie Goh's) exchange with Christoph Cox in the journal *Parallax* is the fight sound studies needed to have about theories of materialism. With Annie Goh, she co-edited the sonic cyberfeminisms special issue of *Feminist Review.*

Mack Hagood's *Phantom Power* is the best podcast on the sonic arts and humanities you will find. And his recent book *Hush* is a wonderful study of "orphic" technologies, where people fight or modify sonic experiences with sound—"fighting sound with sound" (a brief disclaimer: *Hush* is in a book series I co-edit). But the long section on tinnitus is also a major challenge to theories of affect and disability: what defines suffering from tinnitus is not the volume of phantom sound in the ears, but the hearer's relationship to their own tinnitus. That is not to say suffering from tinnitus can be overcome simply by an attitude change—what Barbara Ehrenrich called the "smile or die" relationship to illness. Instead, it challenges us to understand affect beyond simple intention, in a truly relational frame, even when one is relating to oneself.

–*Jonathan Sterne* (sterneworks.org)

Dialogue

MT: Amongst our many shared interests is the complex auditory symptom of tinnitus. Both relatively common and diverse in its manifestations, tinnitus refers to the conscious perception of sound for which there is no external source. I'm currently working on an Arts and Humanities Research Council project called *Tinnitus, Auditory Knowledge and the Arts,* which explores how the arts might help mediate experiences of tinnitus and the diverse ways it affects people. The project stems from an interest in how the arts – as a set of creative practices interested in subjective, contextual, and affective experiences and encounters – might enrich but also diverge from medicalized understandings of tinnitus. It also seeks to depart from the rather limited artistic modes of expression that are often attached to tinnitus, and the problems of engagement that arise for audiences who themselves have tinnitus. Amongst other things, the standard auditory depiction of tinnitus as a sudden loud blast of high-pitched sound can be quite unpleasant for hearing people with tinnitus. We've been keen to emphasize that there's more to tinnitus than the ear and the sine wave.

As part of the project, we've commissioned two artists to develop new work for an exhibition on tinnitus. We're also hosting a series of online workshops for people with tinnitus, exploring how different arts activities involving drawing, writing, mapping and recording might be used to share different aspects and experiences of tinnitus. This project has also provided an opportunity to build upon some of my previous work on noise, affect, and aesthetic moralism; and to consider how tinnitus and other manifestations of 'auraldiversity' (to use John Drever's term) require a reassessment of some of the dominant tenets about sound and listening. I've recently written a short piece on how 'listening with tinnitus' can challenge normate philosophies of listening, which posit careful, relational and open listening as a virtuous ethico-political practice. While rarely recognized as such, these normate philosophies are grounded in an idealized and unimpaired listener: they have little to say of those whose listening shapes and is shaped by hearing impairment or disability. Listening with tinnitus, however, might offer a different perspective on listening, which calls into question this sensory idealism. For example, where normate philosophies of listening often revolve around a sonic capaciousness and connectivity, listening with tinnitus amplifies the importance of disconnection: it requires us to take seriously the need *not* to listen, or to listen selectively.

Mack, why have you been drawn to researching tinnitus? And what do you think is gained by thinking with tinnitus?

MH: Hi Marie, there is so much to dig into in what you've written here! I'll start by answering your question first, as I think the answer relates to several themes you've raised. I wouldn't say I was drawn to researching tinnitus so much as I'd say tinnitus has been my companion in all my work in sound. I don't remember a time before tinnitus. As a small child, I was stricken with the rather antebellum-sounding affliction of scarlet fever, which can affect the middle ear. One of my earliest memories is of a fever dream from that time, of ants running through my blood vessels, accompanied by roaring and ringing. I don't really know if that's where my tinnitus comes from, but throughout my childhood I thought tinnitus was just the sound of the blood rushing through my ears. So, perhaps I'm always "thinking with tinnitus," whether it's my object of study or not.

It's certainly entangled in my thinking on music and sonic arts. By my teenage years, I was playing in loud bands and enjoying live music, which brought out another tinnitus, another relation to it, and another frame for it. I imagine you're familiar with this from your own performance background, as well as your scholarship on noise music, a genre whose performers manipulate amplitude as affection. The affective dynamics of amplitude dynamics are so amazing, even

within a single subgenre. Dave Novak (2013) really hit me with his ethnographic exegesis of high volume in Japanese noise, while part of your book teased out the ASMR-like pleasures of quiet Japanese noise (Thompson 2017). In my own life, I've noticed tinnitus emerging in the interplay between loud sociality and the subsequent return to quiet solitude. Absorbing the pleasures of high volume one moment, then contending with its sonic afterimage later… sometimes fearfully and regretfully. So yes, I'm keenly interested in the question your AHRC project raises around "problems of engagement" in the sonic arts. I think for many musicians—especially older ones—it's a navigation or negotiation between the social and affective potentials of amplification and the auditory fragility and sense of isolation that their tinnitus signals.

I also think that tinnitus primed me for anthropological and cultural studies in that it instilled in me a lifelong scepticism of objectivity. I didn't need John Cage to tell me there's no such thing as silence. And long before I went to grad school and learned terms like "positionality," my auditory system told me very clearly that no two listeners could ever be alike. So, I think tinnitus teaches several kinds of sensitivity and opens up precisely the kinds of interesting questions that you're asking in your project. Questions about auraldiversity and the projection of a universal listening subject in critical theory and philosophy.

However, for all the agency I'm giving my tinnitus here, I should also admit that I wouldn't have figured this stuff out without reading critical theory and disability studies and doing ethnographic research on tinnitus. In a very real sense, my research brought me to this place where I can call tinnitus a companion rather than an affliction. And I'm humbled by the fact that this could all change tomorrow. Tinnitus is always ready to expose the fantasy of the self as free agent.

Marie, if you don't mind, I want to come back later to your astute question about normate philosophies and relational listening. I think it's perhaps the most important question we can ask, as well as a space where there might be some productive differences in our sonic-affective approaches. But first, could I learn a little more about your relationship to tinnitus? What drew you to it? You mention that the new project is an opportunity to build on your previous work on noise. Is tinnitus noise? I'd also like to hear more about your workshops for people with tinnitus. Part of my past research involved attending support groups for people with tinnitus, which I found to be… *complicated!* To use your phrase again, I noticed "problems of engagement" in even communicating about tinnitus.

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MT: I came to tinnitus as an object of research through ongoing conversations about sonic philosophies and sonic arts with Patrick Farmer, who is also working on the AHRC project with me. We recognized that tinnitus generates some important challenges to certain assumptions that are often made in theory and practice: about listening, good and bad sonic environments, about subjectivity, embodiment, and affect. These are themes that I began exploring as part of *Beyond Unwanted Sound: Noise, Affect and Aesthetic Moralism* (2017). I think tinnitus certainly refutes – or at very least complicates – the aesthetic moralist positioning of quietude as an ethico-affective 'good' and noisy environments as 'bad', inasmuch as for some people with tinnitus, a degree of background noise is often preferable. As to whether tinnitus is noise, I think for many it can be manifest as unwanted sound. But also, in keeping with how I've previously theorized noise, it can be understood as pertaining to the material means of mediation: tinnitus might be thought of as the affective relation to relations.

Patrick and I also recognized that clinical approaches to tinnitus are grounded in a language and frameworks that seek to objectify and measure tinnitus as a deviation from a norm. We felt that there was much of tinnitus – as a highly individualized and often context-specific phenomenon – that evaded this kind of approach. As you made very clear in your response, Mack, tinnitus may change in relation to different activities, auditory spaces, affective states and experiences. Furthermore, the ways in which tinnitus affects those who hear it and how they hear it varies widely. My own tinnitus is very mild, and often intermittent (though there have been times in my life where this hasn't been the case – about a year ago, I had a period of quite frightening tinnitus that manifest as a low, loud throbbing sound: a far cry from the high-pitched sine tone 'tinnitus trope' that you have written about, Mack). So, one of the key challenges that we're facing with the project is how to allow space for those whose tinnitus might be a banal, unremarkable, unimposing part of life (i.e. the tinnitus that does not become 'visible' to clinicians because it is not a 'problem'), while at the same time allowing for those who experience tinnitus as something that has a substantive negative impact on their wellbeing.

I guess this moves me on to your question about the complexities of working with tinnitus in an ethnographic context. As I think you've experienced, there are practical and ethical challenges even talking about tinnitus: for some people, this can draw attention to their tinnitus, and in so doing, make the tinnitus louder, more imposing or more difficult to manage. Likewise, we're asking people to engage in arts activities that require people to reflect on their experiences of and with tinnitus, which raises similar issues. I should also mention at this point that

our workshops were effectively derailed by the pandemic. They were due to be held in person, however we've had to redesign them to be delivered digitally. Amongst other things, this has made very clear how celebrations of digital accessibility often fail to take into consideration – or rather, produce and reproduce – disabled hearing. It has also meant that the pastoral support we can provide during the workshops is limited. These issues combined mean we're having to exclude participants whose tinnitus is categorized as 'severe' (in accordance with a clinical questionnaire). I'm hoping in future work this might not be the case.

On a more positive note, at the moment we're in the middle of running a pilot of the workshop with members of the British Tinnitus Association's consultancy group. While its in its early stages, it's already been interesting to note the different aspects of tinnitus that participants are drawing attention to; and the points of connection and difference between their experiences with tinnitus. I've also been struck by how generous people have been in taking the time to work with us and share their feedback.

Perhaps we can come back to this question about normate listening, affect and what we might call the politics of disconnection. I'm aware these are themes that are discussed within your recent book *Hush* (2019), which theorizes and examines "orphic media"– technologies that carry the promise of sonic control. I'm mindful that your first chapter begins with tinnitus, so I was wondering if you had any thoughts about the relationship between normate listening, affect, and orphic media?

MH: Yes, absolutely. The non-normate phenomenology of tinnitus and its recent mapping on a neurophysiological level became central to the theorization of listening and media use in *Hush.* In the book, I make a disabilities-studies move of using the neurophysiological model of tinnitus, not as a model of a flawed body, but rather as a model for how sonic affect works generally. For this conversation, I don't know if we need to delve too deeply into the neurophysiology, but for our readers who aren't expert in tinnitus, it might be useful to concretize the emergent and relational nature of this phantom sound that we've both mentioned. Tinnitus emerges, as you say, as "a relation to relations" between sound, space, self, and sociality. The example I often use is of a hypothetical librarian with tinnitus: In the quiet space of the library, the phantom sound of tinnitus is likely to grow louder in the subject's perception. Now, from the perspective of acoustics, we know that there is an inherent relation between sound and space, but it was fascinating to

learn that this applies even to sound no one else can hear! If the librarian responds to this change in tinnitus with fear and aversion, then going forward, the auditory subconscious may not filter the tinnitus out as an unimportant signal. In fact, the brain may 'turn up the volume' on it, straining to hear the perceived threat better and thus making the tinnitus even louder. At this point, the experience of an independent, agentive self may be undermined—so now we have a new relation between sound, space, and self unfolding. Next, a library patron walks in and needs research help, but the librarian is having trouble concentrating and comes off as difficult and unhelpful, so now the social relation is affected.

This little tale is a simplification of what I learned from interviews and participant observation in audiology clinics, support groups, etc. I think it's illustrative but there are two important and closely related things to note: First, the relations could have emerged in a completely different order and second, if you change one of the elements, all of the others change as well. So, it could have been the difficult research question that triggered an insecurity in the librarian, which then raised their perceptual vigilance, which then led to an awareness of the volume of their tinnitus in the quiet space of the library. But also, in either scenario, if the librarian had gotten *fascinated* by the research question, the tinnitus (as social, spatial, and sonic dissonance) might have receded in significance *and even in perception*, smoothing the social relation and perhaps even ceasing the perception of the tinnitus altogether, at least momentarily. And while all of these unfoldings can happen almost instantaneously, there is also the slow influence of these same embodied, environmental, and social factors, which accumulate over time into a habitus of listening and affection—ideas that prime the future emergence of specific tinnital experiences and one's relation to this relation of relations.

Neurophysiological research has shown that certain kinds of listening to tinnitus become conditioned reflexes, as linkages form between auditory system, the amygdala, and other areas of the brain. And it appears that suffering from tinnitus—as opposed to merely experiencing it—is more associated with this reflexive negative response rather than with the specific pitch or volume of the tinnitus itself (if it even makes sense to speak of "the tinnitus itself"). So, histories of sound, space, self, and sociality get imprinted on the subject as deleterious habits of listening. And in an ableist, neoliberal milieu that prizes freedom and autonomy, tinnital suffering is all tied up with affection ideas that other and problematize its sound: "I'm not supposed to be hearing this sound;" "I'm disabled by this sound;" "I'm not myself because of this sound." And unfortunately, the more you objectify, other, and push against tinnitus, the louder and more troubling it becomes. People who carefully guard their ears and avoid sound often end up with even worse tinnitus. This is normate listening *as suffering.*

And this became my model for *all* listening: from phantom sound to imagined sound, to acoustic sound, to figurative listening online, to political listening. In the book, I'm especially interested in the promise of controlling our listening, which is what media claim to provide. Ironically, the controlled listening our media provide has paradoxically led to a media-fueled crisis of listening, as indicated by complaints of information overload and controversies around filter bubbles, media echo chambers, campus safe spaces, disinformation, political tribalization, and so on. I came to the conclusion that we can learn a lot about these things from tinnitus—learning about listening in the informational and political senses by studying listening in the sensory sense. Because a similar behavior and even a similar physiology are at work when we recoil from a sound we don't like and when we recoil from an idea or identity we don't like. And the scary thing that tinnitus taught me is how deeply these reactions can become imprinted on the body-mind. What Spinoza called "inadequate ideas" about causality become reflexes of prejudicial listening. And when these reflexes determine how we use media, we're in trouble.

This is where I can finally circle back to your original question and a possible difference in our views. Above you wrote about the notion of relational and open listening as a virtuous ethico-political practice and you characterized this as a normate philosophy, grounded in an idealized and unimpaired listener. The funny thing is, in my research, I actually started with impaired listening and ended up believing very strongly in the importance of relational and capacious listening! I feel that what a sound artist like Lawrence English means by relational listening—understanding one's own audition of a recording in relation to the affordances of the media apparatus and the attentional focus of the artist—is essential. And for me, what a feminist media theorist like Kate Lacey (2013) calls "listening out"—decentering oneself in an act of adventurous listening—is essential as well. Both of these techniques have the potential to clarify causes and reduce suffering. Some of my own inadequate ideas involved an ideology of ability that othered tinnitus and said it was a defect that wasn't supposed to be there. Embodying and practising that belief was a great suffering for me. I had to learn the courage to decenter my ego, listen relationally, and gradually accept this 'noise' as part of myself. To sit with it and stop clinging to the delusion that I wasn't really just listening to myself, as a living record imprinted by experience.

At the same time—and this is also something you referred to earlier with regard to tinnitus—I also have to acknowledge that we live in a time when guarded, careful, and selective listening feels very necessary. For me, relational listening can also sensitize us to the commodification of our attention. Or tune us into the ways that marginalized people are often expected to listen to bad-faith arguments or verbal assaults. So, when it comes to the conception of media in my book, I'm trying to encourage a kind of relational listening to the affective use of media and the ways that consumer technologies encourage us to misrecognize unjust structures as merely personal experiences of noise. And this is where I think our approaches are very similar because, as your book so skillfully demonstrates, noise is a register of relations—it's so much more than unwanted sound!

So yeah, I'm super-interested to hear more of your critique of open listening because I'm not completely high on my own supply. There are certainly versions of it I feel uncomfortable with, such as the uncritical lionization of a Habermasian public sphere, which completely fails to account for all the practical and ethical complexities of difference you discovered while organizing your public project on tinnitus. The ways that we embody our diverse histories and traumas as listening subjects, the ways problematic modes of listening can become contagious. These things can't be accounted for or cured by the calls to rational listening that white dudes like me so often love to proselytize.

MT: I should probably say that my thinking about 'open' listening has been profoundly shaped by Eva Haifa Giraud's recent book *What Comes After Entanglement? Activism, Athropocentrism, and an Ethics of Exclusion* (2019). I was fortunate enough to read the introduction as it was in development and I found myself underlining section after section! Although her point of focus is not auditory culture, I consider Giraud's argument to have some significant implications for thinking about sound and listening. I don't want to provide too many book spoilers (!) but Giraud argues for greater critical attention to be paid to exclusions and omissions created by ethical and theoretical models that foreground relationality, complexity, and entanglement. Exclusion is not simply the opposite of relationality, because, as your great example of the librarian listening with tinnitus illustrates, the establishment of one mode of relationality (in your example, between sound, space, and self) forecloses other possible formations. Furthermore, although there is a tendency to attribute ethical significance to these terms (so, entanglement, connection = good; disconnection, omission = bad), Giraud makes clear that exclusion, disengagement, and separation can be necessary or even beneficial: indeed, they are often central to ethical decision-making and activist practice.

I absolutely agree that tinnitus makes clear listening's relationality: its constitution through the complex relations between space, affect, hearing capacity, sound environment, mediating technologies, social norms, cultural discourses and so on. But, as part of this, I think tinnitus also makes clear the affective and ethical imperative to not listen, to listen selectively, or to generate auditory exclusions: excessively listening to or listening out for tinnitus can serve to amplify it, it can exacerbate negative affections, or cause us to withdraw. I think the latter is what risks getting lost in some endorsements of open or capacious listening – particularly when these are positioned as ethical and political fixes. It feels quite important to emphasize this at a time where, I think, the ethical imperative to 'listen openly' is being weaponized by some on the political right. As you imply, Mack, we also need to attend to the forces that constitute audibility and aurality, and which cause listening to be unevenly anticipated and performed – often along lines of gender and race.

So, a relational or even 'capacious' model of listening needs to recognize that some relations (sonic or otherwise) are harmful, undesirable, and unjust. And that we might which to exclude, mitigate, or abolish some types of relation. Relationality is not inherently good. I know this might be stating the obvious, and is in many ways an old point!

Since my last bit of writing to you, we've hosted a pilot version of our workshops with some generous people from the British Tinnitus Association's consultancy group. I'm still unpacking the various implications of this very rich experience. But one thing that feels significant for our conversation here concerns the tension between theoretical models of relational listening (including listening with tinnitus) and how people understand and articulate their own experiences of tinnitus. During these sessions, there were many discussions that would have been of great interest to affect theorists: there was a lot of talk of how tinnitus affects and is affected by different emotional states, environments, life events, activities and so on. There were many who described their own experiences in ways that mirror your own account of moving away from an 'inadequate idea' of tinnitus towards a more accepting standpoint, based on the development of knowledge and understanding. In other words, there was a lot that would support a relational model of tinnital listening. Indeed, many of the workshop activities we designed took this relationality for granted.

What was particularly challenging, then, was when some participants expressed that their tinnitus is constant: it does not change, no matter where they are, what they are doing or what else is happening. In the immediate aftermath, I arrogantly assumed that they were mistaken: the participants had intimated that their tinnitus might modulate in volume, and so their tinnitus does change. Yet I've become increasingly hesitant about this interpretation: what does it mean that these participants don't recognize these modulations in volume as 'change'? What significance does 'constant' carry for them in terms of comprehending and articulating their tinnitus? What is the best way to understand this refusal of a relational model of tinnitus: is this an 'inadequate idea' or something else? I don't have any good answers here (you're getting thinking and processing in real time!) but it feels quite striking, given our conversation so far.

In light of this, I was wondering if I could ask about your own experiences of the relationship between, on the one hand, your theorizations of tinnital and other modes of listening; and your ethnographic work with people with tinnitus? How have you understood this relationship, and how have the people you have worked with understood this relationship?

MH: Marie, thank you for telling me about Giraud's book. I read the introduction and I love this concept of an "ethics of exclusion." This is such a positive term for the ambivalence I had throughout the research for my book. I call white noise machines, noise-canceling headphones, tinnitus maskers and the like, "orphic media" to express this ambivalence. Orpheus was a musician and poet who could unite the human, natural, and divine through sound—an expert entangler! But he also defended the Argonauts from the Sirens by creating a wall of sound with his lyre, the kind of sonic disentanglement we all rely upon today with our headphones, meditation apps, and various media of self-care.

But as you say, entanglement is not inherently good. Tuning out can be the most ethical choice, both in terms of self-care and in terms of positioning oneself as a gap or firewall in webs of harmful relations that ripple through media networks. So, I think we're on the same page here! If "relational listening" means privileging entanglement, that's not what we're after, but if it means listening out for emerging relations and then making ethical, informed choices to include or exclude, that's probably the best we can hope for.

What I worry about is when exclusion becomes the reflexive default, when orphic media become what Jodi Dean (2009) calls a technological fetish, something that, as Freud says, covers over a trauma and helps one through a trauma, but also, in Dean's view, renders us passive in the dynamics that actually cause the trauma.

Dean describes this in the context of political speech on social media, which she regards as a fetishistic substitute for real political action. I'm thinking about this in terms of our technologies of *non*-communication and the sense of control they provide. If you could only hear what you want forever, would you really be empowered by that? There are entire media and technology industries making this promise today through noise-cancelation, algorithmic listening, news filtration and so on. Ironically, these are the same tech and media industries that created the cultural conditions that put such pressure on our listening to begin with.

I've really enjoyed this conversation! Before I sign off, I want to address one question you asked me and then ask you a final question about where your work is headed.

You asked me about the relationship between my theorizations of tinnitus/listening and my ethnographic work with people with tinnitus, as well as the ethics of those relationships. I went into my fieldwork with some understanding that I was interested in how subjects used sound to manage spatial relations, but I didn't yet have a theory of it. The theorization really came from the fieldwork with people with tinnitus, clinicians, researchers, and technology manufacturers. In fact, I hadn't read any affect theory beyond some Deleuze when I started my fieldwork—I only turned to affect theory and disability studies when I was struggling to respond to the questions and experiences offered by people with tinnitus. I'm completely indebted to them, so I love it when I meet people who find my work useful in their own struggles with tinnitus. There are various folks I've been in dialogue with over the years by phone or email and it's fulfilling to be doing, in a small way, some 'applied affect theory' or 'applied humanities,' as I think you're doing in a larger way with your project.

But again, tinnitus requires a great humbleness of us. Who is to say mine won't return with a vengeance tomorrow? Will I feel like someone with answers then? And what of the people you describe, who overtly deny the waxing and waning of tinnitus, even if their narratives betray it in other ways? Who am I to say they are listening in the wrong way? At the end of my chapter on tinnitus in *Hush*, I describe two different patients. One understood wearable white noise technology as a tool to help change their listening practices, while the other expected the technology to cure them of tinnitus. As any clinician would have predicted, the first person found relief while the second person did not. I could praise the first

person for succeeding by understanding and practising relational listening and relaxing into their tinnitus. I could blame the second for embracing a technological fetish to help them cling to their autonomy, thus perpetuating their own suffering. But that would be more than a gross oversimplification. I would also be regarding these patients as fully autonomous subjects with the natural burden of rational agency. I'd be spreading the same discourse of suffering that strains our listening to begin with. To me, theory is worthy only insofar as it ultimately helps reduce suffering. Otherwise, I honestly don't see the point.

This brings me to my question. I was happy to see the other day that *Sonic Cyberfeminisms*, a special issue of *feminist review* that you co-edited with Annie Goh, has arrived. This is a long-running project for you, as you've also held a symposium and other events under this title. My understanding is that sonic cyberfeminism is looking for a radical alternative to mere inclusion and participation for women in gendered spaces of sound technology. Can you talk about those goals? Also, both sound studies and cybernetics have received well-earned criticism for masculinist, Eurocentric, techno-fetishist propensities, yet we also seem to be in a fertile period for Afrofuturist, indigenous, feminist, and queer ideas and practises in sound and technology. So, I was hoping you could talk about the 'sonic' and 'cyber.' Why put them together? Do they have a way of correcting flaws in one another within sonic cyberfeminism?

MT: I've really enjoyed this conversation, too! It's been really great to hear more about your work and to have the opportunity to reflect further on my own.

Just briefly, I found your reference to possible designations of 'good' and 'bad' tinnitus patients significant in relation to my own work. I've found in some conversations with people with tinnitus, there is a desire to articulate that you are doing things 'right': which is to say, adopting a position of acceptance, listening differently, and so on. What was also invoked in some of these conversations was a contrast with an imagined person who approaches their tinnitus in the 'wrong' way, or who have not yet reached a position where they could approach it in the 'right' way. This imagined person experiences the negative affects of tinnitus more intensively, it prohibits their life, their sociality, their wellbeing. I won't say too much more here, but I'm interested to think more about how people with tinnitus understand themselves in relation to one another, and how affect is used to distinguish these positions.

It's really great to see the *Feminist Review* special issue on Sonic Cyberfeminisms out. It was edited by Annie Goh and I, as well as members from the *Feminist Review* collective: Ioana Szeman, Irene Gedalof, and Sadie Wearing. Taken col-

lectively, the articles and open space pieces that make up the special issue can be understood as a variety of responses to the question of 'what is sonic cyberfeminisms'? As you note, this has been a long running project, and the rubric of sonic cyberfeminisms has been used to facilitate different events with different people: we've done a reading group, an artist residency, a podcast, a listening room installation, a zine, panel discussions, and now a journal special issue. You are right that we have been keen to keep a distance from inclusionary models of gender diversity in sound technology, and we've offered what we hope are supportive critiques of such approaches. We've aimed to use the successes but also the limitations of cyberfeminism as a means of working through the relationship between sound, technology, and gender. This has meant revisiting what was and what is cyberfeminism. We've been keen to make clear that cyberfeminism isn't necessarily synonymous with an optimistic or techno-utopian standpoint (there is cyberfeminist work that is explicitly critical of technocultures and their imbrication with capital and coloniality). At the same time, we think that cyberfeminism's sometimes ambiguous relationship with feminist politics, its tendency to centre whiteness and the (over)developed world are significant because they can reveal something about wider and ongoing omissions from discussions about gender, sound and technology.

In terms of our goals for sonic cyberfeminisms: it's quite hard to talk about this because we haven't really had clearly defined objectives. Or rather, the goal has often been to provide a space, to provide resources or opportunities to think, work, make, and speculate together. My personal perspective is that this project came about at a time where myself and others were being asked to talk about 'women in x' (the x can be music, sound technology, audio…) and it felt that some elements of these discussions were limited by assumptions about what gender is and how it relates to auditory technocultures. Annie wrote a piece a few years ago that highlights this tendency called 'Sonic cyberfeminisms and its Discontents' (2014). I'd say for me, personally, having a space to be negative has been really important! Which is to say, to not feel the need to be celebratory or even optimistic in the ways that inclusionary models of participation often demand. But also, to have space to think and do in ways that allow for feminist opportunities and ambivalences. This ties back to some of what we were discussing earlier about listening. I've been adamant that listening is not this magical social force that can easily fix injustices; and I've been critical of accounts that I perceive to advocate for listening as such. At the same time – and with this in mind – listening has

been integral to the various manifestations of sonic cyberfeminisms. The project has sometimes created space to be listened to, and to listen to others, together. The zine we created during a residency at Wysing Arts Centre, with myself, Annie, Miranda Iossifidis, Marlo De Lara, Robin Buckley, Frances Morgan, Shanti Suki Osman, Natalie Hyacinth, Louise Lawlor and Jane Frances Dunlop, contains various visual, sonic and written reflections on an 'Agony Aunts' session that we ran during the week. What became clear here was, again, the need for listening, or more specifically, the need to be listened to, requires selectiveness and control in order to resist the tendency for stories of harm to become objects of consumption. If we understand the cyber of sonic cyberfeminisms as referring to the steering of sounds, voices and listening for feminist means and ends, then part of this is to consider strategy: what do we want to steer toward, and steer away from?

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"HAVE YOU TRIED IT WITH THREE?" ANN QUIN, LOVE TRIANGLES, AND THE AFFECTS OF ART/WRITING

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ABSTRACT

"My favourite one with masks is just the three of us, two reject one, or one rejects two, or all three reject each other, or equally accept," wrote the British avant-garde novelist, Ann Quin, in her 1966 'interdisciplinary' novel of domestic desire and conflict, Three. Entangled within the novel's formal mesh, comprising blurred dialogue, densely-woven description, discarded journals, and poetic tape recordings, the reader enters into a triangular love affair in retrospect, in the fictionalizing and remembering of it, after it has happened, after S—the mysterious intruder and diarist who send shockwaves through the marriage of Ruth and Leon—has disappeared. Reading Quin's novel alongside the feminist and queer work of Ahmed (2006), Carson (1986), and Sedgwick (1993), this article traces the contradictions and multiplicities of affect, love, and desire—produced by the fragile boundaries between rejection and acceptance—that 'shape' the novel's triadic relationship. It opens up the love triangle as a queer erotic formation: as a subversion of the 'straight' line of desire that points to heterosexual coupling, and also as an affective stage for homoerotic intimacies, autoerotic encounters, and masochistic fantasies.

KEYWORDS

love triangle, disorientation, art writing, affect, desire

For N and A
Love,
A

1. Meetings

Listing work and medical history, the folder was stamped *confidential*—a fragile skin separating private and public—where etched into the see-through fabric of its pages was also a name: 'figures' amounting to the parts of a body. *Ann Quin*. Grazing my fingertips across this intimate document, I was pulled closer to her, across time, space: a glimpsing. Was this, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1993) once wrote in memory of a writer she knew, also "love at a distance"? Or was it "even just reading and writing"? (104-105). I too met Quin through "snatches of print," the pieces of her life and writing, as torn edges made asymmetrical shapes and fragments, ripped at 45-degree angles (Sedgwick 1993, 104-105). First it was just the two of us, on that strange day in the Royal College of Art's archive, that started the affair. But then there were more; another began to enter the frame: from two to *three*.

*

This essay is dedicated to the points of the triangle that complete that shape with me. 'N', back then, was familiar to me: an impressive figure and talent whose work on women's experimental writing preceded mine. I felt her influence. Did she feel mine? I wondered if there was room for us both. It was almost erotic, our flashes of contact and conversation, the absent presence of it all, as we held each other closely (via the spectral nature of shared texts swallowed and cited, the ambiguity of collaborations to come), in spite of the distance, and the academic professionalism, which first blocked an intimate flourishing.

It was only when we eventually started writing together, some time after I first found 'A' (Quin) in the archive, after I knew N was getting to know her too,[1] that the separateness of our study evaporated. We came to each other in a different

way. Our words began to stick together, like the wet pages of a book. We met again through A: her body, her life, her objects, her *writing*. Our voices blurred, our readings entangled; we started to forget who said what in our chorus of correspondence. We signed off emails keenly with kisses: crafting a friendship of solidarity, affection, and writing. Bonded by A, we have energized each other.

Through this process of partnered, piecemeal writing, I (or was it *we?* I slip between them) began to think more about the love triangle as a shape of desire and a shape of writing: how it manifests as gendered affect and queer eroticism in Quin's experimental fictions, and how it has also given rise to new forms, new *shapes*, of feminist critical art writing: a writing on, to, and with, other intimates, as expressed across these essay parts. How does the love triangle, when translated as a shape from which to write, sculpt and advance my own close reading, close merging, close inhabiting of Quin's literary threes?

In this essay, N's fluid fragments in parentheses permeate its parts; her words enter mine, a swallowing. Through this methodology of incorporation, I uncover the desire, the competition, the rivalry, the artistry, the nourishment, the kinship, the learning, the love, that sticks between friends, who are also writers, who are also collaborators, invested in the same love object—and how this leads to new and intimate readings of the love triangle as an erotic trope in Quin's writing. As an example of what Maggie Nelson (2015) calls "wild theory"—defined as "writing that is within a particular, often academic, discipline, but also belongs to something else by virtue of its creativity and recklessness" (2015, n.p.)—this essay theorizes, conceptualizes, and performs what I newly term a *love triangle in writing*, running with the critical and creative potential of the affects, erotics, and identificatory lines that bind it.

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In October 1959, Ann Quin took up her post as a part-time secretary at the Royal College of Art's painting school, after being cleared 'fit' by her doctor. She could type quickly for the men in charge, over one hundred and fifty words per minute, and then even more into the night (but this time for herself: these are the working conditions of a secretary/novelist), as she feverishly worked on the typewritten sheets that became her first novel, in her compact room at 62 Redcliffe Road, London, SW10. Here she dreamed, as she scratched, and summoned, the disturbing seaside world of *Berg* (1964) that echoed the spaces of her childhood and adolescence spent on the Sussex coast. (It was in Brighton, the most hedonistic of seaside towns, that Quin was born, in 1936.) This 'debut' novel— it was the first one to survive impulsive urges to destroy her writing through burning

(Hodgson 2019)—was warmly received within the literary landscape. Its surreal eroticism, absurdist violence, and anarchic use of language, narrative, and form, added a new dimension—namely a more closely attuned attention to feeling and desire, as entangled *within* (not separate from) literary experiment—to the innovative work of Christine Brooke-Rose, Brigid Brophy, Alan Burns, and B.S. Johnson: British avant-garde novelists to whom Quin was closely aligned, and who were also committed to radically shifting the aesthetic and moral boundaries of novelistic form in the 1960s.

Nearly sixty years later, I am a writer whose life is subsumed by unpaid hours of affective and administrative labour, in a 'study' nearly as small. Ann Quin—as a working class, experimental, woman writer navigating the intersecting power structures of the 1960s—gives me hope and energy to keep writing. She was my first love, "a writer's love" (Butler 2019, 154)—she was the author of four (nearly five) novels that subverted realist conventions in their abstraction of form, narrative, voice, character, body, and time: each work diving deeply into the psyche's clashing parts, the fragmentary nature of post-war society, the transgression of social and sexual (as well as literary) norms—who left the land for the sea, at the darkness of dawn, in 1973; aged only thirty-seven.[2] She shadows and mystifies my writing, like morning mist, like scribbled annotations in the margins of my paperbacks, a cloud of correspondence—awaiting a reply.

Who from? A or N?

> (N: Ann Quin has long occupied the peripheral reaches of my vision. There is a flurrying of edges that takes place in her stories, moments of intensity between people, objects, scenes, that flare and then dissipate, a rush of words or images suddenly sucked away. This way of looking at the world exists for me too in life after reading them. I, like so many others—Kathy Acker, Chloe Aridjis, Deborah Levy—find myself steeped in her prose. She has never been the focus of my attentions, but her writing clings to me in a murkier way, a thickening of threads, shadows, and shapes through which all else must pass. When I begin to read or think or write, I'm not necessarily aware of this webbing. However, often unexpectedly, a droplet of recognition would slide down these fine connective strands, and Quin would emerge again.)

At my writing desk, a portrait-postcard of Ann Quin sits propped up, amongst pens and pencils; the books I'm writing 'with' (N's missives included); open pots of lip balm, and an abandoned glass of greyed-out water (a drowned fly flailing

Oswald Jones (1929-1998), Ann Quin, undated

within it). A, along with N, along with Sedgwick and Acker, and more, is figured in close proximity to my writing: spatially, spectrally, affectively; her writing hands reach for mine, breaking the 'pastness' of the photographic object. Her large, brown eyes glance upwards to a body just beyond the frame: the luminous point of the triangle: reckoning with the character (or *voice*) in her head.

Quin wrestled with a cacophony of interior voices as she suffered regular, often annihilating, bouts of mental illness over the course of her writing life: from the early years of her novelistic experiments, through to her swimming out to sea, when she was half way through the manuscript of *The Unmapped Country* (published posthumously in 2019) that staged a surreal critique of psychiatric

care. In the photograph, she appears locked in a trance, a psychological state of reverie. Could her fixed gaze suggest a creative embrace of the chorus, a reparative rehabilitation of what made her sick? In asking this question, I am aligning my reading with Sedgwick's (2007) reworking of Melanie Klein's affect-oriented psychoanalysis; her specific recognition that the likelihood amongst intellectuals and writers to experience depression indicates how such psychological precariousness is as "densely woven into our abilities as into our disabilities, our quite individual creativity as much as our sometimes stereotypical forms of blockage" (641).

It is hereby possible to trace a connecting line (however murky and entangled) from the sick tendencies of Quin's life to the sick impulses of her work, namely the manic layering of voices that defines her writing from *Berg* onwards. It is displacement, rather than direct correlation. As Patricia Waugh (2015) has argued of Virginia Woolf's work, experiences of voice-hearing can be seen as intimately connected to the "precariousness of writing" itself, where sensations of madness, exposure, and self-shattering give way to "a new interpretive frame": a re-embodying of the disembodied, dissolving the fragile boundaries between self and world (54–55). It is perhaps, then, unsurprising—given the polyvocal, inner-consciousness of Quin's choral, cut-up texts—that it was "Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*" that made her "aware of the possibilities of writing," when putting pen to paper as an adolescent novelist (Quin 2018, 16).

In the unframed portrait of Quin, her fingers (no wedding wing: her archived resumé stated 'single') clutch at a lit cigarette, curl inwards. She fumbles for flesh, or words: a body suspended in the flux of writing. She is (as I am: fumbling for N to reach A), hovering between gesture and meaning, letters and words, speech and reply. Her mouth is half-open, a vocal gesture unfinished. With teeth showing in wild conversation, these are the indistinct seconds and sounds before the climax of understanding, with those that are invisible. (Me or N? Whose voice?) Quin holds space, language, and art between her hands; she kneads it together, all the genres at once—from poetry to prose to drawing to music, never just one.

Reading her third 'novel' *Passages* (1969), Hilary White (2020) calls this the "indiscipline" of Quin's writing: wherein the 'soft formlessness' of the text shrinks away, skirts sideways, from the rigid singularity of one visual or verbal creative propensity, and how this is intimately connected to her revisions of sex, embodiment, and gender (113–114). I'm attracted to this mode of indiscipline for its ties

with *adolescence*—the writerly experimentation (Barthes 2011), liminal awkwardness (Litvak 1997), and queer desires (Sedgwick 1993; Mavor 1999), which smudge this indefinable age. Adolescence is an "open structure" according to Julia Kristeva (1995, 199), meaning that it can seep outwards beyond its borders, and trespass on 'maturity'—in art, writing, and the messy spaces in between. For Kristeva (2012), the novel (and for Quin, the form-crossing novel), *is* the adolescent form for the "perpetual subject-adolescent": it is here, Quin can try to set herself *free* (11, 14), cut loose from the stifling conventions of gender, sexuality, and writing discipline.

> (N: Our adolescence aligns on that same stretch of coast. It was there that I first found kinship with seawater, surrendering to the relentless rolling grey. There is no curling of toes into sand here, but a buckling of arches against shingle. I see our limbs cross in those waves, our flesh puckered, speech lost to the water. Is it 'love' to be disarmedby another, a willingness to succumb?)

I am disarmed by two others, two writers, whose poetic images provide flesh and texture to my writing and thinking, returning to the tips of my fingers, to be released again. N materializes in the shadows of the text. She comes and goes like ebb and flow, a destabilizing force, which energizes the desire of my writing. It is this mode of triangular love—displayed in hybrid essay form—that helps me to access the particular and erotic intimacies involved in literary recovery, the complex desires and affects of the love triangle in Quin's writing (namely her second novel *Three* [first published by Marion Boyars in 1966]), and the feminist effects of critical art writing that meets and merges with the lives, bodies, and words of others. These three lines of flight—historical, analytical, and methodological—all invested in critical closeness and the inhabitation of 'content as form' comprise the essay's triadic discussions.

2. Scratchings

A was my first love object, then it was N, now it is both. But other writers are also part of my adolescent, interdisciplinary, undisciplined, wild theorizing world. I've learned from their scratches, their shapes. Indeed, the smoking, suspended digits that form the 'punctum' of Quin's author-portrait—as the fleshy detail of the image: "that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me.)" (Barthes 1981, 27)—illustrate what Maria Fusco (2019) has recently explored in relation to interdisciplinary writing, that it comes into being through *scratching.* It is a relentless, indecisive itch for new modes of writing and expression, bringing forms, worlds, and bodies into contact, as Quin does in her capacious novel writing of art and literary experiment, and as I am exploring, performing, gesturing towards here, crossing between art, writing, and theory, touching crossed limbs, holding phrases in my mouth.

For many, the desire to scratch is also the desire to create friction (or a space in between), to flirt with the paradox and adolescent-style mistakes, to welcome *surprise*: one of the energies described by Sedgwick (2003), following Klein, as integral to reparative reading (146). Maggie Nelson cites Sedgwick's call for reparative practices in her own 2015 book of interdisciplinary scratchings (comprising memoir, fragment, love letter, dialogue, essay, and theory), *The Argonauts*. She re-enacts Sedgwick's text in her own gestures, in which love is shown to be not only pluralistically queer, but also *citational*, as etched into the margins of the page are the names of the authors that have brought accompaniment in her relational and *wild* writing-as-loving. I am following Nelson's adventurous reliving of reparative reading to support the flourishing of citational kinship. It is this love between writers—brought to life by interdisciplinary writing, the ambivalent spaces *between* forms—which, I argue, cuts open new readings of affective, erotic, desiring relations as interwoven within creative critical practices. It generates fresh possibilities for feminist scholarship, encompassing the desire of collaboration, choral noises, intimate disclosures, affective textures, and the risky, reckless refusal to be only one thing (form, discipline, genre, or voice).

Similarly, in Lauren Berlant and Kathleen Stewart's dialogic experiment of 'descriptive theory', *The Hundreds*—involving prose/poems that "follow out the impact of things (words, thoughts, people, objects, ideas, worlds) in hundred-units or units of hundred multiples"—affect is drawn into form (2019, 44, ix). Like the 'sting' of the punctum, like Quin's own writing of unstable, affective encounter, it "grabs you into an elsewhere of form" (Ibid., 5), and that form is an entanglement of many different forms. "Collaboration," they say, as one voice of two, "is a meeting of minds that don't match" (Ibid.). I picture their writing held together by a forward slash, a cut, but also a thread, binding and separating, their words and worlds. Echoing *The Argonauts*' epistolary address, and this essay's own processes, *The Hundred's* was in many ways formed through correspondence: sending each other their interstitial prose/poems, editing and transcribing, writing to, with, through, and against, the other—and involving other 'others' in the process. Indeed, referencing Barthes' *A Lover's Discourse* (with which Nelson's wild love theory is also involved), Berlant and Stewart initially meant for their text to include "cascading cites" in the margins, a showering of ideas and connections (Ibid., 20), before deciding that their referential matter needed to be enclosed more *intimately*, "wind up parentheses holding the things we think with" (Ibid.): like open envelopes containing love letters.

To invoke this visual metaphor is to also suggest a tactile, personal object, one to be *felt* on the "palm of the open hand" (Sedgwick 2003, 3). For to write in relation to another (thing, body, text, encounter), is to be in close proximity to it (emotionally, materially), *almost* touching. Inspired by recent instances of reparative dialogue-makings by Berlant and Stewart and Nelson, this essay thinks *with* (in Haraway's theorization of "thinking-with," it is the *pimoa cthulhu* spider, with its tentacles trying 'to feel' this way and that, which represents not only Haraway's [2016)] "threading, felting, tangling, tracking, and sorting" pattern of thought, but also the future world she is speculating [39, 31]), and therefore *writes* with—because this is correspondence—"more than one voice" (Cavarero 2005). I am *thinking with* that open envelope: it holds A and N within an intimate surround. Other citations also spill from its throat. As gestural as Fusco's scratch, Haraway's string arms, or Berlant and Stewart's "scoring over words like a sculptor chiseling things" (2019, 10), it creates relational and embodied correspondences between me and them (A and N), art and writing, fiction and theory: hands outstretched: a forward slash.

3. Graspings

I am grasping for A, and for N, within a "sphere of a pure and endless mediality," as Giorgio Agamben (2000) notes of gesture (58). Gesture, like adolescence; like interdisciplinary writing, also occupies the messy middle ground. Three points suspended in time: I picture our younger selves ("eternal adolescents" at twenty-two to three [Kristeva 1995, 199]) walking the corridors of the art school at Kensington Gore, making marks, fragments, and gestures in words: our hands too hovering, hesitating, in ecstatic (*adolescent*) indecision: a space in between art and writing.

> (N: It's where we encountered one another. I see you both, two points. A and A, years apart, each poring over that sheet of credentials, hands drawn together to smooth the creases. I am between two A's. I know A's work through A. Their bond is stronger, their understanding more intimate. What is it to be the more distant point in the triangle? "Two people. I to them—they to me?" (Quin 2009, 53). Am I, like S of Ann Quin's 1966 novel *Three*, an intruder?)

Expanding the meanings and manifestations of the love triangle into a textual, erotic realm involving three women, three *kin* (two alive, one dead), this 'writers' love triangle' is shaped by our affective entanglements and encounters, by echoes, citations, mutterings, and silences: words said, left unsaid, confusing who said what. (A, you move between us, and us between you, in erotic triangulation.) This way of writing/loving can never be singular, when it is split, fractured, and

shared amongst women writers. I cite, collect, copy, and cut: words, pictures, and encounters. I write *beside* them both, following Sedgwick's (2003) attraction to the same preposition for its nondualistic capaciousness, the space it gives for a "a number of elements" to "lie alongside one another" (8). As an interdisciplinary practice that slides across creative and critical registers (another forward slash, slanting waywardly off centre), 'beside' in this text is relational, affective, and gendered, a grasping for bodies, genres, disciplines, and voices, "desiring, identifying, representing, repelling, paralleling, differentiating," all at once (Ibid.).

Love sits closely to competition when writing beside, chiseling triangular lines between us, our hot and intimate orbit. And such frictions are nourishing for critical acts. In this text, to inhabit the triangle in methodology and written form is to attend to it anew, to bring hidden erotic formations to the surface, to write and read differently with them, allowing for bold new readings of eros (as demonstrated by close reading Quin's *Three*) to materialize with its contact lines.

As Sedgwick (2008) too suggests, there is something sibling-like in this critical position (8), echoed in the writerly formation I am grasping for here, which is defiantly 'sister-sister', as complexly homosocial—but differently gendered—as the erotic triangles conceptualized by Sedgwick in her earlier 1985 book *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. Here Sedgwick expands on the propositions made by René Girard in *Desire, Deceit, and the Novel* (1961) as a means to highlight that "in any erotic rivalry, the bond that links the two rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved" (Sedgwick 1985, 21), and that this bond is always shaped by historically-specific economies of power, thus challenging Girard's original conceit that the triangle is symmetrical, ahistorical, and ungendered (Ibid., 22-24). Sedgwick argues instead that the erotic triangle is a shifting, "sensitive register," through which the "play of desire and identification" takes place (Ibid., 27), including those relationships that pertain to the "hidden obliquities" of homo/hetero and sexual/nonsexual binaries (Ibid., 22).[3]

Sedgwick hereby disorients the 'universal' verticality of the triangle familiar to the Oedipal complex, wherein the Father holds the penis-envy– or penis-complex-key to heterosexual object choice, encouraging us instead to look sideways, or slantwise, even horizontally. Juliet Mitchell (2013) has also argued for an "analytical understanding of lateral relations along a horizontal axis, not instead of

but in addition to the vertical" (14), through her re-reading of Freud, Winnicott, and Klein, and the multitudinous figure of the sibling who has slyly crowded the case notes (Ibid., 17). "Does the dominance of verticality hide the horizontal?" asks Mitchell, "Does this skew our understanding of gendering?" (Ibid., 25). By returning to the traumatic effects caused by the "arrival or expected but non arrival of a sister or brother," Mitchell claims that it is the horizontal (and jealous) relations between siblings, formed in the context of the vertical, which produces the "gendered, social child, girl or boy" (Ibid., 28). Close to Klein's theory of reparation emerging from the depressive position, when the sibling recognizes the negative affect in jealousy, "positive rivalry, competition, and creative struggle" can emerge (Ibid., 30).

I hereby propose that it is the (*performative*) siblings' struggle—the triangular play of affect, desire, and identification—which unleashes interdisciplinary writing of more than one voice, which shapes the love triangle as a feminist space from which to write. As I write beside A and N, the love triangle rotates: each point always seeking the affection (and approval) of the intruder, each point always unsure of whose turn it is to be her. From uncertainty has spilled creativity, pleasure, love: the desiring thrills and risks of reading and writing.

The roles of lover, beloved, and intruder also become messy and confused (to more violent effect) in Quin's abject 1966 novel of domestic desire and conflict, *Three*, wherein a mysterious lodger, simply named S, sends shockwaves through a marriage, before and after her sudden disappearance (a suggested suicide). S describes the sharp, shifting angles of the erotic triangle that plays out across the novel, through the guise of their improvisational mime theatre: "My favourite one with the masks is just the three of us, two reject one, or one rejects two, or all three reject each other, or equally accept" (2009, 66). I echo the three protagonists' triangular performance in the tentacular textures of my writing and thinking, its moving lines of affect and influence, its projections and silences. I compete with N for A. I desire N's words through A. I love A even more *because* of, not in spite of, N. This method of critical embodiment has brought me closer to the particular contradictions of desire, love, and affect (produced by the fragile boundaries between rejection and acceptance) that 'shape' the novel's triadic relationship.

4. Cleavings

After three years administrating at the Royal College of Art, Quin escaped, first for Europe, and then for the United States, where she ventured to explore the relationship between poetry and painting as part of a literary fellowship. Visu-

alizing new possibilities for art, desire, and writing, she positioned herself as the third point of the love triangle in a number of poets' marriages, dedicating *Three* to "Bobbie and Bobb [Creeley]" (Quin 2009, v). These are erotic life experiences that hum and pulse throughout her second novel, *Three*, pieces of which were starting to coalesce into an unfamiliar form, a 'scratchy' fictionalizing of auto-biography, in a way that foreshadows the experimental life-writing of American authors, Kathy Acker and Chris Kraus. Like Quin, the transgressions of these writers are to be found in the formal fissures of the writing—the cut-up layering of epistolary modes, the schizophrenic narration and unbroken syntax, the spatial arrangement of words—as well as the sexual transgressions to be found in the fragmented narrative content, which climaxed, for Quin, in the cut-up novel *Tripticks* (1972) (alluded to by the title's wordplay, it is also focused on a triangular relationship). In a letter to her friend, Father Brocard Sewell, penned during the writing of *Three*, Quin supposes that her fascination with the "relationships between three," could be "partly because I have never known the family unit, and partly the influence of the Roman Catholic convent I spent my childhood in… Does all this sound too Freudian for words?" (Jordan 2018, n.p.). It is my proposition that Quin's unfamiliarity with the archetypal family unit, re-emerges in her writing as a subversive hostility towards it, a gesturing towards alternative kinships and sexual relations, illuminating the spectral, seductive, and shifting forces of the 'intruder'.

For the majority of *Three* (but not *all*: there are no absolutes in this text of shifting perspectives), this part belongs to S—she is the glyphic code to be cracked: a mysterious guest, and a lascivious artist: reminiscent of the modernist 'other' woman. Ruth and Leon initially take S in for a stay of convalescence, compensating, the pair agree, "for the family life she never knew" (Quin 2009, 6). She soon becomes entangled in the domestic, material, and romantic structures of their lives, as represented by the closeness of their sleeping arrangements, which S notes down: "I listened to unfamiliar noises, silence. R's breathing. L's nasal gasps, restless turnings" (Ibid., 67). In this stifling narrative space of aural flicks and bodily twitches, S's flesh is pulled from both sides, compartmentalizing itself. She leaves only traces of her body and voice behind, for Ruth and Leon to animate and re-enact further, within the context of their own conjugal dynamic. Theirs' is a triangular affair that we only come to know in retrospect, in the fictionalizing and re-membering of it, after it has happened, after S has left the scene, conjuring presence-in-absence through the journal entries, spoken tapes, and filmreels that

get left behind: the objects that sustain the erotic field of tripartite desire, re-embodying it and her. As Leon suggests, "A life there perhaps we'll find" (Ibid., 16).

> (N: In a darkened room, L watches S enter and emerge from a breakwater, over and over, again and again, in loops as water lapping at a bank. I am an intruder when I swim. These movements made with such deliberation only cleave. This is what I'm doing now, cleaving my way between two A's. Can we draw each other close when we write through our bodies? Casting each arm out to break the surface, I slip back beneath it, failing it. I pull mouthfuls of air down to where they cannot be, escaping in dribbling lines of bubbles. Intermittent signals that will surface.)

The eroticism of *Three* is drawn from its *intermittences*: the foamy cuts between characters' dialogue, seeping from one voice to another; the flashes of memory absorbed within the splintered recordings of S; the fragments of intimacy and violence offered by S's journaling hand, "making it harder to piece together—which piece fits in precisely where?" (Ibid., 69). It is within this epistolary entanglement, "the staging of an appearance-as-disappearance," as Barthes calls it, that the erotic grabs hold, overwhelms, and confuses (1998, 10). In fact, the webbed density of the novel's textures, its "dark (invisible passages)" (Mavor 1995, 94), where viewpoints overlap or contradict, is intimately connected to the assault it also makes on the straight lines of desire, as the contours between S, Ruth, and Leon, blur beyond recognition. As S confesses to her journal, she is "pursued by a compulsion to jeopardise such a bourgeois stronghold," when it is a marriage, in fact, that is struggling to reproduce, to form a nuclear family unit (Quin 2009, 61). Misunderstandings like these, cleave their way through *Three*. To read it is to succumb to the disorienting particles of mist that cloud the text, and the triad's mountainous summer retreat.

> (N: *Three*, in particular, is the stiffening of atmospheres. Every movement, word, intrudes upon another.)

N intrudes on the body of this text, an erotic presence smeared across the surface of the page: criss-crossing voices and words in ways that echo the murky, intimate spaces of *Three*. For while it is first Ruth who is left isolated by triangulation, reduced to a vulnerable body, an exposed *thing* ("How I hated it when you both went off for those so-called long tramps," she tells Leon [Ibid., 10], echoing the scribed perspective of S: "R conscious the whole time, aware of a hand, eye, jumps to hasty conclusions" [Ibid., 62]), the erotic, entangled atmosphere of the novel enacts the movement of desire, shadowy gestures (impossible to trust), and shifting intimacies. For example, when Leon is away working, the two women become closer, as "R" appears to S, "suddenly like a child," who invites care from her friend, her competitor, her desired (Ibid., 141). (These are, I have lived them in writing, the shifting roles of the homosocial love triangle.) Ruth is a woman-child, asking S "to stay with her," while lying in the "stuffy" room—of hot

flesh and compressed space—"half naked under the sheet" (Ibid.). As the bed linen meets her sick, debilitated, desiring body (Ruth suffers with abscesses, headaches, depression, and infertility: she is, as the artist Johanna Hedva (2016) would now say, a "Sick Woman," rejecting the society that seeks to contain her), skin flashes: the Barthesian erotic (Barthes 1998, 10).

And echoing Mavor's (1999) and Nelson's (2015) queer feminist readings of Barthes, it is these erotic flashes of flesh; S's brushing of Ruth's abject hair within her "restless" bedroom enclosure (Quin 2009, 141), which creates an atmosphere of homoerotic desire, interlaced with unsaid messages and seductive gestures. As S articulates in her journal, "A certain intimacy sprang up between us, that somehow never exists when L is around" (Ibid.). Theirs' is a queer affection that 'springs' up—like a sudden source of water bursting forth from the ground—when the male figure, the property owner, the husband, the publisher of books, is absent. By figuratively aligning S and Ruth's partnership with water, Quin shows how their sexual orientation has flipped or moved off-kilter, the fluid excesses of their desire causing new ripples, new currents, new freedoms, within the shifting shapes of the love triangle.

This is of course a spatial metaphor that describes triadic desire, "like the direction of [*multiple*] arrows toward the loved object" (Ahmed 2006, 70). And in *Eros the Bittersweet*, Anne Carson (1986) re-considers a fragment by Sappho in the context of these arrows and erotic directions, arguing that "it is not a poem about the three of them as individuals, but about the geometrical figure formed by their perception of one another, and the gaps in that perception" (13). In those gaps, desire foams; the pain of absence is infectious: a triangle emerges as desire's shape (keeping it alive, like this very writing) (Ibid., 16). "For, where eros is lack," writes Carson,

> its activation calls for three structural components—lover, beloved and that which comes between them. There are three points of transformation on a circuit of possible relationship, electrified by desire so that they touch not touching. Conjoined they are held apart. The third two are not one, irradiating the absence whose presence is demanded by eros (Ibid.).

In *Three*, the 'straightness' of those lines that make up the directional circuit (its heterosexual arrows), is upended, *perverted*, by the "discontinuity" of S and Ruth's "queer desires" (Ahmed 2006, 71) that also belonged to Sappho. Following Ahmed's conceptualization of perversion as a "spatial term, which can refer to the willful determination to counter or go against orthodoxy, but also to what is wayward and thus '*turned away* from what is right, good, and proper'" (Ibid., 78), when S

and Ruth gravitate towards one another, try on the same dresses, get sticky, share the space of the bathroom, the love triangle deviates, in spatial and bodily terms, from the "point of heterosexual union or sexual coupling" (Ibid.). Even after S has gone, Ruth wears her discarded nightgown, their perspiring, dreaming, eternal-adolescent bodies meeting, skin to skin, in a surrogate sexual thrill achieved without penetration. She is the adolescent stealer of clothes, the 'sick woman' getting psychoanalyzed, the perverse "masturbating girl"—as theorized by Sedgwick (1993) in her collection of essays that connected adolescence with queerness, *Tendencies* (118, 1). In an essay included with that collection, Sedgwick reads the bedroom scenes of Jane Austen's 1811 novel *Sense and Sensibility*—which are also shaped by the horizontal love between two women (who are also siblings)—and finds within them moments of eternally infantile autoeroticism that unsettle the binary of the homo/hetero cleavage (Ibid. 109-129).

> (N: Water, like desire, is corruptible. It curdles into the gels, jellies, slurries, objects sucked at, leached away, ejected, sprayed, slithering along the ground, and taken into the mouth. Quin's writing exists in this smearing between emotional bonds, phrasal blotching.)

The stickiness of their perverse partnership is echoed in the gestural ink of the intimate journal, where S (like Austen's Marianne) unleashes her private thoughts, desires, and feelings, an overflowing, *corruptible* force, similar to the "powerful gush of words," which Barthes (1998) recognizes in the text of pleasure (7). S's writing is erotic and queer, like the water she swims in, or what the poet Eileen Myles (2014) recognizes more specifically as 'foam': the gushing fluids of the body: "speech coagulated on the corners of your mouth" (n.p.). Myles (2014) finds foam secreted in a constellation of texts about gender (this one is wet with saliva and spray), because "gender makes excess, especially when it's unstable which it always is" (2014, n.p.). In contrast, Leon fills his ledger with 'straight' numbers or 'facts'; publishes books in the public domain, such as his book on (according to Ruth), "Egyptian art or something," which he then corrects as the upright, "Monolithic Mosaics" (2009, 2). But as Jane Gallop (1985) has fluidly argued by getting close to feminist correspondences—and as evident in S's sticky scripts (or our own permeating parts)—while gender norms have dictated that "women write letters [*or diaries*]—personal, intimate, in relation [italics mine]," and "men write books—universal, public, in general circulation," there are instances of mouth-watering and moist subversion in women's epistolary acts (104-107). Gallop gets close to queer licks of an open envelope, drawn by Mary Cassatt. Then, in a fluid cascade of associations, she gets even closer to the trangressive adoption of this gesture by French feminist writing, particularly Annie Leclerc's 1977 essay "La Lettre d'amour" ("The Love Letter"), which is also a *relational* and *public*, wild theorizing, "philosophy of the body" (Ibid., 108).

N and A, I feel these fragments foaming: oral notes of fluid correspondence. You helped me dip my fingers into the queerness of water. I swim beside you, brushing your arms. I've kissed your open letters.

5. Gropings

What would it be to give you these notes by hand? What would it be to 'touch' you this way? Correspondence, like the sense of touch, is relational; it conjures contact between objects and bodies, through gestures of communication that are etched with traces of the body and affect. As Sedgwick (2003) elucidates: "the sense of touch makes nonsense out of any dualistic understanding of agency and passivity; to touch is always already to reach out, to fondle, to heft, to tap, or to enfold, and always to understand other people or natural forces as having effectually done so before oneself" (14). As a perceptual system, touch is the bind that shapes the writer's love triangle, as I reach for you (N and A) through the mist, the blur, the phrasal blotchings (I can barely *see*).

> (N: It seems to me that Quin is a writer of the extremities, a world delivered through feet that pace and fingers that pry. These are radical gestures in writing. Christine Brooke-Rose aligned her circle of avant-garde writers, which included Quin, with the gesture of 'groping'. "Experiment," she suggests, "means two things. One is that you're groping, you don't quite know where you're going, and you make discoveries about language. And the other is that you decide on a constraint, which produces a different style, the reader doesn't know why he feels it, the physical signifier is made more physical, the signified less important" (Friedman and Fuchs, 1989). To grope is to use the hands in feeling, touching, to handle or feel something, it is the appraisal of something with which one is unfamiliar, to search space, seek signs. The result, however, is the need to possess this other, of "plucking" and "pulling about," in which something is ultimately 'grasped' (Williams 1994, 627).[4] It is a lustful advance, usually taking the form of rough, heedless grabs at female flesh, an unwanted searchlight shone into water that sends life darting. Is all writing an act of desire? Does writing fulfill this need to press at the edges, however inept, inexpert, all fingers and thumbs?)

Am I more likely groping, then, as I write through and with experiment: the wayward urges of the forward slash (/) that sits between art and writing?

Responding to the provocation, "*'To be an experimental woman writer'*," in the 1989 essay "Illiterations," Brooke-Rose claimed that such a phrase contains "Three words," within which are held "three difficulties," three barriers to overcome

involving gendered oppressions in society, the sexism of canonical hierarchies, and primarily, the particularly dismissive context in which literary experimentation authored by women was then received (55–57, 64–65). While "traditionally, men belong to groups, to society (the matrix, the canon)," Brooke-Rose (1989) postures, "Women belong to men" (66), giving way to a situation in which the woman experimental writer is pigeonholed as an 'imitator' of existing and already legitimized innovations authored by men: "fluttering around a canon," rather than forming her own (Ibid., 65).

In *Three,* Leon places Ruth's abject handwriting under similar surveillance, as he devours her diary against her will. Meanwhile, she sucks the top of her pen, emotional and leaky. Is this a bodily resistance to Leon's consuming her? Brooke-Rose (1989) draws critical attention in her essay to the labels stuck upon women writers, how the committed absorption of "feminist 'themes'" can reproduce gendered binaries and close a reading down (67). Brooke-Rose promotes "bisexualism" instead, indeterminacy in reading, as well as writing (Ibid., 68). My argument here, as I think with Ruth's intimate coalescence with her inky implement, is that the 'difficulty' of groping experiment signaled by Brooke-Rose includes a fourth unnamed problem: how to write emotion (a dismissed feminist theme) *into* the experimental text, via the uncontainable objects its characters grope for, or *suck*: gestures of the hand and the mouth? And how to do this in a way that opens out desire, writing, sexuality, and gender to fresh possibilities, rather than close such themes down?

This scratches at the assumption, also challenged by Jennifer Doyle (2013) in relation to contemporary performance art, that the difficulty of art considered 'experimental'—its withholding of meaning and dense formalism—usually involves (or is presumed to involve) a "regulation of affect (in which opacity, the difficulty of meaning, is packaged as cool, distanced, and anti-emotional)" (8). Doyle argues conversely that the difficulty of performance artworks is intimately "tied to their emotional and identificatory geometries" (Ibid., 21),[5] a project shared by *Three*, as S expresses in her journal:

> Attempts at censoring any desire to think what should be felt. This is the most difficult. So conditioned are the reflexes they become part of a mausoleum, when emotions outweigh surrounding matter a figure monstrous in shape chiselled from soft substances (Quin 2009, 56).

Invoked by this image of soft substances, and feelings becoming museums, the relational 'shapes' and 'geometries' of the novel, formed by bodies and objects within the home, represents a kind of emotional and experimental phenome-

nology, wherein (like Melanie Klein's "phantasy-with-a-*p*-*h*"), "human mental life becomes populated, not with ideas, representations, knowledges, urges, and repressions, but with *things*, things with physical properties, including people and hacked-off bits of people" (Sedgwick 2007, 629).

This is staged from the novel's outset, when Ruth is "startled from the newspaper" (a published object, denoting masculine publics), by Leonard, "framed in the door-way. … Screen. Sliding doors. Rush matting" (Quin 2009, 1). As a series of room dividers, semi-transparent interfaces, and obstacles, these objects create the affective thickets that clutter and shroud the novel, a suffocating atmosphere of emotions left unspoken, of repressed domestic life, which pricks the skin of the reader. And as she inscribes it here, Quin often favors the 'rule of three' in her enumerations of objects, be it the screens that form an unsettling threshold between inside and out, or S's childhood memories of clutter: the texture and smells of "Eau de cologne. Disinfectant. Mothballs" representing the affective afterlives of things (Ibid., 27), to which we both cling to and seek closure from in equal measure.

For, according to Ahmed (2014), emotions "involve bodily processes of affecting and being affected… emotions are a matter of how we come into contact with objects and others" (208). It is relational and embodied, this emotional matter. Therefore, to locate affect in the sphere of unmediated physiological reactions, and emotion in the sphere of conscious intentionality, as Ahmed (2014) suggests, refutes the blurry ways in which we are 'pressed' upon by bodies and objects (as when S describes the ways "Impressions stain. Spread," in one of her abstract tapes [Quin 2009, 17]), creating feelings that are sometimes unrecognizable *as* feelings, as subjective feelings that belong to us (208). And yet, even when such experiences mark us affectively in this muddy way, like a splash of paint that stains and spreads beyond recognition, this does not make them *impersonal.*

In *Three*, the groping advances of Quin's poetic/prose, where words themselves become things on the page, gestures toward the unsettling kinship between objects, feelings, desires, and the bodies that inhabit them: "emotions handled, shifted about, dropped, picked up, but always attached as a child's pair of gloves" (Quin 2009, 63). Ruth's *personal*, particular agitations, for example, are felt in her constant re-arrangement of domestic furnishings—"She straightened cushions, placed objects in different positions, re-placed chairs, slid the doors apart, stood

between, and faced the room" (Ibid., 3)—so that her emotional frenzy, born from her gendered position, is in a way inseparable from the objects she gropes for and inhabits, *habitually*, through repeated and performative gestures. Or as Ahmed (2006) argues, "Gender is an effect of how bodies take up objects, which involves how they occupy space, by being occupied in one way or another" (59). Ruth's discontented affects are in many ways shaped by the things that fill her space, and yet, as Ahmed (2006) suggests, "sometimes we reach for what is not expected" (62), or we reach for it differently, "becoming an object" (159). This is what Ahmed (2006) calls disorientation, wherein "bodies inhabit spaces that do not extend their shape, or use objects that do not extend their reach" (160). Ruth appears as if a body out of place like this; she is ungrounded, disoriented, and oblique, "estranged from the contours of life at home" (Ahmed 2006, 170), as she busies herself with the rim of a whisky glass, strokes metal pistol lighters, or jabs tweezers manically into the air.

Ruth longs for "some*thing*, someone" (Quin 2009, 10; italics mine), but departs from what will "cohere" (Ahmed 2006, 70) or straighten: the home, its objects, her desire. Instead, her affective, haptic gestures point to the queer effects and possibilities of disorientation, with and through, objects-in-space. For example, Ruth deviates from the horizontal and vertical axes of space, by shifting objects' usage, or offering a new 'perspective' on what 'to do' with them. Her affects make her both passive and subversive in the ways she brings objects near, signalling affective *undercurrents* of agency. Such encounters open up a visionary, but disorienting, angle on the world that opens up the affective complexities of female sexual desire. When she holds the whisky glass, her lips also nudge "the inside" (Quin 2009, 6), in a suggestion of onanistic pleasure. Or, after trying on clothes; squeezing into dresses; struggling out of them; touching the material; tracing the design; folding and unfolding blouses; slipping them on and off; holding a necklace above her neck, its beads springing fatally apart; she then licks the broken beads, replaces "them on her extended nipples, her head thrown back, knees pressed into the carpet, feet together" (Ibid., 12). Haptic encounters such as these, as when Ruth "scratched the edge of the eiderdown… hugging the transistor which she turned low, hand sliding up the aerial" (Ibid., 15), invite new readings of queer autoeroticism (following Sedgwick 1993). Quin uncovers the covert pleasures of disorientation, of keeping the lines of desire and its objects waywardly off-kilter. Tentacular gropings.

'To grope' also finds a secondary meaning in *Three* that renders the sexual body an objectified 'thing'. Ruth is violently raped by her husband, his heavy actions silencing her cries: "He lifted her back, parted her legs. No Leon don't not now—

not like this. He pressed down, held himself over her mouth, between her breasts. Don't cry shhh there. He touched her with his fingers" (Quin 2009, 78). As a shocking and abject portrait of marital rape, it is portrayed as disturbingly 'everyday', a recurring event that Ruth attempts to clean from her skin (eradicating the violence of his touch) with the towel she asks him to fetch. This is one example of the ways in which Quin rejects the idea that sex is "sublime or even beautiful" (Doyle 2006, xxi), instead exposing the quotidian machinations of power that cause, reap, even dangerously legitimize, sexual violence within the home. It is a painful and raw scene, couched within the writing's perspectival and dialogic blur.

The triangular blur of *Three* is thus also about the blur of desire that disorients and unsettles: the slippages between intimacy and violence; between straightness and queerness; between pleasure and pain; between emotion, affect, and feeling. "The divinity of desire is an ambivalent being," writes Carson (1986) in *Eros the Bittersweet*, "at once friend and enemy who informs the erotic experience with emotional paradox" (5). Like water (and like fantasy), it cannot be fully known or held, as Carson (1995) suggests in her hydro ethnography (117), further demonstrated in the seascape scenes of S's masochistic fantasies that are etched into journal entries, which blur the line between fiction and reality. S's fantasies involve drenched fragments on a "cliff edge, the sea spilling into the sky. Back to front. Kneeling. Like dogs. He said. Arms stretched out, bodies arched, more submission demanded. And rolling over as in waves. With the waves" (Quin 2009, 71). Her desire to submit, to relish in self-abandonment, and become a 'sex object' (Doyle 2006, 99)—as excessive and transgressive as the ocean's currents—disorients the lines of heterosexual desire that connects intercourse with the fulfilling of reproductive capacities. It replaces the domestic "boundaries of bed, floor, walls" (Quin 2009, 71). As a complex portrait of female sexual desire that shows its masochistic, violent, affective, and outdoor-public variants, it points to the radical vision of Quin's love triangle, the ways it oozes and gropes beyond borders, strays off the line of the vertical.

> (N: For S, to lose herself to another is to be born anew by the tides. Sex as primordial, an act as old as the oceans, this all betrays a thirst for knowledge, for new acts, new words: amniotic becomings.)

6. Drawings

I am hereby arguing—via wayward diversions, fragments, intrusions, mutterings, gestures, and encounters—that *Three* is also 'drawn' at a 45-degree angle; its vision on the world tilts sideways. Quin plays with, writes 'with', the wayward slashes of the triangle, waving and rotating forward and back, like the frenetic movement of desire (Carson 1987, 17). *Three*'s textual spaces—formal, sexual, affective, autobiographical—are shaped according to this line, this 'dis/orientation': neither horizontal, nor vertical, but both; the 'novel' occupies a state of radical in-betweenness. Ahmed (2006) hopes that when the "reproduction of the facts […] fails," "new impressions… new lines… new objects… even new bodies" will emerge and gather in spaces redrawn (62). And hidden with the oblique, disorienting textures of *Three*, it is possible to find them: not only in the non-linear narrative depiction of an erotic love triangle that is smeared across the novel's surface, and which immediately challenges the monolithic and vertical structures of the heterosexual couple and nuclear family, but also in the queer geometries formed by Ruth and S in the slantwise, murky shadows of journal, dialogue, and tape.

'Pressed' by bodies and objects (Ahmed 2014, 208), Ruth gropes for the diagonal line in her intimate encounters with the disembodied, inanimate spectre of S, deviating 'off line' in her autoerotic encounters with domestic objects, in her absorption within S's posthumous documents, in her sickness and her sweat. She is the dis/oriented queer subject becoming an object, feeling the "oblique… as another kind of gift" (Ahmed 2014, 107). Here the wayward directionality of 'queer' as a sexual and spatial orientation materializes, and the verticality of the home gets redrawn at a slant. As Ahmed (2014) suggests, "Queer orientations might be those that don't line up, which by seeing the world 'slantwise' allow other objects to come into view" (107). In *Three*, these include Ruth's autoerotic objects, as well as the watery objects of S's uncontainable, masochistic fantasies (multiplying triangles upon triangles).

These moments of queer disorientation within the novel are intimately connected with the fragile, confusing, and shifting contradictions of affect (it too is a diagonal line: unfixed). Hence, while queer disorientation in *Three* might begin with the "bodily feeling of losing one's place, and an effect of the loss of a place" (Ahmed 2014, 160), from this experience of groundlessness, comes the possibility of groping and desiring, *obliquely*, as a radical way of living and loving and feeling and embodying, as another way of *writing*. The triangular drama of *Three* evolves from the slanting, blurring, wayward, and perverse, effects of that

shape. It repeats, gets redrawn, over and over again, on tangents that deviate from the central triad, through affective and erotic encounters with objects, through investments in writing, through the writing of fantasy. In effect, it is spliced through with disorienting diagonal slashes that refuse the straight singularities of love, desire, affect, and *form*.

And so is this essay, which has groped—through the gestural layering of correspondent voices: beside A and N and more—for a revised understanding of triangular relationships, in particular a new shape of feminist art/writing that draws affect and love into theory, a type of citational kinship. Feeling its way with its tentacular arms that slash, this shape spasms between: forms and disciplines; jealousy and love; straightness and queerness; allo and auto; presence and absence. As an interdisciplinary methodology, it has attended to the aims of performative writing to embody, and re-live, the contributions of its absent beloved. It has thought 'with' the radical geometries of *Three* by way of evocation, restaging the complex affects and desires of the writer's love triangle, this one specifically (but there will be more, for triangles can multiply). "Fingers take on a life of their own," in this essay, "angles drawn in the air" (Quin 2009, 55). It is this angle, this perverse line, mapping a wayward course forward, that I am transfixed by. It opens up the possibility for a future of disoriented writing, where forms, voices, disciplines, and desires, slip and swim astray… *away*.

*

Postscript: a special thank you to Natalie Ferris for her words, epistles, readings, and writings; for allowing me to think and write with our triangle:

A
N, A.

Endnotes

1. See Ferris, Natalie. (2021). *Abstraction in Post-War British Literature 1945-1980*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Forthcoming.

2. There has been a resurgence of interest in Quin's work over the past ten years. In scholarly terms, PhD theses have focused on situating her experimental fictions within social, political, cultural, and creative landscapes (Williams 2013; Hodgson 2014; Van Hove 2017; White 2020), and writers have mused about Quin's influence and contemporary significance (Levy 2016; Rourke 2018; Home nd.). Quin scholar, Jennifer Hodgson, is writing a book on Quin's life and work, which follows Robert Buckeye's critical biography *Re: Quin* (2013).

3. For more on the concept of triangles in Sedgwick's living and theorizing of identification, see Wiegman, Robyn. (2015). Eve's Triangles, or Queer Studies Beside Itself. *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 26 (1), pp. 48-73.

4. In the entry for 'grope' included in *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature* Vol. 2 (1994), Gordon Williams refers to a 1560 description of the "sexual preliminaries" in Scott's "Scorne of Wantoun Wemen," in which "brasing, graping, and plucking" signifies the "genital caress" of 'groping'.

5. Jennifer Doyle slides between the terms, 'affect', 'feeling', and 'emotion' in this book, avoids naming their differences, because, as she argues, when art that is "defined by its work with affect, emotion, or feeling," is accompanied by a "critical language that presumes (even provisionally) that feelings are self-evident, that emotions can be parsed and catalogued, produced and consumed at will," in a way that affects *cannot*, the reading becomes emptied out of the specific effects of the works themselves (2013, xiv). I am indebted to this same relationality in the terminology I employ.

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A Magnolia species: flowering stem with labelled floral segments, fruit and seed,
coloured etching by G. D. Ehret, c.1737, after himself.
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Untitled, Jon Read, 2021
jonreadsart.squarespace.com

DÉJÀ VU ALL OVER AGAIN

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Part One

While no one knows exactly when or where it started, the term "lurkers" was, like many terms, first coined online, in a reddit group dedicated to dream analysis. It was there that the word took on a new sense and a new meaning, different from but predicated on its use as a term for people who only passively observed events online. That was well before it became its own topic, even its own veritable subculture, spawning its own chatrooms, youtube channels, and podcasts. Depending on which of the many channels, threads, or stories you watched, read or listened to, lurkers were signs of demonic possession, proof of past lives, or evidence of alien abductions. These different theories became their own subcultures in turn; there were entire threads and youtube channels dedicated to each interpretation, corresponding flame wars between different schools of thought, and, of course, memes that become more insular, more indecipherable with each passing month. No one over thirty was interested at all, or could make sense of the terms 'lurkers,' 'lurking,' or all of the various memes and jokes about lurking. This made it easier to discount at first; the existence of a new vocabulary, not to mention entire debates, that were primarily online and primarily involved young people was not surprising. All of these debates and discussions were side effects, symptoms really, of a profound sense of unease that was discounted precisely because no one could possibly understand it.

It would be years before accounts of lurkers migrated from the internet to more established media, longer still before doctors, sociologists, and scientists tried to make sense of the phenomena. The first accounts were innocuous enough, describing a sort of anxiety that was described as "slightly creepy" or a "little skeevy" by the people who experienced it. Individuals would report an acute sense of being watched, being observed in their most private moments. Being watched is not entirely correct, as the term suggests being observed by a person or a camera: someone looking from the outside. Lurking was something different, more intimate and uncanny. Individuals reported a sense of being watched not from outside, but almost from within, as if there were two minds, two consciousnesses, experiencing the same thing. The experience of being "lurked," as it was sometimes called was not constant. It was most prevalent at important events and memorable experiences. People recounted a feeling of being watched at prom, at weddings, and when they had their first kiss. Everyone who experienced this experience of lurking reported not just feeling watched but with it an almost overwhelming sense of sadness. Some broke out in tears in the middle of their own wedding, or started sobbing uncontrollably in the middle of some happy event.

As Alysha Greene wrote in a reddit post dedicated to lurkers, "I had a crush on Byron since eighth grade and after waiting for what seemed like forever we were on our first date. When he kissed me I noticed two things: First, his breath was so clean, minty even. I thought it was so sweet that he had a mint or something. Second, I remember feeling so sad. I didn't know why. We were kissing for the first time, but it felt like we had already broken up or something. It was new but it felt like it was over."

As the experience of lurkers moved from reddit and youtube to psychiatrist's offices and medical journals, new explanations and theories emerged, more sociological and psychological than supernatural and paranormal. Lurking, it was argued, was an unavoidable side effect of a life spent online. People were so used to sharing everything, posting photos, status updates, and videos, that they experienced everything twice, once as they lived it and a second time as they imagined it would be seen by others. The experience of "Lurkers" was nothing more than a particularly intense version of the generalized exhibition that permeated contemporary life. As for the sadness, that was easily explained as well, whenever this new online generation experienced something unshareable, something so private or inexpressible that it could not be instagrammed, or conveyed by a meme, there

was a sadness as if it was lost. What could not be shared was not really lived. As Jennifer Brissard put in her bestselling book *Lurking: The Malady of a Digital Age,* "The psychological experience of lurking was nothing more than the last vestiges of privacy in a world that had lost it."

Part Two

Dr. Thomas Ogovye invented time travel in the 2053. The time travel he invented was not what the phrase suggests. There was no time machine, no physical displacement at all. Physicists had known for decades that it was not possible to physically transport oneself back in time. What Dr. Ogovye discovered was that it was possible to transport one's consciousness, one's awareness back to a previous period in one's life. Time travel was less a matter of physically traveling to some bygone era than it was return to a previous period in one's own biography. More like rewinding a reel of film than taking a journey. Meager as it was, such time travel still seemed like it was enough to save the world.

That Dr. Ogovye research was funded at all revealed how desperate things had become. The collapse of much of the world's agricultural production in 2052 had led to starvation and brutal wars for survival. There were attempts, desperate attempts, to do anything to reverse or change the course of things. Money was spent on global cooling projects, desalinization plants, anything that would offer hope for the surviving three billion. It was a small matter to spend a few million on time travel. With the exception of the stifled giggles as he walked through the campus' cafeteria Dr. Ogovye did his research more or less undisturbed. Everything changed, at least momentarily when he made his first trip back, traveling back nearly forty years to the day when his son, Jacob was born. Dr. Ogoyve did not know how word got out, but he was alarmed to see the headline "Time Travel Works: World Saved" trending across the social networks. Such a proclamation seemed very premature to his careful, methodological way of proceeding.

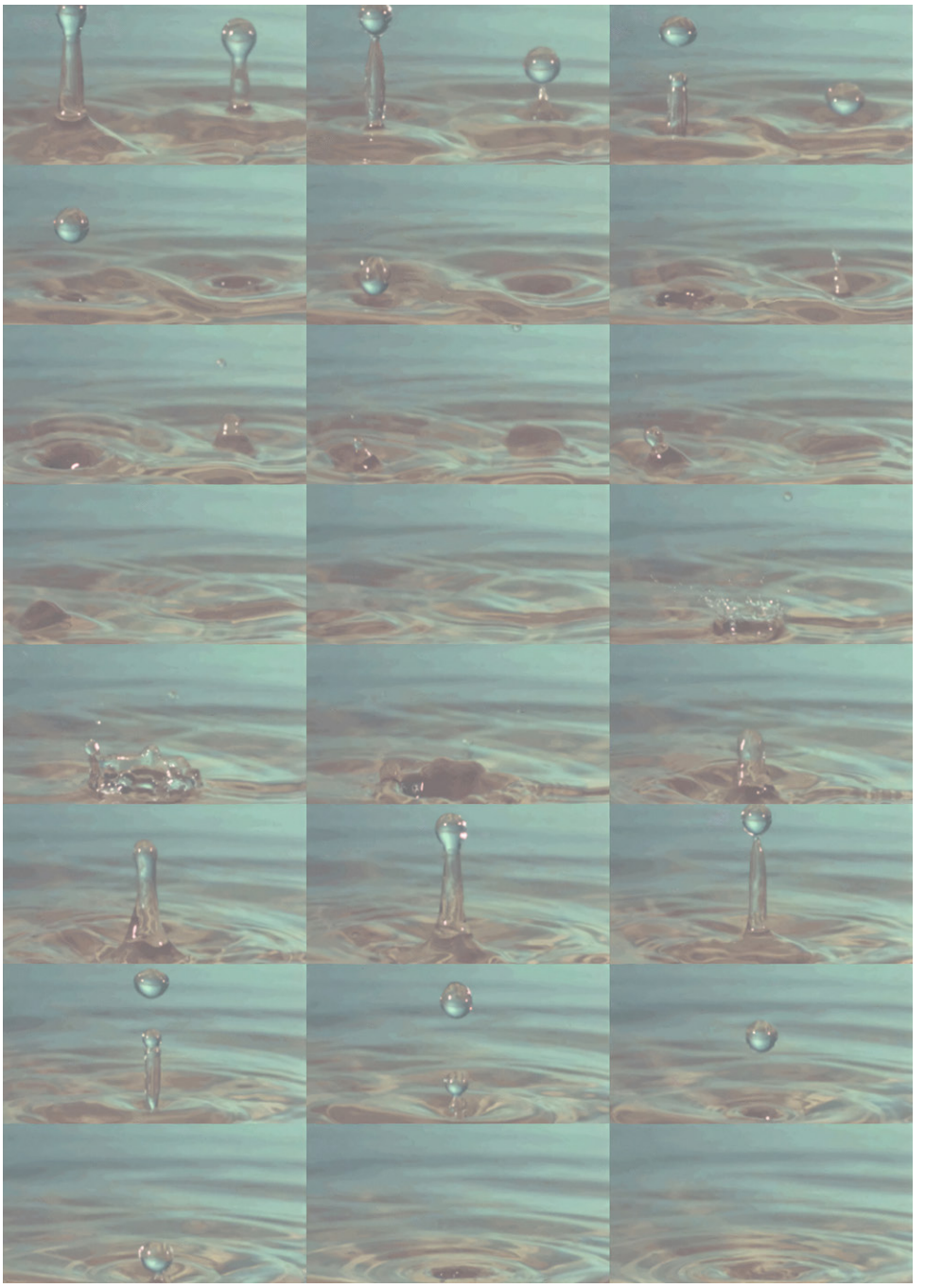
Thomas' caution was well placed. He learned quickly that not only could one only travel back to a previous period in their life, limiting the scope of time travel to at most eighty years, but one could only watch, only observe what had already taken place. As much as Thomas and his fellow researchers tried there was no way to communicate to their past selves, no way to warn them of the coming pandemics, the catastrophically warming atmosphere, or the dying oceans. They could only watch themselves living a moment that seemed blissfully unaware. Thomas consoled himself by reminding himself that he and his fellow time travelers had no real news to deliver. Everyone already knew, or could know with a

little research, about climate change, the viral breeding ground of factory farms, and the warming oceans. The predictions had been made long in advance. However, it was hard to shake the feeling that an eyewitness to the apocalypse could make a difference. People refuse to believe what they cannot see and the people of Thomas' world had seen so much.

Thomas Ogovye lost interest in his time displacement technology, and so did much of the world. It did not live up to its hype and the world moved on to the extent that it could. As with many new technologies a second, unintended use was discovered. It was possible for people to go back and relive past moments of their life. To live, however briefly, a life free of want and fear, to experience pleasures long since gone. Reliving a past memory was more intense than just recalling it; it was living it all over again. Many spent hours living as much as they could in the past. Such a refuge was open only to the oldest survivors, to those who were kids, teenagers, or even young adults in the period of blissful ignorance that was the early years of the twenty-first century. Anyone younger would only be able to remember wars, plagues, and famines best forgotten. It was also only an opportunity available to the wealthy. The technology was not cheap. Reliving the past could only be done under the observation of a neurologist who guarded against psychosis and delusion.

In the end Thomas had saved a world, just not the world. The oldest and wealthiest were able to spend their lives behind guarded compounds remembering and mourning the lives they had lived as young men and women, lurking in the past.

A man holding a bunch of flowers; representing good wishes
coloured photographic postcard, c.1920–1929
Public domain



Untitled GIF, 2014
https://media.giphy.com/media/o7HIboeMPbj9K/giphy.gif

THE MATTER OF TEARS: TRANSLUCENT ENTANGLEMENTS WITH/IN COUNSELLING ENCOUNTERS

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ABSTRACT

Tears have long been documented in human culture. Tracing their history reveals the very different ways culture has shaped their expression and meaning. In more recent history, human tears have been thought to signify an internalised psychological state, with displays ruled by particular constraining forces within Western society. In this essay, I propose a reconceptualising of tears instead as intra-active cultural, political, social, material and affective phenomena (Barad, 2007). This reconceptualization is stimulated by (and in the context of) the social practice of counselling, and within that, the process of becoming a counsellor. I draw on data gathered with a diverse group of counsellors-in-training over the period of one year using a collective biography methodology. Engaging in a diffractive, rather than reflexive, process of data analysis, which marks a decentring of the individual subject of inquiry, and instead requires an opening up to the intra-active flows, matter, and material-discursive practices, I document how tears came to matter, both as an object of analysis, and for counsellors-in-training, in relation to the multiple forces enacting them.

KEYWORDS

tears, diffraction, posthumanism, affect, counselling

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Porous

A fantail rests on the table
part object,
becoming child—
its flight sweeps through me.
A piwakawaka i becomes monarch—
both vessels of dead living love.
Porous boundaries leaking,
in/animate flux
of me-you-boys-who've-gone
but will (not) leave
marks on bodies
that will not erase.

The moment, because it really was only a moment, this poem refers to occurred at the end of a counselling supervision session where I was in the role of supervisor with a counsellor-client whom I had been working with for about two years. The moment this poem depicts is of the emergence of tears, mine, although they were not the only tears present. These were not glassy or watery eyes, but tears rolling down my cheeks, this is perhaps the first time I had experienced this in a counselling session, despite the years I have spent sitting with people telling me the most agonizing and painful stories. Jack Katz (1999), in his book *How Emotions Work*, suggests crying ought to be one of the more compelling areas for research in the human sciences, yet its study is oddly absent. Crying, he suggests, says "What's going on now hits me just where I live. Something has struck at one of the primordial homes of my identity." (175).

In the following essay, I outline how I was compelled to turn toward this study of tears, ultimately exploring the identity of tears, as entangled with other identities, objects, affects, words, spaces, pasts, presents and futures yet to come. While I use the terms crying, weeping, and tears interchangeably in reflecting the following cultural, historical, and psychological literature, I use the term tears for my own analytic work in order to signify tears as *matter* in an agential-realist framework (Barad 2007). As a process oriented philosophy, the matter of tears do not reflect tears as fixed, static, or boundaried but rather as a dynamic, iterative becoming. In this sense, tears are "not a thing, but a doing, a congealing of agency." They are "morphologically active, responsive, generative, articulate, and alive. Mattering is the ongoing differentiating of the world" (Barad 2013, 17).

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Beginnings: diverse cultural, psychological and discursive constructions of tears

The documented presence of human tears in culture can be found as far back in history as the fourteenth-century B.C. in North-Western Syria. These early intimations offer a rich beginning for thinking about the diverse meanings tears acquire and their power to embody and signify. I begin by drawing on Tom Lutz's extensive work on the natural and cultural history of crying, followed by more contemporary psychological and discursive theorizations of tears in order to illustrate some of these ways in which crying and tears have been conceptualized, before turning to a feminist new materialist orientation to counsellor-in-training tears.

Found on Canaanite clay tablets, a narrative poem tells the story of the death of Ba'alz, an earth god worshipped by several ancient Middle Eastern cultures, and of how his sister, the goddess Anat, responds to the news of his death. The accepted scholarly translation of this particular part of the poem is that Anat "continued sating herself with weeping, to drink tears like wine" (Lutz 1999, 33). Seemingly a recognizable grief induced response—weeping at the loss of her brother—the scholar who produced this translation argued that the story was actually related to a springtime tribal ritual which moved from communal weeping and wailing to hysterical and raucous laughing over the course of several days. Interestingly, in this ritual, "frantic crying and raucous laughter are not opposed emotional displays but part of a continuum" (Lutz 1999, 34) which viewed such emotional expression as a source of fundamental pleasure and social cohesion.

Further explorations of historical texts, particularly Greek sources, make even clearer this nourishing, sustaining, and pleasurable association with tears and crying, often in the form of transformative rituals. Lutz refers to *The Iliad,* where Homer talks of "desire for lamentation" and "taking satisfaction in lament" (cited in Lutz 1999, 34). Ultimately, Lutz concludes that weeping was so pleasurable that it was seen to "make one 'shiver' with delight" (35). This association of tears with pleasure is was evident as recently as the mid twentieth century. For example, when psychologists began studying the psychophysiology of tears, William James wrote in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890), pleasure was possible during the actual weeping part of what was called the "dry sorrow-weeping" cycle (James cited in Lutz 1999, 35). Later, physiological psychologists, including Silvan Tomkins, continued to make suggestive arguments about tears and pleasure; however, as Lutz (1999) concludes, the pleasure of tears remains inexplicably unexplored and, I would suggest, lost within the current cultural imaginary.

More contemporary psychological associations with the expression of adult tears include "powerlessness/helplessness, the loss (or threat of the loss) of an important relationship, and, at the opposite end of the spectrum, exceptional performances and the forging of new bonds" (Vingerhoets 2013, 261). Vingerhoets and Bylsma (2016) add, "in addition, perceived empathy, altruism, and a basic sense of justice, essential building blocks of human society, are major reasons for tearfulness in adults" (214). However, Lutz suggests a perhaps more complex and contradictory understanding of tears. He says, "[i]t is often …mixed emotions or competing desires—fear mixed with desire, hope mixed with despair—that can trigger the release of tears" (Lutz 1999, 22). Regardless whether they are described as tears of happiness, joy, pride, mourning, frustration, or despair, such an expression of emotion is generally viewed as an outward sign of an individual's emotional interiority or of reflecting a particularly individual, personal meaning or experience.

Several scholars have suggested that the process of civilization has been responsible for the increased restraints on the public displays of emotion, including crying (Vingerhoets 2013). Indeed, neoliberalism, with its "emphasis on the making of particular kinds of selves" in contemporary society, creates the conditions to increase the likelihood of tears for subjects "always on the boundaries of failure" (McAvoy 2015, 26). At the same time precluding the expression of such emotion, lest it affirm the very failure the individual subject strives to avoid. Drawing on humanism's binaries, or dualisms, such as: subject—object; self—other; mind—body; male—female; rational—emotional (Haraway, 2004), we see, too, how emotion is subversively relegated to be 'less than' its dominating and colonizing partner, reason. The effects of humanism's binaries are far-reaching and, indeed, devastating to many of those on the wrong side, who "have struggled to reclaim and rewrite untold histories, to subvert what counts as knowledge and truth, and to challenge those who claim the authority to speak for them" (St-Pierre & Pillow 2000, 5).

Tears are messy, an uncontained leaky bodily fluid, perhaps even unpredictable, incoherent, and irrational—material evidence of what a sexist, neoliberal society would identify as a 'feminized self,' and characterize as a 'poor relation' to the hegemonic, rational, self-contained, coherent, knowing man. Such affective practices stand in stark contrast to the power of the contemporary neoliberal discourse that prioritizes and constitutes individuals as autonomous, rational, self-maximizing, economically productive subjects (Davies & Bansel 2007; McAvoy 2015).

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Tears in the counselling room

The discussion above explores crying and tears from historical (Lutz 1999), psychological (Vingerhoets 2013) and discursive (McAvoy 2015) vantage points, in an attempt to understand causes, meanings, effects, and displays of such a mysterious and complex phenomenon (Vingerhoets 2013). Yet there has been little attention given to the study of tears in the counselling literature, despite studies finding that tears occur with great regularity in helping relationships (e.g. doctor-patient; nurse-patient; therapist-client) (Blume-Marcovici, Stolberg & Khademi 2013; 2015; Lutz 1999). Indeed, while recent studies have found between 72% (Blume-Marcovici et al. 2013) and 87% (t' Lam, Vingerhoets, & Bylsma 2018) of therapists report having cried in therapy, there are less than a handful of studies on this topic (Knox, Hill, Knowlton, Chui, Pruitt & Tate 2017; Morgan & Nutt Williams 2020). Findings from this small body of work have primarily focused on the therapeutic context of tears (e.g. grief and loss), therapist perspectives on the effects of therapist tears on the therapeutic relationship, and on psychotherapeutic processes. Causes of therapist tears tended to be framed in personal, circumstantial, and emotional terms, such as a strong empathic response, a triggering of their own loss or grief, or a symptom of burnout. Therapists tended to worry about the effects and appropriateness of their tears for clients, while wanting to remain in control of their emotions (Knox et al. 2017).

This attention, in the broader literature on crying and tears, to the finer detail of psychological, social, and cultural forces and encounters offers a somewhat familiar analysis of social context determinants and cultural and historical variability, with the counselling literature offers a primarily psychological framing of therapist tears. In the following sections I turn to my own doctoral research, outlining how deploying a feminist new materialist approach opens me as researcher up to 'seeing' the matter of tears as an object of analysis, and how, through such a reconceptualization, therapist tears came to matter in myriad ways.

Data that glows: researcher-data intra-actions and the emergence of tears as an object of study

This research data was originally generated with feminist and post-structuralist aims of exploring and mapping the embodied encounters of counsellors-in-training as "subjects-in-relation, subjects-in-process" and of making visible the discursive processes of subjection, (Davies 2009, 8), in order to think differently (from predominantly humanistic views) about counselling and counsellor identity. Inspired by Collective Biography methodology (Davies and Gannon 2006; 2012)

I, as researcher, met with a small group of eight counsellors-in-training for a series of eight three-hour workshops over the course of a one-year period. Participants were invited to explore, through processes of talking, listening, making, and sensing, critical incidents or meaningful encounters contributing to their identity formation as counsellors. Data from these video recorded workshops included verbal content (transcribed), affect, silences, emotion, physical space, and other matter arising in the time and space of data analysis.

Coming to 'see' tears in this data emerged with an onto-epistemological shift to feminist new materialism (Barraclough 2018), through an intra-active process of engagement with feminist new materialist theory (Barad 2007) and of paying attention to data that "*glow*" (Maclure 2010, 282). These were tears which were talked about by participants at the workshops, as emerging in encounters with clients in counselling sessions, both as present on counsellors' faces and/or in their eyes, and/or as felt in the body (a restrained desire to cry) but not emergent on the face (ghostly). Tears at times also re-emerged during the collective biography workshops, as participants re-called such moments in the counselling sessions.

This intra-active process of coming to 'see' tears in this body of data refers to Barad's notion of intra-action (2007). The concept of intra-action is key to her agential-realist framework and stands in contrast to the usual 'interaction,' underscoring a profound conceptual shift. Interacting components, such as human and non-human forces, observers and observed, or data, theory, and human researchers suggest the interaction of independent, pre-existing, separate entities. Intra-action, on the other hand, delineates the ontological inseparability of these entities, the non-dualistic nature, with the emergence of their boundaries and properties only becoming determinate through the larger material arrangement (material practices). In this way, phenomena such as 'tears,' are merely a part of the world's ongoing, dynamic, and intra-active becoming, emerging as specific configurations or articulations in relation with the time and space of the research entanglement.

Thinking with theory as an intra-active process of analysis, entailed "an embodied engagement with the materiality of research data: a becoming-with the data as researcher" (Lenz Taguchi 2012, 265). It is not that the phenomenon of tears lay inertly waiting in the data to be found and studied as an object of analysis. It is not that there are a finite number of analytic objects requiring unearthing in

the data. Rather, tears emerged through my "body as a space of transit," (Lenz Taguchi 2012, 265), that is, through the intra-action of multiple, dynamic subjectivities of counsellor, woman, mother, researcher (…) with the material-discursive phenomena that we have labelled 'data.' This entangled process then produced the *glow* of tears.

MacLure (2013) states that the glow of data appears around singular points, "—'bottlenecks, knots and foyers' " (Deleuze 2004, in MacLure, 662), that, she says, involve a loss of mastery over language (and ultimately, over ourselves). Drawing on a feminist new materialist theoretical orientation, I re-turned to my data with a desire to look beyond the post-structural subject with which I was most familiar, to decenter this individual subject and instead open up to matter, flows, intensities. I re-turned to the voices, sounds, and bodies of my participants, invoking, too, MacLure's (2013) notion of wonder, around what came to matter during the hours we met together over the period of several months. This required attention to desire, intensity, and the embodied felt sense of something reaching up from the data to grab hold of me. I centered MacLure's affective descriptions of wonder as "movements of desire and intensity that connect bodies—human and nonhuman, animate or inanimate" (MacLure 2013, 229) and as a "potentiality [that] can be felt on occasions where something…seems to reach out from the inert corpus (corpse) of the data, to grasp us" (MacLure 2013, 228). Such an orientation to data analysis perhaps requires a letting go of old practices of industrious, mechanical, and cognitive searches for meaning within inert data and instead requires a greater attunement to and reliance on the senses, that, ironically perhaps, invoke a capacity for further thought. In letting go of a cognitive approach and attuning to the senses invokes capacity for further thought, what started to glow for me, and immediately became evident as intra-active (material-discursive) phenomena, were 'tears.' Starting my research from such a decentered position, invited a seeing, feeling, and sensing with/in the data ultimately opened me up to new and different ways of knowing.

There are likely a multitude of intra-active forces which led me here, to notice, investigate, and map entangled genealogies (Barad 2007) of counsellor-in-training tears. From personal childhood (and adult) experiences of tears as involuntary and excessive, undesirable, and unavoidable, to witnessing the pain-filled tears of clients and students, friends, and family, who shamefully apologize and wipe away this evidence of a natural-cultural physiological process. The researcher-I was also influenced by the voluminous counsellor education literature on the perceived negative emotional effects of learning counselling, and the often resulting individualized solution to find better ways of coping (e.g. Elliot & Wheeler 2010; Rønnestad & Skovholt 2003; Truell 2001).

The plentiful presence of tears as a site of intense affect in the data seemed to offer a way of exploring this further, but from a theoretically different perspective than the previously dominant individualized, psychological framings in the counselling literature, offering an opening also into material and discursive forces shaping the emergence of the tears. My desire was to also challenge and reconfigure normative practices and assumptions related to emotion, crying, and the discomfort of visible displays of tears. Such normative practices needlessly contribute to increased self-flagellation and pain that, most likely, contributes to the *glow* of tears. Desiring to make a "demonstrable difference" (Bell 2012, 117), to undo the rational-emotional binary, and taking up the agential-realist's "responsibility for the world's becoming," and to "to contest and rework what matters and what is excluded from mattering" (Barad 2003, 827) is no doubt another force in the materialization of tears as object of analysis through this boundary making analytic practice.

Conceptualising tears as affective-material-discursive phenomena

Having experienced this emergence of tears as an object of inquiry with/in the data, I then turned to a further inquiry of what might emerge through an analysis of tears as an affective-material-discursive practice, or "phenomena" (Barad 2007). This meant seeing the materialization of tears as inseparable from and intra-active with, the discursive conditions that mutually constitute them. That is, tears not as "entities with inherent boundaries and properties but phenomena that acquire specific boundaries and properties through the open-ended dynamics of intra-activity" (Barad 2007, 172). In this sense, the discursive practices and the materiality of the tears do not "stand in a relationship of externality to each other," neither are they "ontologically or epistemologically prior" and neither are they "articulated or articulable in the absence of the other; matter and meaning are mutually articulated" (Barad 2007, 152).

The more we understand the physiology of tears the more apparent this dynamic entanglement of matter and meaning becomes. For example, three different kinds of tears are recognized by physiologists and ophthalmologists. These tears not only have different functions but also have different chemical, hormonal, and protein compositions—referred to as basal, reflex, and psychic tears. Lutz (1999)

illustrates that “basal tears are the continuous tears that lubricate our eyeballs. Reflex or irritant tears are produced when we chop onions, for instance, or get poked in the eye. Psychic or emotional tears are those caused by, and communicating, specific emotional states” (67).

In a fascinating photographic study by photographer Rose-Lynn Fisher, shared in her book *The Topography of Tears* (2017), Fisher has explored the physical terrain of more than one hundred tears emitted during a range of emotional states and physical reactions by using an optical microscope with an attached digital camera. There are many factors determining the resulting tear image, including "volume of tear fluid, evaporation or flow, biological variations, microscope and camera settings, and how I process and print the photograph" (Fisher 2017, 8). Comprising a wide range of her own and others’ tears, from elation to onions, as well as sorrow, frustration, rejection, resolution, laughing, yawning, birth and rebirth, Fisher (2017) suggests "it's as though each one of our tears carries a microcosm of the collective human experience" (8).

In noticing the very different material composition of tears as well as the forces of their entanglement with the visual photographic-microscopic image of tears (including the apparatus of measurement), tears as intra-active phenomena becomes evident. Through immersion with/in the data it became apparent that there were diverse and situated patterning processes at work in the enactment of tears. Paying attention to these offered the opportunity to bring forth the complex and multiple material-discursive forces at work, not just in the materialization of tears, but through tears, in the (re)(con)figuration of counsellor-in-training subjectivities.

Thinking in this way, tears are construed not as an object or thing with inherent boundaries, but rather as an entangled, dynamic relationality, where the boundaries of intra-acting forces are reconfigured to produce the real, material, situated effect of tears. This analysis aims not to understand the essence or singular meaning of tears as produced by a bounded individual, rather, thinking tears in this way invites an analytic focus on the boundary making practices, or forces, that intra-act in producing the ever-increasing multiplicity of tears. Generating such a multiplicity then acts to destabilize reductionist, naturalized notions of tears as only emotional, as failure, as female, and so on. Instead, new models are generated for being and becoming-with tears, which are multiple, processual, dynamic, and open-ended (Baker 2013).

Drawing on Whatmore (2006), and staying with a relational ontology, tears can be seen to be a “force of intensive relationality,” an intensity that is felt but is not personal, and that is visceral but is “not confined to an individuated body” (604).

Such a view of the affective nature of tears in particular, although from a different tradition, also aligns with Wetherell's (2012) theorizing of the affective-discursive. She argues that "human affect is inextricably linked with meaning-making and with the semiotic (broadly defined) and the discursive. It is futile to try to pull them apart. An affective practice like a dancing plague recruits material objects, institutions, pasts and anticipated futures" (20). This aligns with Barad's notion of intra-activity, and the inseparability of mutually entangled forces, including space, time, matter, and discourse. What Wetherell's work brings to this discussion in particular is a focus on the *affective* nature of such an entanglement or practice. As she says, "it is the participation of the emoting body that makes an assemblage (cf. entanglement) an example of affect rather than an example of some other kind of social practice" (2012, 159). Tears in this sense, as an affective intensity, are inseparably entangled with other matter, bodies, times and spaces, and momentarily located in and on a body, embodied.

Poetics as analysis—making intra-active tear-poems

At this point, I turn back to the data and transcorporeal engagements in order to show what might be materialized or made visible through the enactment of tears as intra-active patterns and to examine how they may be figured differently. In performing this analysis with the data from the workshops, a number of intra-active tear patterns emerged, that were configured through the analytic device of the poem. I use Suchman's (2012) definition of an analytic device as an inventive method, an analytic resource, through which things are made. I constructed a number of poems from the participants' talk of tears in the group sessions, in relation to the stories they recounted of crying and of the materialization of tears, in their eyes and on their faces, while performing their roles on placements as counsellors in counselling sessions. In keeping with Barad's agential realist ontology, these patterns are not seen to be exhaustive or representative, rather, in the time and space of the lives and groups of these participants and with myself as researcher, they are what came to matter.

Though creating the tear-poems from the talk of participants shaped the initial stage of my data analysis, the next stage turned to both theory and the poems in order to further enact the contingent and entangled "processes of *patterning*" (Hughes & Lury 2013, 786) in the space-time-mattering of tears. In such an

intra-active approach, I was reminded that this process is one of experimental encounter, where "the researcher does not know in advance what onto-epistemological knowledge will emerge from the experimental mix of *concepts, emotions, bodies, images, and affects"* (Davies 2014, 734, emphasis added). In addition, the researcher's body acts as a "space of transit" (Lenz Taguchi 2012, 265) for transcorporeal engagements with data, theory, and other multiple elements of the research encounter, too infinite to be listed.

Through this research I had become familiar with the use of the poem as a method of inquiry (Richardson 1994), to think with. In a reconfiguring, I now think of the poem as an analytic device, as a structure which "cuts things together-apart" to produce an intra-active pattern (Barad 2013, 2). The poem offers a structure to map myriad interferences, of human and non-human encounters and non-linear figurations of time and space (Barraclough 2018). Poems, like Osgood and Giugni's (2015) *Odes and PhArts*, are offered as "valid knowledges generated as non-representational figurations that capture the intensities, fragments, impressions, politics and affects" (355) of entangled, intra-active, multi-sensibilities. While Osgood and Giugni similarly present *Odes* as a "materialization of post-humanist logic to reconfigure and offer diffractive readings" (355) they do so *not* with the intention of decoding them. In contrast, while my intention is also to offer poems as valid knowledges, it is to use them additionally as an analytic tool with which to map and think in relation to my encounters with the data and theory, and in order to ask 'how and what comes to matter for counsellors-in-training?'

I draw here too on Barad's (elaborating on Bohr), agential realist understanding of an apparatus, in thinking about what it is that my use of the poem might do. Apparatuses, as with the poem, are not merely a collection or assemblage of human and non-human forces. Rather, says Barad, they are "specific material reconfigurings of the world that do not merely emerge in time but iteratively reconfigure spacetimematter as part of the ongoing dynamism of becoming" (2007, 142). As such, my interest is in what the tear poems might produce, reconfigure, and remake in relation to the phenomena of 'tears' for counsellors-in-training. Tears as a multiplicity are re-imagined through the form of the poem which, then, invites an ongoing re-shaping of both the phenomena of tears and of counsellor/reader subjectivities through intra-active readings of the poem. The poem, as with any text, produces differences which matter, in ongoing intra-active processes.

These notions of 'mattering' and 'reconfiguring' align well with certain feminist and activist poets. Such poetic work is political, and has worked to make the invisible visible, and change the landscape of possibilities for those margin-

alized and oppressed within capitalist heteropatriarchal systems. Writing in the *New Yorker* on the work of Adrienne Rich, for example, Claudia Rankine (2016) comments, "[w)]ith Rich came the formulation of an alternate poetic tradition that distrusted and questioned paternalistic, heteronormative, and hierarchical notions of what it meant to have a voice, especially for female writers." Poetry, in this sense, becomes not just literary or romantic or clever, but aims for a far wider, and more life determining, reach. This is particularly evident, too, in the infamous words of Audre Lorde:

> For women, then, poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams towards survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action. Poetry is the way we give name to the nameless so it can be thought. The farthest horizons of our hopes and fears are cobbled by our poems, carved from the rock experiences of our daily lives (1984, 37).

Poetry, in these forms, is most definitely a material-discursive practice, reconfiguring the world in all senses for the writers, for the world of poetry, and for all of those who have had the privilege and pleasure of reading such work. New boundaries are enacted through the force of poetry, "not merely in the sense of bringing new things into the world but in the sense of bringing forth new worlds" (Barad 2007, 170).

This is true also in the sense that a poem intra-acts with the reader to produce an affective force. Poet David Whyte (2012), in speaking about poetry, suggests that "poetry...is not *about* a subject, not *about* a quality, or an experience, it is the experience itself" (n.p.). Such personal and evocative texts have come to be seen as potentially powerful, political, and meaningful in qualitative research, with the capacity to "move writers and readers, subjects and objects, tellers and listeners into this space of dialogue, debate and change" (Holman-Jones 2005, 764). In staying with a relational ontology, "affect refers to the force of intensive relationality—intensities that are felt but are not personal; visceral but not confined to an individuated body" (Whatmore 2006, 604).

In this sense, the force of poetry to move, to affect, is a dynamic relational one, an intra-action between, at least, words, space, time, and bodies. Such a theorizing reflects the new materialist, post-qualitative "shift of concern from what things mean to what they do," that creates "a shift from an onus on *meaning* to an onus on *affect*" (Whatmore 2006, 604). Thus, the poem as an analytic device is intended

to doubly work to reconfigure what things do rather than express what things mean, as well as to advance performative understandings of knowledge-making practices for counsellors-in-training which may go on to affect others.

It is with this understanding of the poem, as an affective force itself, that I turn to the poem below. The poem is an intra-active tear pattern enacting multiple material-discursive forces, a collective biography of the tears, both present and ghostly, of a small, diverse group of becoming-counsellors in Aotearoa, New Zealand. This poem was created by me at the end of my analytic work for my PhD as a way of bringing together the now visible multiplicity of material, relational, social, and cultural forces and processes intra-acting to produce counsellor-in-training tears. Beyond the scope of this essay, such intra-active forces were inclusive of gender, ethnicity, neoliberalism, professionalism, counselling spaces, High school spaces, private-public binaries, counselling ethics, and multiple other times and spaces and matter.

While the poem was shared with the participants, as part of the feminist research practice of reciprocity, they offered no specific input into it. Given that the poem's aim was to bring together a collective re-telling of the forces shaping the emergence of tears for counsellors-in-training in this study, I imagined the poem as resonant with the multiplicity of encounters they described in the workshops. The structure of this poem was prompted by a poetry collection by New Zealand poet, Bill Manhire, called *Tell Me My Name*, (2017) comprising of a range of riddles. In reviewing Manhire's collection, Norman Meehan (n.d) writes, "Every culture has riddles—they keep company with runes and spells and Christmas crackers, they challenge and entertain us, they remind us just how mysterious the world can be." (n.p.). The poem I created also connects with Barad's agential realism, where agency is no longer considered the sole property of the human, but is rather shared with, co-constituted in relation with other more-than-human matter. The aim of the poem is to reflect tears as encompassing both the mystery and agency of portraying the ways they are formed in relation with, and are inseparable from, other identities, affects, matter, and discourses, and how these forces simultaneously shape the possibilities for counsellor-in-training subjectivities.

Tear reconfigured

I am translucent entanglement
formed of multiple histories
and futures-yet-to-come
colliding in the eye of a storm.

I am surprise, intensity, flow,
abject outcast made to matter
in the dark, the secret, the private,
the under-ground space of a profession.
I am nature-culture, matter and meaning
you and her, an inseparable we
made of genuineness and empathy,
of the other—in, on and under one skin.
I am losing control, irrational, non-white
neurotic female vulnerability.
I am man to man, turned inside-out,
brave and strong and good.
I am ethics—listening, hearing, relating.
I am ordinary fragments, cut together-apart,
unanticipated, world in seed, taking root
in the fertile earth, at the edges of our skin.
I am non-chronos, a point of time,
sadness, desolation, abandonment,
inseparably spliced through, entangled with
forgiveness, hope, compassion.
I am piwakawaka and monarch, a re-turn
to a place of beginning that marks
the present. I am embodied alterity
made visible. I refuse to rest.

I am ghostly matter made real,
a potent presence of
a figure marked by its absence.
I nevertheless, demand your attention.
I am im/possibility, energetic entanglement.
I inhabit the subterranean, a rhizome—
thick with loss, pain, powerlessness and fear
of breaking down, apart, of becoming, uncontained.
I am handling it, I am okay, I am relief.
I am you, me, them and us,

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a gazed upon, subjectified body, formed
of ideologies, normativities, and imagined ideals.
I am a rational calculating creature,
full of feeling, desire, and illicit love.
I am undesirable, uninvited, bordering on failure.
I am paradox.
I am large and small, ideology and subjectivity,
an intra-active montage threatening to leak, seep
and leach beyond my borders
into foreign terrains.
I am time accelerated, a compulsion
to speed up and slow down,
a simultaneity of overwhelm and powerlessness
to independently do either.
I am counselling space, High School space
professional space and always the space between,
a conduit of networks, of appropriated subjects
making materializations of the not-yet-known.

This is not all. This does not end.
Porous and responsive, an iterative ethics,
one tear dissolving into ocean, reconfigured
and reconfiguring an unending of im/possibilities.

Conclusion (un-ending)

The aim of this essay has been to outline the ways in which a turn to thinking with feminist new materialism opened up new possibilities for engaging with data, in particular through the phenomena of tears for counsellors-in-training. This analytic direction for research in the counselling field is relatively new and yet holds significant potential for bringing to light the complexity and multiplicity of forces at work in counselling encounters. Making these intra-active material, affective, and discursive forces visible (and thus revisable) seems imperative in such a relational and emotional field that places counsellors at increased risk of burnout (Kottler 2010). While the analytic detail of how these forces, such as neoliberalism, intra-act to shape the emergence of tears, and thus counsellor-in-training subjectivities, is discussed in depth in other work (e.g. Barraclough

2017), it has also been the aim of this essay to illustrate their multiplicity and intra-activity through the use of the poem. Poetry's affective force to move its reader and to increase our capacity to know and to act in previously un-thought ways, strongly aligns with feminist new materialism's project of opening up to the not-yet-known, and producing differences which make a difference (Barad 2007). Drawing in particular on Barad's concept of intra-action in relation with data analysis, the phenomena of tears, and the poem as analytic device has offered generative possibilities both for re-thinking tears as intra-active phenomena and for contributing to new understandings of the dynamic, iterative and co-constitutive process of becoming for counsellors-in-training. A feminist ethics and politics has been pivotal to these processes, through engaging with a feminist new materialist affirmative approach to power relations and undoing of oppressive binaries (Hinton & van der Tuin 2014). This is echoed in the collective rendering of tears formed in the poem. Here, tears are reconfigured from an either/or binary dominated by 'feminine' constructs as emotional, private, personal, vulnerable, and neurotic to a multiplicity, where tears become also professional, rational, strong, brave, and shift to paradox, entanglement and ultimately to an un-ending of possibilities.

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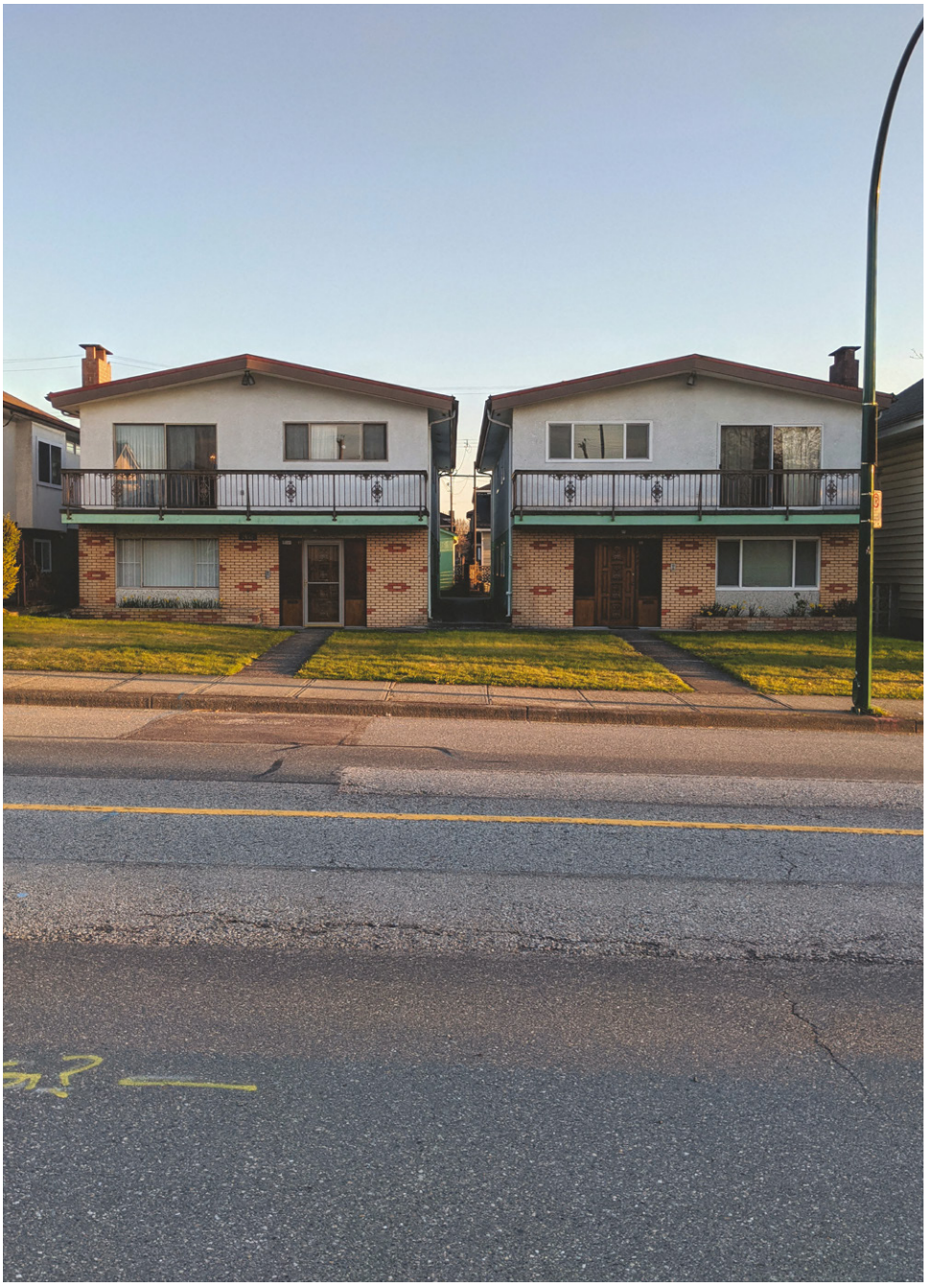

Pairs III, Mathew Arthur, 2016

CAPACIOUS

AFFECTIVITY AND MAKING SENSE OF THE NEGATIVE

Randall Johnson

> Affectivity is the sole function capable, thanks to its relational aspect, of giving a sense to negativity.
>
> —Gilbert Simondon

> Everything really does come down to a matter of thinking the negative rigorously.
>
> —Maurice Merleau-Ponty

In the preface to the 2005 publication of Gilbert Simondon's *L'Individuation à la lumière des notions de forme et d'information*, the first publication of the text in its entirety, Jacques Garelli reminds us of the rarely highlighted fact that Simondon dedicates his primary doctoral thesis of 1958 to his teacher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty. The 2013 reissue of the book restores the text to its originally conceived structure of two main parts, "Physical Individuation" and "Individuation of Living Beings."[1] Not only does this honor Simondon's writerly intention for his own text, but it more clearly demonstrates that his predominant focus is to rethink individuation as primary rather than as secondary. Typically, beings have been understood as already individuated, almost as if individuation were merely of the past. With such priority placed on individuation in its processual

ongoingness, the organizing psyche and the emerging collectivity of humans are not so many added on parts that can be kept separate. The psyche in its singular plurality problematizes the very act of thinking itself *as* individuation: Simondon brings obscure zones into the light.

To think individuation is to think happening; and to think happening *itself* is rare. To articulate such thoughts in a manner that coheres just enough to be intelligible to another—in an effort to say the all but unsayable—is perhaps as rare in the domain of philosophy as philosophy is rare among the various modes of existence. Discourse, for the most part, remains in the realm of representation—the realm in which thoughts are as manipulable as we imagine things to be—and the intelligible is valued, even hubristically overvalued, in a dissociation that passively forgets or actively disavows its ontogenesis within the realm of the sensible. Indeed, such hierarchical valuations seem to persist even when discourse makes an effort to incorporate the anarchical sensible realm and to envelope its manifest stirrings of affectivity. To evoke felt sense in the happening of thought itself is to reawaken and to reclaim its wonder, its sublimity that hovers between the pleasures of resonance and the pains of dehiscence. All the while, such felt thinking of happening must guard against the reactionary tendency of too thoroughly devaluing the realm of representation to the point that it is forgotten or disavowed. This traps thought again in an obliged dichotomy that the critique of representation had sought to fracture in the first place. The fact that there is a node of thinking-sensing-feeling—whatever name is given to such a central contraction of functioning—must also be yet another aspect of happening, an acknowledged problematic with which this operative center must reflexively grapple in the burdens and joys of consciousness.

At one extreme, this node of thinking-sensing-feeling is conceptualized as some mythic fully-transcendent ego that can represent all of existence. At the other extreme, perhaps mirrored in a funhouse sort of way, this node is conceived of as an illusory, fully-fractured I, or a completely-dissolved self that becomes immanently imperceptible, yet can somehow apprehend its very happening. This, again, risks morphing into a renewal of a dichotomy that may obscure such a node of functioning from any such auto-reflexivity and, by doing so, may merely re-inscribe the contracted center with an even greater insistence, intensified by being unbeknownst to its own self-evacuation. To think happening in this singular node of ever pluralizing relations in a manner that can also critique its

own inevitable stoppages into relatively fixed conceptual naming keeps thought sensible in its inherence within a given affective real: an affective real that is emotive in its ongoing originating and contingent in its felt knowings. Simondon and Merleau-Ponty are exemplary in articulating such happening and in foregrounding its originarily essential affectivity.

In an intense and stunning section of his main thesis "Individuation and Affectivity," in which he addresses the virtuality of the affective realm, Simondon elucidates how affections operate in the transductive potentiation of emotions of the individuating psyche and how the operative tensions of affections assure a never finalized subject. These preindividual affections press toward the genesis of a truly transindividual collective rather than a merely interindividual group. By elucidating both affects and emotions, as well as their operative interplay, what Simondon sketches in these pages largely exceeds the Deleuzian inspired line of affect theory. Even though emerging in part from the acknowledged direct impact of Simondon's thought, the currently predominant manner of theorizing affect, indebted to Deleuze's philosophy, often seems to dismiss emotion as a representative construct of a presumed self rather than to engage in any genuine grappling with the difficult question of how affects and emotions are related. Ironically, such dismissiveness of both the term *emotion* and its referent only increases the risk of an eventual conflation with an overly genericized use of the term *affect*. This may stem in part from the relative dismissal in this theoretical line of any particular node of thinking-sensing-feeling by an overvaluing of its fractured dispersal. Likewise, Simondon's theory exceeds much of psychoanalytically inspired affect theory, which at times also collapses the important differentiation of affect from emotion. This conflation accompanies what seems to be a relative overemphasis on ego functions, especially in the American ego psychology line of classical psychoanalysis, that prioritizes individually experienced emotions, and risks excluding any notion of shared affects within a milieu.[2]

Simondon avoids both these risks of conflation from seemingly opposite directions by maintaining a clear distinction between how affects and emotions *happen*: illuminating how they function differently within, for the most part, distinct modes of being. At the same time, he addresses their operations within vital psychic individuation in a manner that makes apparent that any claim of some pure separation abstracted from their ongoing relation is likely to obscure rather than to clarify the workings of what he often refers to as *affectivo-emotivity.* Affectivo-emotivity in its broad and general sense includes the specific, psychically-lived emotions of vital individuals, as well as the preindividual affective milieus of their emergence. Simondon's thinking helps us understand the hyphen between the affective and the emotive as more than a mere diacritical mark of punctuation: it is the site

of happening of individuation itself. And if understood more as an oscillatory process than as some unidirectional linearity, it is the mark of the transductively operative functions of processual individuation amidst preindividual, individual, and transindividual modes of being.

This is also the point for an affective apprehending of the sense of the negative within the psychically-lived real. Since briefly summarizing Simondon's thought can only distort it, I will engage in a close reading of the link between negativity and affectivity in the passage whose beginning phrase serves as my epigraph. This sentence expresses an inkling of Simondon's critique regarding Western thought's hylomorphism and substantialism: to think being not from the stance of a presumed given of the already individuated but, rather, as the very flow of becoming, as the happening of relations, as *individuation*, a term that Simondon (2013, 2020) returns to the level of a primary philosophical concept:

> Equally, one comprehends that affectivity is the sole function capable, thanks to its relational aspect, of giving a sense to negativity: the nothingness of action, as the nothingness of knowledge, are ungraspable without a positive context in which they intervene as a limitation or a pure lack; in contrast, for affectivity, nothingness can define itself as another quality; … nothingness has a sense in affectivity, because two dynamisms clash there at each instant; the relation of integration to differentiation constitutes itself there as a bipolar conflict in which forces interchange and equilibrate (163, 174-5).

Rather than circumscribing the negative within the logics of the excluded middle of representation, a domain that remains limited no matter how universal it pretends to be, Simondon rehabilitates the negative by allowing it a more primordial place in the ontogenesis of an affective topology (becoming, then, a lived chronology). With crystallization as its exemplar in the realm of physical ontogenesis, he describes the transductive operation as an individuation in progress.Such thinking of the relations of individuation, he specifies, "consists in *following being in its genesis*, to accomplish the genesis of thought at the same time it accomplishes the genesis of the object" (34, 14, emphasis original). This *concurrence in the ongoing originating of thought and object* in Simondon's philosophy warrants emphasis, since it often seems to be elided when he is read primarily as a theorist of *techne*.

Simondon contrasts such transductive thought to the dialectic, as it is typically understood and deployed, in which the negative appears in a second step, a step that is contained in logics of representation as we have characterized it. The hap-

pening of individuation, in contrast, corresponds, as Simondon phrases it, "to an immanence of the negative in the first condition under the ambivalent form of tension *and* incompatibility" (34, 15). It is this affectively apprehended ambivalence that surpasses the logical and epistemological containments of deduction and induction, so that transduction allows for a close and engaged thinking that opens onto other dimensions of being, in its very process of individuation, to a greater extent than the relative closure that a more detached representative thought permits in the supposed disinterested neutrality of its discourse. This opening allows a felt sense of the preindividual, the more primordial and virtual dimensionality of the real that both precedes, persists within, and succeeds the individual—whether such an individual is physical, organic, or psychic. "The psychic intervenes," he says, "as a slowing of the individuation of the living." This slowing conserves an internal duality in a metastable state that "is neither a solicitation nor a superior rearrangement of vital functions…but a new plunge into preindividual reality" (165, 177). Any individual, and perhaps especially a singular psyche, is a phase of becoming that is all too often mistaken to be a fixed state of being.

During the course of this great text of philosophy, we learn to name such an incompatible duality—such an insoluble problematic that provokes ongoing individuations and that is affectively apprehended as felt tension—*disparation*. Disparation is the term for the disparity of retinal images, hence two images that are not entirely superimposable and, thus, cannot be synthesized so much as they are integrated into a new dimension, a new ensemble of vision that allows a sense of depth. Simondon employs the term as a philosophical concept and nuances the negative implicated in such affectively apprehended preindividual disparations:

> This is what is more positive in the state of preindividual being, to know the existence of potentials, which is also the cause of the incompatibility of the non-stability of this state; the negative is first as ontogenic incompatibility, but it is the other face of the richness in potentials; it is therefore not a substantial negative; it is never a step or phase, and individuation is not synthesis, return to unity, but a dephasing of being from its preindividual center of potentialized incompatibility (34, 15).

To rescue negativity from its enclosure within representative dialectical logic is to free its operative informing of the murky middle ground of relations, which Simondon at one point calls "the autonomous zone" and, at another point, "the obscure zone of relation." A transductive logic, revealed by affectively apprehending negativity as the other face of ontogenetic disparations, allows a nuancing of the obscure autonomy of relationality that does not leave it veiled by some mythically dark name (however much affinity we may have for such somber precursors).[3]

Simondon, as Merleau-Ponty before him, strives to think the liminally sensible in its happening and search for a methodology that guards against any covering over by the unthought assumptions of what is presumed to be a purely objective knowledge as well as any obscuring by an uncritical faith in a more subjectively-sited mythic knowing. As Garelli suggests in his preface to *Individuation*, there is an essential thread of resonance between the work of Simondon and that of his teacher, which lets us know that the dedication to Merleau-Ponty is one of fidelity as well as remembering. A remembered fidelity of what, Garelli asks and then answers:

> Of Merleau-Ponty's thought of the Preindividual in its liaison with individualizing formations, of his invitation to meditate on the pre-Socratic thought of the "element," of his critique of the theory of Form, of hylomorphic dualism and symmetrically of materialist automatisms developed by several currents of contemporary psychology; finally, of a radical critique of Nothingness and of the dialectic, in the sense where this notion and this approach manifest a sort of reversed positivism of negation, which diverts philosophy away from the preindividual dimension of the World (9, xv).

In addition to the felt resonances of thought between the two that Garelli beautifully adumbrates, there are two working notes of Merleau-Ponty from 1958 that comment specifically on Simondon's thought. What we learn from these notes, in a more direct way than the traces of history typically offer, is that the teacher's thinking may also have been influenced by his student. In the introduction to *Chiasmi International* 7, the editor mentions that Reynaud Barbaras was familiar with these notes, a familiarity which precipitated their publication for a special section devoted to the two philosophers in this 2005 issue of the journal; and Barbaras shared in a conversation with the editor that "this was the only time that Merleau-Ponty had displayed such consideration for the author of a doctoral dissertation" (Carbone 2005, 13). Clearly, Merleau-Ponty read Simondon's text carefully, and he includes in the first note a specific page number for future reference. The citation is to a portion of the text in which Simondon summarizes the findings of modern biology and addresses the idea of heredity as a prolonged ontogenesis by way of his concept of individuation, understood as vital processes. Both thinkers maintain throughout their work an active interest in and keen knowledge of the sciences, as well as a critical attention to their relation to philosophical questions. In the second note, Merleau-Ponty (2007) writes:

> Simondon's viewpoint is [transperceptual]: perception is for him of the order of the inter-individual, incapable of giving an account of the true collective. There is something true there: posing the problem in terms of perception is still the phenomenological attitude in the sense that Fink criticizes it. We do not perceive constantly, perception is not coextensive with our life (421).

In addition to being involved in the defense of his dissertation, it seems likely that Merleau-Ponty had a number of philosophical conversations with Simondon over the years he was working on this text, years which coincide with Merleau-Ponty's own rethinking, if not self-critique, of his earlier focus on perception as remaining overly indebted to Cartesian ontology. It is quite evident that Merleau-Ponty was making an effort in his phenomenological explorations to move beyond this language. Indeed, he ends this second note with these words, typical of the vocabulary emerging in his later writing to express happening *itself*: "Simply, instead of saying: perceived being and perception, I would do better to say brute or wild being and 'foundation' (*Stiftung*)" (421).

There is no particular place in Merleau-Ponty's oeuvre that provides us with a sustained and theoretically succinct focus on affectivity—understood in the broad sense we evoked earlier as including affections of the world grasped as primordially pre-objective milieus, emotions amidst psyches in their embodied locomotions as singular plural egos, and feelings that perdure for never finalized subjects as socially-instituted. To address affect in Merleau-Ponty's writing is thus more so to speak of a style of philosophical expression than to foreground any content of specific explanation. Indeed, in another working note from 1958, he writes: "Someone will say: you explain nothing, you observe. But to explain is always: to bring Nature back to God or to bring it back to the spectacle of man—not to see nature. In reality what one has *to learn is that being is that*, it is precisely *not to explain*" (420, emphasis original). Instead of offering a theoretical explanation of affectivity, Merleau-Ponty manifests its very happening in his writerly expression. But as we well know, he does not observe naively, and his employment of phenomenology is always critical. Along with his rethinking of the degree of residual Cartesian fixity in the term 'perception,' and likely influenced by his reading of Heidegger, he begins to speak more in terms of ontology. This can be viewed as a shift in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy that, I would contend, is overly emphasized as a 'turn of thought,' whatever this overwrought phrase is taken to mean, rather than apprehended as the ongoing elaboration and varying expressions of a body of thought in its lived trajectory. My preference is not to focus on the term *ontology*, which Merleau-Ponty (1968) for the most part qualifies—as existential, as phenomenological, as indirect—when describing his own thinking, a thinking that he characterizes as lateral, even at times necessarily oneiric. As he phrases it, "everything really does come down to a matter of thinking the negative rigorously" (63). Merleau-Ponty says this in the midst of describing the risk for any dialectic to get trapped in some notion of pure negativity. In his own rigorously thinking the negative, he calls for a *hyperdialectic*, a dialectic that is open to lived ambiguity (94-5). The felt tension of such ambiguity demands an

affective awareness that exceeds purely logical cognition. The emerging word in Merleau-Ponty's later writings that intrigues me is *aesthesiology*, a term from late 19th century biology for the study of the senses and specifically the sense organs themselves, which he begins to employ as a philosophical concept. Rather than a *Logos* for phenomena, this would be a *Logos* for *aesthesis*, the very opening *onto* and *as* being in its reflexive foldings of becoming conscious, the burdens and joys of sentient sensibility. Such an aesthesiology demands a hyperdialectic.

Along with the resonances between Simondon and Merleau-Ponty, perhaps a productive disjunctive tension between them is revealed in how each employs a different aspect of the sense of vision and its organology as a trope for their thinking. As mentioned above, Simondon raises the term "disparation," the differentiated retinal images as integrated rather than merely synthesized to create a sense of depth, into a generic philosophical notion for the felt tensions of incompatible dualities. For Merleau-Ponty, in contrast, the term "*punctum caecum*," the blind spot where the optic nerve exits the eye, becomes a philosophical notion for the invisible inhering in the visible, indeed, for the insensible of sensibility in general, as well as for the unintelligible of intelligibility.[4] Similarly, the *punctum caecum* of affectivity may be glimpsed in the experience of awakening from a deep sleep or, perhaps more literally, in the often dreamily confused regaining of consciousness following general anaesthesia. In such a moment, we encounter the negative as zero-point, as Merleau-Ponty might phrase it, thus illuminating an aesthesiological hyperdialectic as a methodology for thinking the renewal of the open. In some ways, Simondon's trope of disparation is more physiological, perhaps more processual, while Merleau-Ponty's trope is more anatomical, perhaps more structural—*punctum caecum* as suturing to the unsayable negative that nevertheless demands to be rigorously thought. Simondon's more technical manner of thinking risks falling into the explanations of a fully abstracted representational discourse, and Merleau-Ponty (2007) may have been pointing to this concern in the note characterizing Simondon's point of view as transperceptual when he adds, "nevertheless, one no longer knows that of which one is speaking if one sets oneself up in the [meta-perceptual]" (421). Merleau-Ponty's more aesthesiological manner of thinking, however, risks falling into an all but mystical gnosis that escapes intelligibility entirely. Productively reading them together helps one to apprehend Simondon's precise style as more revelatory than reductionistic and to hear Merleau-Ponty's poetic style as more ontically nuanced than ontologically gnostic.

Intelligibility wants to master the affective and sensible matrixial real of living and to relegate sensations and affects to the diminished status of so many add-ons to its abstract and formal primacy. This is deadening: by dismissing the ambiguities of sensibility and the ambivalences of affectivity, intelligibility fixes thoughts into objects become sterile. Perhaps such a desire for mastery—a word here deliberately employed to hint at a certain gendered tendency—paradoxically reveals in its felt hubris that it remains in umbilical adherence to the preindividual it wishes to sever. In contradistinction, for Simondon and Merleau-Ponty, affective sensibility inheres in the very *happening* of thinking itself, in the ongoing passionate grappling with its originating negative.

Endnotes

1. The English translation, *Individuation in Light of Notions of Form and Information*, appeared in late 2020 and follows the 2013 French edition. Portions of his main doctoral thesis were previously published in two texts appearing 25 years apart: *L'individu et sa genèse physico-biologique* (*The Individual and its Physico-biological Genesis*) in 1964, and *L'Individuation psychique et collective* (*Psychic and Collective Individuation*) in 1989, the year of his death. Neither of these separated texts were fully translated into English. His secondary thesis, *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*, published in France in 1958, is more widely known and remains influential in technology studies. After many delays, this book finally appeared in English translation in 2017. In the last few years, a number of Simondon's courses and essays have been collected for publication, and his oeuvre is receiving increasing critical attention in France and elsewhere. [Note: in-text page references are first to the 2013 French edition, my translations, followed by page references to the English edition.]

2. Thus far, the influence of psychoanalytic thinking remains infrequent in affect theory, except inasmuch as it is the object of an often caricatured critique. Teresa Brennan's work is a notable exception to such caricature. Her thinking about the transmission of affect is astutely psychoanalytically-informed while also being helpfully critical of this theoretical line of thought. However, the categories of affect and emotion, along with how they interface with her use of the term *feelings*, remain somewhat slippery in her work as well. This concern of the conflation of terms also arises in the thought of Silvan Tomkins, which in many ways can be described as elaborating a cognitive model of affective functioning within human behavior at both the individual and social level. It is mainly through the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick that this model has influenced subsequent affect theory. Tomkins' model for clinical practice emerges in part from a critique of psychoanalysis and at times does seem to offer a somewhat diluted and superficial characterization of Freudian thought, during the era when behaviorism was in its ascendancy as the predominant theoretical model for psychology as a human science discipline. While not without usefulness, overly cognitive theories can ever so quickly occlude what they name by this very naming into representative discourse.

3. Interestingly, in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze directly relates what he names *dark precursor* (*le précurseur sombre*) to Simondon's thought regarding disparation: "We call this dark precursor, this difference in itself or difference in the second degree which relates heterogeneous systems and even completely disparate things, the *disparate*" (120).

4. On multiple occasions in his writings, of course, Merleau-Ponty references the dimensional shift from monocular to binocular vision that allows for depth vision via the process of disparation. However, this does not become a conceptual trope in general for him as it does for Simondon.

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* The second working note on Simondon first published in *Chiasmi* is included in this reader. The author prefers Lawlor's translation.

REVIEW: A SILVAN TOMKINS HANDBOOK: FOUNDATIONS FOR AFFECT THEORY

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Frank, Adam J. & Wilson, Elizabeth A. (2020). *A Silvan Tomkins Handbook: Foundations for Affect Theory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 216 pp., $20.00 (paperback).

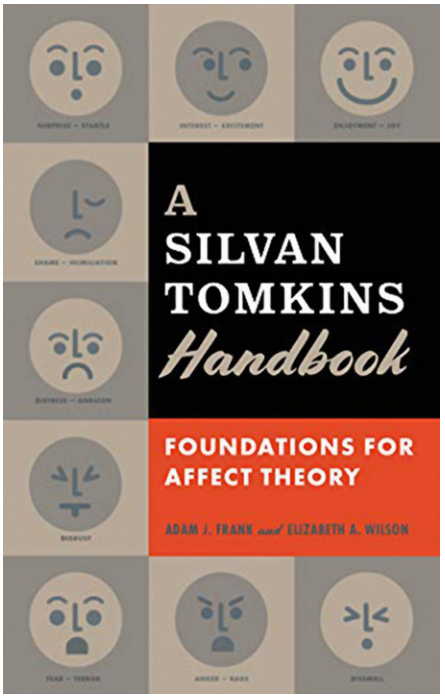
On their opening page, Adam J. Frank and Elizabeth A. Wilson pitch *A Silvan Tomkins Handbook: Foundations for Affect Theory* (*ASTH*) as a "makeshift handrail" for those unfamiliar with Silvan Tomkins (1). This humble description undersells the enormous potential of this book for scholarship on affect theory. Indeed, *ASTH* does offer first-time readers of Tomkins an efficient and accessible guide to his theory of affects. But Frank and Wilson also engage in field-animating conversations that will excite and challenge specialists. They respond, for example, to Russ Leo's (2010) call for revised histories of affect theory by brilliantly elucidating Tomkins's engagement with cybernetics, psychoanalysis, psychology, evolutionary theory, and screenwriting, as well as challenging the prevailing taxonomy of affect theory into Spinozist/Continental and Darwinian/Anglo-American strains. For scholars galvanized by the work of Ann Cvetkovich (2012), Sara Ahmed (2014), and Donovan Schaefer (2019), Frank and Wilson provide another set of practical and incisive tools for connecting affects, emo-

tions, and feelings to larger social structures. *ASTH* also echoes many of the key concepts contained in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Frank's widely respected but nonetheless underused reader, *Shame and Its Sisters* (1995), while simultaneously fleshing out several additional elements of Tomkins's "human being theory" (Tomkins 1992, 1, quoted in Frank and Wilson 2020, 161). Less a handrail and more a special exhibit on a neglected yet influential artist, this handbook translates the world of Silvan Tomkins for contemporary scholars and charts new routes for affect theorists.

Frank and Wilson divide the book into three sections which sequentially unpack Tomkins's conceptualization of affect, imagery, and consciousness. Frank and Wilson open *ASTH* to those unfamiliar with Tomkins by lucidly scaffolding his conceptual framework across these sections. The individual chapters introduce readers to Tomkins's essential concepts, distinguish his framework from others, and detail his eclectic influences. Each chapter concludes with suggested readings from Tomkins's writings (especially his four-volume magnum opus *Affect Imagery Consciousness* [1962–63 and 1991–92]) and other literature relevant to the given topic. Two interludes that are wedged between the three sections demonstrate key resonances between Tomkins's and Spinoza's respective conceptions of affects and clarify the essential dissonances in Tomkins's and Darwin's use of evolution, facial affect, and primary affects. Frank and Wilson helpfully conclude with a chronology of Tomkins's life and a bibliography of his published writings.

The first part of *ASTH* details Tomkins's affect-drive system, while also complicating and correcting mischaracterizations of his work. The initial chapter presents Tomkins's understanding of drives and affects as conjoint and independent. Centrally, Tomkins contends that drives fail to effectively motivate action without the felt inflection of affects. Chapters two and three distinguish Tomkins's conceptualization of faces and evolution from those of Charles Darwin and Paul Ekman by unpacking Tomkins's emphasis on circulation, feedback, and conjoint systems. Frank and Wilson address post-human and anti-liberal critiques of Tomkins in chapter four, clarifying that Tomkins understood "freedom" not as a uniquely human quality characterized by choice but, rather, an indication of the degrees of possibility corresponding to the complexity of one's drive-affect system. Chapters five and six offer brief examinations of the "positive affects" (affects that "reward" action) and "negative affects" (affects that add insult to injury), with a description of their particular physiological, facial, phenomenological, and social dimensions.

The rubber meets the road in the following section on "Imagery," or Tomkins's framework for the interaction between the affect-drive system and social experience. Amidst the theoretical and conceptually rich sections of *ASTH*, this one stands out as especially useful for scholars interested in the way affects mediate and are mediated by social, political, and religious life. Chapter seven describes Tomkins's conceptualization of "images" as "centrally emitted blueprint[s]" which guide individuals by affectively rewarding or punishing their actions (85). The following chapter concerns "affect theories," or paradigms which organize daily affective experiences and which may be "weak" or "strong"—the former describing "theories" that relate an affect to many situations and the latter to those applied to more limited conditions. Chapter eight introduces Tomkins's conception of "scripts" as frameworks that inform how individuals manage affective experiences. In chapter ten, Frank and Wilson examine the way scripts dispose individuals toward "ideologies," or societal feelings about knowledge, in an approach that recalls Sara Ahmed's (2004) work on the orienting capacity of social feeling in "Affective Economies."



The final part of *ASTH* traces and substantiates the influence of psychoanalysis, psychology, personology, and cybernetics on Tomkins's framing of consciousness. Chapter eleven describes the eclectic and experimental environment Tomkins encountered at the Harvard Psychological Clinic from 1937 to 1947 and its influence on his theory of affects. Frank and Wilson focus on cybernetics and its importance for Tomkins's "central assembly"—the mechanism which enables recognition of sensory data and memories—in chapter twelve. The subsequent chapter on Tomkins's "psychology of knowledge" unpacks his attention to subjectivity in the production of knowledge, elaborating themes mentioned in the earlier chapter on ideology. "Consciousness" closes with a brief examination of "the minding system," which conjoins loosely and unevenly with affects, drives, and scripts to enable awareness of and induce care about the surrounding world.

ASTH promises great value as a classroom resource or research guide, in addition to its aforementioned contributions to the field. It will work especially well as an introduction to Silvan Tomkins or, more generally, theories of affect because it identifies the broad contours of the scholarly conversation in a sophisticated yet accessible manner. One limitation of the book is that it lacks a more critical examination of Tomkins's overall framework. Frank and Wilson note several troubling aspects of Tomkins's thought, such as the imperialism-inflected universalism of cybernetics, his plainly anti-communist Cold War mentality, or his disregard for the productivity of negative (or "ugly" or "minoritarian") affects. While a significantly longer dissection might have incorporated these issues into Tomkins's "human being theory," these shortcomings and problems are not hidden. Rather, Frank and Wilson let them peek out from this survey like loose ends teasing those interested in the novel capacities of Silvan Tomkins's conceptualizations of organized complexity, subjectivity, and affects.

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REVIEW: RAISING THE MOODY GHOSTS

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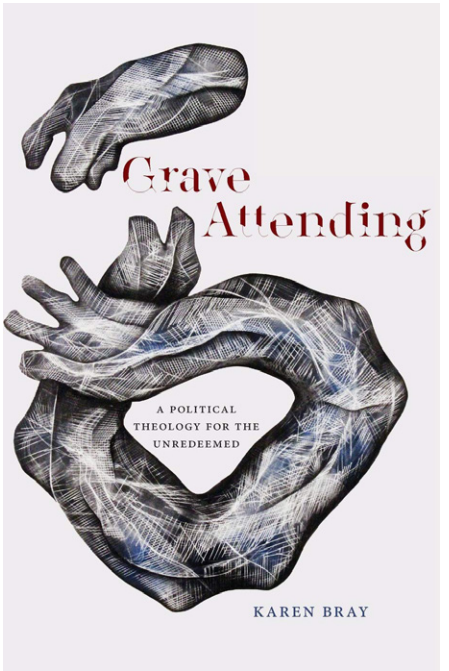
Bray, Karen (2019). *Grave Attending: A Political Theology for the Unredeemed*. New York City: Fordham University Press, 339 pp., $35.00 (paperback).

Karen Bray's *Grave Attending: A Political Theology for the Unredeemed* is primarily a book about the shape and heft of affect in the contemporary neoliberal moment. Each individual is expected to attend to their own emotional state in order to measure productivity, fitting in, usefulness, and success. Bray's insistent question is: what happens when affective states like depression sinks its teeth into us and refuses to let go? In a society reduced to strategies of emotional management, what happens when we are emotionally unmanageable? What can we learn about the contours of our present society if we find the depressed and resigned call of the couch too compelling to go to work? In other words, Bray's central question is, "how does it feel to be irredeemable?" (16), and she asks, "what kind of a social relations might come into being by attending to irredeemable or unredeemed subjectivities?"

Bray offers a good, concise, and intensive reading of affective states that are located in unproductive, unreasoned, and untimely moments. Bray insists on the fecundity of these moments in readings that span queer, crip, and black studies. Each reading insists on the deleterious affects produced by neoliberal capitalism

through carefully ferreting out affective spaces that might either go ignored or might succumb to a kind of ideological shaming. I wish I was better versed in theology as a discipline, but even to a completely untrained eye the sequenced readings that maintained a focus on close readings of theological discourse were still compelling, and the argument for a theology focused on a "cacophony of feeling" instead of a "harmonizing of thought" aligns with the very real need to expand our affective sensorium under late capitalism (148). To put the book in other terms, while Bray doesn't cite Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's famous essay "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or You're so Paranoid You Probably Think This Essay is About You," she does explore a similar territory in what it means to live in the space of the unredeemed. Bray names "bipolar time" as a "disordering of a linear movement from crucifixion to resurrection" that resides in a temporal eddy between promise and threat (59). I bring up Sedgwick here because, without naming her, Bray is invoking a kind of reparative process or logic that combats the "future-oriented vigilance of paranoia…because there must be no bad surprises, and because of the learning of the possibility of a bad surprise would itself constitute a bad surprise" (130). Tarrying in bipolar time resists the closed future of paranoia, and while it doesn't track exactly onto Sedgwick's reparative position, this is one way of understanding some of the critical possibilities opened up by Bray's bipolar time.



A question that, at times, seems a stumbling block is the role that liminality plays in the production of these subjectivities. Bray ends *Grave Attending* by stating that, "to care incessantly is to let that which haunts—the mad murmurs and quotidian persistence of affect alien prophets—take hold" (211). Yet the insistence on the power of the outside often works to romanticize the position of the affect alien in ways that holds these positions in suspended animation, infused with prophetic power to unredeem. Yes, this is a model that offers resistance to the neoliberal mode of productivity that so often insists on working to the bone, structuring time as just-in-time production where gig work forces people into a constant zany juggling of

jobs to make ends meet. And yes, this does make people unhappy. Bray is certainly right about that, but there is a nagging doubt for me surrounding the potentiality of the lived experience of depression, for instance, as a way of working in resistance to a mode of production that seeks complete subsumption to capital. So, while I agree that "the demand to be happy by those who affirm the systems that have constructed our unhappiness serves a catechistic function" and the feedback loop of offering solutions to a crisis the same system created is a crucial site of critique, I am unsure, from an affective and phenomenological basis, about the efficacy of a jubilee of the depressed (107).

I might have missed it, but throughout the book Bray attaches the prefix "un-" everywhere, haunting the text, without clearly defining the work that the prefix does. This might seem like a minor point, but it is not just a marker of opposites and, in some moments, perhaps a close reading and attending to a care of the "un" might have opened up even more space for what is often an incisive study of a swirling host of affects often deemed problematic. In other words, a level of attention akin to Sara Ahmed's lengthy description of how "hap" happens in *The Promise of Happiness*.

Bray's writing is a pleasure, and she traces a path away from narratives of the redeemed, which brings into stark relief a contemporary ideology striving to speak in unison about the failures of those who fail to thrive in a society built precisely to limit the ability for people to thrive. In this way, *Grave Attending* is a crucial addition to work tracking the lived negative affects in our present moment. The book is must reading for anyone interested in tracing how affect studies may be used as a form of sociopathological critique of what capitalism feels like—and how contemporary capitalism produces a range of deleterious affects while simultaneously organizing a culture of shame around those deleterious affects.

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Barbados aloe plant (Aloe vera): flowering plant and floral segments
colour halftone after J. Lambert, c. 1842, after P. Turpin.
Public domain

REVIEW: WHO'S LAUGHING NOW?

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Sundén, Jenny, & Paasonen, Susanna (2020). *Who's Laughing Now?: Feminist Tactics in Social Media*. MIT Press, 208 pp., $30.00 (hardcover).

While many works have explored affects that circulate feminist work and life, few zoom in on joy and laughter. Sundén and Paasonen's *Who's Laughing Now?: Feminist Tactics in Social Media* (2020) is a rare and much-needed investigation into the more absurd aspects of feminist resistance. Situated within a strong framework of feminist affect theory, this book demonstrates the role of humor, laughter, and the absurd in feminist resistance across many areas of social media: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, dating and messaging apps, and more. Sundén and Paasonen describe the affective work and movement of laughter in many ways; humor and laughter "reroute," "reshape, " and "redistribute" affective circuits of "anger, outrage, shame, and shamelessness that fuel resistant activities" (3). Their choice of verbs, and particularly the prefix re-, points to how these authors envision how laughter makes new, it does over again—and this time, in the service of the feminists. Through rich examples, the authors show how the absurd not only turns "things around or inside out" but disrupts and eschews sexist and exclusionary logics (11). Laughter makes anew, and I think the authors would be pleased

to know that I laughed out loud many times while learning about how feminists across the globe disrupt sexism and oppression through humor. As an example, in Chapter 4 "Countershame, Startle, and the Unsolicited Pussy Pic," Sundén and Paasonen unpack the rhetoric and humor of Stormy Daniels's tweets in response to demeaning messages. Daniels's tactics include pride in the self-identification of "slut," critiquing grammar, and deliberately misunderstanding to make fun. Here is an example Twitter exchange:

> Tweet to Daniels: "tell me this, how are you always spewing nonsense? I mean rumor has it you're mouth is always full and the spewing your doing is because you don't swallow!"
>
> Response Tweet from Daniels: "That is a disgusting and vicious lie! I absolutely DO swallow!" (January 23, 2019) (74).

Reading this exchange, I gave one of those "shameless, irreverent giggles" that the authors value and advocate for (17). The many examples of feminist humor in this book show how laughter can "bring pleasure and joy to knowledge production on topics laced with the affective intensities of rage, sadness, shame, and disgust," for instance—sexual harassment online (17). While there are many examples that will make readers laugh, these feminist strategies are not one-liners; Sundén and Paasonen linger with the ethical and contextual nuances of feminist humor. For example, when exploring reactions to "dick pics," including Kerry Quinn's "unsolicited pussy pics" experiment, the authors investigate ethical concerns, including harassment and nonconsensual recirculation of dick pics as feminist tactics of resistance (78). The affective economies of complicated, gendered exchanges are investigated with an eye of healthy critique.

Throughout the book, theories of positionality (Haraway) and intersectionality (Crenshaw) clearly inform the work of these

authors. Across modes of analysis, there is consistent attention to the interlaced dynamics of race, gender, class, and sexuality. The authors are transparent that most of the feminist initiatives they explore, including the #MeToo movement, draw attention to cis-gendered women who are "white and, for the most part, middle class and heterosexual" (7). The exclusionary nature of various feminist initiatives is interrogated, and I particularly appreciated how Sundén and Paasonen explain the reliance of some feminist humor on gender binaries. Activist rhetorics that operate within this binary logic:

> can be efficient in tapping into dynamics and power differentials that are instantaneously recognizable. At the same time, as we have argued throughout this book, it comes with the risk of turning attention away from different ways of acting or doing gender relating sexually to others; being racialized, exoticized, or comfortably resembling a norm; being singled out or shamed on the basis of body size, shape, ability, or neurodiversity (148).

This explanation of the foundational of binary logic in some feminist humor shows how some social media rhetorics can be quick to circulate and yet remain deeply exclusionary.

Who's Laughing Now? also stands out for the "slutty Nordic positionality" of its authors (6). Sundén and Paasonen draw many examples from politics of gender and sexuality from North America as well as Sweden and Finland. They unpack feminist reclamation of titles such as Swedish *hagga* (hag) and Finnish "*tolerance whores and flower-hat aunties"* and explain their relationships to Nordic feminist movements. As an American feminist academic who primarily reads about feminism in the context of American politics, it was insightful to read about the circulation of affective and laughter in a Nordic politics and cultures. Particularly intriguing is their analysis of "*Skamlös utsläckning"* (shameless extinction), a Facebook event for *hagga* that encourages shamelessness through humor.

Primary contributions of this book include the authors' theories of "affective homophily" and "affective heterophily." Affective homophily is "the love of feeling the same that brings people together through networked expressions of similar feeling" and has been predominant in the #MeToo movement (15). The three areas of affective homophily the authors unpack are seriousness, anger, and shame. Sundén and Paasonen importantly note that what drives feminists in these communities together can also drive them apart: "When feminist communities are construed only around similarity in opinion (are you the right kind of feminist?) and similarity in feeling (are you feeling the right kind of feminist feelings?), our spaces shrink as we run out of air" (157). In contrast, affective heterophily is the

"love of feeling the different or of feeling differently—which opens up a much needed space for a multitude of voices and bodies, for affective ambiguity, and for a multitude of ways of connecting politically through how things feel" (67). The authors see affective heterophily, which welcomes inappropriate humor and the absurd, as an urgent intersectional critique of #MeToo. I find Sundén and Paasonen's new theories poignant as well as productively unbound. As a fellow researcher of feminist digital communities, I am wondering: At what point do the dispositions and behaviors specific feminist community members reflect affective homophily or affective heterophily? Can absurd humor, including feminist memes, be part of homophily? What affective relations encourage inclusivity and affective variety? What affective relations promote unity and belonging? I believe Sundén and Paasonen's insightful, and flexible, theories will help us to learn more about affective circulation, transformation, and resistance in feminist communities and beyond.

REVIEW: VIRTUAL MENAGERIES

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Berland, J. (2019). *Virtual Menageries: Animals as Mediators in Network Cultures*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 325 pp., $35.00 (hardcover).

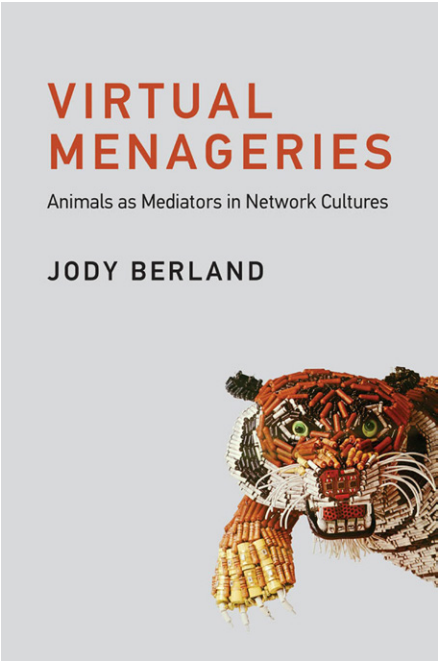
What might it take to see our contemporary digital culture with new eyes? With the title of her book *Capital is Dead: Is this Something Worse?*, McKenzie Wark (2019) asks readers to re-envision their categorization of our current networked economy, in order to understand online information extraction's new primary role. As she observes, the corporate use of predictive algorithms to track and capitalize on the desires and behavioral patterns of individuals has reshaped modern society in ways that may no longer be 'capitalism' as we have historically thought of it. Here, media consumers are tracked, studied, and sold as the primary commodity. In this new system, communication and media engagement becomes a brand of production, transforming speakers into products through their expressions of interest and identity.

While reading Jody Berland's new book *Virtual Menageries: Animals as Mediators in Network Cultures* (2019), it became clear to me that the economic mode Wark describes rode in on a wave of animal images—everything from the Linux pen-

guin to the Twitter bird. These nonhuman logos and avatars were fundamental for establishing our current structure of feeling and for ushering in the widespread use of communications technologies. In Berland's refreshing work, existing at the overlap of cultural studies, media studies, and critical animal studies, she excavates several key concepts for understanding our current, highly-mediated information economy. In the introduction, she argues for the central importance of the term "animal spirits" for understanding the spasmodic flux and flow of contemporary markets, outlining how these "spirits" have been historically conceptualized within economic theory. Used initially to bracket off elements of the economy that were thought to not be subject to rational equations of supply and demand, "animal spirits" have become more and more central for understanding the disastrous convulsions of global economies in the 21st century. As capitalism fails to uplift all but a tiny few, its structures and mechanisms are increasingly described as inhuman, initially premised on theories of human behavior that even its proponents no longer believe to be true (Harman 2010).

In this landscape, individual consumers are ever-more fragmented and animalized in their role as drivers of unreasoned market forces. Berland (2019) argues that online animal images—the adorable memes that we share, the animated sidebar ads playing in our browsers, the pet photographs we snap and send—"speak the language of these animal spirits," positioning online consumption and communication as the natural consequence of irrational, inborn desires for freedom and pleasure (11). In her inspired fourth chapter, "Assembling the Virtual Menagerie," Berland tracks the ways in which these animal iconographies were deployed by early software and technology companies to draw their users into adopting disruptive new communication technologies into their lives. She describes this use of animal images as a form of "risk management," (44) in which onscreen animals embody and seem to reconcile the contradictory forces at the heart of virtual media. Through the presentation of digital communication as akin to the natural play of animals, corporate entities and human users navigate the paradoxes of online culture—where modern technology is often free yet monetized, autonomous yet tracked, individualized yet standardized, and seemingly immaterial yet environmentally toxic. Closely examining the visual history of animals such as beavers, cats, and giraffes, Berland describes the rendering process through which animals are stripped of their surroundings and turned into abstractions capable of representing a frictionless, ahistorical ideal of the virtual.

None of this can be removed from the backdrop of environmental collapse. As species, ecosystems, and habitats are wiped out, virtual animals' offer of escape from context and surroundings becomes all the more alluring. Berland traces the early colonial origins of this process: linking the harvesting of beaver pelts to beavers' eventual iconic status within Canada and following the reverberating effects of the trade in "exotic" animals such as the giraffe throughout the centuries. And yet within this history of oppression, both of humans and nonhuman animals, she is sure to leave the door open for animals to signify in unintended ways, noting how lesbian communities re-appropriated the beaver's double entendre and how users create intimate communities through the sharing of domestic cat pics. She argues for a conceptual shift, in which we reinscribe abstracted images and logos of animals back into their history and environment, understanding them to be in and of the world rather than an escape from it. As I was reading these sections, I questioned whether this type of recuperative work is up to the tasks that face us today: whether global extinction and spreading fascism could be countered by this type of conceptual enterprise. Instead, Berland's writing made me wonder how radical leftists might mobilize the techniques of the virtual menagerie towards their own ends, evoking to me the black Chilean dog Negro Matapacos, who went from being photographed protecting students from police during the 2011 protests in Santiago, to becoming an icon of the New York City subway protests of 2019 (Isfahani-Hammond 2020). In this instance, and others like it, the globalizing abstraction and distribution of animal images were directed towards revolutionary ends, pointing to a practice that might look less towards restoration and conservation, and more towards mobilizing political movements.



Ultimately, Berland's critical insights prompt me to ask why so many in animal studies continue to litigate the failures of Cartesian dualism when our current ruling class, the "vectorilists" defined by Wark, share more of their worldview with Donna Haraway, or at least B.F. Skinner, than Rene Descartes. Like Haraway's brilliant "cyborg manifesto," Berland's writing is a call for us to face the world as

it stands today, acknowledging all the previously heretical complexities of contemporary human/animal relations. *Virtual Menageries* is best read along with other works currently questioning the simple binary implied by previous critiques of anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism, such as Zakkiya Imam Jackson's *Becoming Human: Matter and Meaning in an Antiblack World* (2020) and Nicole Shukin's *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times* (2009). Cumulatively, these works point to major shifts in the conversation, ways of thinking through the political perils of human recognition as well as animalization, and of capital's investment in nonhuman life. Reimagining contemporary visual culture within this changing paradigm is of the utmost importance for understanding the politics of animal imagery within the Anthropocene. Following Berland's thinking, I am inspired to conclude by repeating Wark's initial statement and question, now slightly reframed as: Anthropocentrism is dead, is this something worse?

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REVIEW: EVE'S BODY/OF WORK

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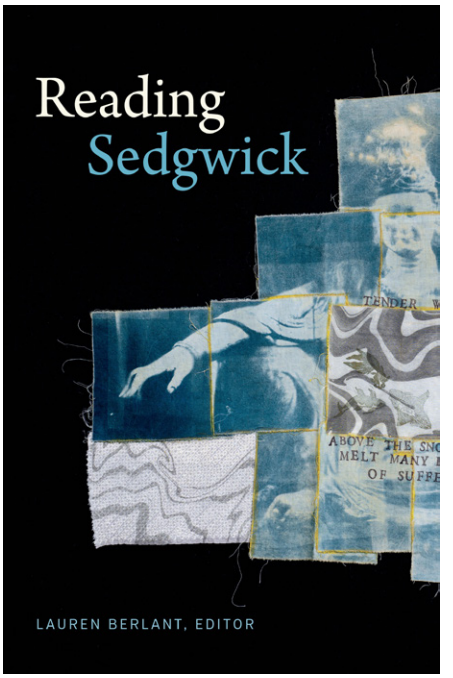
Berlant, Lauren (ed.). (2019). *Reading Sedgwick*, Durham: Duke University Press, 320 pp., $27.95 (paperback).

In a classic interpellation of her sly essay title "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, Or, You're So Paranoid You Probably Think This Essay is About You," I'm convinced Eve Sedgwick's late career essay "Teaching/Depression" is about me. The timing is right—the essay is from late 2006, and reflects on the admissions committee work of that year, when I was accepted to attend. I may have been the last lucky student to be chosen to work with Eve. Contributors to the recent volume *Reading Sedgwick* work through similar problems: how to think about Eve, with Eve, through Eve, after Eve. "Who among us has not had our breath taken away by Eve Sedgwick?" Judith Butler queries, paraphrasing Eve's question of Barbara Johnson, "Who among us is *not* in love with Barbara Johnson?" (63).

The volume is a collection of essays written by colleagues in response to Eve Sedgwick's passing in 2009, often for memorial conferences and panels, or for memorial seminars on her work. The volume boasts an impressive roster of con-

tributors, and houses a variety of reflections on the value and future of her practices of being, thinking, reading, and writing. Eve was ultimately besotted with questions of living and loss—and not a few of the contributors bring up *karma*, and her Buddhist inflections. The volume is the work of mourning, holding the beloved lost object in cupped hands while working to conjure the charismatic impact of the once and future Eve.

Andrew Parker addresses explicitly one of the productive tensions in the book: "I don't think I've solved very well the problem of whether to refer to her throughout [my essay] as 'Eve' or as 'Sedgwick,' so I decided finally and arbitrarily to do both" (178). In my view, there is, on the one hand, Eve: her body, her work. There is also Eve's body of work—which scholarly convention asks we denote with "Sedgwick." But only those who can claim to have known her may feel a right to the personal "Eve." Karin Sellberg also addresses this issue head-on: "Those who knew her often gave a short account of a particularly pertinent comment she made or an occasion on which she spoke, laughed, or reacted in a specifically Eve-esque manner. Those who neither had the privilege to know her beyond the pages of her books nor to hear her speak tend to openly admit to this—and point out that their reading will be colored by this fact" (193). Luckily, Eve was an active and prodigious teacher—profound and serious and earnest and intense. And she reached a good many students. Melissa Solomon's elegiac and personal essay casts her glance around an early memorial, wondering: "How many people here owe their success, their university teaching jobs, their university tenure, their accepted book manuscripts, their positive reviews, their fully flowered theses, their nascent ideas made better to the caring, time-giving, help-giving generous hard work of you?" (236). Indeed, 'having been her student' is an ample space peopled by 'big names' at 'big places,' and the volume trades on the inclusion of substantial essays by many Big Names in queer theory: Berlant,



Edelman, Butler, Munoz, Stockton, Gallop, Wiegman; all last names that set off bells for feminist and queer scholars. But very few scholars attain the singular first name: few scholars are 'Eve.'

Eve was singular—a fat woman fighting cancer and perversely "cross-identifying" as a gay man who put up with the "zingers" of an activist community who more than once demanded to know "*Are you a lesbian?*" The first label is the one that Ramzi Fawaz identifies as one of the strengths of Sedgwick's (embodied) work, her relish for the joy of the "political work" of "being able to be identified with" (19). A tight essay by the late Jose Esteban Munoz probes at the question of (crossed) identifications, too, by taking an unflinching look at Sedgwick's work promoting, editing, and publishing Gary Fisher. While he takes the 'sponsorship' of Fisher's work to be historically problematic, and while he understands the work to be a working-through of the 'reparative' mode, Munoz ultimately locates the success of Sedgwick's most embattled project in its positing of incommensurability as the limiting condition of reparative work (163). Lee Edelman and Lauren Berlant explore the nature of "dread" in Sedgwick's work, precisely of the "zinger," the formulation designed to catch, shame, or humiliate the student or respondent. Wiegman's essay—no less provocative than Munoz's—hangs on Eve's "identity" in queer studies, starting with the infamous conference where a participant queried, "*Are you a lesbian?*" (242). Wiegman affirms that Sedgwick was "never unaware" of the problematics of the "early days of institutionalizing identity-oriented knowledges, when discerning an identity object of study from the vantage point of 'being it' *was* what identity studies meant" (251), a claim about a historical moment that also feels increasingly important in This Embattled Present. Both Munoz and Wiegman value in Sedgwick her willingness to plunge into and hold the embattled middle space in the midst of multiplicities and intersections: in Wiegman's case, the relentless productivity of the figure of the triangle.

Jane Gallop articulates a compelling argument for the "queer temporality" of Sedgwick's work by looking at it as a body of work crossing time and selfhood. By highlighting the distinctions made in late-edition introductions to her earliest works, written after *Epistemology* crystallized Sedgwick's thinking about queerness and identity, Gallop historicizes Eve's evolving selves over time(s). Gallup's essay is critical to posthumous periodization: where does one Sedgwick end, and another begin? And what do we do with a person comfortable with having been many?

Melissa Solomon offers a kind of origin tale about Eve that threatens to justify many of her most impactful essays—"Queer and Now," "How To Bring Up Your Kids Gay," and so many others: "Your mother still worries and wonders whether she did the right thing when she prevented you, in elementary school, from publishing a letter to the editor in the Bethesda newspaper in defense of your gay teacher who was being persecuted for his homosexuality" (240). From young Eve to old(er) Eve, the story provides illuminating continuities that inflect so much of Sedgwick's work—at the risk of biographical readings that come freighted with ideological baggage.

Inasmuch as the volume makes much of 'having known Eve,' many of the essays highlight pedagogy as an inseparable aspect of the theoretical work of queer studies and affect theory. We are, have been, and do contain multitudes; we are not the first-person singular but the first-person collective. Chris Nealon quotes joyous Eve in his essay—"Promiscuous we! / Me, plus anybody else. Permeable we!" (175). Jason Edwards, working through the implications of Sedgwick's art praxis as inextricable from her pedagogy, argues that she coaxes the reader into hypotheses against orthodoxy, favoring may/try to certainty (86).

Most of the contributions are concerned both with mourning and with the reparative work of Eve's future capacities. Like the Kleinian depressives Sedgwick relished, many of the essays hold their lost object carefully, regarding it with awe and pleasure. "What *does* endure in the work? What changes?" Christopher Nealon queries, in a delightful essay "Sedgwick Inexhaustible" (166). He concludes that *texture* serves as the "'middle range' of experience and subjectivity" that is "more than spacious…it's potentially infinite" (167). Sedgwick's work demonstrates, to paraphrase Fawaz, the particular with a heart for the universal (11); and there is ample space generated between desire and text. Texture, moreover, implies the haptic, touching, holding, and feeling. Edwardsborrows terminology from Eve's poetry, "Fatness" concerns the tactility and substantiality of the material, the body, the book, the word, the fabric; and "thinness" refers to smoothness, flatness, the page, paper, tradition (77).

Mourning comes with its own difficulties, inescapable and inevitable. As Kathryn Bond Stockton reflects in the [sharp] Afterword, "What we have in losing Eve is losing Eve to myth…Myth is a graspable form that we make of even living beloveds when evoking them" (274). Heather Love, in her 2010 essay grappling

with Eve's account of paranoid and reparative reading, argued shortly after her passing that "to read Sedgwick [her work] *always* reparatively is to miss the energizing force of paranoia in her work; it also reduces the kinds of relations we might now cultivate with her," and we must "begin the hard work of deidealization" (2010, 240).

Between extremes, or nestled amongst them, and in the ordinary, is a range of experience(s) that are endlessly fruitful for careful thinking and reading. We can, of course, see much of the legacy of this Sedgwick in affect studies – a desire to identify the quotidian, the ordinary, the banal as the location of rich affective structures. Sedgwick's insistence on the productivity of the instability of the triad or triangle continues to create space for nuance in contemporary thinking about multiplicit(ies), as both Judith Butler and Wiegman argue. Ramzi Fawaz, in the terrific introduction, articulates multiplicity, lists, the additive mode, as one of Sedgwick's primary pleasures and promises, linking this impulse to her role as an "affective curator" who in her pedadgogic and metapedagogic modes cultivates spaces of discomfort and mutability (24-25). Berlant celebrates Sedgwick's ability to provoke "new capacities for bearing, and not repairing, ambivalence," and extends this praxis through mourning, learning to "be[ing] in the room with that ambivalence, which she also called unbearable, in its revelation that having and losing are indistinguishable" (61).

Several of the essays draw from the best traditions in Sedgwick's cutting literary close readings, the kind of work she did in her readings of Gothic novels, 19th-century literature, Shakespeare, Austen, Cather. Meredith Kruse articulates the value of Sedgwick's "perverse close reading," coming down on the side of the joy of reparative reading, arguing that Sedgwick's literary criticism engenders "the shape of a queer feminist erotic ethics of close reading" that embraces a Foucauldian practice of identifying and deconstructing power. Other contributors in the volume joyously model the kind of close reading practices that Sedgwick embraced in her lit crit: Denis Flannery knits an essay that dives into the "in" of Sedgwick's anal-erotic readings of Henry James; Michael Moon riffs out a reading of a decadent French novel of technofetishism (*L'Eve Future* by Villiers de l'Isle-Adam) to gesture towards new horizons for Sedgwickean thinking alongside technology, science fiction, and spiritualist discourses; and Andrew Parker offers what feels like the final word, and the new foundation for further study,on *Frankenstein* through the identification of the incommensurability of feminist and queer theoretical readings of the novel.

In some ways, we are all in love with Eve, as in Solomon's elegiac title "18 Things I Love About You," or, if we didn't *know her*-know her, at least in love with her style, which Fawaz gushes "is constantly performing a meta-critique of the very epistemological foundations on which she makes her most original claims" (21) even as it also teases snap-worthy moments and shocking self-revelations. He claims "the most potent and lasting effect of Sedgwick's writing…is to construct a writing style that functions not merely to transmit ideas but also to pass along, invoke, or generate the very kinds of affects required to understand and transmit them" (22).

It's hard to say in what admixture Eve would have been bemused and pleased by all of the loving attention the volume pays to her. If I see myself in the essay "Teaching/Depression," then I must also acknowledge my place in the schema of her pedagogy that is mutually terrifying: "to recast the teaching situation in terms of a psychoanalytic encounter: sometimes I feel like my students' analyst; other times, floundering all too visibly in my helplessness to evoke language from my seminar, I feel like a patient being held out on by 20 psychoanalysts at once." (1).

A plant (Cynometra cauliflora L.): trunk bearing flowers and fruit, and separate floral sections
chromolithograph by P. Depannemaeker, c.1885, after B. Hoola van Nooten.
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Claire Danes as Carrie Mathison in Homeland, Showtime, 2020

CAPACIOUS

ALTERED STATES: DRUGS, BIPOLARITY, AFFECT, AND THE 'KILLJOY' IN HOMELAND

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ABSTRACT

Taking a longer view of Homeland than recent scholarship (Negri, 2015, pp. 125-58) this article traces the complexities of Carrie Mathison's condition across all seven seasons of the series. This article focuses upon Homeland's affective domain as a structuring feature, offering a new approach to the series. Sara Ahmed's notion of the feminist killjoy assists an exploration of Carrie's willfulness, especially as it is filtered through the changing affective context of legitimate and illegitimate drug use. Finally, this article posits that Carrie is a new type of superhero, a kind of super-anti-hero, possessing a super-power and heroic but also complicated by her all too human sensibilities.

KEYWORDS

Homeland, spying, affect, drugs, states

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The final scene of season seven of Homeland (Showtime 2010–20) takes place on a bridge as Carrie Mathison, the series' main character and a spy working for the CIA, is delivered back into the hands of Saul Berenson, her handler and US national security advisor, in a prisoner exchange with Russia where Carrie had been held in captivity after a botched mission. Carrie has the look that viewers have come to recognize in the series: disheveled appearance, wild staring eyes, grimacing face, and lurching body movements. But this time her condition is much worse. Upon her release at the center of the bridge Carrie fails to even understand that she is to move toward her American liberators and is pushed when she hesitates. She then reels and staggers across the bridge passing Saul without recognition. With her medications for Bipolar Disorder having been withheld in captivity, Carrie has experienced a total psychological collapse in which recognizability itself has been deleted from her consciousness. The season ends as Saul strokes her hair and repeats her name while viewers wonder what will happen next.

Audiences have grown accustomed to Carrie's precarious psychological states, which have ended in breakdown under various circumstances in *Homeland*. For example, she sometimes stops taking her medication to treat Bipolar Disorder in efforts to aid her spying. Once free of medication, Carrie's condition produces heightened levels of perception and pattern recognition that allow her to identify things that others are incapable of seeing. At other times, her medication is replaced to undermine Carrie's work, life, and national security objectives. Carrie also periodically uses her medication in conjunction with alcohol and other drugs to recklessly enhance her periodic mania. The effects of this regulated and unregulated drug use are key features of the series. However, after climaxing to dramatic effect in season four, Carrie's bipolar condition took more of a background role in season five, and especially in season six where it surfaced only briefly and was regulated once again. In season seven, the bipolar narrative returned in its most extreme presentation yet to once again become a central plot line. Season eight, wherein Carrie no longer works for the CIA—but surreptitiously works for Saul—culminates with her infiltrating the Kremlin (through Russian spy-cum-romantic-interest Yevgeni Gromov) after yet another (real or manufactured) partnership 'breakdown' with Saul. While there are minor questions in season eight regarding Carrie's mental health, in its final iteration the series refuses the connections established in prior seasons.

Taking a longer view of *Homeland* this article traces the complexities of Carrie Mathison's condition at the series' culmination rather than its initial presentation, to examine endings rather than beginnings. Such a view is able to account for how a series changes over time. In addition, this article offers a unique approach to *Homeland* by focusing upon affect as a structuring element, a claim which develops Emmanuelle Wessels' argument regarding labor in the important article, "Homeland and neo-liberalism" where she asks, "who owns Carrie's life and labour?" Wessels argues that, "[a]lthough *Homeland* sometimes 'counts' Carrie's affective labor as work, the alienation and suffering she experiences as a result are coded as personal problems in the form of aberrant femininity and/ or mental illness" (Wessels 2016, 514). In this framework Carrie pays the personal price for her labor while the State remains the beneficiary (Wessels 2016, 517). Yet, the status of this benefit is different in *Homeland* and will be addressed in two ways here: first, in an unexplored approach to the relationship between *Homeland* and affect theory emerges, placing drug discourse at the unacknowledged and overlooked centre of the series; second, by using Ahmed's "feminist killjoy" to consider the role of agency with regards to Carrie's "disorder." While Ahmed's killjoy is a useful figure for thinking through political, subjective, and bodily states, Carrie's body and actions mark a limit point for the concept that is examined here.

Studies of *Homeland* have not sufficiently attended to its affective elements. For this purpose, Sara Ahmed's notion of the feminist killjoy—"willful women, unwilling to get along, unwilling to preserve an idea of happiness"—assists an exploration of Carrie's willfulness (Ahmed 2014, 2) and her "unmanageable" character (Wessels), especially as it is filtered through the changing affective context of legitimate and illegitimate drug use. This article also posits that Carrie is a type of anti-hero—heroic in possessing a form of super-power but also thwarted by her all-too-human sensibilities. Such an approach advances both the study of *Homeland qua* series as well as the uses of affect as a theoretical framework for considering the relation between mental health and drug use, licit and illicit. *Homeland* matters for television studies because of its interesting and problematic framing of its female lead in the hyper-masculine field of popular culture espionage. It also matters due to its mobilization of affect, offering insight into the manners in which affect infuses popular representational forms. The "affective turn" (Clough) has only begun to be investigated in scholarly studies of popular culture. Carrie's reliance on drugs is brought into relief here as a structuring dynamic that her own biomediated subjectivity must negotiate. In Wessels' argument, the State has the last word regarding Carrie's affective labor. This article also asks how the killjoy might produce spaces of agency for the subject within the frame of affective labor.

Homeland first appeared ten years after 9/11 and begins with CIA agent Mathison's hunch that a returning US marine named Nicholas Brody had converted to Islam and was turned into a terrorist while in captivity in Iraq. Carrie must go to bold extremes to convince others in the CIA and government of Brody's terrorist sympathies as he quickly advances through the ranks of the military and government, aided by his own victim narrative. Eventually, Carrie must save the President and his advisors from Brody's intricately orchestrated suicide attack,in addition to averting the resulting constitutional crisis. While the Brody narrative ends with his hanging in Iran in the finale of season three, the series takes up Carrie's heroic struggle to save the world in subsequent seasons in different ways: she becomes CIA Station Master in Kabul in season four; she briefly goes into private security in Berlin before learning of a major terror plot in season five; in season six Carrie returns to the United States to fight Alt-right domestic terrorism after a controversial presidential election, a fight which continues through season seven as the President struggles to survive a coup instigated by the Russians. In season eight, the narrative travels to Afghanistan for the series finale. In each of these circumstances Carrie must overcome immense opposition to her intuitive hunches, outbursts, and actions as she fights terrorism. The stakes could not be higher than presented in the finale of Homeland as Carrie infiltrates the Kremlin itself and secretly communicates her intent to Saul.

Through extraordinary moral virtue and patriotism, Carrie Mathison is framed as a type of superhero in *Homeland*. As Peterson and Park (2008) note: "Virtually all superheroes have character strengths, usually to such a degree that we can describe them as paragons of one virtue or another" (9). In addition, superheroes face moral dilemmas but overcome their own faults and misgivings to act valiantly in the face of evil. For viewers of *Homeland*, Carrie is recognizable within this frame as she fights global terrorism to restore order and peace. However, Carrie must also be understood as anti-heroic, making "moral compromises, often in an effort to reach a desired end or to help secure a fair conclusion" (Tally 2016, 5). Viewers witness moral compromises repeatedly in *Homeland*, such as in season four when Carrie seduces a young man named Aayan in Pakistan with the promise of entry into a US university. Carrie is attempting to capture his uncle, Haissam Haqqani, a top target of the CIA. Aayan is casually murdered by his uncle for the perceived betrayal but not before Carrie develops real if ambiguous feelings for him. These lapses, strategic and coincidental, occur throughout the series. Yet, it must be noted, as will be argued below, that Carrie's anti-heroism is framed differently

from her contemporaries in "TV's Third Golden Age" (Tally 2016).

Alex Bevan (2015), in an exploration of women, mental health, and national bodies in Homeland, argues that "the mental and bodily health of Carrie Mathison become battlegrounds for the series' overarching questions about state surveillance and citizenship" (145), adding that "[t]he series' ongoing management of Carrie Mathison's pathology and the government's control over her body are also meta-interrogations of the logical fissures marking the temporality of national security" (149). For Bevan, similarly to Wessels, Carrie's body is constantly placed under state control, like other women in quality television (e.g. Stella Gibson in The Fall and Debra Morgan in Dexter, etc.) (151), if in even more paternalistic ways, for example when Carrie is institutionalized in season three or loses custody of her child in season six. Bevan is correct to identify this coupling of pathology, gender, and national security. However, Carrie is anti-heroic in ways that are different from other contemporary figures. Her bipolar-induced intuition operates as a unique power that provides Carrie with knowledge that no one else possesses while also positioning her as a clairvoyant who leads others toward truth—although her followers always remain reticent because it is during psychological breakdowns caused by ceasing her medications that this power appears. Like many contemporary heroes, Carrie possesses a power that she must learn to use correctly while those around her learn to trust her unorthodox methods.

In her own self-perception Carrie Mathison is the only person capable of saving America from the urgent threat of global terrorism. Carrie's 'saviour complex' is a central theme raised throughout the series, one important enough to be included in the opening sequence in which Carrie says, "I missed something once before. I won't let that happen again." Saul Berenson, her handler, responds: "It was ten years ago. Everyone missed something that day" (*Homeland* S1-3, E1-12). The dialogue refers to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, which Carrie believes she alone could have prevented. A version of the sentiment returns in each season. For example, in season seven Carrie's sister Maggie sarcastically argues, "There is a vast government conspiracy and you are the only one that can bring it to light. I know Carrie" (Homeland S7, E2). Carrie, knowing that her willfulness sounds ridiculous, still responds affirmatively. She takes the responsibility of saving the world very seriously. In this sentiment Carrie is not alone. Popular culture contains many such televisual gestures in the years since 9/11, with programs such as *24* (2001-10), *The Agency* (2001-03), *Threat Matrix* (2003-04), *NCIS* (2003-present), *The Grid* (2004), *Sleeper Cell* (2005-06), and *The Americans* (2013-18) also appearing in the American context. Even so, Carrie's feelings of responsibility are heightened by comparison to other popular culture heroes.

In *The Biopolitics of Terror* Julian Reid (2006) defines "logistical life" as "a life lived under the duress of the command to be efficient" (13), a similar notion to Wendy Brown's "practice of responsibilization," which forces the subject "to become a responsible self-investor and self-provider… that meshes with the morality of the state and the health of the economy" (2015, 84). A body's capacity not only to always seek "health" and to "be healthy," but also to seek security on individual, national, and global registers, these are central preoccupations of *Homeland*. Bodies here fall within strict disciplinary systems but also must circulate in relation to neoliberalism's productive responsibilization, as Wendy Brown (2015) suggests:

> No longer are citizens *most importantly* constituent elements of sovereignty, members of publics, or even bearers of rights. Rather, as human capital, they may contribute to or be a drag on economic growth; they may be invested in or divested from depending on their potential for GDP enhancement (110).

Homeland connects *homo oeconomicus* to *homo securitas* through this investment. It is Carrie who bears (i.e. carries) this burden disproportionately. Through the feeling of being responsible for American and global security *Homeland* positions Carrie heroically. After feeling like she had failed when 9/11 occurred she is committed to ensuring that such events do not repeat.

In this way, a primary problematic of *Homeland* is affective. Affect here defines the relation of Carrie's body to the discourses of the war on terror, with its claims on security and territory, and those of *Homeland*, which mobilizes melodrama as its key narrative mode. Affect is omnipresent in the series, with anxiety, fear and paranoia being crucial concerns of *Homeland's* security framework. These are felt not only at the subjective level but also at that of the nation, the primary figure through which terror responses are generated. As Sara Ahmed (2014) notes, the nation is both a site and a subject of feeling, such as when we say that "a nation mourns" (13). At the same time affect is not a possession of the subject but defines a relation between objects and is a type of precursor to emotion. Ahmed writes: "Signs increase in affective value as an effect of the movement between signs: the more signs circulate, the more affective they become" (45). Along similar lines, Sianne Ngai (2005) refers to affect as an "analog amplifier" (530). For example, the figure of the stranger gains affective value as other signs attract relational "stickiness." Being seen to not assimilate, to take jobs meant for "natives," or to pray five times a day—to name but a few—these signs all stick to the stranger to reproduce difference and emotion. In this way affect produces "intensification" as stickiness operates to reproduce strangeness, which is figured as non-alignment

with the general will. As Ahmed (2014) claims in *Willful Subjects*, "Through acts of association a 'moral and collective body' is produced" (98). Entities like the "family" and the "nation" become "straightening rods" for the subject, intent on producing willing and aligned subjects (114). Carrie's role as a CIA agent is to ensure that this aligned body is always maintained and promoted in the face of terror. The problem for Carrie is that her own body requires drugs to maintain alignment. Carrie's willingness is based upon her body being drugged. Her willfulness emerges most pointedly when drugs are ceased. For Carrie, drugs mark the line between the good subject and the killjoy.

Carrie Mathison possesses many of the central features of Sara Ahmed's killjoy. In her book *Living a Feminist Life* (2017), Ahmed includes both "A Killjoy Survival Kit" and "A Killjoy Manifesto," which are her most recent explorations of the idea. The essays feel like character studies of Carrie Mathison but require qualification regarding subjective fragmentation, as will be stated in the concluding remarks. In its most literal manifestation, the killjoy kills joy. Yet, Ahmed does not suggest that killing a narrow concept of joy is the killjoy's only action. More frequently it is alignment itself that is challenged by the killjoy. A pronounced example in *Homeland* is that of family. For Carrie, family relations are fraught in similar ways to her other relations. Her mother abandoned the family when the children were young and they retain an uncertain connection to her as adults. Carrie seeks solace and protection from her father, but he also has bipolar disorder and remains periodically misaligned himself. Dis-ease is always in the way, upsetting their relationship over and over. Indeed, joy itself is hard to find in her family and alignment is rare—despite remaining an abiding desire for everyone. Carrie's sister, a medical doctor who surreptitiously provides drugs to Carrie at times, is supportive but paternalistic. Always telling Carrie to settle down, to attend to her health (and take her drugs), to sleep, to be more involved in family, to reconsider her work life, Maggie seeks familial alignment and cannot understand her sister's decisions when they upset family cohesion. Carrie's obsessions keep her from experiencing familial alignment, always pushing her toward an unattainable goal in the series.

It is with regards to her child that Carrie's misalignment is felt most acutely. Frannie was born after her father, Nicholas Brody, was executed for treason in Iran in the finale of season 3. Upon learning of her pregnancy Carrie experienced mixed emotions because the child represented a coveted but lost connection to Brody—whether it was in fact real love or not—and a block to Carrie's work. Carrie failed to both tell Brody about her pregnancy and to bond with her newborn baby. Indeed, in a highly discussed scene from the season 4 premiere Carrie is seen bathing Frannie. Suddenly, Frannie slips from Carrie's hands and her head

goes under the surface of the water. Looking up from Frannie's perspective the audience sees Carrie hesitate before saving her baby. Carrie finally recognizes her own state and lifts Frannie from the tub, Carrie's face exposing a sense of shame as she recognizes her dilemma. Later in the episode, Carrie leaves for a new posting in Kabul and departs without saying goodbye to Frannie. These two connected scenes demonstrate Carrie's misalignment with her role as mother. Maggie, her sister, often cares for Frannie in Carrie's absence and later seeks custody after a particularly fraught situation in season 6 in which Frannie is removed from Carrie's care. In order to chase a hunch, Carrie leaves Frannie in the care of Quinn, a close colleague and friend from the CIA, but who also periodically abuses drugs and is in recovery. However, when Quinn arrives he is recovering from an unintentional experience with methamphetamine that was affecting his perception still. In Carrie's absence, a communication mix-up escalated into an armed standoff between Quinn and police in Carrie's apartment—with Frannie present. Mistakenly, Quinn takes extreme measures to protect Frannie but instead he endangers her. Frannie is removed from Carrie's care.

Bad parenting is not the unique purview of the killjoy. Carrie, driven by her obsessions regarding terrorism, repeatedly rejects family relationships in order to serve a higher order that is itself structured through notions of alignment. She refuses the happiness that is coded into the idea of family, and rarely—if ever—experiences anything like joy. Many of Ahmed's principles in her manifesto for the killjoy describe Carrie's sensibility. For example, Ahmed (2017) describes how institutions are often constructed as "promises of happiness" (257). When she rejects this promise, Carrie demonstrates that she is "willing to live with the consequences of what she is willing" (Ahmed, 257). In this sense she embodies Ahmed's "Principle 7," which states, "I am willing to live a life that is deemed by others as unhappy and I am willing to reject or to widen the scripts available for what counts as a good life" (264). Just as the promise of happiness contains violence, the killjoy must accept not only her own unhappiness but the unhappiness she causes, "Living a life with feminist principles is thus not living smoothly; we bump into the world that does not live in accordance with the principles we try to live" (Ahmed, 256). Drugs, particularly those used to treat Carrie's bipolar disorder, are a critical component of Carrie's sensibility because they alter her affective alignments. Drugs hold Carrie's killjoy at bay. Yet, she moves in and out of alignment, at times choosing misalignment while at other times choosing the promise of happiness—temporarily. Ahmed (2017) describes this movement:

> Timeout from being a killjoy is necessary for a killjoy if she is to persist in being a killjoy. Being a killjoy is not all that you are, and if you are too consumed by her, she can drain too much energy and will. Come back to her; she will come back to you: you will, she will (242).

For Ahmed, one is not a killjoy all the time. For Carrie drugs connect the killjoy and the person more than the volition that Ahmed here ascribes to the subject. In addition to Ahmed's interesting framing of the killjoy's temporalities, the fragmentation that accompanies the figure is important, as will be argued below. In this sense, it is important to note that drugs are not only important in *Homeland* because of Carrie's medical condition. Drugs are a fulcrum around which the series is structured.

A scan of the series reveals approximately 200 instances of drugs being taken over the course of eight seasons. Apart from their physical administration, talk about drugs is ubiquitous in Homeland. Drugs are taken for a variety of reasons: alcohol is consumed regularly, and extensively for Carrie and Quinn, her CIA colleague; marijuana is regularly used by Brody's daughter and her friends, who are underage, beginning in the first episode; several instances of hard drug use occur, including Quinn consuming methamphetamine; there are several instances of people being drugged in the series, including Brody being turned into a heroin addict while in captivity; there are instances of drugs being used for medical purposes, such as when the terrorist Hoqqani is provided medication by his nephew Aayan, mentioned above; and, there are numerous instances in which Carrie's medications are administered to either assist or undermine her. In total twenty-two separate drugs are used in the series, including caffeine (which is mentioned only because it was being snorted), marijuana, Ativan, lithium, morphine, heroin, and numerous others ranging from soft to hard. Drugs and drug discourse are structuring features of Homeland.

Drugs influence affect by either amplifying or dampening it. In Carrie's case, bipolar disorder medication, Lithium, dampens affect. It is in this state—medicated—that she is considered to be balanced and healthy. As Nikolas Rose (2007) notes of psychopharmaceutical drugs today, they "do not so much seek to normalize a deviant but to correct anomalies, to adjust the individual and restore and maintain his or her capacity to enter the circuits of everyday life" (210). Brain chemistry is routinely regulated and fine-tuned in modern medical practices, utilizing drugs to return the subject to the 'normal' state from which it had ostensibly strayed. Through psychopharmacology, disorder becomes order as the subject's will is realigned with the general will. For Carrie, depression and mania disappear as her sensibilities are dampened by the drugs prescribed to rebalance her. Conversely, there are instances in which Carrie intentionally ceases taking

her medication, and the return of affect produces many problems for her; nonetheless, the attending intensification of intuition that Carrie feels produces a state of hyper-awareness in which she is able to identify patterns where others cannot (including her other self). It is precisely the amplification of anxiety and paranoia that pulls Carrie closer to the object of her affective response and ultimately reveals the pattern that she can communicate to others. This is her power; however, it comes at a significant price.

In *Willful Subjects*, Sara Ahmed (2017) asks, what is the relation of the part to the whole in a social body? She argues that the reproduction of the national body relies on a "crucial mechanism," "[t]he creation of a distinction between willing and willful parts" (128). A willing subject's "self" aligns with the general will. To be willful means to not be aligned as required by a social body. To be identified as willful is to become a problem, Ahmed suggests:

> When attunement becomes the aim, those who are not in tune or who are out of tune become the obstacles; they become the 'non' attuned whose clumsiness registers as the loss of a possibility. This 'non' is saturated: those who are assumed to cause the non-attunement *become the non they are assumed to cause* (51, emphasis in original).

Nothing could describe Carrie Mathison's position more deftly. Aligned when medicated and mis-aligned when not, this is the (perhaps too convenient) binary that Carrie's subjectivity negotiates at every stage in *Homeland*. Her so-called misbehavior, those actions that place her at odds with everyone but often save the day, produce intense challenges for everyone, but especially for Carrie. Yet, this is her biological self, unedited and as close to the truth of the subject as one might come. In this resides a potentially productive, if flawed, figure. Ahmed (2017) argues that willfulness is a "style of politics" that involves not only being willing to not go with the flow, but being willing to cause its obstruction (161). The killjoy is not only a block to the literal idea of joy; rather the figure challenges the very concept of subjective alignment. In this sense, the killjoy troubles consensus:

> Perhaps some have 'ways of life' because others have lives: some have to find voices because others are given voices; some have to assert their particulars because others have their particulars given a general expression. For some, willfulness might be necessary for an existence to be possible. When willfulness is necessary another world becomes possible (Ahmed, p. 160).

Carrie's willfulness begs to be understood in this light. As noted, she blames herself for 9/11 and vows to ensure that it is not repeated. "It was right in front of my eyes," we hear her whisper in the main title sequence of seasons one through

three, a version of which she repeats each succeeding season. The stakes are high for Carrie. The "responsiblization of the self" outlined by Brown finds its highest expression in her. Yet, for this moral economy to be successful it requires that Carrie also de-responsibilize by ceasing the very action that keeps her aligned and healthy. There is a paradox in this relationship, with drugs standing at the nexus of individual and collective health, security, and nationalism. If bipolarity here signals an incommensurable relationship between biological and neurochemical selves, then it is also Carrie's biological self that is posited as the altered state. Without drugs she loses her affective alignment, and yet becomes the spy that best serves today's augmented system of state surveillance. This places Carrie, and those around her, in grave personal harm, a point that the State is only too willing to capitalize upon in *Homeland*.

Patricia Clough (2010) argues for a biomediated body that challenges the autopoietic, that is the self-creating, self-producing, and self-knowing, character of the body-as-organism that by the nineteenth century had become the model of what a body is (207). In this she echoes Eugene Thacker (2004), who defines biomedia as:

> particular mediations of the body, optimizations of the biological in which 'technology' appears to disappear altogether…The 'goal' of biomedia is not simply the use of computer technology in the service of biology, but rather an emphasis on the ways in which an intersection between genetic and computer 'codes' can facilitate a qualitatively different notion of the biological body—one that is technically enhanced, and yet still fully 'biological' (6).

If affect defines a kind of "visceral perception" that precedes perception, as Massumi suggests (cited in Clough 2010, 209), then it opens the body to indeterminacy. Clough (2010) notes, "Affect and consciousness are in a virtual-actual circuit, which defines affect as potential and emergent" (209). The oppositions that have been held in place by the body-as-organism, between the living and the nonliving, the technological and the biological, the natural and cultural, are shifting at this post-biological threshold where the dynamism of matter challenges notions of the autopoietic subject that still dominate contemporary thought (Clough 2010, 209-10). For Clough (2010) and others the body and "life itself" are better described as informational. It is constantly remediated through recombinant information, subject to "turbulence," "bifurcation," "emergence," "capitalist capture," "nomadism," etc., in a wider field of forces, intensities, and duration (209, 216, 224). Clough states:

> Biopolitical control is not the production of subjects whose behaviors express internalized social norms; rather, biopolitical control is an effect of the 'normative' undergoing rapid inflation, as classificatory and regulative mecha-

> nisms are elaborated for every socially recognized state of being…'Normal' is now free-standing, no longer the opposite and necessary complement of 'abnormal,' 'deviant,' or 'dysfunctional,' as it was under disciplinary power (222).

The subject of discipline has been transformed into "generic figures of affective capture" in which individuals have become "dividuals," an idea taken from Gilles Deleuze, "statistically configured in populations that surface as profiles of bodily capacities, indicating what a body can do now and in the future" (Clough, 222). The fragmentation attending this notion is important as it emphasizes key aspects of the subject's formation. As Judith Butler (2005) claims, any account she gives of herself begins *in media res,* "the norms by which I seek to make myself recognizable are not fully mine. They are not born with me; the temporality of their emergence does not coincide with the temporalities of my own life" (35). When Butler asks who this "I" is that gives an account of self, she underscores the subject's fragmented relation to its own sovereignty.

If one considers Carrie Mathison through the frame of the biopolitical, that is not as a human with full sovereignty over the self, motivations and actions, but rather as a body that is biomediated—that coheres, organizes, and disassembles according to the circulation of affect, intensifying or stultifying as the thresholds of its capacities are experienced—then one can better understand the operations of the State upon and through her. Whether she is good or bad is less important than considering how she negotiates altered states between her biological/neurochemical selves and the State she serves. Drugs are the key to these reconfigurations in *Homeland*. Medication maintains Carrie's alignment with the general will and her affective capacities supercharge her subjectivity in the interests of the will of the State when withdrawn. But the algorithm that links nomadism and control is more complex than this simple binary relation. The personal side of the equation guarantees stability so long as Carrie maintains her medicinal regimen. Her family, friends, acquaintances, and anyone with whom she has personal contact appreciate the version of Carrie that presents while medicated. It is easier. When she withdraws from medication, though, all of her relationships become challenging within a very short period of time. When this unaltered body begins to wander an argument favoring nomadism emerges. However, we must also understand, as the bridge scene in season seven so adeptly demonstrates, that the endgame for Carrie is total psychological collapse.

The State suffers from no such dilemma in Homeland. Just as it benefits in a variety of ways from Carrie's pharmaceutically produced stability—because she is already an agent of the highest quality in the CIA—it then benefits disproportionately when

Carrie is withdrawn from her medication. As her intuition is supercharged, forms of creativity and obsession drive Carrie toward her ultimate goal of ensuring that 9/11 does not repeat. But it produces great harm to Carrie as this form of value is extracted. In this she shares a common quality of the emergent contemporary hero who often must endure emotional duress, physical transformation, and/or trauma. While this form of hero becomes more complicated today, and as audiences demand more of them in the age of quality television, where will the trend lead? Carrie Mathison broke through a significant barrier regarding the role of women in the espionage genre and her accomplishments are not to be underestimated. This article has argued that affect is a primary but largely overlooked register for understanding Homeland, and that examining Carrie's character, actions, and motivations through the lens of affect advances understanding of the series. In this context it is tempting to view Carrie's willful wandering body as a model that frees her from constraint in the series. However, because the very moment that Carrie's medication is withdrawn and her body begins to wander the State becomes the beneficiary of her actions in new and troubling ways, the question of the political expediency of the killjoy must be asked, as self-harm overwhelms Carrie's subjectivity even as she is heroized through service to the State. In this sense, Carrie's experience demonstrates a limit point. Carrie's refusal to "just get along"—even in its most extreme expression—lands her a place at the top of Russian intelligence. This is the ultimate career accomplishment. It is Carrie's peripatetic body that placed her there, not because she played by the rules and acted like a 'good girl' but precisely because she rejected her prescribed roles in family, career, and nation. With drugs marking the line between willing and willful, Carrie repeatedly acts as an agent to attain the ultimate level of spying—the hero that saves the world from terrorism. However, her path is not straight, the means are frequently unethical, her relationships suffer irrevocably, and viewers never learn whether her romantic relationship with Russian agent Yevgeny Gromov—which she has used to reach this pinnacle—is sincere. It's probably not.

Carrie's willfulness is always framed after the fact as the common good in the series. When issues arise for her, as Wessels (2016) argues, they are coded as personal rather than professional (512). At the same time the words of Sara Ahmed (2014) must stand as reminder of the potential of the killjoy, "When willfulness is necessary another world becomes possible" (160). One of those possible worlds is achieved as Carrie successfully fights terror and attains a position at the top of Russian Intelligence. However, while Carrie's body is aligned with the state in fundamental ways in *Homeland*, what would happen if her body wandered otherwise? There is no necessary correspondence regarding the direction of Carrie's wandering as drugs are consumed or ceased, just as there are no guarantees regarding the potential of Carrie's presence inside the Kremlim. Yet, it must be noted that, while the State's imperatives may remain secure and stable in its de-

mand for her labor, this is not to suggest that Carrie's status as a killjoy, and as an agent of change, are eradicated. Even without national and global transformation the killjoy's work remains. The State may experience no transformation as a result of Carrie's affective labor; however, the killjoy must continue to challenge the promise of happiness. In this sense, while change may be a goal, the work of the killjoy is often thwarted. Yet, she must carry on. Finally, Ahmed (2014) reminds readers that "widening the script" (264) may not always be an admirable objective: "We are not grateful when a system is extended to include us when that system is predicated on inequality and violence" (263).

Carrie Matheson is a complicated figure who is challenging to understand without reverting to stereotypes of women, mental health, work, family, and nation. The approach explored here refuses to overwrite Carrie's subjective states in efforts to render her totally legible. In this sense, Carrie's body is ultimately unresolvable as a feminist object. It will always push back. In the era of quality television, with its focus on the journeys of anti-heroes and challenging narratives it is important to explore approaches that address complexity rather than to distill objects into easily-consumable portions. The accursed share, what Georges Bataille (1988) describes as the irrational, excessive, and non-recuperable elements of an economy—much like Butler's subject *in media res*—here finds alignment with affect and melodrama. *Homeland* retains key features of the melodrama genre and its search for moral legibility. As Elisabeth Anker (2014) suggests in *Orgies of Feeling*:

> the felt experience of being an American comprises not only persecuted innocence and empathetic connection with other Americans' suffering but also the express demand to legitimate state power. In these melodramas the nation's unjust suffering proves its virtue, and virtue authorizes dramatic expressions of state action, including war and state surveillance (3-4).

Homeland, like other melodramatic series, offers freedom to those who are virtuous; however, virtue is hard-won in the series. As the late John le Carré has brilliantly observed about espionage: "We are constantly asking people to abandon what they believe in, in order to defend it" (cited in Bruccoli and Baughman 2004, 8). Capturing the dilemma that all spies must negotiate, no one suffers more for her struggles with virtue than Carrie. Anker (2014) states that the attainment of such virtue is meant to revitalize sovereignty for both subject and nation, that sovereignty can only be achieved in melodrama "after an overwhelming experience of vulnerability, powerlessness, and pain" (13). This claim must be framed slightly differently for *Homeland*. While the State benefits from such virtue, the

heroine of the story is left in a suspended state, seeking and never attaining total virtuous sovereignty. This article claims, against the will to render the subject totally recognizable, that Carrie's illegibility is productive. Exploring her complexity through the figures of drugs and affect assists the understanding not only of how Carrie is made meaningful in the series, but also points to the challenges of positing Carrie as figure of resistance. The killjoy resists. But not always.

Perhaps this is the ultimate point of *Homeland's* final scene where Saul discovers that Carrie has made contact with him from Moscow. As he opens a book in his personal library, spurred by a secretive suggestion from Carrie, he recognizes that Carrie had discovered how he was communicating with a prior agent in the Kremlin (who had been unmasked). Saul finds a note from Carrie tucked into the binding of the book. This is not the act of the broken Carrie seen on the bridge described at the beginning of this article but Carrie at her most contained and focused. As Saul simultaneously realizes Carrie's place, and that she is communicating as a spy making contact with her handler, the scene and series ends. The discovery suggests that audiences have not yet seen the last of Carrie and Saul, leaving viewers to speculate about both the new-found stability Carrie experiences as she infiltrates Russian intelligence, and, more importantly, what lines of flight Carrie's wandering willfulness will take in the future.

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IN DIALOGUE WITH NEESKE ALEXANDER'S MONTH OF FACIAL EXPRESSIONS, FROM HER VISUAL STORY, *ONE DAY AT A TIME*

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The physicality of drawing, making, the 'making do' during the pandemic (or now, or anytime/everytime), the materiality of graphite, ink, charcoal, paper, the texture of paper felt through drawing tools, the anatomy of the expression of a feeling, the structure of the bones and muscles of the face, the minute (MY-noot) movement that conveys multitudes, that is simultaneously a response and the evocation of a response in another, the back-and-forth of expressions and *feelings* —a cat's cradle of affect between us, the inverse reading through our retinas that perforce moves our own muscles, tiny ligaments, tiny bones until we look away, move away, are in solitude and dwelling with ourselves (though we still move in feeling and maybe we make faces in the mirror, and maybe, like Issa's reflection in *Insecure* those become their own faces, bodies, feelings, expressions of those feelings, they talk back to us, disagree, move away).[1]

Neeske Alexander created an artwork a day for a year, each month a challenge in a new medium, new subject matter, ranging from interiors of physical spaces and of imagination, to exteriors of Cape Town; from the delicate, sublime, and

profound to the cartoonish, illustrative, and more. Selections here are from "the month of *Facial Expressions*" where Alexander engaged in deep study of anatomical drawing and close observation that transcends technique. Indeed, over the course of producing these particular drawings, Alexander injured her wrist and, by necessity, had to draw the following month using her non-dominant hand. Alexander describes, anatomically, that a "laugh is a smile with space between the teeth" is also to describe the space where life enters and escapes, to describe the slow or quick growth of a feeling. Cvetkovich writes of "acknowledging the somatic or sensory nature of feelings as experiences that aren't just cognitive concepts or constructions";[2] Alexander examines the inverse, depicts the knowledge into feeling, she describes being "struck by how a millimetre of movement of the iris, for example, can change the facial expression completely" (personal communication). Her *suppressed expressions, eyebrow expressions, expression of sadness, of anger, of fear* drag and pull my face in response, out of repose, mirror neurons attach themselves before words form.

Berlant describes affect as a "way of talking about the impact of the world on subjects and the way they try to kind of assess their belonging to the world, or their sense of relation to strangers and other humans for identification."[3] In this year of isolation we maneuver (or fumble without skill) and wonder where/whether we belong to a world, we fear contact with strangers and beloveds, we read full feeling in partially revealed expressions, masked, gloved, loved/unloved, sanitized, porous, borderless. Neeske Alexander invites us to traverse the year and her worlds, the only boundaries the media of the month.

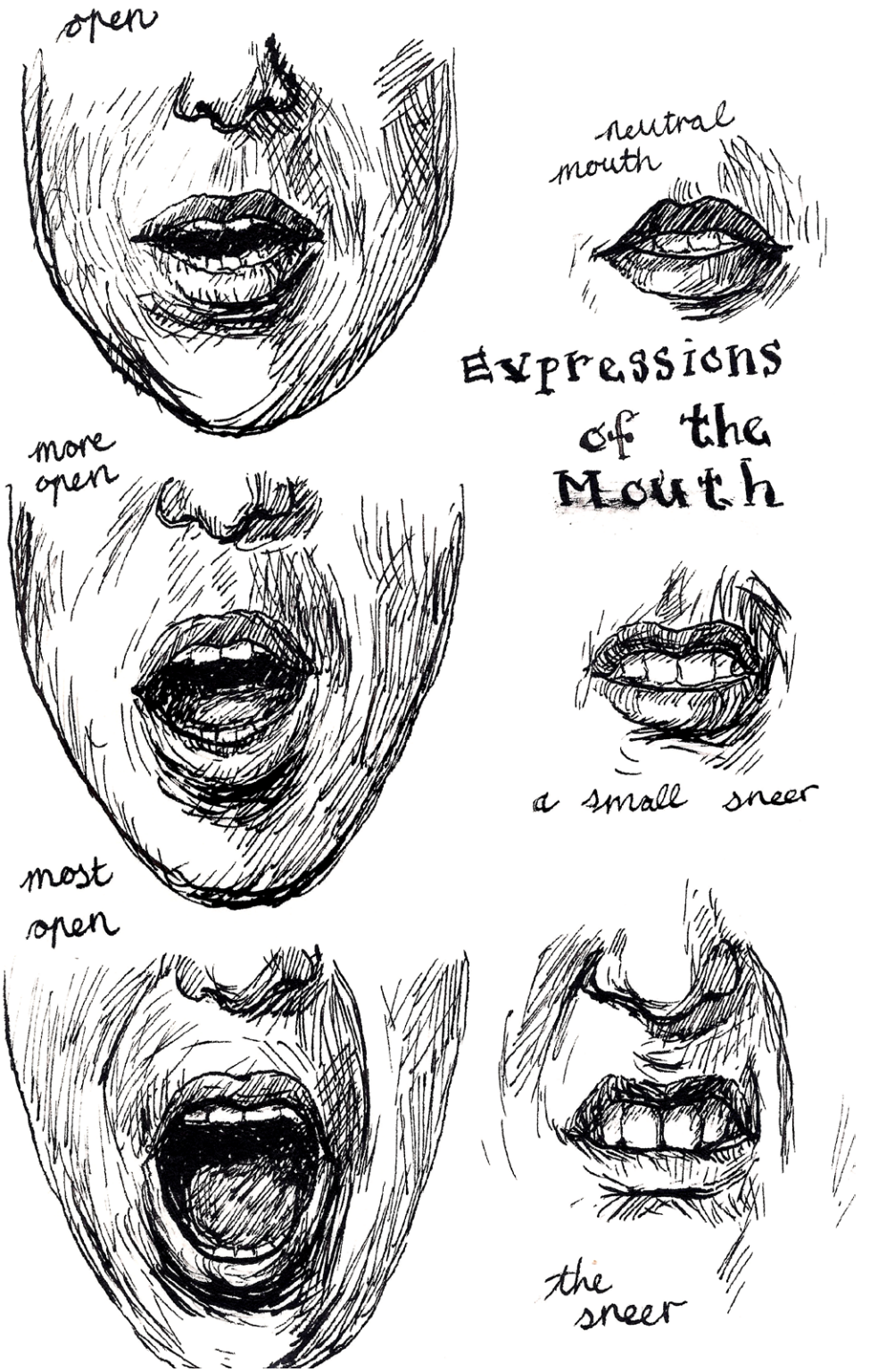
See the full body of Neeske Alexander's work at neeske.com

Endnotes

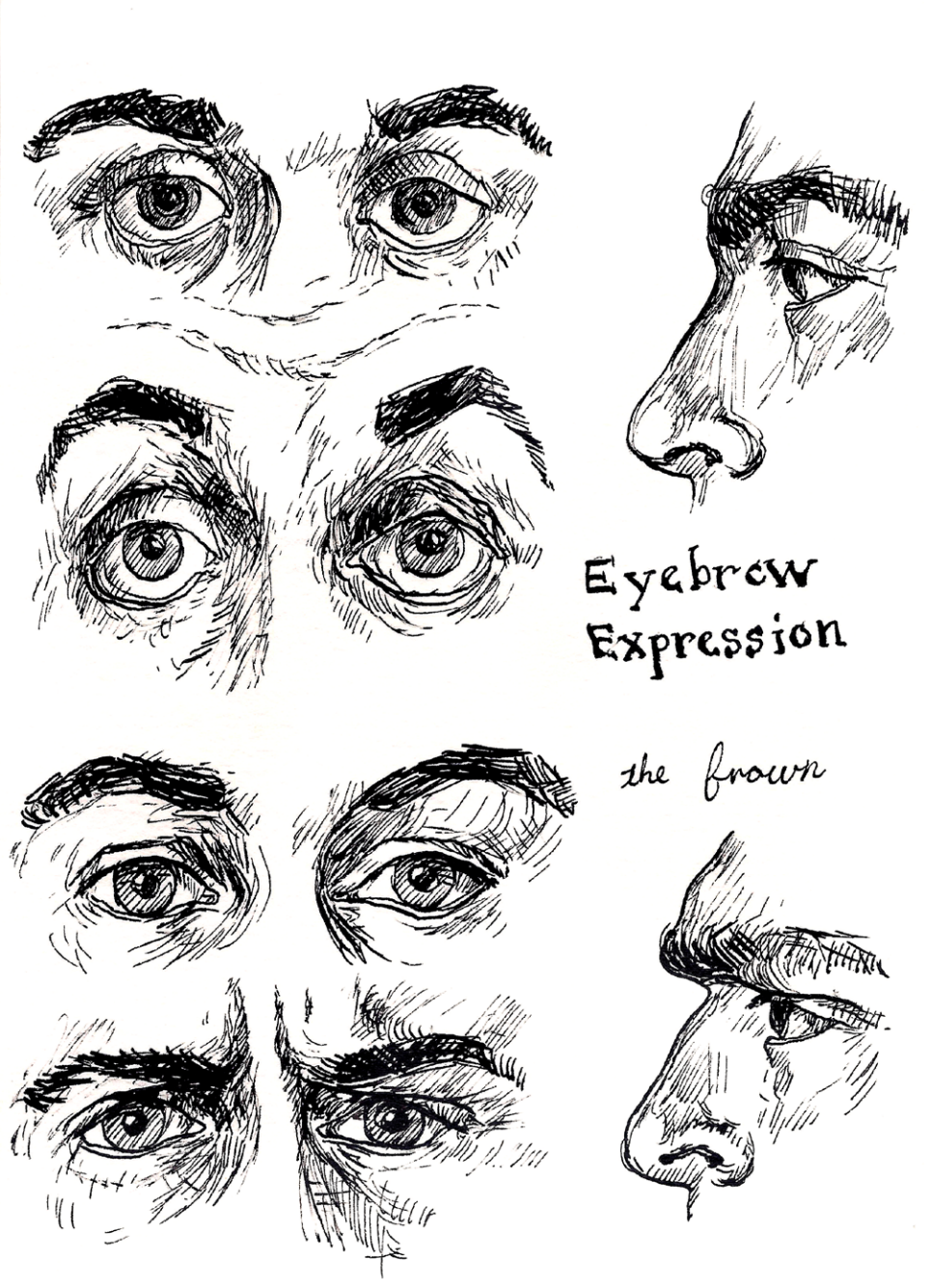
1. Rae, I., Prentice, P., Rotenberg, M., Maatsoukas, M., Becky, D., Berry, J. (Executive Producers). (2016-present). *Insecure* [TV series]. HBO Entertainment; Issa Rae Productions; Penny for Your Thoughts Entertainment; 3 Arts Entertainment.

2. Cvetkovich, A. (2012). *Depression: A Public Feeling*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, p.4.

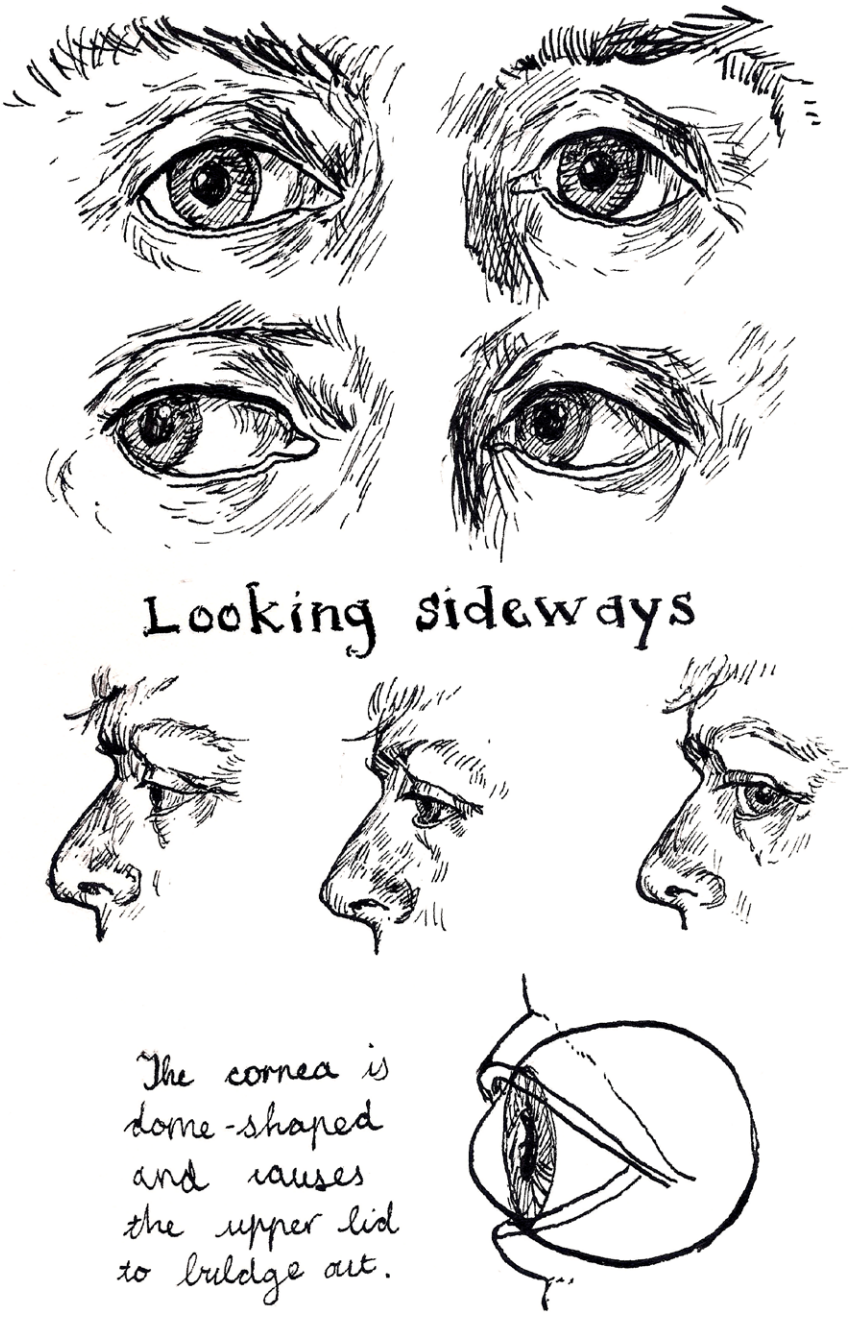
3. *Lauren Berlant: Interview* (2016). IPAK Center. Youtube. [Video].Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ih4rkMSjmjs



Expressions of the Mouth, ink on paper (97x150mm)
From the series One Day at a Time, Neekse Alexander, 2020



Eyebrow Expressions, ink on paper (97x150mm)
From the series One Day at a Time, Neekse Alexander, 2020



Looking Sideways, ink on paper (97x150mm)
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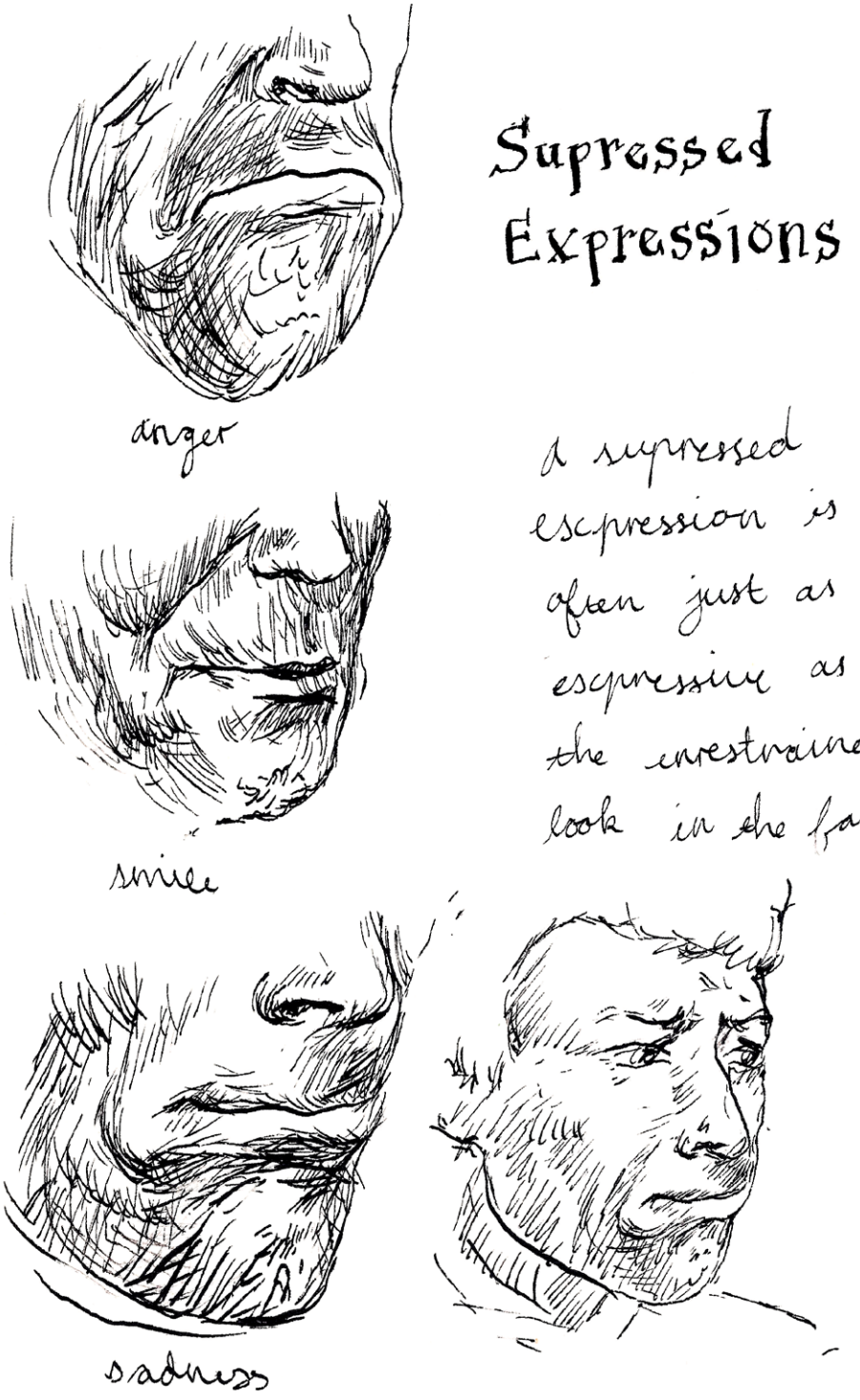

Suppressed Expressions, ink on paper (97x150mm)
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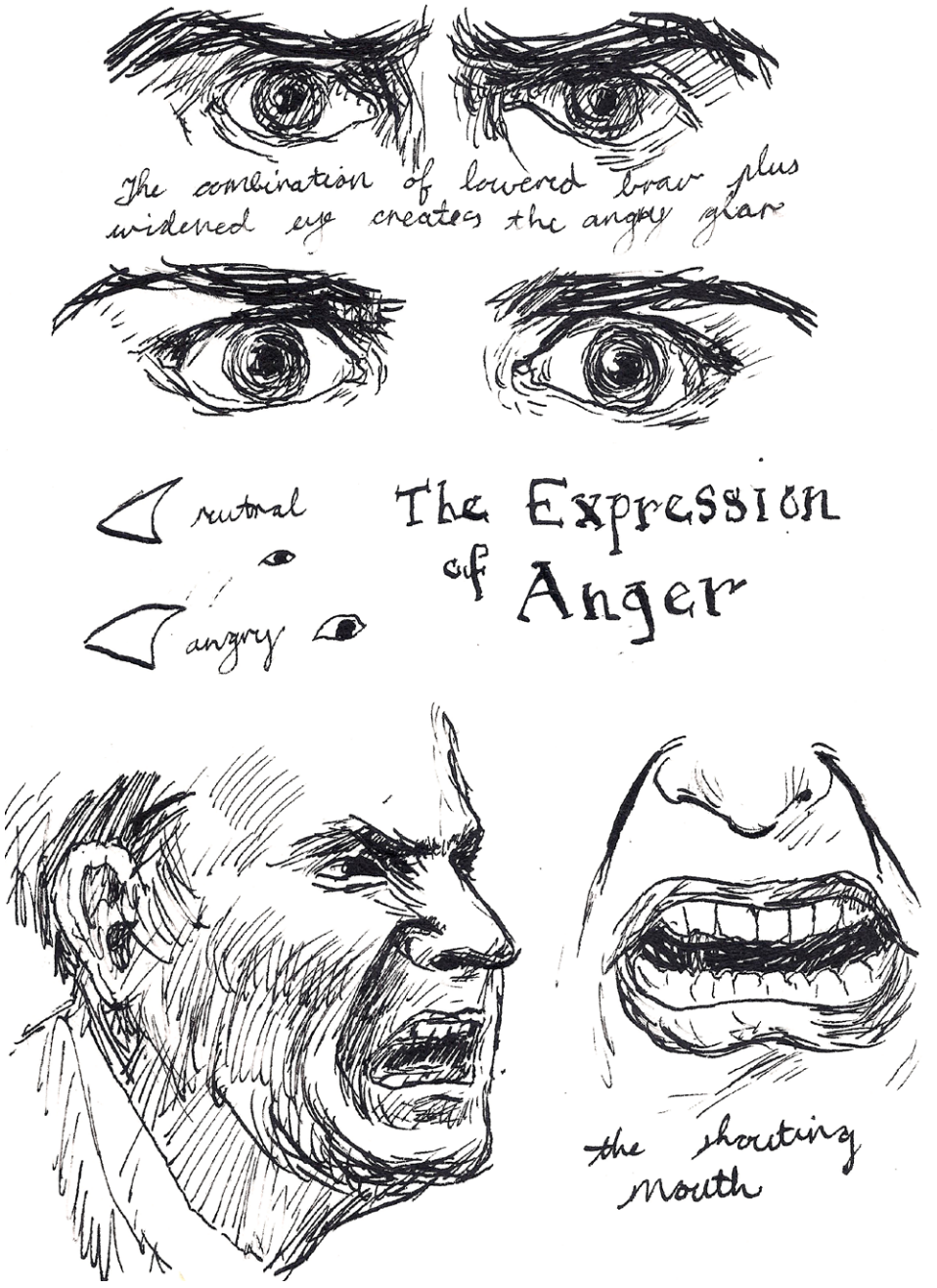
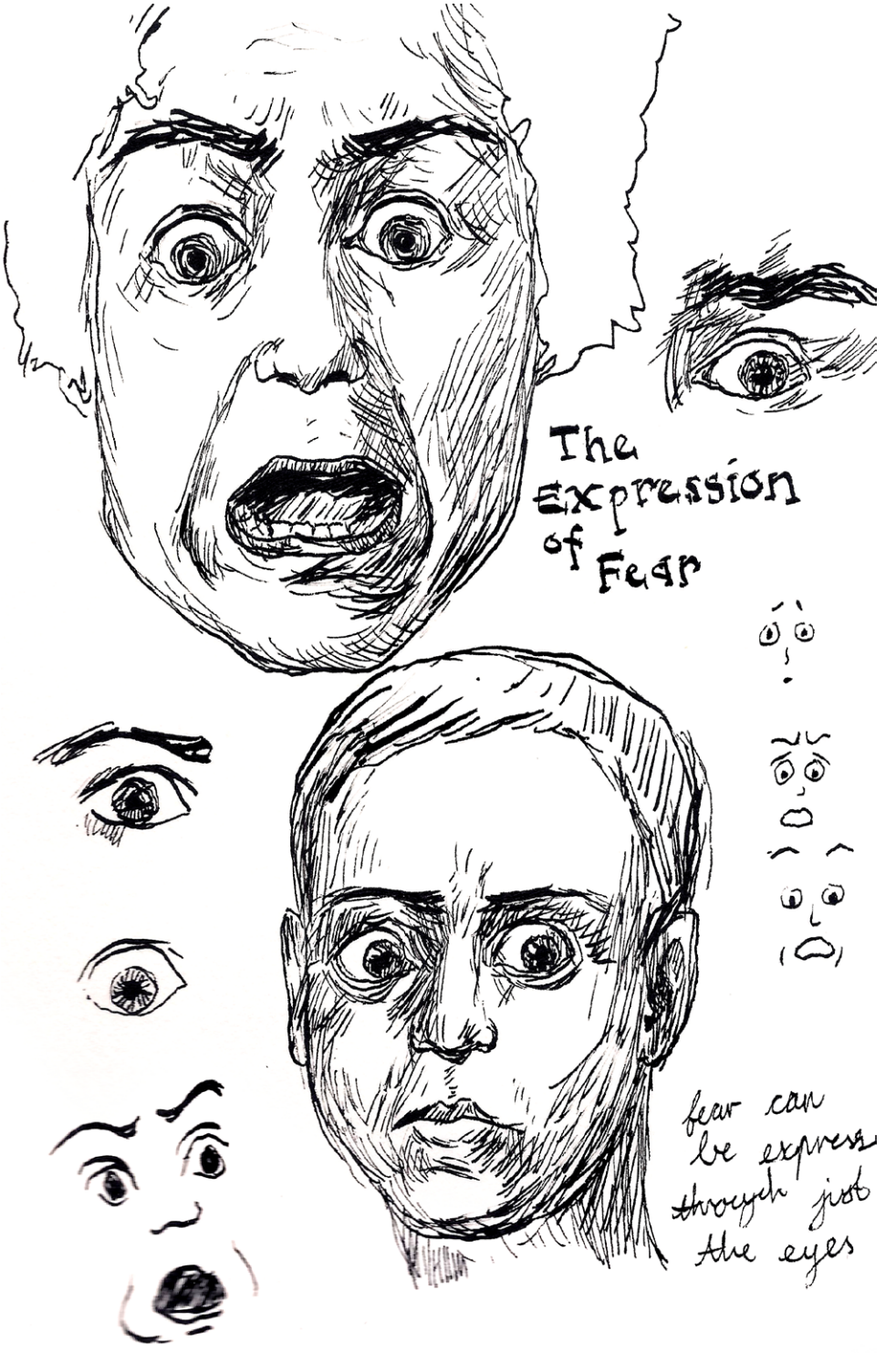
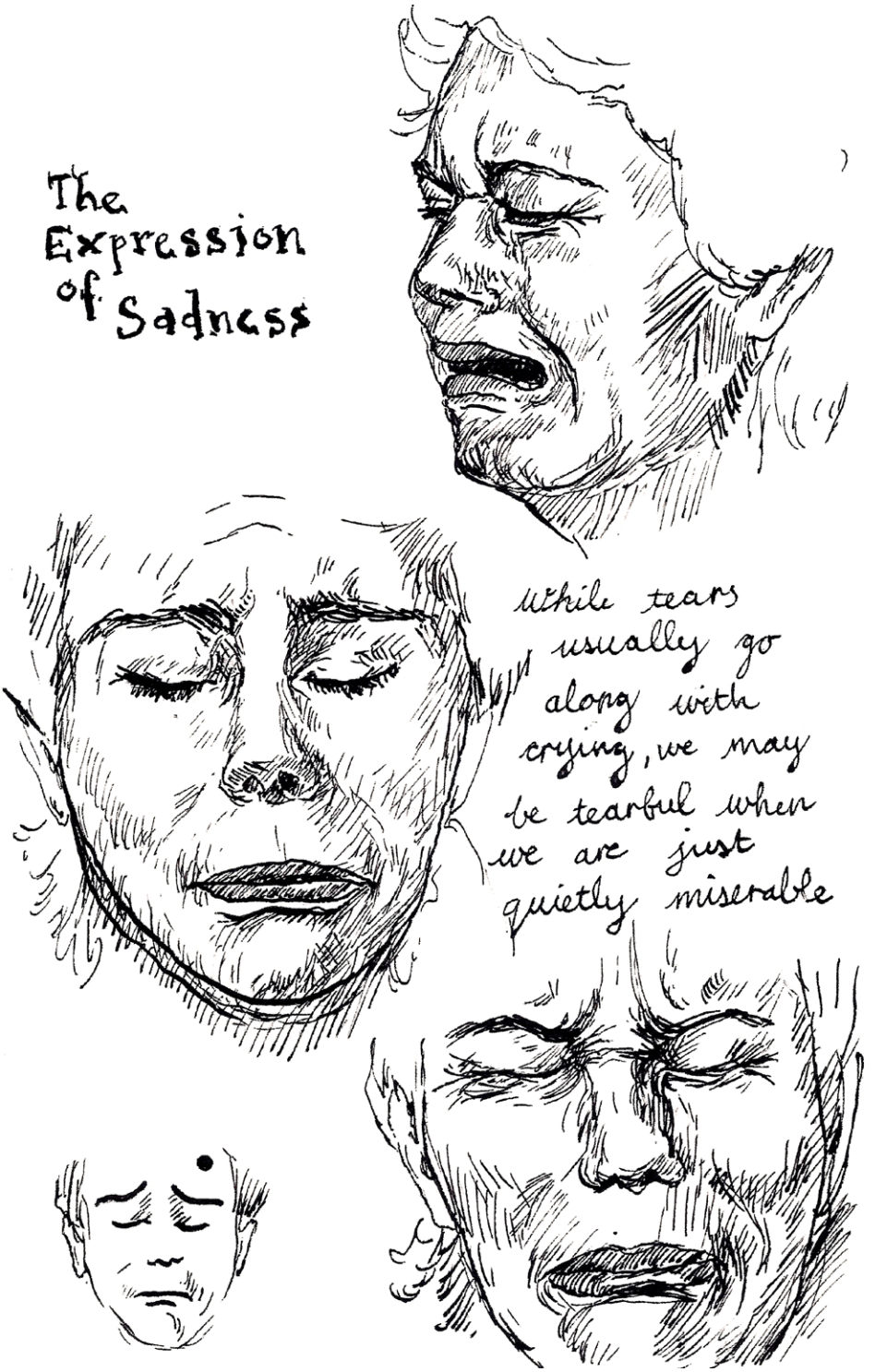


The Expression of Anger, ink on paper (97x150mm)
From the series One Day at a Time, Neekse Alexander, 2020

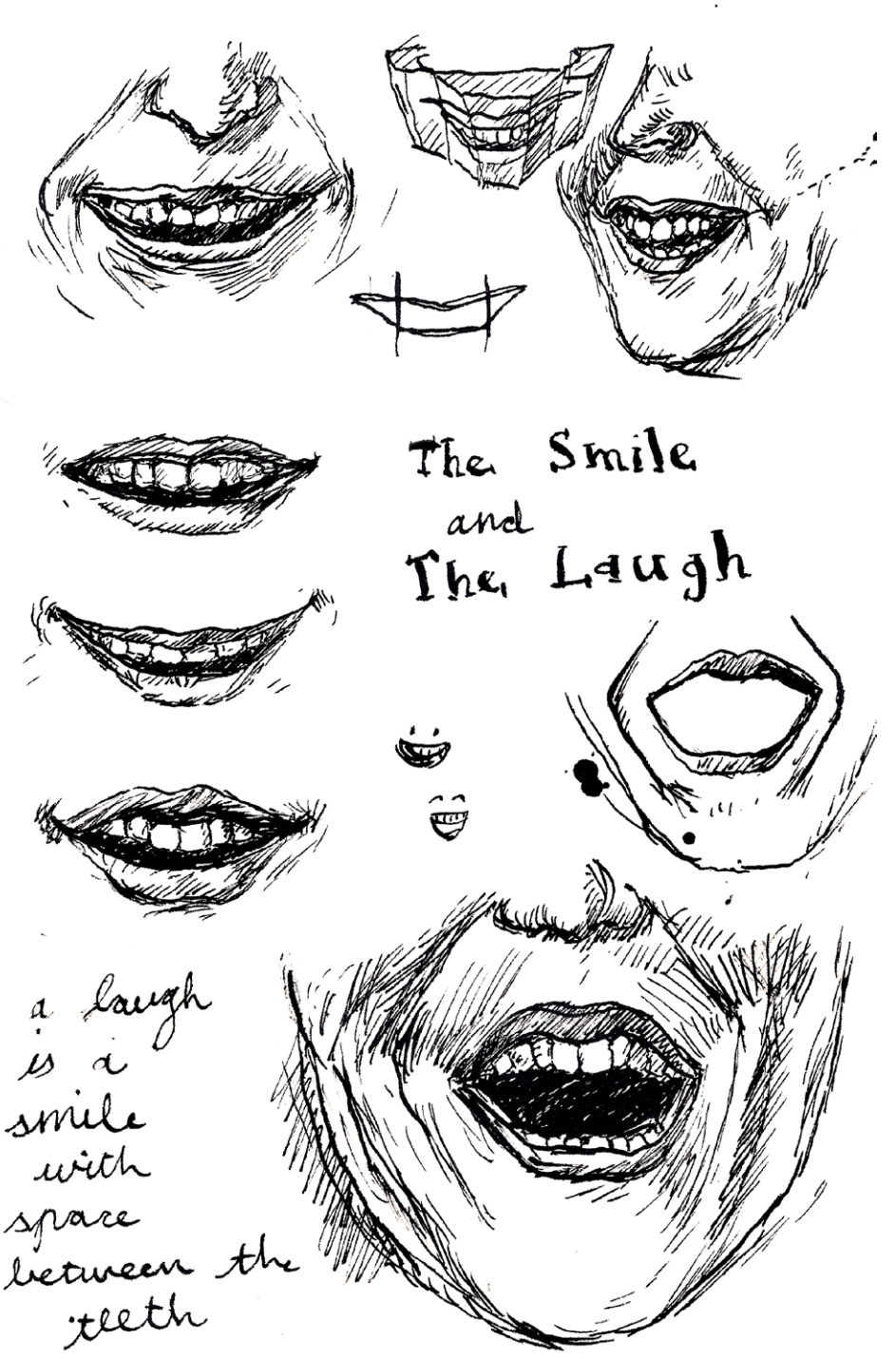


The Expression of Fear, ink on paper (97x150mm)
From the series One Day at a Time, Neekse Alexander, 2020



The Expression of Sadness, ink on paper (97x150mm)
From the series One Day at a Time, Neekse Alexander, 2020

The Laugh, ink on paper (97x150mm)
From the series One Day at a Time, Neekse Alexander, 2020



The Smile and the Laugh, ink on paper (97x150mm)
From the series One Day at a Time, Neekse Alexander, 2020

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