MODEST EXPERIMENTS IN LIVING: INTENSITIES OF LIFE

by

BRIAN E. KUMM

(Under the Direction of Corey W. Johnson)

ABSTRACT

The work of this dissertation was nothing less than an attempt to open space to think, feel, and live differently in everyday situations. The goal was to find “lightening rods for thought” (Dewsbury, 2010, p. 327), to affect a violent shock to the habitual, hiccupping refrains of pathological living, thinking, and feeling, and to explore different ways to approach life as intensities. Ultimately, the purpose was to leverage sonorous and visual arts in everyday situations to open, expand, and augment moments and spaces of sadness toward an intensified joy. This opening toward joy was not conceived as mere emotion, but as an ethical activity, as something that must be enacted. Throughout this work I attempted to think, feel, and live life in ways that are affirmative, joyful, and pleasurable. And the moments and spaces where this ethical enactment of joy, affirmation, and pleasure was most salient were those marked by affects of grief, anxiety, and fear. Drawing lessons from music and visual arts, and these alongside a Spinozan-Deleuzian theory of affect, I engaged in a series of modest onto-epistemological experiments in living to heighten my capacities to endure, sustain, and affirm the life I live. Although no prescriptive findings were identified, this ethical work was necessarily proscriptive against certain pathological modes of living—modes that privilege intentionality, rationality, willfulness, and sovereignty. At each stage of this work, I pushed toward the dissolution of the
humanist subject to conceive a life more joyful, open, cosmic, and even animal. This dissertation and its experiments in living were nothing less than becomings-otherwise, losing one’s self, and in so losing regaining a modest faith in life itself.

INDEX WORDS: Affect, Art, Deleuze, Ethics, Intensities, Joy, Music, New Empiricism, Posthumanist, Postqualitative, Spinoza, Speculative Pragmatics
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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA
2015
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DEDICATION

For Kera. You’ve got me singing! XO
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to extend my most sincere thanks and warmest affections to the many individuals and groups who generously supported this endeavor. First and foremost, to my family, to Kera, to Echo, to my parents, Ronald and Carole Ann, as well as to my sister Andrea, her husband, Bradley, and children, Isabel and Lacey: Thank you for enduring my absenteeism, my worriedness, and my preoccupied and inattentive presence when I was around. I love you each so much. You each intensify my life in the most joyful ways. I hope to repay the grace you’ve extended me over the past 18 months. To Kera, thank you for not giving up on me, for sticking with me through this process, and for loving me in spite of myself. I love you!

Secondly, I want to acknowledge and thank the many friends, companions, classmates, and “partners in crime” who have dropped small words, big ideas, and weird factoids into my lap over these countless years. You have each encouraged me and gently moved me along this path whenever I felt stuck. In particular, Joseph Pate, Erin Bassett, Logan Leslie, Christina Yother, Jaye Theil, Shaknoza Kayumova, Sara Scott Shields, and Karen Sweeny Gerow deserve to be mentioned by name. To Joseph, thank you for getting in the mud and staying in it with me! Thank you for not shying away from the hard questions with me and for tirelessly supporting me during the throes of passion—NO FEAR; NO ENVY; NO MEANNESS! To Erin, thank you for working with me on the paintings. They are too beautiful to be included in this work, but thank you for letting me use them anyway. You are a true gift that increases my joy profoundly! To Logan, thank you for the long chats on the phone, sharing your Deleuze and Guattari knowledge with me, and sharing in the pain and pleasure of thinking differently! To Christina, thank you
for encouraging me during the early stages of this academic life, for helping me to believe that I can indeed do it! To Jaye, Shaknoza, Sara, and Karen, thank you for lending your ears, offering thoughtful comments, and talking through it all with me. Thanks to each of you for your kind support and generous friendship throughout this process.

Finally, I wish to thank the members of my dissertation committee: Drs. Diane Samdahl, Bettie St. Pierre, and my advisor, chair, and mentor Corey Johnson. You answered the phone when I called in writing crises (and didn’t hang up but endured with me); you sat with me and talked for hours long after lunch ended; you listened patiently as I ranted and raved about how hard it was, gently smiling and knowing me and my process better than I did. Thank you for not crushing me when I was vulnerable and exposed. Thank you for trusting me to do something very different with this. And thank you for never betraying my trust as I worked through it.

To Diane, thank you for always challenging me to push the envelope, refuse the status quo, and go for broke! To Corey, thank you always being willing to take a chance and a risk with me, for always coming up with new opportunities, funding, extra space and time for me to read, think, and write! Your mentorship is invaluable to me! To Bettie, what can I say? Thanks is not enough. You never blinked or hesitated in taking me under your wing. You publicly, and in front of your peers, called me smart! And you always gave me your time, energy, and advice—always, and without ever expecting anything in return! Thank you so much! I hope I can follow your steps in my future career.
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CHAPTER 1

TUNING TOWARD AN IMAGELESS IMAGE OF THOUGHT

“A word is a bud attempting to become a twig. How can one not dream while writing? It is the pen which dreams. The blank page gives the right to dream” (Bachelard, 1960/1971, p. 17).

I wish only to write something worthy of the page. For the blank page “faces the great universe” (Bachelard, 1960/1971, p. 6), and to write worthy of the page is to write worthy of existence, life itself, in all its terrible magnificence. It is to affirm and contribute to the many forces that propel life and that life propels, in varied and complex degrees of intensity, pleasure, and joy. In a certain sense, the blank page is not an absence of anything: “One never commences; one never has a tabula rasa; one slips in, enters in the middle; one takes up or lays down rhythms” (Deleuze, 1970/1988, p. 123). The page is always-already pluripotent with every potential form. They exist as virtual capacities. Mine is the task of enframing, extracting, and transforming the actual materiality of composition so as to give a life, a body, and a universe to the page. To make it plain and (not so) simple, it is the force of intensity I seek and attempt to compose herein.

There are no misapprehensions, however, that writing performs a rite. If writing is to compose a body, a life, and a universe, it is also to make an offering, to pay tribute, and to render the duty required for passage. In every sense a religious specter haunts, often with menacing affect. On one hand, it is a matter of which divinities are summoned, invoked, and called upon
within an ever-expanding pantheon of composition (DJ Spooky, AKA That Subliminal Kid, 2004). On the other hand, it is to recognize the many priests who will judge its accuracies and efficacies. On a third hand, it is nothing less than an act of heresy: a process of consenting all the bodies involved to a series of passages, phase shifts, and transformations, not the least of which is my own process of becoming-composer and becoming-intense. This hand, the third hand, is the one that is deployed throughout as the interface with the page to compose with beauty and passion in ways worthy of the task.

All these concerns are best defined in terms of conventions, traditions, and expectations. It is as if the blank page possessed a cellular memory of each and every previous composition along an ancient and laborious continuum. Additionally, it is a matter of the purpose and function the composition performs in the life of the composer, an issue of fulfilling disciplinary and institutional stipulations for completeness. Here, the third hand draws a line, a diagonal line—_write_ (Bates & Stroup, 2007)—acknowledging yet unsettling given conventions and stipulations, and suspending purpose and function, to make possible a series of passages in the invention of a composition.

Conventions and stipulations constitute vertical and horizontal lines corresponding to harmonies and melodies, a history of elaborations and reformations of possible forms (Bogue, 2003a; Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011). It is quite literally a matter of time and compositional flow: words on the page as lyrics, tempo, movement, rhythm, pace, as they become expressive in a (con)structure of a “reality.” This history of possible forms flows forward from a “hinterland” comprised of all those “costly literary and material relations that include statements about reality and the realities themselves; . . . a topography of reality possibilities, impossibilities, and probabilities [as] a concrete metaphor for absence and presence” (Law, 2004, p. 160). Yet, the
composer must not cling to these pre-given lines but “produce an imperceptible diagonal,” a “line of deterritorialization” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 296). It is a matter of antihistory and antimemory, but it no less depends upon these lines for its deterritorialized invention (Bogue, 2003a). “When this is done it always goes down in History but never comes from it” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 296).

To draw this line is to float in-between, in the middle, not necessarily merrily or dreamily, but no less unmoored. It is like a “drunken boat that melds with the line or draws a plane of consistency” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 296). Bachelard (1960/1971) may have called it reverie, and certainly there is something appealing about such notions. Indeed, an unmoored, floating, and drifting faculty of speculation and wonder is grievously uncommon to most scholarship. Yet, caution is warranted: to float in-between is not equivalent to indirection. It is not to endlessly gaze inward or outward, but to move and be moved, to affect and be affected, to feel and sense forces. It is to disembark from fixed, determinate coordinates, to transform the static into a directional vector, a force. *It is less indirection and more insurrection.*

Dylan (1965) sang it thusly, “with no direction home / like a complete unknown . . . you’re invisible now, you got no secrets to conceal.” It is to live nomadically, without landmarks or signposts, to forsake the nostalgic, the status quo, and to embrace the difficulties of homelessness for the sake of the new (St. Pierre, 2004). To draw such a line is to plot an asthmeth, to envision a degree of a line that orients disembarkation in a voyage of immanence (Deleuze, 1970/1988). Like the great blues singers of the early- and mid-twentieth century, this line leads to the “crossroads” and extends toward the “margins,” which are terms signaling an edge, an in-between of the known and the unknown, a middle zone of the not-yet-determined. In this zone the “I” of the researcher is supplanted with many “eyes” or “ayes” of a multiplicity
(Bates & Stroup, 2007), and the imposition of the verb “to be” is shaken and uprooted by the force of the conjunction “and . . . and . . . and” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 25).

The hard part is finding the flow. In drawing a line and plotting an asthmeth, I seek less to reroute the regularized flow of possibilities issuing from the “hinterland” (Law, 2004) and more to find a different channel, a different flow: one “without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 25). Rather than possibilities, this inquiry is primarily concerned with potentials: The distinction lying in the latter term’s indication of a pluripotent zone of the not-yet-determined and the former term’s signification of a pre-existing form, a back-projected stencil of a pre-determined reality often overlaid upon inquiry (Massumi, 2002). The stakes are the new, difference, not resemblances, reproductions, or tracings of an already-determined reality-possibility.

The epigraph is simply a means by which one end of this asthmeth can be connected and linked to an image of thought while leaving loose the direction and degree to which it extends. The point of connection is the dream, but only insofar as Feynman (1998) described it: “The dream is to find the open channel. Admitting that we do not know . . . the direction necessarily to go permit[s] a possibility of alteration, of thinking, of new contributions and new discoveries” (p. 33).

The image of the middle subverts Bachelard’s (1960/1971) arborescent order of root-trunk-branch-bud-twig-leaf (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011); however, retaining the notion of a dream offers a way to imagine a flow of thought less linear, more haptic that circumvents regularized routes and various filters and censors. The goal is to relinquish tight control, rigid strictures, and embrace a practice of “deliberate imprecision” (Law, 2004, p. 3) so as to extend what is possible or barely possible to think, feel, and do in relation to the rhythms and sequences
moving and circulating within the middle zone of the in-between. This is not to valorize dreams, anymore than to valorize intoxication, visions, error, misperception, or stupidity, but to critically question the valorization of so-called “good sense, common sense, and a natural inclination of thought toward truth” that is assumed to be an accurate mode of “winnowing wheat from chaff” by “following preexisting paths” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 174).

*It is less calculation and more circulation:* To keep things moving in a vast alterity of rhythms, in varying haptic happenings, in the generation of atmospheres, moods, and feeling-tones (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010; Bennett, 2010; Clough, 2009). Call these phenomena affects or intensities, which cannot be contained nor subordinated to “interpretation, meaning, signification or representation” (Clough, 2009, p. 49); rather, attending to these intensities is necessarily performative and generative. Equally, one must attune to the transitive movement of intensities across bodies (human and nonhuman alike), to the virtually imperceptible affects at the molecular level, and to their potential alterations and deteritorializations. It is a matter of quickening the body, to actively feel that which is normally passed over and only felt in its effects.

There is doubtless something more nightmare-ish than dreamy about a facing a page that “faces the great universe” and the daunting task of composition as I have described it thus far. Furthermore, these sensations become intensified when viewed as an analogue for existence. If the page is never blank, it is also never a flattened, orderly, and evenly planed surface for the expression of clear, linear, narrative thought. Existence is, rather, more like a crumpled and folded arrangement of multiple planes, lines, and waves, a haptic process of folding and unfolding, a complex, origami-like multiplicity of life in all matter (cf., Coole, 2010). Existence, life, and intensity are never straightforward so they can facilitate or warrant a seamless
composition of words flowing from top-left to bottom-right; rather it is an experience akin to Lennon and McCartney’s (1968) *Helter Skelter*: “When I get to the bottom I go back to the top of the slide / Where I stop and I turn and I go for a ride / Till I get to the bottom and I see you again.” Repeat.

It is a matter of circulation, revolution, and involution:

A logical circularity, but not a vicious one, because it is also an ontological circuit around an opening: a phase shift between the substantial and the potential without which the movement would be simple repetition of pregiven terms entering preauthorized, premeant relations. (Massumi, 2002, p. 77)

Call the substantial “the actual” and the potential “the virtual.” The virtual signifies infinite capacities of a body to affect and be affected; that is, the infinite number and type of intensities it is virtually capable of inducing. The virtual always exists in the actual, which is the material arrangements (“including the already-constituted abstractions of meaning” [Massumi, 2002, p. 77]) that give form, substance, and expression to what becomes known and knowable.

The phase-shift is the passage of the potential to the substantial through the “intermixing of already-constituted bodies, things, and signs” to “express itself as coordinated becoming,” which is “the effective condition of collective change . . . [as an] emergent relation, the becoming sensible in empirical conditions of mixture, of a modulation of potential” (Massumi, 2002, p. 77). After the fact, becoming becomes history: “The intermixing of bodies, objects, and signs is standardized and regulated,” and “it is only by leaving history to reenter the immanence of the field of potential that change can occur” (Massumi, 2002, p. 77). These terms of relation between bodies whereby becoming becomes a potential are related to two additional concepts: 1) *the refrain*; and 2) *music*. Define the refrain this way: “What is, is a refrain; . . . a rutting by
scoring over” (Stewart, 2010, p. 339). Define music as the “deterritorialization of the refrain” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 33). Music “takes the refrain as its content and transforms it by entering into a process of ‘becoming’ that deterritorializes the refrain” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 33), which “entails an unfixing of commonsense coordinates of time and identity” to pass through a “becoming-woman, becoming-child, becoming-animal, becoming-molecular” (p. 34).

What is life if not a rhythmic series of passages, movements, and sensations, a pulsing involution that brings the outside in and the turns the inside out? What is the body if not a vehicle for scoring these crossings, comings and goings, anticipations and uncertainties? Indeed, “the body has to learn to play itself like a musical instrument in this world’s compositions” (Stewart, 2010, p. 341). Is it possible to understand life and bodies in terms of a musical composition? Can music provide an analogue for life itself, its excessive creativity, affirmativity, and generosity?

At the core of this inquiry is the belief that “music is never tragic, music is joy. But there are times it gives us a taste for death; not so much happiness as dying happily, being extinguished” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 299). Living and dying, coming and going, transitioning, and transforming, we are scored with the rhythmic refrains of what is. The challenge is to become-composer, become-music, and become-intense in the deterritorialization of the looping refrains of the same.

Think of the refrain as an earworm. It is that random song heard in passing that bores down deep into your brain and bores you to death in its endless looping repetitions. It can be part of a rhythm, a melody, a verse, or a lyric, but it ingresses into the body in ways that are autonomic. Without thinking, the body moves to the rhythm, hums the tune, or whispers the lyrics. The refrain is rehearsed in these movements until it reaches a point of possession.
Eventually, an unconstrained expression of the earworm burst forth in front of companions and friends who then sarcastically thank you for getting the song stuck in their heads.

An earworm happens at random. It can be picked up anywhere at any moment, but it builds in intensity and becomes contagious. It affects bodily movements, thoughts, and feelings. It is a sort of thought-hiccup, a repeat, replay, and loop of the same, becoming an increasingly intensified annoyance, irritation, and maddening monotony. Many ways of life, or ways of living, resemble an earworm—a torturously boring, contagious monotony and a repeating, looping refrain of the same.

A day in the life: “He blew his mind out in a car / he didn’t notice that the lights had changed” (Lennon-McCartney, 1967). Bleak imagery tuned pop tune. Too much of life is the idling engine at traffic lights, waiting in queues, orderliness, neatness, conformity, rigidity. It is so common that it is almost unnoticeable, less an issue of indifference and more a problem of volume, saturation, and just too much of the same. But music is the process of deranging the refrain, the looping same, acting on a plane of composition or immanence where change exists as virtual, yet-to-be-determined potentials (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011). Although the refrain itself is a complex process of “deterritorialization and reterritorialization,” operating by three simultaneous aspects of “a point of order, a circle of control, and a line of flight to the outside” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 33), music is emphasized within this inquiry as a mode of intensifying life through a process of deterritorialization that transgresses ontological categories and hierarchies to issue a becoming-other, a potential for change and alteration.

The work of this dissertation is an attempt to dislodge the earworm, to find “lightening rods for thought” (Dewsbury, 2010, p. 327), and to effect a violent shock to the habitual, hiccuppings refrain, jolting the body into various different animations. It is to not only find
reasons to resist blowing one’s mind out, but to begin seeing, understanding, and thinking life in ways that are affirmative, joyful, and pleasurable. It is an attempt to derange the monotonous beat—the beat down—of a way of life entrenched in modes of thought that tend to route continually toward the pre-determined, pre-meant, and pre-authorized: the same. Equally, it is an attempt to return to that bustling zone of the in-between, to engage intensities of life in ways that heighten and increase life’s capacities. In short, this dissertation is nothing less than a series of modest experiments in living\(^1\)—modest onto-epistemological experiments involving both thought and composition, but above all involving living. I investigate potentials for a life more worth living, to attend to the question of how potentials for extended, augmented, intensified, and increased capacities of life in modes of joyful passions can become actualized.

Ultimately, I seek to understand life and the world in terms of ethics, rather than a matter of “rights” or “right/wrong.” Moreover, I desire to understand the rhythms of life in which the body learns to play itself, and the music of life that can issue out of deterritorializing the regularized and authorized, habitual patterns onto a plane where the new is possible. To accomplish this task, theories of affect (cf., Spinoza, 1677/1994; Deleuze, 1970/1988; Seigworth & Gregg, 2010; Clough, 2009, 2007; Sedgwick & Frank, 1995; Stewart, 2010, 2006; Massumi, 2002) are taken up alongside a posthumanist ontological orientation (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011; Coole & Frost, 2010; Bennett, 2010; Braidotti, 2010, 2013) in a postqualitative research paradigm (cf., St. Pierre, 2013; Lather, 2013; Jackson & Mazzei, 2013; Larimer, 2013; Coleman & Ringrose, 2013; MacLure, 2013a, 2013b) to examine intensities of life. Music is the vehicle I selected for this exploration. To evaluate this inquiry, we must not ask is it right or

\(^1\) Please not that any similarities between my use of the phrase “experiments in living” and the usage of this phrase by John Stuart Mill is purely coincidental. At the time of writing this dissertation, John Stuart Mill’s work was unknown to me. It was through my reading of Spinoza and Deleuze that the idea of “experiments in living” occurred to me.
wrong, but “does it work” (Massumi, 1987, p. xv). We must ask, “What new thoughts does it make possible to think? What new emotions does it make possible to feel? What new sensations and perceptions does it open in the body” (Massumi, 1992, p. 8). I argue that doing so requires we suspend theoretical and philosophical fidelities, to speculate about the world as “a dense network of mostly unknown links” (Stewart, 2007, p. 6) and to be caught in the middle of that network.

Recently I was given tickets to a theatrical performance of *Fiddler on the Roof*. Sitting in seat 41 on row L in the mezzanine, I surveyed the theatre, inspected its ornate ceiling, the plush red seats, the grand velvet curtain. Suddenly, a mighty note powered from the orchestra pit and fixed the audience’s attention to the stage. Something was about to happen. The orchestra was simply tuning their instruments for the immanent performance of this well loved musical. But the multiple timbres, resonances, volumes, and voices of the instruments, resounding in a cacophony of sound, generated an intense sensation that filled the room with anticipation. Parents held their children to keep them from following the irresistible urge to rush to the edge of the stage and peer over into the pit to see what was going on.

Consider my introduction here an act of tuning, of bringing many voices, timbres, and registers to bear in the course of garnering attention for what follows. Throughout the dissertation, music will unfold and refold, bringing circularity to the flow of concepts and ideas. Furthermore, within the chapters that follow I attempt to compose in ways that bring the forces of life to the page, to situate blocks of writing so their interactions may generate an intensity of sensation, feeling, thought, and action (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011). For the moment, consider the orchestra pit a figure for life, mostly invisible to the observer yet effecting powerful affects, impersonal intensities, that cannot but be felt bodily as they incite, activate, cue, and
induce a multiplicity of thoughts, feelings, and actions, many of which are autonomic and only become registered as personal when subsequently incorporated into social and linguistic circuits of meaning (Massumi, 2002).

We are left, therefore, with the following: a folded, crumpled, origami of existence; life as an assemblage of forces that can be thought as intensities, affects, and sensations; a problematic that might understand these forces as affirmative, joyful, and pleasurable; a process of deterritorializing the refrain to actualize a becoming-music, becoming-composer, and becoming-intense; and the task to render these matters on a page. This is not a dissertation for the “straight faced and straight laced” (Massumi, 2002, p. 69). In drawing an imperceptible diagonal, an asthmeth orienting disembarkation for a voyage in immanence, this work is unmoored. It is detached from fixed, determinate coordinates and floats in a middle zone of the not-yet-determined. It trespasses ontological categories and divides for the sake of change, alteration, and becoming-other. It involves relinquishing tight control for the sake of an open channel, a drift, and a flow that undercuts its banks and parameters.

It is a drunken boat built from philosophy, science, and art, a veritable raft to ride the chaos into which thought endlessly plunges (Deleuze & Guattari, 1991/1994). Rather than wrest clarity from chaos, we float, drift, and flow in the middle, unmoored in a complex, musical composition of life’s forces, intensities, and affects. Though I attempt to render these forces perceptible on the page, I hope they register somewhere beyond the normalized and standardized circuits of thought. Poets, novelists, and philosophers have long produced volumes that accomplish this task, that register a pleasurable intensity in their pages. I suggest that the pleasure of this intensity is not in the resolution or solution of puzzles or riddles; rather, it is in the puzzling of solutions, in leaving resolutions riddled, open, and porous, where a reader can
find many passages for additional connections, extensions, contractions, and dilations of thought as potentials for change, alteration, and the new. But to compose requires a loss of composure, a becoming-unmoored, a return to the field of potential, a plunging into chaos, and seeking new arrangements and derangements of bodies that enter into a complementary mode of composition, rather than decomposition, to generate a becoming-other.
Paintings, such as this one, are included throughout this dissertation. My dear friend Erin Bassett created them. Erin is a visual artist and musician. She and I are longtime collaborators, and these paintings were generated through the sharing of our thoughts related to the various chapters and sections of this dissertation. They are presented throughout this dissertation not as representations but as resonances of the coming-together of intensities of friendship, affection, joy, as well as the various concepts, ideas, and motifs discussed within this text. It is our hope that your eyes can rest from reading and contemplate the thoughts shared within this dissertation while looking upon these paintings.

Figure 1: *Intensities of Life* (Bassett, 2014). Gouache on paper.

2 Paintings, such as this one, are included throughout this dissertation. My dear friend Erin Bassett created them. Erin is a visual artist and musician. She and I are longtime collaborators, and these paintings were generated through the sharing of our thoughts related to the various chapters and sections of this dissertation. They are presented throughout this dissertation not as representations but as resonances of the coming-together of intensities of friendship, affection, joy, as well as the various concepts, ideas, and motifs discussed within this text. It is our hope that your eyes can rest from reading and contemplate the thoughts shared within this dissertation while looking upon these paintings.
CHAPTER 2

DANCING ABOUT ARCHITECTURE AND THE AFFECTIVE MIDDLE

The Kumm-Schaley’s are musicians, but my wife, Kera, and I are something of an anomaly, a strange coupling. Though we are both musicians and share an affinity for each other’s traditions, our musical backgrounds lie in dramatically different positions within a spectrum of genres. Kera is a cellist who performs primarily with punk bands, and who made significant contributions to many critically acclaimed albums, most notably Nirvana’s (1993) *In Utero*. As a guitar player, my musical style is immersed in an acoustic tradition that includes folk, bluegrass, and singer-songwriter genres. Though I performed electric guitar leads for a handful of local and regional rock and roll bands’ demo recordings, Kera and I speak in very different musical languages yet share a broad and generous love for all music that intensifies our love for each other.

In our household, however, we rarely talk about music. To do so is almost an act of treason. Quoting a witticism she attributes to painter/musician turned actor/comedian Martin Mull, “Talking about music is like dancing about architecture,” Kera almost invariably dismisses any attempt to delve into a philosophical discussion of music. She is of the opinion shared by many musicians and music aficionados: Music is ineffable and better when experienced than dissected. To do so is not only considered a vain exercise in futility but an act that potentially diminishes the intensities music induces and transduces in and across the body, the very vibrational forces and qualities that render music so enjoyable. To talk about music, it seems,
as strange a coupling as a punk-cellist, or a punk-folk marriage, or, indeed, dancing about architecture.

In this chapter, I commit marital treason by not only effing the ineffable (Brown & Tucker, 2010) and dancing about architecture, but also in following an implicit line of joyous polyamory demonstrated by nature’s effectuation of strange couplings. This discussion, in part, attends to the conditions that make art possible, its process of becoming, which is inhuman at its core yet renders life more humane. That is to say, there is an excessive and gratuitous creativity in nature, a capacity to bring strange couplings together in the generation of new forms for no purpose other than that it is possible to do so. It may be argued that among the many forces constituting existence, love is primary; however, it is a strange, inhuman love that, although thoroughly sexual, selective, and affective, is one that extends beyond the functions of survival and reproduction and trespasses ontological categories and divides in a process of becoming—other—a dense yet joyous artistry of life itself. Along with Grosz (2008), I contend that such processes of becoming are a “consequence of love not war, of seduction not defense, of sexual selection not natural selection” (p. 69), and that music has its roots, like all the arts,

not in the creativity of mankind but rather in a superfluousness of nature, in the capacity of the earth to render the sensory superabundant, in the bird’s courtship song and dance, or in the field of lilies swaying in the breeze under a blue sky . . . in the natural and in the animal, in the most primitive and sexualized of evolutionary residues in man’s [sic] animal heritage. (p. 10)

The first section of this chapter describes Deleuze and Guattari’s (1980/2011; 1991/1994) conceptualization of a house-territory system and attends to both sides of this coupling. I examine the house in relation to works of art as beings of sensation. I imagine the house as a
figure of a prosthetic relationship that affords the emergence of beings of sensation, as a compound of affects and percepts. I then discuss territory as the necessary condition for the emergence of matters of expression, which signals an inseparable link between the human and animal. Taken together, the house-territory system provides conditions in which sensations become autonomous and capable of affecting bodies. I introduce the refrain as a concept intimately related to territories, abodes, and homes, but that also affords a means of departure, escape, or a line of flight whereby territories become deterritorialized. This concept is difficult to locate, like the sound of a glass harmonica (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011) whose sonic register is in a middle zone between 1000 and 4000hz, a frequency zone that human bodies can scarcely locate by listening alone. This reference is not coincidental; the refrain is a prism or crystal that affects what surrounds it. Though it moves in the direction of territorialization, in the bringing together of seemingly disparate bodies as couplings of motifs and counterpoints in a little, repetitive tune, it also promises their dissipation or movement into other arrangements or assemblages. Finally, I discuss music in relation to the refrain as its content proper, which musicians deterritorialize to create a composition. Throughout this first section, I emphasize animal and natural processes from which matters of expression emerge. The human arts appear as an extension of this fundamentally nonhuman element of aesthetics, and music is a passage between human and nonhuman, a becoming-molecular as opposed to the molar-standard, whereby the deterritorialized refrains taken up in music create a difference of expression bearing the characteristics and qualities of something new.

In the second section of this chapter, I outline a Spinozan-Deleuzian theory of affect, illustrate its usefulness, and demonstrate its importance for understanding life as a mix of joyful and sad intensities (Spinoza, 1677/1994; Deleuze, 1970/1988). Many contemporary social
theorists have turned to affect to explain the collective feeling of being stuck, at an impasse, where social conditions make new movements, thoughts, sensations, and feelings difficult to imagine and nearly impossible to actualize (e.g., Cvetkovitch, 2012; Berlant, 2010; Ahmed, 2010a, 2010b; Clough, 2007). By emphasizing some implications affect bears on ontology, I contend that this theoretical orientation is not only necessary to understand how thoughts, feelings, and actions arise in a world full of movement, flux, alteration, and change, but also that affects and their potentials for alteration are precarious insofar as no claim can be made that they effect a better condition. Affect is useful for envisioning music as a process that can readily intensify, augment, and increase capacities of life, even if but for a moment, in modes of joyful passions; however, it must also be acknowledged that the potential for the converse is equally probable. As Grosz (2008) noted: “Music has long been recognized as the most seductive of the arts, the one that most immediately enhances a sense of well-being, the art that most directly enchants (or equally infuriates)” (p. 29). Nonetheless, the challenge taken up in this chapter is to forward a coupling between affect and music useful for channeling potentials for enchantment, seduction, and passion, and a movement from being stuck in a looping refrain toward a joyful symphony of intensified life.

Figure 2: *Birds in Flight* (Bassett, 2014). Gouache on paper.
**Art and House as Prosthetic**

Using the broadest terms available, the territory of art is delimited as composition:

“Composition is the sole definition of art. Composition is aesthetic, and what is not composed is not art” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1991/1994, p. 191). In equally broad strokes the work of art is defined as “a being of sensation, and nothing else: it exists in itself” (p. 164). Doubtless the techniques used to compose vary greatly according to artists, materials, and works; and those specific to Western music include, among other things, tones, scales, instruments, rhythm, and pitch. However, “a work of art is never produced by or for the sake of technique” (p. 192). Indeed, the work of art, as a being of sensation, exceeds the technical virtuosity of its creator, the creator herself, and even the materials that constitute the composed artwork (e.g., fibers, stone, sound, words, paint, etc.).

In a slight elaboration, Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994) asserted: “By means of the material, the aim of art is to wrest the percept from perceptions of objects and from states of a perceiving subject, to wrest the affect from affections as the transition from one state to another” (p. 167). Sensation can be grouped into these two orders, that of percepts and affects, which “do not arise from a subject but instead pass through them” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 164). They are the impersonal and incorporeal dimensions of corporality, the excess of lived experience, the imperceptible forces that populate the cosmos and are nonetheless rendered perceptible and sensible in a work of art. To wrest is to extract, but also to grip, clinch, and embrace, as if passing body-to-body these impersonal forces and their various transmutations in passage. A work of art operates in each of these three aspects, extracting, clinching, and passing impersonal percepts and affects in a composed, composite, compound of sensation.
For an impersonal compound of sensation to be extracted, clinched, and passed body-to-body, one must not repose upon a common view of art as an “intrinsic relation to one’s own body” (Grosz, 2008, p. 11), nor even, as Nietzsche believed, as “the exteriorization of one’s own bodily forces and energies” (p. 10). Neither can it be conceived phenomenologically as a matter of intentionality, whereby an embodied world and an embodied self intertwine in the incarnation of sensation in a common flesh (cf., Bogue, 2003a; Deleuze & Guattari, 1991/1994). The problem with conceptions of art anchored in various notions of the self, the flesh, or the exteriorization of intrinsic forces, is that they can scarcely constitute a being of sensation. A being of sensation is a compound of affects and percepts, which Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994) emphatically defined as nonhuman becomings of human being and nature, respectively: “Affects are precisely . . . nonhuman becomings of man [sic], just as percepts . . . are nonhuman landscapes of nature (p. 169). The flesh is not a being of sensation; it “is only the developer [as in photographic development solution] which disappears in what it develops: the compound of sensation” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1991/1994, p. 183).

The flesh is too malleable, too tender to support such becomings; it requires a scaffolding and armature to pass into sensation, a becoming-imperceptible in a zone of indiscernibility whereby intensity resonates in and for itself (Bogue, 2003a; Grosz, 2008). The requisite scaffolding and armature is not a bone or skeletal structure, but a house, as an extension of architecture as “the most primordial and animal of the arts,” and of which the “design and construction of frames” (Grosz, 2008, p. 13) is its most basic form of expression. Consider a house: it is defined by a series of intersecting and interlocking frames, which constitute diversely oriented planes (e.g., walls, floors, ceilings, roofs, etc.) that function to both demarcate a habitable territory for the malleable flesh by separating interior from exterior and to position the
body within a space, giving an orientation of up, down, left, right, etc. (Bogue, 2003a). Walls, floors, ceilings, and roofs are planes that enframe a habitable space or territory. Yet, within each plane there are additional frames, which render the territory a porous membrane rather than a closed system of containment: windows, doorways, gates, vents, shutters, and screens are all thresholds affording selective passage between interior territory and exterior milieu, and between the infinitely divisible re-constitution of each (Bogue, 2003a).

This figure of the house indicates a prosthetic relationship, both between the body and the world and between the materials that constitute a painting, song, or other artifact and the work of art as a being of sensation. The house operates as “a filter that affords selective passage of forces into and out of the habitat, . . . through which the inhabitant and the cosmos interact” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 167, emphasis added). It is the prosthetic apparatus to which the flesh adheres, and through which nonhuman forces of the cosmos and nonhuman becomings of human being are exchanged and adjusted, made to “swirl around like winds” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1991/1994, p. 183). As Grosz (2008) noted, the framing of the earth in the plane of a floor, “makes of the earth and of horizontality a resource for the unleashing of new and more sensations, for the exploration of the excesses of gravity and movement, the conditions for the emergence of both dance and athletics” (p. 14). Likewise, a window is an inflection of a frame within the partitioning frame of a wall that “selectively envisions its natural exterior, now a ‘landscape,’ no longer beyond its partition but within the enframed space of the room. Its selectively brings in a now framed outside, a view or vista” (Grosz, 2008, p. 14).

The frame is the primary architectural force that “constitutes painting and cinema just as readily as architecture; it is the architectural force of framing that liberates the qualities of objects or events that come to constitute the substance, the matter, of the art-work” (Grosz, 2008,
The frame denotes the corners, boundaries, and junctures of the plane of composition upon which art is composed. The plane of composition is the requisite condition for the emergence of a work of art—a being of sensation—and the armature of the house signals the necessary immanence, the swirling, interacting, and intermixing of nonhuman forces and nonhuman becomings, that are rendered in the composition. Without this prosthetic relationship indicated by the armature of the house, which is constituted by the architectural form of the frame, “there may be objects or things but not qualities that can become expressive, that can intensify and transform living bodies” (Grosz, 2008, p. 11). The inaugural gesture of the arts is, therefore, not “body-art but architecture-art” (p. 10):

Art is first architectural because its cosmic materials require demarcation, enframmement, containment in order for qualities as such to emerge, to live, and to induce sensation. Architecture is the most elementary binding or containment of forces, the conditions under which qualities can live their own life through the constitution of territory. (p. 16).

The figure of the house not only emphasizes nonhuman dimensions of the aesthetic but “suggests as well something of the artwork’s relation to human experience” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 167). In one sense, the house may be thought as the “paradigmatic material artwork,” as a functioning component of the inhabitable world, the construction of a territorial home, the orientation of bodies, the framing and delimiting of space, “but also a means whereby we communicate with the outside, the artwork serving as a filtering membrane that permits an interchange and circulation of forces across its surface” (p. 167). Yet, in another sense, the house is “a figure for the structuring, modulating, and shifting configuration of forces within the artwork” (p. 168). A distinction between the artwork as artifact and the work of art as a being of
sensation can be made insofar as the artifact demonstrates the former and a being of sensation demonstrates the latter sense of the term.

The artifact is never isolated and self-contained but a membrane whereby intensities of sensations can be passed across other material bodies populating the physical world. Yet a being of sensation is distinct from an artifact just as “percepts and affects are distinct from the perceptions and affections experienced by humans beings” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 168). It is in the second sense of the figure of the house, as a “configuring structure of forces” (p 168), that the materials of the composition (e.g., pigments, vibrations, lights, clays, words, etc.) can pass into sensation and vice versa. This passage can be witnessed in music’s traditional tonal compositions whereby sensations seep “into the conventionally structured sonic material,” and whereby the accumulation, modulation, and compounding of material, through “variegated timbres, microintervals, and fluctuating rhythms,” passes equally into the sensations producing “a malleable sonic force-matter” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 169). In painting, sensations are “projected onto a material surface,” yet “the paint itself—it's thickness, saturation, texture, etc.—articulates forces” by passing into sensation (p. 169). In literature, the styles in which words are composed project a sensation, and the “mutant sounds, syntactic patterns, and semantic elements” equally pass back into sensation as they are built up in the composition as “varying modulation[s] of forces” (p. 169). In both directions, throughout the exchange and passage, material becomes expressive, and a being of sensation emerges. This passage is facilitated by the armature, the architectural force of the frame that constitutes a house-territory, a plane of composition, and a prosthetic relationship that, in joining or coupling various components (e.g. pigment-canvas-oil, vibration-rhythms-modulation-intervals) operates as a membrane and structure for the extraction
of percepts and affects from perceptions and affections: an intermixing, transmutation, and phase shift of qualities and forces to sensation, which are released to have a life of their own.

Artists compose with the “beings” of affects and percepts, creating compounds of sensations. When successful, “they give them to us and make us become with them, they draw us into the compound” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1991/1994, p. 175). The artwork is a territorial house composed on a finite plane of composition drawn from an infinite field of forces; yet the artwork, as a house, also opens back upon the cosmos, back to the infinite field of forces, and constitutes a “universe” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1991/1994, p. 196). Thus, when “we become with the artwork, we, too, open to the cosmos and ‘become universe’” (Bogue, 2003a, pp. 169-170). It can be posited that perhaps the proper operative mode of art is the passage “through the finite in order to rediscover, to restore the infinite” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1991/1994, p. 197). Through the prosthetic relationship figured by the house, a complex “circuit of embodiments and disembodiments, a passage of sensations through bodies” becomes apparent. First percepts and affects are “extracted from bodily perceptions and affections, then rendered perceptible in the expressive matter of the artwork, then engaged by embodied audiences swept up into the artwork, and then extended into an infinite field of forces” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 170).

Artists, artworks, and audiences alike become alongside and with the being of sensation. An artist passes into the compound of sensation becoming-otherwise: Cézanne’s paradox, for example, demonstrated how humans were “absent from but entirely within the landscape” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1991/1994, p. 169). Similarly, the composer Messiaen’s birdsongs demonstrated nonhuman becomings-animal: both bird and composer underwent a becoming-other in the transposed sonic motifs taken from nature (cf., Deleuze & Guattari, 1991/1994; 1980/2011). A novelist, likewise, releases percepts and affects in a compound of sensation not
by conveying a character’s perceptions of the fictionalized world, or by reflectively writing her own perceptions into the textual landscape; rather, it is in the passage of all these in a zone of indistinction that sensation emerges. Artists give us visions through percepts, but above all they give us affects—“an unknown and unrecognized,” a not-yet-sensed force brought to “light as the becoming of . . . characters” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1991/1994, p. 174). Again, the successful artist passes into the compound and draws us into the becoming. When we read or listen to poetry or music or when we observe any of the visual arts in their diverse forms, we do not receive a reflection or representation of experiences, the world, or objects; rather, the artwork produces, generates, and makes becomings in sensation:

We are not in the world, we become with the world; . . . Everything is vision, becoming.

We become universes. Becoming animal, vegetable, molecular, becoming zero. . . .

What strange becomings unleash music across its “melodic landscapes” and “rhythmic characters.” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1991/1994, p. 169)

The critical point to note is the point of connection made possible through the prosthetic relationship figured by the house. In the etymological sense of the term, a prosthetic is an additive, not a replacement (Massumi, 2002), and in the sense that it is deployed here, it operates as a juncture or abutment between distinct and heterogeneous bodies (both human and nonhuman alike). The process of these heterogeneous bodies coming together is that of an assemblage, which is not a static organization of predetermined parts into an already-conceived totality but a process of coming-together, a becoming, in such a way as to constitute a group and express a particular character (Wise, 2005/2011). In the process, in the abutment, a middle zone is formed whereby passages occur to release sensations. The frame divides, partitions, and cuts into a spatiotemporal milieu; yet in the process it also multiplies. It generates zones of connection,
zones of indistinction whereby qualities of objects, perceptions and affections of subjects are extracted, clinched, and pass between bodies as emergent sensations. Sensation is a being that signals becoming, a veritable abutment of being and becoming (Massumi, 2002). These sensations live lives of their own for no other sake than that of intensity, yet they are those beings that affect human bodies and make them become (Grosz, 2008).

This middle zone is the operative sphere of the arts, but it is not the privileged domain of human being. Human art is not the “accomplishment of ‘higher’ existence, whether conceived mentally or spiritually, but is an elaboration of the most primitive and elementary fragments of an ancient animal prehistory” (Grosz, 2008, p. 35). Indeed, that which is most artistic in humans is not “a uniquely human sensibility” but “that which is the most bestial” (Grosz, 2008, p. 63). The affects that are released through human art “signal that border between the human and the animal from which it has come” (Grosz, 2008, p. 77). Within this affective border-region, passages between animal and human in becomings-animal stand as “paradigmatic of the creative process of all composers” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 29).

**Territory and Matters of Expression**

In the previous pages, I used the “house” of the house-territory system to describe the prosthetic relationship necessary for the emergence of a being of sensation as the work of art. Now I use the “territory” portion of this coupling to describe the condition for the emergence of matters of expression. Although the previous discussion of the passage of bodies, materials, and forces into sensations “may sound like sheer mysticism, it is based on a coherent theory of nature as creation” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 170). Regardless of its design, a house is an inflection of a territory, and as such it binds the human to other territorial animals. Through the demarcation of not only a habitable, but also a proprietary territory, the human demonstrates its inseparable
connection with the animal. As discussed previously, art requires an architectural armature for its emergence, and this is an extension of the creative force of nature to establish territories, which are clinched from the rhythmic patterns formed throughout the natural world and the cosmos.

The process by which territories are created is certainly not linear, and it is best to consider them as emergent from chaos. Chaos is not, however, an “unthinkable blur . . . opposed to order [territories]; rather, it is a genetic medium from which order spontaneously emerges” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 17). And a territory is not an absolute but provisional order. Chaos is constituted by a multiplex of “directional vectors from which a point of order may issue;” however, a point of order “is not inert but mobile,” and “determined by its relations with other loci of order” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 17). In between chaos and territory, order first emerges from these directional vectors as a milieu, as a “directional space” or “a coded block of space-time” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 17). A milieu is defined by its codes, or the frequency of “periodic repetition” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 313) between its constituting components.

These repetitions are vibratory and produce rhythms; however, it is not the repetition that is rhythmic but the difference it produces. A milieu exists by virtue of it periodic repetitions, its codes, but the codes’ “only effect is to produce a difference by which the milieu passes into another milieu” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 314). Thus, “each code is in a state of perpetual transcoding or transduction” (p. 313), and “it is the difference that is rhythmic, not the repetition, which nevertheless produces it: productive repetition has nothing to do with reproductive meter” (p. 314). Wherever there is a transduction of codes or a transcoded passage between milieus, there is rhythm. Milieus, therefore, are not enclosed totalities, but open systems in contact with other milieus and with chaos, which “threatens them with exhaustion or
intrusion; . . . rhythm is the milieus’ answer to chaos” (p. 313). Yet the rhythm that emerges in passage between milieus is not in opposition to chaos but shares with it “the in-between—between two milieus or rhythm-chaos or the chaosmos . . . in this in-between, chaos becomes rhythm” (p. 313).

Chaos may be thought as the milieu of all milieus, a multiplex of directional vectors. Milieus may be thought as a blocks of space-time that are directional but not dimensional. A territory, however, emerges “precisely when milieu components cease to be directional, becoming dimensional instead, when they cease to be functional to become expressive. There is a territory when rhythm has expressiveness” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 313). A territory “borrows from all milieus; it bites into them, seizes them bodily. . . . It is built from aspects or portions of milieus” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 314). It is the delimitation or “the compression and compaction of a number of different milieus, . . . an external synthesis, a bricolage of geographical elements, environmental characteristics, material features, shifted and reorganized fragments” (Grosz, 2008, p. 47). Yet, it is critical to note that regardless of which milieu components are involved, the point at which a territory is formed is precisely when they cease being functional and become expressive as an autonomous quality or rhythm.

An ocean, for example, can be considered a milieu. It is constituted not simply as a body of water but by multiple and varied directional vectors, an interplay of forces that produce continual variations in their mixture. An ocean exhibits interplay between its various currents, various flora and fauna, the sun’s energy, atmospheric pressures, and even seismic movements shifting the formations of its boundaries. Each of these is an example of a directional vector or force. Their intermixture produces rhythms in the middle zone of sea and shore, for example, in the production of lapping waves and tides. Within the milieu, certain components that become
expressive constitute territories. And it should be noted that this constitution can appear and disappear very quickly; thus, a territory is as fleeting and temporal as it is spatial.

Certain fish display alternating colorations, and these are often hormonal responses activated by environmental stimuli (e.g., potential prey, predators, mates, rivals, etc.). These conditions tie the colorations to specific functions and activities within a milieu. Yet in other cases, the colorations exist solely for the purpose of expressing a spatial relation to a territory, whereby colors are not triggered responses to external stimuli, tied to specific environmental activities, or linked to a specific milieu function. Rather, they operate as a territorializing marker. Likewise, many species of monkey are known to expose their brightly colored sexual organs when serving as territorial guards: “the penis becomes a rhythmic and expressive color-carrier that marks the limits of the territory” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 315). The question is not whether the colors of fish or the color of the monkeys’ penises resume their milieu-functions or even fulfill new ones in the territory—they indeed do—“but this reorganization of functions implies first of all that the component under consideration has become expressive and that its meaning, from this standpoint, is to mark a territory” (Deleuze & Guattari, 2003, p. 315).

The marker, “as the disposition of expressive qualities, is the active agent in the formation of a territory and the establishment of its occupant’s proprietary identity” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 20). Art is proprietary and “property is artistic,” because art is first a territorial marker, “a signature, an expressive quality that creates a domain and names its owner” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 20). Both the territory and owner are at one and the same time constituted “through the delineation of an expressive quality,” which does not indicate a reductive relationship as if it were “an outgrowth of a primal acquisitiveness rooted in a self-preservation instinct” (Bogue,
Rather than a preexisting subject placing a signature on an object, one is given a signature by the qualities and rhythms abstracted from milieu-functions to operate as an expressive marker of a territory. The rhythmic milieu component that establishes a territory becomes both quality and property, and in its expressivity “a directional milieu becomes a circumscribed, dimensional space, but it is the territorializing function of the expressive quality/property that establishes the dimensional space, not the space that determines the function” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 19).

The moment “a quality is abstracted from a milieu component, a possession is declared, and a dimensional space is established” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 19). Yet, territory is an act that affects milieus and milieu components. Territory, or territorialization, “is the act of rhythm that has become expressive, or of milieu components that have become qualitative” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 315). But whose act? The act of territorialization is not necessarily intentional or conscious, for it is difficult to claim the coloration of a fish’s skin or a monkey’s genitalia are acts of volition. The expressive territorial marks have their own autonomy yet are produced by the rhythms that occur in passage between milieus and between milieus and chaos, which, we will recall, is distinct from meter, tempo, or pace:

Meter is dogmatic, but rhythm is critical; it ties together critical moments, or ties itself together in passing from one milieu to another. It does not operate in a homogeneous space-time, but by heterogeneous blocks. It changes direction. . . . Rhythm is never on the same plane as that which has rhythm. Action occurs in a milieu, whereas rhythm is located [in-between]. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 314)
Thus, it may be said that “rhythm itself—the differential, incommensurable relation between milieus—creates the territory, and with it expressive qualities that stake out a possession” (Bogue, 2003a, pp. 19-20).

If milieus are defined by their *codes*, as the periodic repetitions between their components, then a territory may be understood as a circumscribed dimensional space formed when a milieu component or function becomes *decoded* (transcoding or transduction) in order to operate as a purely expressive quality/property. In a similar mode of operation as the “house” discussed previously, the establishment of a provisional territory—or the act of territorialization—signals the “emergence of pure sensory qualities . . . in the body’s postures and colors (Deleuze & Guattari, 1991/1994, p. 184). The monkey, who displays his penis when standing guard, makes of his body a spectacle, a display of attractors and detractors, and the sexual organs of the guard and perceptual organs of his observers resonate with an intensity of color, shape, and rhythm (Grosz, 2008). Territorialization, in this case signals an animal-intensification, and animals are certainly artistic, if by this “we understand that they intensify sensation (including the sensations of their human observers)” (Grosz, 2008, pp. 69-70). The act of territorialization “provides the marks, the emblems, the very qualities by which a composed art becomes possible” (Grosz, 2008, p. 70), and “in this respect art is continually haunted by the animal” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1991/1994, p. 184).
Figure 3: Expressive Territorial Marks (Bassett, 2014). Gouache on paper.
The Refrain

It is most important to note that the house-territory system indicates the necessary conditions for the emergence of sensation, which exists for the sake of intensification alone. These intensifications produce new functions within the demarcation of a territory or house; however, of primary importance is the emergence of intensity itself. The question now becomes one regarding the relation between this vision of nature as creative and the realm of human music. To attend to this relation, it is necessary to introduce an additional concept: the refrain. The refrain pertains “to any kind of rhythmic pattern that stakes out a territory” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 17) or to “any aggregate of matters of expression that draws a territory” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 323). As such, it bears a close relation to rhythm as the passage between milieus and between milieus and chaos, as well as the act of territorialization where by an expressive quality/property emerges.

When aggregated, matters of expression form territorial motifs and counterpoints, which must be considered to be of one and the same refrain. The territorial motifs are constituted by the internal relations comprising a living being, and territorial counterpoints are constituted by external relations or circumstances, and both are characterized by autonomous rhythms that organize and pattern these respective variables (Bogue, 2003a). Motifs and counterpoints thus indicate relations within and between components and populations of territorial domains and their external others, be they of other territories, milieus, or chaos (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011). That is to say, they denote infra-, intra-, and inter-assemblages between various components within, across, and beyond territories. Consider a spider and its prey: Before any particular spider meets any particular prey, it constructs a web within a milieu as if it had its prey in mind. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2011), the spider and its prey are not
territorial but live in a milieu; however, their relations exemplify a refrain. The spider’s web creates a point of order that is consistent with the concept of territorialization and corresponds to the shape, size, weight, and movements of the prey: “the spider carries within its web a complex picture of the prey it is to capture—its web is a map of a counterpoint to the fly” (Grosz, 2008, p. 22). The web may be considered a motif and its relation to prey a counterpoint: “harmonic forces, dueting features that must be considered as part of one and the same refrain” (Grosz, 2008, p. 53).

The prey may be thought as contrapuntal to the web, and, equally, the web may be thought as a contrapuntal intervention in the design of both the spider and fly. The rhythms forming milieus intervene in the spider, the web, and the prey as if their bodies were instruments continually performing a refrain, a rhythmic melody that repeats and returns. And a refrain may indeed be thought as a little song, tune, or ditty composed by a coupling of at least two distinct bodies. In the example just given, the refrain signals a spider-web-prey coupling. The web acts as a conjuncture between milieu components in a refrain.

The refrain, therefore, indicates an additional movement of passage. As previously discussed, the rhythms that emerge in passage between milieus and/or chaos form territories when those components pass from functionality to expressivity. Here, a refrain demonstrates passages between (inter), within (intra), and across (infra) bodies, territories, and milieus. As an aggregate of matters of expression, a refrain is an assemblage, and it may be said that a refrain moves in the direction of territorialization—it “lodges itself there or leaves” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 323). In the sense of an infra- and intra-assemblage, a refrain is that which gives consistency and cohesion to a territory: “a kind of rhythmic regularity that brings a
minimum of livable order to a situation” (Grosz, 2008, p. 52). However, in the sense of an inter-assemblage, a refrain is equally that which destabilizes and deterritorializes a given domain.

Thus, the refrain pertains not only to the consistency of and the entrance to, but also to the problem of leaving a territorial-assemblage: deterritorialization (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011). Three distinct characteristics define a refrain: “a point of order, a circle of control, and a line of flight to the outside” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 33). To illustrate a point of order, Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2011) provided the example of a child afraid of the dark who hums to comfort herself as she tries to find her way home: “The song is like a rough sketch of a calming and stabilizing, calm and stable, center in the heart of chaos” (p. 311). It is the little tune, the humming, that helps the child find her home or territory. Yet, a home or territory, according to Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2011), does not preexist: “it [is] necessary to draw a circle around that uncertain and fragile center, to organize a limited space” (p. 311). This is the refrain as a circle of control. It is the little ditty, tune, or song that is performed when there are tasks to do to maintain the consistency of the territorial-assemblage, keeping the forces of chaos at bay: “an activity of selection, elimination, and extraction, in order to prevent the interior . . . from being submerged . . . or even to take something from chaos across the filter . . . of the space that has been drawn” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 311). Finally, “one launches forth, hazards an improvisation. To improvise is to join with the world, or meld with it. One ventures from home on the thread of a tune” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 311). Though these characteristics may be differentiated from on another, “they do not represent successive moments in an evolutionary or developmental sequence” (Bogue, 2003, p. 17). They are three aspects of a single refrain that manifests differently within different situations.
Though Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2011) offered human examples of these different manifestations, they may also be thought as inflections of animal refrains: a bird builds a nest, a cat sprays strategic objects encircling its territory, and lobsters take long migratory marches by following lines of magnetic force across the ocean floor (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011). Like the spider that carries the code of the prey within its web that expresses this counterpoint, which is carried in its own distinct, coded body, we humans carry refrains within our bodies—a little tune that eternally returns in the performance of home, territory, and departure to the outside. As Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2011) remarked,

> How very important it is, when chaos threatens, to draw an inflatable, portable territory. If need be, I’ll put my territory on my own body, I’ll territorialize my body: the house of the tortoise, the hermitage of the crab, but also tattoos that make the body a territory. (p. 320)

The marking of a body indicates the territorializing factor within the refrain, the emergence of a matter of expression that works to keep chaos at bay, at a critical distance. The deterritorializing factor is its portability or rather the factor that bridges the critical distance, the movement from territories to an outside, which is often denoted by the one and the same expressive component (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011).

A tattoo creates a critical distance as a territorial marker; it delimits the bearer from others. “The territory arises in a free margin of the code, one that is not indeterminate but rather is determined differently” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 322). It is not accurate to say that a tattoo is an expression innate in the bearer although she may have in mind the qualities of its design. Likewise, it is not entirely accurate to consider the tattoo a purely acquired mark; rather, it is somewhere in-between the innate and the acquired that the tattoo is actualized. It is an
appropriation; the ink is appropriated into the skin of its bearer, and the codes of the body and ink must be decoded in the creation of a territorial-assemblage. It is a passage between bodies and milieus—a needle’s rhythmic punctures transduce a territorial mark. It is the appropriative mark, however, that also deterritorializes by producing new arrangements, relations, and counterpoints, not only between ink and skin, but also to an outside, socially coded world.

Aggregates of matters of expression that form motifs and counterpoints signal a critical conversion of expressive qualities/properties to style or ethos. The refrain “always carries earth with it; it has a land (sometimes a spiritual land) as its concomitant; it has an essential relation to a Natal, a Native . . . it is ethos, but the ethos is also the Abode” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 312). Thus, each of the previously discussed concepts—house, territory, proprietary occupants, matters of expression, rhythm, milieus, and chaos—converge in the refrain: “Forces of chaos, terrestrial forces, cosmic forces: all of these confront each other and converge in the territorial refrain” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 312). Moreover, the refrain introduces processes of deterritorialization, whereby one leaves a territorial-assemblage to enter into a new assemblage or leave them all together.

The initial classification of refrains can be elaborated slightly to incorporate the effects of the convergence of these concepts. A refrain, then, marks or assembles a territory through the autonomous matters of expression emergent in rhythm. This territorial-assemblage creates new functions, which signals a regrouping or reorganization of forces in the development of motifs. Motifs are coupled with external counterpoints, generating new connectives within or beyond the territory. In each instance, the motifs and counterpoints operate in order to centralize the territory or go outside it (Bogue, 2003a). The refrain, then, is “of the crystal or protein type” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 348).
It is a “prism, a crystal” that “acts upon that which surrounds it” through “a catalytic
function: not only to increase the speed of the exchanges and reactions in that which surrounds it,
but also to assure indirect interactions between elements devoid of so-called natural affinity, and
thereby to form organized masses” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 348). It has, then, “two
essential aspects: augmentations and diminutions, additions and withdrawals, amplifications and
eliminations by unequal values, but also the presence of a retrograde motion running in both
directions” (pp. 348-349). It may become concentrated, “as though moving from the extremes to
a center, or, on the contrary, to develop by additions, moving from a center to the extremes, and
also to travel these routes in both directions” (p. 349). The expressive component that
territorializes is often the same as that which deterritorializes. As that which territorializes or
holds the assemblage together, it is an “intercalary oscillator,” a “synthesizer with at least two
heads,” which is ambiguous because it does “not proceed by homogenizing and equalizing
measurement, but operate[s] from within, between two rhythms” (p. 329). As that which opens
to the outside, “it is an operator, a vector, . . . an assemblage converter” (p. 325).

The refrain is ambiguous, and it is certainly difficult to offer a precise definition,
although it may be thought as a little song composed of motifs and counterpoints that return and
repeat. It may also be thought as an incantation, as that which brings assemblages together as
territories or that equally causes their dissipation. It is perhaps much better to resist conclusive
definitions and understand the refrain by what it does as a prism or crystal, which often leaves
one making indications, associations, and descriptions. From the discussion above, it is perhaps
possible to understand Stewart’s (2010) description/association/indication of a refrain:

What is, is a refrain. . . . A scratching on the surface of rhythms, sensory habits, gathering
materialities, intervals, and durations. A gangly accrual of slow or sudden accretions. A
rutting by scoring over. A refrain is a worlding. Nascent forms quicken, rinding up like the skin of an orange. . . . A repetition that underscores, over-scores, rescores . . . the expressivity of something coming into existence. (pp. 339-340).

This description is aligned with Bogue’s (2003a) conclusion: “The refrain is autonomous, unlocalizable,” and “self-explanatory” (p. 74). Yet, it is most important to note that the refrain is not any one component but the relations between diverse and heterogeneous bodies, which at times may seem as strange and bizarre as a Rube Goldberg machine (Bogue, 2003a).

The refrain launches the natural world into a politically charged social world, but it does not leave the animal and natural processes of de/re/territorialization behind. The refrain must be thought as “sonorous par excellence” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 348), even though the world is full of visual matters of expression (e.g., colors, postures, silhouettes, etc.). This is because sound carries a more powerful coefficient of deterritorialization than its visual counterparts: “It seems that when sound deterritorializes, it becomes more and more refined; it becomes specialized and autonomous. Color clings more, not necessarily to the object, but to territoriality” (pp. 347). Additionally, the sonorous expresses a particularly powerful political potential beyond the visual—a potential fascism. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2011), “colors do not move a people. Flags can do nothing without trumpets” (p. 348). And as they noted elsewhere, drums and trumpets “draw people and armies into a race that can go all the way to the abyss (much more than banners and flags, which are paintings, means of classification and rallying)” (p. 302). The refrain, as sound, “invades us, impels us, drags us, transpierces us . . . makes us want to die” (p. 348). The refrain can equally “develop its force into a sickly sweet ditty as into the purest motif . . . and sometimes the two combine” (p. 348).
Music

The refrain is found in “the tapping a child makes in wandering around aimlessly, the humming we sometimes unconsciously perform as we anxiously wait for something or someone, [and] the small piece of annoying music that sticks in our heads despite our loathing it” (Grosz, 2008, p. 51). Each is “a small capture of melodic and rhythmical fragments that, while they are not the raw materials of music, are the content of music and are what music must deterritorialize in order to appear” (Grosz, 2008, pp. 51-52). As in the example of the dueting and harmonizing features of the spider-web-fly coupling, the refrain is musical; however, it stops short of becoming music. It is not known where music begins, but Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2011) asserted that music exists because the refrain also exists. The refrain may be thought as “the means of preventing music, warding it off, or forgoing it” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 300); however, “music takes up the refrain, lays hold of it as a content in a form of expression, because it forms a block with it in order to take it somewhere else” (p. 300).

Though the refrain stops short of music or even potentially prevents its emergence, it is at the same time “the smallest anticipation of a music to come” (Grosz, 2008, p. 52). Music “submits the refrain to the process of deterritorialization, removing it from the place of its ‘origin’ and functionality, enabling the refrain to free itself from a particular place, purpose, rhythm or force” (Grosz, 2008, p. 300). As Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2011) succinctly concluded, “Music is a creative, active operation that consist in deterritorializing the refrain” (p. 300). This deterritorialization concerns voice and sound, “making each resonate with a different set of vibrations than those (chaotic forces) the refrain attempts to ward off” (Grosz, 2008, p. 53). The refrain keeps chaos at bay through a musical frame or rhythmic melody that constitutes a territory and names an occupant, and “it is only when the territorial organization is itself upset,
reconfigured, and abstracted through autonomous qualities that music can work its intensifying effects on individual and collective bodies” (Grosz, 2008, p. 53).

As noted earlier, the refrain has its own lines of flight; however, music does not so much exploit this line of flight as create its own escape “from the home that the refrain constructs” (Grosz, 2008, p. 53). The refrain moves in the direction of territorialization; it constructs an abode as ethos by bringing together “a series of disparate elements all fundamentally vibrational” (e.g., sights, sounds, postures, etc.) into a synthesized organization, “a territory that now contains or locates expressive qualities—colors, textures, tones, tempi—all made into a kind of assemblage, a natural creation” (p. 56). The refrain decodes elements in order to recode them into territorial assemblages “that amuse, protect, and enhance” (p. 56). Yet, music’s emergence requires “the reverse movement” (p. 54), a deterritorialization of the refrain whereby its components are “transformed and reoriented from its incantatory relation to a location and specific bodies” (p. 56). Though the refrain is the requisite condition for music’s emergence, the refrain is equally its problem, that which inhibits, impedes, and obstructs its creation. The history of Western music, as Grosz (2008) noted, is a history of inventing “lines of flight, forms of escape from the capture of the refrain, the extension and transformation of the refrain beyond the territory and home that it establishes into a world it no longer binds and keeps at bay” (p. 56).

Whereas the refrain bids us to abide and enjoy a certain stability provisionally protected from chaos, music opens this stability back onto chaos and offers an invitation to explore, confront, and engage its forces in new and different ways. Far from being a “conversion, translation, or restructuring” of the refrain into “human notation, vocalization, or instrumentation,” music is nothing less than “the rendering sonorous of forces, ultimately the forces of chaos itself, that are themselves nonsonorous” (Grosz, 2008, p. 57). Music makes
audible the forces that could not otherwise be heard, and this does not follow “the bricolage technique of the refrain, whose inventiveness consists in the juxtaposition of elements that do not without external intervention belong together” (p. 57). Rather, music’s inventiveness lies in its capacity to follow a line of flight as far as it will go, “giving voice or sound to what has not been heard before” (p. 57). Music is the breakage and dislocation of the refrain; “it breaks down the refrain, it dislocates it from its home and from the safety zone it marks around itself” (Grosz, 2008, p. 58).

This breakage and dislocation, according to Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2011), is music’s potential fascism: “Music has a thirst for destruction, every kind of destruction, extinction, breakage, dislocation. Is that not its potential ‘fascism’” (p. 299)? One may, therefore, question whether music is dangerous. A musician certainly hazards a risk in composing, and there is a politics proper to music. Yet, there is no simple way to approach this question or explain these themes. Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2011) developed their musical philosophy, and philosophy of music, through a careful and thorough examination of composers, compositions, and the various problems and solutions evident in the Classical, Romantic, and Modern periods (Bogue, 2003a). As previously mentioned, the history of Western music is a history of lines of flight, various escapes from the enclosure of the refrain. Yet, the history that Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2011) traced was always double, an anti/history, that pertained to “perception and discernibility, of individual composers’ formal innovations, and of the varying problems and solutions evident in different periods; and an antihistory of becoming, an antimemory of temporal blocks of differential speeds and affective intensities” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 53).

Each period Deleuze and Guattari examined, the Classical, Romantic, and Modern, “correspond to the three moments of the refrain—as organizing point, territorial circle, and
cosmic vector” (Bogue, 2003, p. 52). The orientation Deleuze and Guattari took in their analysis was decidedly Modernist, “with its emphasis on innovation and experimentation as the prime movers in all art” (p. 53). The Modern task of music, as Deleuze and Guattari saw it, was of “molecularizing matter and harnessing forces . . . to render audible inaudible forces” (p. 52). To put this another way, the Modern musician extracts “something imperceptible from the cosmos and dresses it in the sensible materials that the cosmos provides in order to create sensation, not a sensation of something, but pure intensity, a direct impact on the body’s nerves and organs” (Grosz, 2008, p. 22). Yet, this task was equally present in both of the previous periods. The difference, according to Bogue (2003a), is that “in Modernism forces are seized directly, whereas in Classicism and Romanticism they are reflected in the relations of matter and form” (p. 52). This is exemplified in Deleuze and Guattari’s (1980/2011) description of the classical musician’s labor:

The classical artist hazards an extreme and dangerous adventure. He or she breaks down milieus, separates them, harmonizes them, regulates their mixtures, passes from one to the other. What the artist confronts in this way is chaos, the forces of chaos, the forces of a raw and untamed matter upon which Forms must be imposed in order to make substances, and Codes in order to make milieus. Phenomenal agility. (p. 338).

In the Romantic period, the artist abandoned “the ambition of de jure universality and his or her status as creator: the artist territorializes, enters a territorial assemblage” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 338). The artist “is no longer God,” the Creator, “but the Hero who defies God” (p. 339). The territorial assemblage is a territorial refrain set within the Earth, but also set in tension with it. The task of the classical composer was that of God, to organize chaos, and the artist’s only cry was “creation,” whereas the Romantic period is characterized by a new
cry, that of “the Earth, the territory and the Earth” (p. 338)! The romantics sought a foundation in the territorial refrain, but the earth was not a “substance endowed with form or a coded milieu, with bounds and an apportioned share;” rather the earth was “that close embrace of all forces, those of the earth as well as of other substances, so that the artist no longer confronts chaos, but hell and the subterranean, the groundless” (p. 339).

With this disjunction, this dissonance, between territory and earth, the Romantic artist was, thus, a “wanderer or exile, either seeking a return to the lost territory or pursuing the deterritorializing vector opened up by the earth” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 40). According to Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2011), this indicated the fundamental innovations of Romanticism: Instead of “substantial parts corresponding to forms, milieus corresponding to codes, or a matter in chaos given to order in forms and by codes,” there was “a great form in continuous development, a gathering of the forces of the earth taking all the parts up into a sheaf” (p. 340). Thus, for the Romantic, the matter of music was no longer a chaos to be subjugated, but “matter in continuous variation. The universal had become a relation, variation” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 341). Yet, the risks the musician took on were equally great, evidenced in the nationalism associated with this period’s music: “fascism used Verdi much less than nazism did Wagner” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 341).

The post-romantic turn toward Modernism lies precisely in the third moment of the refrain, in the “deterritorializing line of flight that opens a territory to the cosmos at large” (Bogue, 2003, p. 44). If classical composers imposed form on a chaotic matter and romantic artists transformed “the relationship between matter, form and force, treating form as a force of continuous development and matter as an expressive medium in continuous variation,” then modern musicians “discover[ed] a third way of handling form, matter, and force, converting
matter into a molecular *material* capable of harnessing cosmic forces” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 44). That is to say, “the essential is no longer in forms and matters, nor in themes, but in forces, densities, intensities” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 343). Within the Modern period, music concerns a different relation than the “matters-forms” of Classicism or “the continuous development of form and the continuous variation of matter” of Romanticism, “it is now a direct relation *material-forces*” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 342). The task of Modern composers is that of “elaborating a material charged with harnessing forces,” and with it “matters of expression are superseded by a material of capture” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 342).

In painting this is visible in Cézanne’s rendering of invisible forces, for example, in “landscapes through thermal and magnetic forces, apples through forces of germination: nonvisual forces that nevertheless have been rendered visible” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 343). Similarly, the Modern musician “molecularizes sonic matter and thereby becomes capable of harnessing nonsonorous forces such as Duration, Intensity” (p. 343). The composer Messiaen exemplified this process by developing “rhythmic characters,” “added values,” and “nonretrogradable rhythms” that complicated otherwise simplistic time signatures to the point where the music moved in a floating, nonpulsed, time of *aion* rather than *chronos*. Here, *aion* refers to the unfixing of commonsense coordinates characteristic of a linear, sequential flow of time used to construct a chronological (chromos) history as well as conceive of a linear movement of music as a matter of on pace, meter, or what is tantamount to dogma rather than rhythm (cf. Bogue, 2003a). The result was, according to Rößler, a music that rendered audible the nonsonorous force of time: “the endlessly long time of the stars, the very long time of the mountains, the middling one of human being, the short one of insects, the very short one of atoms” (as cited in Bogue, 2003a, p. 44). Equally, Varése’s compositions exemplified the
molecularization of sonic matter in his various experiments with music as a spatial arrangement of moving bodies, and whereby he “sought means of transmuting sonic matter, transforming the temporal flow of sounds into spatial blocks, planes, and volumes” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 45). In his various experiments, sound-matter was ionized, atomized, and crystalized through prisms, which resulted from complex developments of rhythmic relations where the various pitches, frequencies, and sounds did not follow a melodic line as much as occupy a musical space (Bogue, 2003a).

It is worth noting that Varèse experimented with a sound machine, which was not a machine that reproduced sounds already heard; rather, the machine “molecularizes and atomizes, ionizes sound matter, and harnesses a cosmic energy” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 343). The Modernist period, then, moved from the sphere of territories and the Earth toward the Cosmos and the machine. Yet, this period, like the Romantic, is characterized as an assemblage, but not a territorial one; rather, its assemblage is machinic, figured as a synthesizer that makes the sound process itself audible:

By assembling modules, sources elements, and elements for treating sound (oscillators, generators, and transformers), by arranging microintervals, the synthesizer makes audible the sound process itself, the production of that process, and puts us in contact with still other elements beyond sound matter. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 343)

The synthesizer is an operation of consistency between disparate elements, the synthesis “of the molecular and the cosmic, material and force” (p. 343). The Modernist period often valorized “children’s drawings, texts by the mad, and concerts of noise;” however, for Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2011), this marked a lapse back into reproduction and one that reproduced nothing but “a scribble effacing all lines, a scramble effacing all sounds” (pp. 343-344).
modern composer, therefore, faces a challenge to deterritorialize the material sufficiently “to be molecularized and open onto something cosmic, instead of lapsing into a statistical heap” (p. 344). All that is needed for success is “sobriety,” an assemblage with consistency, and a “very pure and simple sound, an emission or wave without harmonics. The more rarefied the atmosphere, the more disparate the elements you will find” (p. 344).

This history of music is one of perception and discernibility, “of the changing ways in which forces and the molecular operations of deterritorialization manifest themselves” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 52). Yet, Deleuze and Guattari also traced an antihistory of becomings-other, which is not a story of discernible points in a past that connect to points in a present (chronos) but relates to the suspended, floating space-time of aion whereby coordinates of identity become unfixed, unhinged, and shifted from their commonsense place and sequence through transversal movements across ontological divides, social hierarchies, developmental processes, and so-called “natural” affinities. This transverse movement, this antihistory, pertains to connections between what is conventionally considered musical and extramusical matters, and in their connection may be thought of as that which gives rise to history. It involves an additional problem for the periods previously discussed yet thoroughly permeates the molecularization and cosmicization of sound-matter and forces; specifically, it pertained to the problem of a people, to the individuation, the formation, or the creation of a people to come, which Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2011) termed the Dividual. The problem of creating a people emerged in “the nineteenth century, but the mode of individuation proper to the formation of a people, the Dividual, [was] already present in Classicism, though undiscerned as such” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 52). In Romanticism, the Dividual was “perceived in terms of ethnic, regional, or national identity, and in Modernism in terms of statistical masses and micropolitical populations” (Bogue, 2003a, p.
52). Yet, in Modernism, the invention of a people, the Dividual, became explicitly one of a “general process of becoming, one that embraces the phenomena of becoming-woman, becoming-child, and becoming-animal in a single becoming-molecular” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 52).

The transverse connections between musical and extramusical matters are found in what is neither “an extraneous imposition on a musical form” nor assimilable “within a mimetic model of musical imitation or representation of a discursive content” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 53). In other words, the various “themes enunciated in opera librettos, song lyrics, program notes, and composition titles, the diverse connections drawn by composers between their works and mythical, religious, philosophical, and social ideas” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 53) are not coincidental but indissociable contents proper to the sound expression. They are indexes of becomings. As Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2011) mused:

What does music deal with, what is the content indissociable from sound expression? It is hard to say, but it is something: a child dies, a child plays, a woman is born, a woman dies, a bird arrives, a bird flies off. We wish to say that these are not accidental themes in music (even if it is possible to multiply examples), much less imitative exercises; they are something essential. (p. 299)

Within this indissociable content-expression lies music’s emotional dimension, which is also proper to its history. Yet, it is not “a coded translation or direct expression of emotions but a complex intermingling of personal and interpersonal feelings with the [impersonal] affective intensities of becoming” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 53).

What is implicit in Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the refrain and conceptualization of music as its deterritorialization is a “grand natura musicans, a creative interwining, enfolding, and unfolding of differential rhythms that play through milieu points of order, territorial
domains, and transterritorial openings to the outside” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 75). The unfolding can be thought “as the expression in time of a kind of developmental melody”—“the birth, growth, maturation, and eventual death of each organism” (p. 4). The enfolding and interwining may be thought as the imbrication of an organism with other bodies (organic, inorganic, natural, artificial, or social) in the enactment of a world or a territory, which “may be taken as the creative coevolution of melodies and motifs over an extended period of time” (p. 4). When human music deterritorializes the refrain, it is enacting a transterritorial opening to the cosmos, which is an enactment of a “general process that pervades the physical and biological universe” (p. 75). A becoming moves along this transversal, in-between entities and domains, along the line of a cosmic refrain.

It is, therefore, possible to classify birds as musician, but also “crickets, ticks, atoms, and stars” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 75). The composer Messiaen was unique insofar as he incorporated birdsongs into his musical works more than any other composer. He made numerous field investigations, enlisted prominent ornithologists, and precisely notated the songs of hundreds of birds (Bogue, 2003a). Although Messiaen was unique in this regard, Deleuze and Guattari consider his work, as a becoming-animal, to be paradigmatic of all composers (Bogue, 2003a). The becoming-animal of Messiaen indicates a process of transversal movement across ontological domains—a deterritorialization of both human and animal musicians. The birdsongs register in a higher frequency than human instruments can reproduce, involve microintervals that do not conform to conventional, human, tonal scales, and are produced at a much quicker tempo than can be imitated by humans. The birdsongs, therefore, required not so much a translation into human tones and tempi, but a deformation or mutation to enter into a human domain (Bogue, 2003a). Yet, this mutation is a two-way operation; Messiaen equally entered into an
assemblage with the bird by unfixing commonsense coordinates of time, space, and identity, by preserving the relations between bird-tones though the intervals that were necessarily expanded to make them playable upon a piano (Bogue, 2003a).

![Image of bird symbols](image.png)

Figure 4: *Birdsongs Therefore* (Bassett, 2014). Gouache on paper.

In the becoming-animal of Messiaen, the music formed a sonic block with the bird refrain, and its content was a becoming (Bogue, 2003a). Such becomings are never imitative or figurative:

No art is imitative, no art can be imitative or figurative. Suppose a painter “represents” a bird; this is in fact a becoming-bird that can occur only to the extent that the bird itself is in the process of becoming something else, a pure line and pure color. Thus imitation self-destructs, since the imitator unknowing enters into a becoming that conjugates with the unknowing becoming of that which he or she imitates. The painter and musician do not imitate the animal, they become-animal at the same time as the animal becomes what they willed, at the deepest level of their concord with Nature. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, pp. 304-305).

The actual music composed by Messiaen performed a transduction, a process of deterritorializing disparate refrains (human and nonhuman alike) so as to reterritorialize them.
in his compositions, and it may be thought as the interwining of diverse musical motifs, those that unfold through the human’s and animal’s development, those that enfold them together, and those that pose an unfurling of the cosmos in a becoming-animal. The transduction equally converted a sound-matter and cosmic force, a block of content-expression, into a *nervous* signal, one that affected listeners and drew them into the becoming. Music creates new or other “sounds and forms that leave behind what is recognizable to engender an unknown, a joyful (or excruciating) movement of invention,” and this becoming-music of the refrain is the “becoming-excessive or the becoming-cosmic of sound, the freeing of sound from any origin or destination and its elaboration as a pure movement—movement without subject or goal, aim or end” (Grosz, 2003, p. 58).

It should be noted that the becoming-animal of Messiaen did not indicate a literal transformation of human to bird or bird to sound-matter-cosmic-force but a movement along a transversal line crossing ontological domains and presumed hierarchies that unfixed commonsense coordinates of space, time, and identity. A transversal line of becoming is related to the nonpulsed, floating, suspended time of aion, which indicates its antihistory. A becoming does not pertain to punctual systems of localizable points or even localizable lines connecting points along vertical and horizontal axes that refer to a *flow* and order of time as moving from past to present (flow) and from present to past (order or representation); rather, “a becoming is the movement by which the line frees itself from the point, and renders points indiscernible” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 294). The line does not so much link together disparate bodies of time, space, and identity, as “it passes between them, carrying them away in a shared proximity in which the discernibility of points disappears” (p. 294). The “submission of the line
Arborescence may equally be called by the name “phallogocentrism;” it is “the most privileged model of rocklike identity . . . the proudly erect tree under whose spreading boughs latter-day Platos conduct their class” (Massumi, 1987, p. xii). The rhizome is its opposite: a schizomorphic, subterranean network “strangling the roots of the infamous tree” (Massumi, 1987, p. xiii). Tubers and bulbs are rhizomes, but also colonies of ants and packs of wolves. Though other plant life with root systems and radicles may also be schizomorphic, and though rhizomes assume diverse forms, the rhizome’s distinguishing trait is “there are no points or positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree, or root. There are only lines” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/1980, p. 8). A becoming is a rhizome, composed of lines, lines of flight, and deterritorialization. It is not defined by localizable points, but “passes between points, it comes up through the middle, it runs perpendicular to the points” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 293). A line of becoming “has neither beginning nor end, departure nor arrival, origin nor destination” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 293).

A becoming arises in the middle of things; in the midst of fluid states of affairs, and anything can activate the process. Yet, a becoming “always turns out to be a political affair,” and “necessitates a labor of power (puissance), an active micropolitics” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 292). A becoming consists of two variables: 1) a deterritorialized variable of the majority; and 2) a deterritorialized variable of the minority. Majority does not refer to “a greater relative quantity but to the determination of a state or standard” whereby its others, whether of larger or lesser quantities, can “be said to be minoritarian”—it implies “a state of domination” (p. 291). The number is irrelevant; the constitution of “a standard in the universe in relation to
which men necessarily (analytically) form a majority” is primary (p. 291). In this way, by assuming as “pregiven the right and power of man,” it can be said “women, children, but also animals, plants, and molecules, are minoritarian” (p. 291).

It is important to make a distinction between minorities and minoritarian. The former term is a reterritorialization, an aggregate as a state, but in a becoming one is deterritorialized. When considering the minoritarian, it is important to note that it refers to a process of becoming, a dislocation of determinate states, but that nonetheless pertains to the relation between the man-standard and its others. A becoming occurs by two simultaneous movements, “one by which a term (the subject) is withdrawn from the majority, and another by which a term (the medium or agent) rises up from the minority” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 291). These are the two deterritorializing variables mentioned previously, and they form an asymmetrical and indissociable block of alliance. That is not say they form a hybrid or an average—“a becoming is neither one nor two, nor the relation of the two; it is the in-between, the border or line of flight or descent running perpendicular to both” (p. 293). The block of becoming constitutes a zone of proximity and indiscernibility, a “‘no-man’s-land,’ a nonlocalizable relation sweeping up the two” (p. 293).

All becomings are, therefore, minoritarian, “a becoming-minoritarian” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 291). Equally, it can be said that all becomings are molecular, which indicates an opposition to molar or majoritarian regimes or standards, or what was previously called arborescence. There is no becoming-man, for example, because “man is the molar entity par excellence” (p. 292). For the same reason there are many becomings-child, becomings-woman, becomings-molecular of man, and “in a way, the subject in a becoming is always ‘man,’ but only when he enters a becoming-minoritarian that rends him from his major identity” (p.
Yielding Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2011) also asserted that “a woman has to become-woman, but in a becoming-woman of all man” (p. 292). This is because a becoming-minoritarian is not a matter of numerical quantities as a reterritorialized, aggregate state, but an “unspecifiable, unpredictable disruption of codes that takes place alongside women, children, and animals, in a metamorphic zone between fixed identities” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 35).

In other words, “a becoming deterritorializes such codes and in its operations necessarily engage the underprivileged term of each of these binary oppositions”—man/woman, adult/child, human/animal, molar/molecular, etc. (Bogue, 2003a, p. 35). Becoming is the “politics proper” to music, “the invention of a people;” however, this politics is “one that avoids reductive schemes of sociological causation or reflection and resists ready appropriation by any given agenda, since the history of the Dividual is an antihistory of becoming, whose opening to the future is forever uncharted” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 53). That is to say, music is not always-already sutured into a progressive or liberatory political agenda. If the politics proper to music are a becoming-minoritarian, and if these becomings are not readily absorbed into an existing agenda, it must be equally acknowledged that music is itself “a majoritarian or popularizing, capitalizing, and imperializing of the arts (indeed the most majoritarian and popularizing, the most capitalizable of all the arts forms)” (Grosz, 2008, p. 57). From this apparent tension between a majoritarian art form and its politics as becomings-minoritarian, we may conclude that music is, in a certain sense, schizophrenic, particularly in the Modern era.

I cannot agree, therefore, with Grosz’s (2008) conclusion that music is a “mode of giving voice to social minorities” (p. 57), because becoming-minoritarian involves rending one from the majoritarian, passages between points of identity, and a transversal line freed from fixed and determinate localization. Becoming is a two-way operation affecting both majoritarian and
minoritarian, and music, therefore, cannot be a “speaking for,” “giving voice to,” or any other insidious act of usurpation and assimilation. Rather, it involves processes that subvert, break, dislocate, and dislodge the voice through deterritorialization. Under certain conditions, music may indeed be an important factor within minority communities and be deployed with various political, social, or cultural aims; however, music itself does not supply such straightforward lines of reasoning but requires a more complex, even schizoid, orientation. The danger, both in terms of usurping a voice and in following a line of flight, is that it may indeed veer “toward destruction, toward abolition” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 299).

The Modern artist shapes a molecularized material capable of harnessing forces, and engenders becomings-molecular as the invention of a people to come, the Dividual. This is concomitant with the contemporary deterritorialization of the earth and the molecularization of the people, as well as the “globalization of powers of control and a molecularization of means of political regulation” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 48). This is evidenced, as Bogue (2003a) indicated, in modernity’s “total war” that creates “constant terror, the annihilation of a population, and the destruction of a habitat,” and in modernity’s “total peace,” which “simply pursues war by other means, instilling a pervasive climate of insecurity, depopulating cities by controlling urban space (citizens visibly disappearing from city landscapes, sheltered in cars, apartments, enclosed malls), rendering habitats increasingly uninhabitable” (p. 48). Modernity witnesses “constant saturation bombing attacks on consumer-citizens, implementing a micropolitics of media and informational discipline and normalization that creates statistical populations functioning simultaneously as molar masses and molecular aggregates” (p. 48). Is this not also a schizoid condition common to existence in the modern age?
The contemporary artist is no longer “the One-Alone withdrawn into him- or herself, but has also ceased to address the people, to invoke the people as a constituted force,” whether a regional or national people (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 346). Rather, the contemporary musician’s “effort remains that of creating a people as Dividual multiplicity, but such a collectivity must increasingly be conceived of as a future people, a becoming as line of incipient elaboration” (Bogue, 2003a, p. 48). The question, according to Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2011), is not just “how to win a majority,” but whether “to dwell as a poet or assassin”:

The assassin is one who bombards the existing people with molecular populations that are forever closing all of the assemblages, hurling them into an ever wider and deeper black hole. The poet, on the other hand, is one who lets loose molecular populations in hopes that this will sow the seeds of, or even engender, the people to come, that these populations will pass into a people to come, open a cosmos. (p. 345)

What, then, can be said of music as a poet’s art? It “uses anything and sweeps everything away” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 349). Bogue (1991) termed this phenomenon rhizomusicosmology. Thus the call of the contemporary musician: Use anything at one’s disposal, deterritorialize the refrain (what is) for the sake of the new—a molecularization and cosmicization of sound-matter, force, and a people to come. Music runs along transversal lines of flight in-between majoritarian and minoritarian in multiple becomings. It invents a people to come, the Dividual. It is schizomorphic, of the order of the rhizome.

Please note that my inter-usage of “modern” and “contemporary” in relation to music is intentional. It is not clear whether or not Deleuze and Guattari saw their work as “postmodern” or as another way to live in the modern era. What is important to draw from this discussion is less a linear periodization (as that work is not linear in actuality) and more that political dimensions of music—what lessons it offers in each period. These political dimensions of music coincide with the three movements of the refrain, and this is what is most important for the work of this dissertation.
Music involves a house-territory system from which a being of sensation and matters of expression emerge and releases a compound of affects and percepts, incorporeal dimensions of corporality, which draw the composer and listener into becomings. Finally “music is never tragic, music is joy. But there are times it necessarily gives us a taste for death; not so much happiness as dying happily, being extinguished” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 299).

Whether music’s line of flight leads to abolition, death, or an enhancement of life, it is joy because it moves, because it takes us somewhere, makes us becoming otherwise than any here and now, and because it generates new connectives while sweeping away that from which it was drawn. Whether in life or death, music intensifies existence through strange couplings, through sensation, and through vibrational forces directly impacting the nervous system. It gives us visions, sparking contemplation of the forces that not only compose our bodies but that also pass across them.

Human music is an inflection of the music of the cosmos, drawing bodies together and separating them. Yet, in drawing bodies together it does so for no other reason than that it is possible to do so. The new, the creative, the inventive: music as a polyamorous force.
Figure 5: *Molecular and Cosmic* (Bassett, 2014). Gouache on paper.
A Spinozan-Deleuzian Theory of Affect

Foucault (1983/1984) warned, “Everything is dangerous” (p. 343). And, doubtless, there are particular dangers inherent in my interest in affect as a theory. According to the dominant organizing structures of our society, mine is the face of the molar—white, heterosexual, middle class, male. Historically, those of such privileged positions were also the dominate inhabitants of the realm in which theory was produced (Sedgwick & Frank, 1995). Thus, some may be suspicious and question my interest in affect as a theoretical orientation.

Sensitive to these relations of power, along with Seigworth and Gregg (2010), I wonder and worry “whether [I] too [am] guilty of exploiting an all too common scenario in the powerful transnational economy of global theory” (p. 18). That is, affect as a theory is currently trending in various academic discourses (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010; Clough, 2007; Ahmed, 2010). However, there are many theories or treatments of affect and then there is Deleuze’s and Deleuze and Guattari’s treatment of affect drawn from Spinoza. Although I pull from various theories of affect through out this section, my primary interest is to return to Spinoza’s theory of affect by way of Deleuze. The work contemporary scholars with various theories of affect are used only as supplementary. And with this in mind, it perhaps worth noting that the origin of my interest is entirely accidental—attracted by the force of chance encounters with articles and book chapters that, for example, discussed how an affective intensity became so heightened that a conversion point was reached where, for example, Ronald Reagan shifted from bad actor to, arguably, an equally bad politician (Massumi, 2002); or the potential afforded by affect theory to critique that which characterizes late capitalist culture, the real subsumption of capitalism—the

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4 Some treatments of affect border very close to psychological and humanist renderings. With regard to this slippery slope whereby discussions of affect can quickly lapse into psychological or humanist projects (Massumi, 2002), I attempt to feature the ontological differences a Spinozan-Deleuzian treatment of affect poses that make psychological treatments untenable.
shift of capital from the “domain of accumulation to life itself” (Clough, 2007, p. 20). My interest was and is spurred by an intense curiosity of how such remarkable and interesting connections and analyses can be made, the potential for such important critique, and an intensification of the literature’s affective capacity itself.

Though anecdotal, the spurring of interest leading to my investment in theories of affect itself teaches an initial lesson on affect. Affect may be thought, in many ways, as synonymous with “force or forces of encounter” (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010, p. 2). The origins of affect are always accidental (Spinoza, 1677/1994) and affect is without teleological ends (Deleuze, 1970/1988). As such, “it is purely transitive” (Deleuze, 1970/1988, p. 21) and registers bodily as intensities, flows, and modulations of tempo, speed and slowness, often autonomically “at the surface of the body, at its interface with things” (Massumi, 2002, p. 25). Our consciousness of affect merely indicates an awareness of its passage (Deleuze, 1970/1988), not its end point.

Finally, the scenario above alludes to the incumbent challenges of writing about affect. How does one write about something that we are only aware of in passage? To write about affect not only requires an entanglement or assemblage with other bodies (in this case a body of theoretical and philosophical literature, among other things) but also recognition of the implicit continuation of an affective transmission through such entanglements.

Massumi (2002) remarked that such writing about affect is necessarily experimental, commensurate with Deleuze’s (1970/1988) description of the enduring relevance of Spinoza’s seminal work on affect as “a long affair of experimentation” (p. 125). And as the title of Spinoza’s monolithic work on affect indicates, this is a matter of ethics. It is an experimentation of ontological becomings, a resistance to the inherent stasis underlying many philosophical and theoretical positions and signals an overturning of many foundational precepts ordering thought,
feeling, action, and life itself. The question of where to begin this discussion of affect is already, to a degree, answered. Following Deleuze, I start “from the middle of things; thought has no beginning, just an outside to which it is connected” (Hurley, 1988, p. i). In other words, “One never commences; one never has a tabula rasa; one slips in, enters in the middle; one takes up or lays down rhythms” (Deleuze, 1970/1988, p. 123). Having already slipped into the middle, the remaining pages of this chapter attempt to attend to questions of what, how, and why affect; that is, I attempt to draw tentative definitions, illustrate its usefulness, and demonstrate its importance. Implicit throughout this discussion is an attempt to draw attention to the outside to which thought is always connected, as well as the implications this proposition bears on the philosophical commitments of affect as a theoretical orientation. And finally, this discussion demonstrates what I take up, and perhaps even lay down, in relation to affect theory, conveying a sense of the potentialities and problematics such a theoretical orientation carries.

**The middle**

If the origins of affect are accidental (Spinoza, 1677/1994) and if it is without teleological ends (Deleuze, 1970/1988), then it is difficult to imagine beginning anywhere other than the middle. In fact, affect arises in the middle of things, in the midst of “in-between-ness: in the capacities to act and be acted upon” (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010, p. 1). Though affect is born in in-between-ness, it “resides as accumulative beside-ness” (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010, p. 1). This denotes a relation: after all, “in-between,” “middle,” and “beside” are terms of relations (Massumi, 2002), and affect is found in the force of relations as intensities that pass from body to body (human and nonhuman alike). In deed, we may aptly apply the term “affect” to the forces of relations or forces of encounters, which are best understood as bodily capacities to affect and
be affected (to act and be acted upon) that increase and decrease through the various modulations, rhythms, and modalities of encounters (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010).

Affect, as *force of encounter*, manifests as moods, atmospheres, and feeling-tones (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010; Bennett, 2010; Clough, 2009). These forces do not indicate a personal emotion, or an action per se, but an *impersonal* and *open-endedly social* capacity for activation (Massumi, 2002). That is, the capacity to affect and be affected is related to a body’s capacity to act and be acted upon. The moods or atmospheres constitute the conditions making certain potential actions actionable: “affect can become the nonphenomenal background of existence or the affective tone or generic context of a way of life” (Clough, 2009, p. 49). For Spinoza (1677/1994), to understand affect is to understand causes (or quasi-causes) of actions, which implies “a mode of living, a way of life” (Deleuze, 1970/1988, p. 122).

Yet, it does not follow that to understand affect and, thus, understand actions we can arrive at how we *ought* to live, as if it were a matter of deducing universal rules or principles of life. Likewise, any position that would seek to determine and establish an affective mood or landscape so that a certain set of doctrines can be lived out must also be avoided. All such logic leads to moralism rather than ethics. In opposition to moralism, “which always refers existence to transcendent values,” Spinoza’s ethics is “a typology of immanent modes of existence” (Deleuze, 1970/1988, p. 23). That is, Spinoza’s ethics evaluates thoughts and actions “according to the immanent mode of existence that it implies” (Smith, 2007, p. 67). Deleuze and Guattari (1994/1991) explicated this further when they wrote, “A mode of existence is good or bad, noble or vulgar, complete or empty, independently of Good or Evil or any transcendent value: there are never any criteria other than the tenor of existence, the intensification of life” (p. 74).
“The important thing is to understand life”—not my life or your life, but a life—“not as a form, or a development of form, but as a complex relation between differential velocities, . . . [a] composition of speeds and slownesses on a plane of immanence” (Deleuze, 1970/1988, p. 123).

What Spinoza (1677/1994) called “Nature or God” (p. 59)—a single substance having infinite attributes and all creatures (natural or artificial) being “modes of these attributes or modifications of this substance” (Deleuze, 1970/1988, p. 17)—equates to a life, which is not lived “on the basis of need, in terms of means and ends, but according to a production, a productivity, a potency, in terms of causes and effects” (Deleuze, 1970/1988, p. 3). What affects produce, then, in relation to a life, is either intensification or diminution of capacity, or power to act. As Smith (2007) noted, the question is never, what must be done? Rather, it is, what can be done? In other words, how can life be productive to such an extent that it is taken to the limits of its capacity?

Affect, as a theoretical orientation, is concerned primarily with bodies, the “capacities and unknown potential of the body to do things” (Grosz, 1994, p. 169). And as Spinoza (1677/1994) made clear, “No one has yet determined what the body can do” (p. 155). And to be clear, there is no distinction between mind and body in Spinoza’s philosophy! Likewise, no one has determined “the nature and powers of the affects, or what the mind can do to moderate them” (Spinoza, 1677/1994, p. 153). The Cartesian belief that the “mind has absolute power over its own actions” (Spinoza, 1677/1994, p. 153) is nothing more than an illusion of consciousness, which “is inseparable from the triple illusion that constitutes it, the illusion of finality, the illusion of freedom, and the theological illusion” (Deleuze, 1970/1988, p. 20). As Spinoza (1677/1994) continually emphasized: “It is not in the free power of the mind to either recollect a thing or forget it” (pp. 157-158). The ideas of the mind arise by the same necessity as any mode of existence—by the force of encounters with external bodies. Neither are actions under the full
control of the mind: “the madman, the chatterbox, the child, and a great many people of this kind believe they speak from a free decision of the mind, when really they cannot contain their impulse to speak” (Spinoza, 1677/1994, p. 157). To reiterate, there is no distinction between body and mind in Spinoza’s philosophy!

The illusion is such that those “who believe that they either speak or are silent, or do anything from a free decision of the mind, dream with open eyes” (Spinoza, 1677/1994, p. 158). Consciousness, as illusion, only takes in effects; it remains “ignorant of the causes by which they are determined” (Spinoza, 1677/1994, p. 157). Consciousness appeases its ignorance by “reversing the order of things, by taking effects for causes (the illusion of final[ity])” (Deleuze, 1970/1988, p. 20). In so doing, it assumes volition over the body, which indicates the illusion of freedom. And when the sufficiency of consciousness runs out and is incapable of imagining itself to be both the first cause and director of ends, “it invokes a God endowed with understanding and volition, operating by means of final causes or free decrees in order to prepare for man [sic] a world commensurate with His glory and His punishments (the theological illusion)” (Deleuze, 1970/1988, p. 20).

Though Spinoza (1677/1994) placed primacy on the body, its movements and affects, above the mind, it is not accurate to say he merely rearranged the same precepts as Descartes—in something like a chicken-and-egg scenario, but with mind and body. In fact, such thinking would remove the impetus his ethics bears on the materiality of life. But by patiently outlining what he identified as “three primitive, or primary, affects”—“joy, sadness, and desire” (Spinoza, 1677/1994, p. 189)—and by describing how all other affects are not only derived from these but also how they invariably result in material ways, we must contend with a much more complex world than that proposed by Descartes. The joyful passions (or affects, or modes of existence)
result from the forces of encounters with bodies that enter into, or join with, a body in a complementary mode of composition (Spinoza, 1677/1994). That is, joy is the enhancement and compounding of a body’s capacity to act or its degree of power. Contrariwise, forces of encounters result in a diminution of a capacity to act, or degree of power if the bodies tend towards decomposition—the sad passions (Deleuze, 1970/1988).

To fixate on joy or sadness as emotive states would capture only half of Spinoza’s (1677/1994) intended usage of the terms and potentially undermine an ability to grasp the significance of affect. To be joyful or sad indicates a certain end point: it signals the cognitive, categorical indexing of forces of encounters. Emotion is affect “owned and recognized . . . the sociolinguistic fixing of [its] quality” (Massumi, 2002, p. 28). Joy and sadness, in Spinoza’s (1677/1994) usage of the terms, also refer to the passage and movement of a body into either greater or lesser states of perfection. That is to say, a body is moved to a lesser or greater degree of power; it is either removed from or approaches its ultimate capacity to do things (Deleuze, 1970/1988).

For Spinoza (1677/1994), desire is synonymous with appetite as the striving inherent in all things to persevere in existence (*conatus*). Yet desire is distinct from appetite insofar as it requires one be conscious of one’s appetite, thus relating “generally to men [sic]” (Spinoza, 1677/1994, p. 160). Because of desire, we do not strive for “anything because we judge it to be good; on the contrary, we judge something to be good because we strive for it” (Spinoza, 1677/1994, 160). Yet, because this striving prompts different actions according to the forces of encounters and is inseparable from the movement by which they cause a body to pass to either a greater or lesser perfection (joy and sadness, respectively), consciousness of the appetite appears as “a witness of the variations and determinations of the *conatus* functioning in relation to other
bodies” (Deleuze, 1970/1988, p. 21). One cannot use the concepts of instinct, genetics, interpellation, or drives (in the Freudian sense) to explain desire. After all one is not conscious of such things. As Deleuze and Guattari (1972/2004), following Reich, wrote: “The astonishing thing is not that some people steal . . . but rather that those who are starving do not steal as a regular practice” (p. 31).

From the perspective of affect, according to Smith (2007), the reason for this is simple: “it is because your desire—that is, your drives and affects—are not your own” (p. 74). They are always constructed in assemblages with other bodies. And because Spinoza (1677/1994) defined a body (and there is no distinction between mind and body in his philosophy) as simultaneously kinetic and affective, by the motion and rest (speeds and slownesses) between the infinite number of particles that compose it, and by the thresholds of its capacity to affect and be affected, many things change. All forms, functions, and positionalities emerge from a body’s movement and affectivity, not the opposite (Massumi, 2002). The body, therefore, cannot be defined as a closed system, an organization of organs, substances, functions, or as even as a subject or object (Deleuze, 1970/1988). From the perspective of affect theory, the body as an organism (as a closed system) is obsolete. The body is produced in assemblages; equally, this production signals the ongoing obsolescence of the body as the requisite condition of change. Each incremental modulation in a body’s capacity to act signals a change (hopefully for the better) and renders its previous state obsolete: “To say that the obsolescence of the body is produced is to say that it is compelled. To say that it is compelled is to say that it is ‘driven by desire’ rather than by need or utility” (Massumi, 2002, p. 108)—an important distinction to note, as desire does not indicate a lack but plentitude (cf. Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/2009; 1980/2011).
Bodies are a matter of invention, ontological experimentation on the plane of immanence, or “the immanent plane of Nature,” the single substance and univocity of attributes of which all things are modes, where each thing “is defined by the arrangements of motions and affects into which it enters, whether these arrangements are artificial or natural” (Deleuze, 1970/1988, p. 124). For Spinoza, all bodies are conative and associative, or social modes composed of a greater number of extensive parts that come to it from elsewhere (Bennett, 2010). Bodies can be simple or complex, or to use Bennett’s (2010) terms, “protobodies” or “mosaicized” (p. 22). In both cases the body is a mode and expresses conatus as either a stubborn tendency to persist or as the effort to maintain the movements and rest (speeds and slownesses) that define that mode, respectively (Deleuze, 1970/1988). Regardless, “what it means to be a mode is . . . to form alliances and enter assemblages: it is to mod(e)ify and be modified by others,” which is “not under the control of any one mode—no mode is an agent in the hierarchical sense” (Bennett, 2010, p. 22). To reiterate from the previous section on music, the word assemblage does not suggest a static organization of predetermined parts into an already-conceived whole; rather, it is the process of heterogeneous elements organizing in relation to their qualities and affects to constitute a group and express a particular character (Wise, 2005/2011).

Although there is an obligatory contingency to assemblages, which are always imbued with a certain chanciness, it is not accurate to classify assemblages as completely random or arbitrary. Assemblages are constellations of elements organizing “in such a way as to converge [(immanence)] artificially and naturally; an assemblage, in this sense, is a veritable invention” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/1980, p. 406). Affects “circulate and are transformed within the assemblage” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/1980, p. 257). That is, a body’s capacity to act and be acted upon is modified, changed either to a greater or lesser degree of perfection (joy or sadness),
and the ontological status of anything is determined precisely by what it can do, its capacities to mod(e)ify and undergo mod(e)ification in and through assemblages. Because each mode suffers the actions on it by other modes, continual (re)invention is required if it is to persist. It “must seek new encounters to creatively compensate for the alterations or affections it suffers” (Bennett, 2010, p. 22).

If the ontological status of a body is determined by what it can do, and if this capacity to act is always modified by its assembling with other bodies, ontology is a matter of becoming rather than being—the former term indicating continual movement, flow, change, and modification and the latter term indicating a peculiar stasis. “Affects are becomings: [sometimes] they diminish our strength of action and decompose our relations (sadness), sometimes they make us stronger through augmenting our force, and making us enter into a faster and higher [capacity for acting] (joy)” (Deleuze & Parnet, 1977/2007, p. 60). Affect marks a body’s “belonging to a world of encounters or; a world’s belonging to a body of encounters but also, in non-belonging, through all those far sadder (de)compositions” (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010, p. 10). As such, Massumi (2002) described affect as a “transidividual, transductive contagion” (p. 121), “world-glue” (p. 217) that spreads socially to form an overall mood affording potential for change. And if affect theory portends anything, it is a body’s chance for change, “to an elsewhere and otherwise than it is, in any here and now” (Massumi, 2002, p. 5). Yet it does not follow that affective, ontological becomings always promise something better “as if affect were always already sutured into a progressive or liberatory politics. . . as if affect were somehow producing always better states of being” (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010, p. 10). Affects, as forces of encounters, both “impinge and extrude for worse and for better, but (most usually) in-between” (p. 2).
It may be said that the ethical position affect theory takes is one of hope: “the transformation of ethos through experiments in living” (Highmore, 2010, p. 135). Yet, “Spinoza did not believe in hope or even courage” (Deleuze, 1970/1988, p. 14). It is better to say that his is an ethics of affirmation. But this is not a ubiquitous affirmation of all passions and affects—Spinoza radically denounced the sad passions that reduce the power to act as the requisites for a tyrant-slave assemblage. The tyrant needs those removed from their capacity to act in order to rule, and those who are removed from their capacity to act need a tyrant to satisfy their misery (Deleuze, 1970/1988). Spinoza’s ethics beckons all to become vivants-voyants, to see beyond the illusion of consciousness and “all that separates us from life” (Deleuze, 1970/1988, p. 26). The question that stubbornly remains is how one can maximize one’s capacity to act (joy), where we “‘approach’ the point of conversion, the point of transmutation that . . . will make us worthy of action” (Deleuze, 1970/1988, p. 28). Nonetheless, such vision is hopeful—through experiments in living there is hope to move beyond the impotence that arises from the sad passions, a potential to approach the maximum capacity for life. This is in direct opposition to what Spinoza described as the “resentful man, for whom all happiness is an offense, and who makes wretchedness or impotence his only passion” (Deleuze, 1970/1988, p. 25), the man whose only thought is “how to keep from dying” (p. 26).

Affective extensions: Review of informing literature

Thus far, I attempted to provide a Spinozan-Deleuzian treatment of affect as the forces of encounters between bodies that manifest as moods, atmospheres, and feeling-tones, resulting in either a greater or lesser capacity to act, either an intensification or diminution of life (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010; Bennett, 2010; Clough, 2009). Rather than indicating a personal action per se, affect signals an impersonal and open-endedly social capacity for activation (Massumi, 2002).
Additionally, I attempted to demonstrate the inseparability of affect as a theoretical orientation and the affirmative ethics inherent to Spinoza’s (1677/1994) philosophy. Finally, I attempted to illustrate how affect theory necessarily involves a reconception of the body, moving away from definitions derived from form, function, need, utility, and/or subjectivity/objectivity toward modes of existence inherently undergoing processes of *becoming*—of (re)invention and mod(e)fication through various assemblages with other bodies (Bennett, 2010; Wise, 2005/2011; Massumi, 2002; Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011). Finally, I described affect as an ontological orientation that emphasizes what a body can *do* over what it *is*, which is continually emergent in the various flows of affective intensities moving transitively across a body’s surfaces (Massumi, 2002; Deleuze, 1970/1988).

The orientation embraced herein is, thus, decidedly aligned to Spinoza and Deleuze. As such, I made a distinction between affect and emotion—the latter being the sociolinguistic indexing of affect as an impersonal intensity passed from body to body, into cognitive categories that are, from that point onward, owned and recognized as personal (Massumi, 2002). However, other scholars may deem this distinction as less important or even problematic to their projects. For example, Cvetkovich (2012) intentionally blurred the distinctions between affect, emotion, and feeling, finding particular power in ambiguity as she explored depression as a public, political, cultural phenomenon characteristic of late capitalism. While Berlant (2010) also explored political depression, her approach was more strictly Spinozan-Deleuzian by examining affect as the *force* that makes it nearly impossible to break with the *desire* for “the good life” promised but never delivered by post WWII society. Both scholars contended with depression as an *impasse*—being stuck, unable to change—and both drew from rich, though very different, archives to illustrate the condition.
Cvetkovich (2012) began with a personal memoir tracking her experiences with depression in the ordinary and mundane routes of life. She then followed this memoir with a speculative essay to theorize the conditions of depression, and she found purchase in early Christian writings about *acedia*, a sluggish inertia associated with demonic possession. Rather than view this association as a liability, Cvetkovich (2012) found it useful to explain “forms of transference and affective connection” (p. 87) as well as to discern the affective forces of depression as a social, political contagion. Berlant (2010) drew upon an archive of literature to “track practices of self-interruption, self-suspension, and self-abeyance that indicate people’s struggles to change . . . the terms of value in which their life-making activity has been cast” (p. 97). Desire is never merely for a discrete object, but for all the promises and potentialities enveloped within an object. For Berlant (2011), desire for the good life was bound in a cluster of optimistic promises that become cruel when the object of desire actively impedes the aim of its initial attraction.

“Cruel optimism” is phrase Berlant (2011) coined to describe the affective forces, the magnetism of attraction, that caused people to persist, even to their own peril, in striving for promises that cannot be delivered. Berlant (2010) issued a small appeal, a paradoxical solution, to the impasse of political depression. She urged for the creation of “an impasse, a space of internal displacement . . . [that will] shatter the normal hierarchies, clarities, tyrannies, and confusions of compliance with autonomous individuality” (Berlant, 2010, pp. 116-177). Cvetkovich (2012) responded to Berlant’s call to create an impasse by experimenting with modes of agency conceived as lateral rather than vertical or hierarchical, a position that recognizes the necessity to escape the decomposition of life caused by continual incitements to sovereignty, rationality, intentionality, and willfulness. As Berlant (2011) remarked: “The
urgency is to reinvent, from the scene of survival, new idioms of the political, and of belonging itself, which requires what the baselines of survival should be in the near future, which is, the future we are making” (p. 262).

For Cvetkovitch (2012), impasse became a state of productive potential through creativity:

Defined in relation to blockages or impasse [(depression)], creativity can be thought as a form of movement, movement that maneuvers the mind inside or around an impasse, even if that movement sometimes seems backward or like a form of retreat. Creativity can describe forms of agency that take the form of literal movement and are thus more emotional or sensational or tactile.” (p. 21)

Joy and sadness, creativity and impasse, according to Cvetkovich’s (2012) account, are entwined and enhance each other. And even though “shifts in affective atmosphere are not equal to changing the world” (Berlant, 2010, p. 116), the capacity to experiment with new ways of living that are creatively reparative, “making it possible to get up in the morning” (Cvetkovich, 2012, p. 26), may be enough for now.

Berlant may be thought as the epitome of what Ahmed (2010b) called the feminist kill-joy—one who “expose[s] the bad feelings that get hidden, displaced, or negated under public signs of joy” (p. 39). Though Ahmed (2010a, b) focused her work on affect around a certain classification of feelings as happy, as opposed to depression or impasse, her insightful account amplified the contingency inherent to all desire and affect, and their movement to spread as a social contagion. She grounded her argument in what she called “the drama of contingency, how we are touched by what we are near” (Ahmed, 2010b, p. 30). Affect, for Ahmed (2010b), was
something that not only arises in relation to other bodies according to proximity, but something that can accumulate and stick to various bodies as they circulate socially.

    Bodies, human and nonhuman alike, become associated with particular affects through the social alignment of a shared affective orientation, and those who do not sustain that orientation are considered “affect aliens” (Ahmed, 2010b, p. 30, 37). Similar to Berlant (2011; 2010), Ahmed (2010a) conceptualized the desire for happiness as a “container for the diversity of such objects” that “cluster around the promise of happiness” (pp. 30-31), which becomes a “moral injunction, as a will to will” (p. 35) so bound in collective desire for its promise that it is seen to erase the contingency—the “hap”—at the root of the word “happiness” and that undermines any attempts to regulate desire. As she pointed out, “happiness means living with the contingency of this world, even when we aim to make happiness necessary” (Ahmed, 2010a, p. 31). Furthermore, the collective desire for a particular state is what enables, sustains, and intensifies its promise, necessarily requiring continual deferral, “what makes waiting for something both endurable and desirable—the longer you wait, the more you are promised in return” (Ahmed, 2010a, pp. 32-33).

    Ahmed’s (2010a) analysis attempted to highlight the contingency inherent in notions of affective contagion that were so useful to Berlant (2010; 2011) and Cvetkovitch (2012):

        I wonder whether the concept of affective contagion might underestimate the extent to which affects are contingent (involving the ‘hap’ of a happening): to be affected by another does not mean that an affect simply passes or ‘leaps’ from one body to another. The affect becomes an object only given the contingency of how we are affected. We might be affected differently by what gets passed around. (Ahmed, 2010a, p. 39)
For an affective mood or atmosphere to be passed body to body in the same shape and form assumes that bodies arrive to an encounter in a neutral state. For Ahmed (2010a) how a body arrives is never so simple and an affective atmosphere is never simply “‘out there’ before it gets ‘in’” (p. 40). Though we may feel an atmosphere it is always contingent on the angle of our arrival. Thus, for Ahmed (2010a), “to receive an impression is to make an impression” (p. 40), and affects, in this way, are performative.

The critical question for Ahmed (2010a; b), and her particular relevance beyond a question of happiness or its opposite, depression, is where, when, and who is the conversion point, that point of bringing the affective aliens back into alignment with the shared, social affective orientation. And the point of conversion is, in Ahmed’s (2010a; 2010b) account, almost always those of privilege, those aligned to molar regimes, who urge letting go melancholia, pain, and suffering as a past- rather than future-orientation. In short, it is an attempt to erase what is most affirming about affect aliens who refuse to let go of the past in the hope of getting along in the future, that “a concern with histories that hurt is not . . . a backward orientation: to move on, you must make this return . . . as an alternative model of the social good” (Ahmed, 2010a, p. 50). Ahmed (2010a; b), Berlant (2011; 2010), and Cvetkovich (2010) each, in their own way, illustrated the inherent complexities between emotion, affect, and desire, which are always contingent in relation to micro- and macro-level factors, those both of individual bodies’ propensities, histories, and conditions as well as those related to material and discursive practices of social and institutional bodies. Additionally, these authors alluded to the inherent difficulties of thinking agency in terms of rational, self-directed autonomy, as well as the problems of distinguishing between past, present, and future when contending for an affirmative, ethical critique of an affective mood, atmosphere, or feeling-tone.
To understand the ontogenesis, or emergence, of any social or cultural becoming on the plane of immanence, whether that becoming is named political depression, cruel optimism, or the promise of happiness, “requires returning . . . [to] the affective twilight zone . . . that bustling zone of indistinction” (Massumi, 2010, p. 66). In this zone of indistinction, time is thought in terms of duration, and bodies—any bodies—are thought as part-subjects-objects (Massumi, 2002). Duration, as alluded to in the previous section, pertains to the state of suspended animation, an “in-between of space and time” composed of “accumulated movements [that] bleed into one another and fold in upon [a] body” (Massumi, 2002, p. 57). Duration indicates the “impossible timing of the present in the passing of time . . . and affect as bodily capacity, or incipient act” (Clough, 2010, p. 213). It signals the affective event as that which is “quasi corporeal” moving between time-space in a “pure relationality of process . . . a measureless gap in and between bodies and things, an incorporeal interval of change . . . it is a time that does not pass, that only comes to pass” (Massumi, 2002, pp. 57-58).

The affective event, “for that very reason, is as future as it is past” (Massumi, 2002, p. 58). Cho (2007) exemplified the concept of duration as she explored transgenerational hauntings of the Korean diaspora. She conceived of transgenerational hauntings as a diasporic, machinic vision, a concept that distributes eyes, as an organ of perception, “across bodies and generations” constituting an “assemblage of the body memory,” where “witnessing is passed along to another as trauma’s legacy” (Cho, 2007, pp. 157-158). Cho (2007) invoked the Korean word “teum” that simultaneously means “crack,” “chance,” and “an unguarded moment” (p. 158) to illustrate that such witnessing of trauma is contingent, occurring in a crack of time as duration or suspended animation, and yet diametrically opposed to common conceptions of leisure as spare time—such moments are politically urgent. She concluded by positing that the haunting of trauma be given
expression to constitute additional assemblages with other diasporic ghosts and potentially form
“a kind of storytelling machine, an assemblage of seeing, speaking, and listening components”
that entwine “not just a personal narrative of the survivor but also an embodiment of the voices
that emerge from the teum” (Cho, 2007, pp. 165-166), the politically urgent crack in time, the
duration mixing past-present-future.

Taking a similar approach to Cho (2007), Kim (2007) focused on the tongue of the
Korean diaspora that has become “parched” (p. 34), displaced, a body “without words,” given up
for the “bare condition of survival” (p. 41) in an economic system of English. Kim (2007)
located her discussion within the context of international adoptions, and complicated the notion
of the American Dream, which was promoted by the Korean government as a way to shame
Korean women’s “poverty and il/legitimate pregnancy,” forcing any “regular channel of
communication . . . [to] spill through porous body lines, disjointed from [their] original sources,
[and passing] into different discrete bodies and matter” (p. 44). The parched tongue of the
Korean diaspora is a tongue that is “always accidentally configured, always in between” (Kim,
2007, p. 45). Kim (2007) and Cho (2007) illustrate how the body within affect theory shifts from
being conceived as a closed organism to an open assemblage. Clough (2007) remarked that this
shift is necessary given the “political, economic, and cultural transformations [that] pressure a
shift in capitalist accumulation to the domain of affect or preindividual bodily capacities—to life
itself” (pp. 20-21).

As such Hardt (1999) forwarded a concept of affective labor to describe the surface
contact between bodies central to the postmodernization of capitalism. This concept may be
witnessed in the service and entertainment sectors (e.g., Wissinger, 2012; 2009; Ducey, 2013),
but it also accounts for the professional “cool” that Gregg (2010) explored among information-
based, white collar, office workers and the proliferation of emoticons in email communications as the “default repository making up for email’s tonelessness” (p. 254). Affect theory offers an important view to the ways in which we live in relations that are both intimate and impersonal. Though there are many other endeavors that equally demonstrate the many necessary conceptual apparatuses making it possible to contend with affect in valuable ways, this selection is offered to illustrate the complex relation between emotion and affect, the complexities of time, and the inventive production of bodies within assemblages.

Figure 6: *Single Substance, Infinite Attributes* (Bassett, 2014). Gouache on paper.

**Next movement: Hazard an improvisation**

From the extensive movement throughout this chapter, from art in its most general sense to a discussion of music, and then onward to affect and conditions of feeling stuck in a looping
refrain, unable to change, one may question what the exact and precise object of this study is. As stated in the previous chapter, but worth repeating here, the work undertaken herein seeks to explore intensities of life with music as the primary vehicle. My intention is to experiment with modes of living that may move one from feelings of being stuck in a looping, enclosed refrain along a line of flight to diverse and affirmative becomings-music. Music is emphasized as a process unfolded, enfolded, and traversed across the physical and biological universe (Bogue, 2003a) that can be thought as a conceptual language to enact such movements in everyday life toward joy. To be clear, though a movement toward joy away from being stuck in a looping refrain is desirable, the emotive state of happiness is not necessarily the objective.

It is intensity, affect, and sensation in themselves that are sought, which requires an unhinging and deregulation of movement and which aligns this work more with art (a becoming-art) than the behavioral or social sciences. Yet, in attending primarily to affect this invariably routes the work into modes of inquiry that are nonetheless social and geared toward critique. Indeed, the studies reviewed within this chapter not only offered an important glimpse into how such critique is generative and how the social is inseparably tied to affect, they also indicated that new thoughts, feelings, and actions are always mixed in relation to so-called good and bad feelings. Critical to note, however, is the active involvement, the experimentation these authors took that posed a potential for alteration.

A world saturated with what Spinoza (1677/1994) might call sad passions—arising in relation to global war, counter terrorism, relentless securitization, neoliberal capitalism, and rampant social control—seems desperately in need of change. However, as fragile as change at the systemic level may be, it seems necessary to begin scratching at the surface of thought and action, pounding a small dint in the systemic wherever possible to open space for something,
anything, different to emerge. But to be clear, music is not conceived as a panacea any more than affect is automatically linked to better social conditions. Being stuck in a looping refrain of the same calls forth a line of flight. However, I am not concerned with getting beyond, around, or through a stuck place. Such an agenda would imply an assumption that one is not thoroughly affected by that space, even constituted by it. Rather, the goal is to make, produce, and create something with that space, to deform it, deterritorialize it, and in so doing, to modestly undo the constrictions of that space.

Though I resonate deeply with Cho’s and Kim’s (2005) description of transgenerational hauntings experienced by those whose lives and bodies are in continual flux due to war and/or adoption—haunted as I am by my own experience as an adoptee and time spent in group homes and foster care—I am also haunted by the questions that invariably arise whenever I talk about intensities of life. I am always asked: Whose intensities? Yours? White people’s? Massumi (2002) suggested the question is not “whose” intensities, but rather intensities “of what? Answer: the world’s. Altogether and openly” (p. 220). While this understanding helps me to think of positionality as what emerges from a world full of movements and affects, it only compounds the ethical dilemma. I must account for my positionality as both being and in potential becomings: a double onto-ethical quandary.

I cannot claim any resolution to these problematic issues, but I draw inspiration from Bennett (2010) who suggested, “the ethical aim [is] to distribute value more generously” (p. 13) to bodies “across a wider range of ontological types” (p. 9). That is, to think beyond the anthropocentric concept of human toward “extension into the posthuman . . . bringing to full expression . . . what the human shares with everything it is not: a bringing out of its inclusion in matter, its belonging in the . . . material world in which every being unfolds” (Massumi, 2002, p.
In contrast to anthropocentric, human-centered ontology—which itself does not have a stellar record of success in stretching human capacities to their limits—Bennett (2010) suggested another way: *to raise the status of the materiality of which we are composed*” (p. 12). Perhaps human capacities for thought, feeling, and action can be augmented, stretched, and intensified through encounters with nonhuman and nonorganic bodies, rather than just human or social ones.

This move toward a posthumanist ontology is commensurate with postsecular ethics, which Braidotti (2010a) described as “the ethical process of transforming negative into positive passions, introduce[ing] time and motion into the frozen enclosure of seething pain . . . creating the conditions for endurance and hence for a sustainable future” (p. 214). My belief that such augmentations are possible amounts to “a basic and rather humble act of faith in the possibility of endurance, as duration or continuity, which honors our obligation to the generations to come” (Braidotti, 2010a, p. 215). Additionally, it is to extend from the actual into the virtual future, to “be visionary, prophetic, and upbeat,” to participate in a “dreaming forward,” and to cultivate “a deep and careless generosity, the ethics of nonprofit at an ontological level” (Braidotti, 2010a, pp. 216-217).

To repeat, this study searches for ways to extend, augment, intensify, and increase the capacity of life in modes of joyful passions, and as Grosz (2008) suggested, music may indeed be one of the most immediate routes for such augmentation. To that end, my goal is to imagine a way of living musically, artistically, and joyfully. There are many procedural lines, or approaches, as Massumi (2002) suggested, that such experimentation can take, and the more the better. It is a question of the angle one takes when slipping into the affective middle. One may begin with the sociolinguistic, examining, for example, public and private programs, institutional regimes transducing affects across bodies. Equally, one may enter through the experiential, to
experiment with experience as McCormack (2013) phrased it, through direct personal or collective engagement with the world and various modes of existence that emerge from such encounters. This study primarily follows the latter.

Yet, regardless of the angle one takes to approach the affective middle, the implications of this theoretical orientation necessarily change how we view inquiry. “Attending to affect necessarily is performative. . . . [It] cannot be a matter of containment . . . interpretation, meaning, signification or representation” (Clough, 2009, p. 49). And most scholars attending to affect “do not sweat the construction of any elaborate step-by-step methodology much at all, but rather come to fret the presentation or the style of presentation, the style of being present, more than anything else” (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010, p. 14). It becomes a matter of how one might quicken to the rhythms, tempos, and intensities in order to notice their virtually imperceptible movements in ordinary life—one must quicken one’s self enough to actively feel that which is normally passed over and only felt in its effects. In short, one hazards an improvisation! One leaves the safety afforded by the refrain of conventional inquiry, its circumscribed territory that carries a home-value, and its premeant, preauthorized, and predetermined modes for sake of the not-yet-determined, difference, and perhaps even the new. For a detailed description of the style and angle of approach taken within this study, please see Appendix A.

A final speculative word: all affective inquiry is necessarily speculative in the philosophical sense (Massumi, 2002). As such, one does not simply speculate about affect or living musically, but explores the forces that compose such possibilities, compose the bodies involved, and continue across them through an ongoing transmission. Affective inquiry may be incompatible with social science; in that regard, it is likely more committed to philosophical inquiry. In particular, it must speculate about the normative ontological emergence of
becomings. In contrast to more conventional modes of research, affective inquiry emphasizes that “thought enables rather than represents being” (St. Pierre, 2013, p. 225). And one cannot know what thought is possible prior to the act. This means one must be willing to embrace knowing what one did not, becoming what one was not, and living as one did not, even if it seems silly or stupid. To be experimental, one must “affirm” even one’s “own stupidity” (Massumi, 2002, p. 8).

Figure 7: Hazard an Improvisation (Bassett, 2014). Gouache on paper.
As earlier demonstrated, my wife’s witticism—“talking about music is like dancing about architecture”—actually makes sense. It makes sense when considered through the house-territory system posited by Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994; 1980/2011) as the necessary processes whereby qualities of materials become expressive, become extracted, abstracted, and distanced from their so-called “original” functions and, within a limited and finite frame, become a composed compound of affects and percepts—a being of sensation—a work of art.

Throughout the following three chapters (i.e., chapters 4, 5, and 6) I consider how everyday practices, activities, and occurrences afford potentials for becoming-art, becoming-music, and becoming-intense. With each chapter (4, 5, and 6) that follows I relate these potentials to the Spinozan-Deleuzian theory of affect previously described as well as to a series of my own modest experiments performed in attempts to actualize potentials into forms of artful, musical, and expressive living in augmented, extended, and intensified modes of joyful passions. Each chapter explores a concept in relation to events that materialized in my everyday living. These events from my everyday life are quite sad and tend to route thought, feeling, and living toward clichéd or pathological modes of existing in relation to the concepts they involve, enclosing potentials for joy in a sad impotence. However, art and music are discussed alongside various theories and philosophies to think, feel, and live experimentally, artistically, and joyfully contrary to the cliché or pathological tropisms that conventionally encircle each concept. Thus,
each chapter is a modest onto-epistemological experiment in ethics that works to open space for
difference in how I think, feel, and live in the midst of everyday events that tend to be quite sad.

The ethics of each chapter consists in the work I perform to open these sad situations
toward joy—toward expanded and augmented modes of thinking, feeling, and living in the midst
of sad situations. Each event I discuss was selected due to its intensity, and its intensity was
contingent upon its immediate proximity to my body in terms of space and time, or what Ahmed
(2010b) called “the drama of contingency, how we are touched by what we are near” (p. 30). In
the three chapters that follow, this drama of contingency not only includes “what we are near”
but also what I hold dear, those people, places, and moments within which I invest a particular
affective value. As this work contends for an ethics of joy through modest onto-epistemological
experiments, music and art are discussed less as objects and more as modes of living that may
engender openings toward joy. Each event I discuss actually happened, although the sequence,
location, and persons involved in their happening are altered for the sake of providing a measure
of confidentiality, respect, and honor for those I care about. The remainder of this prelude
attempts to provide some greater detail related to each of the subsequent chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Chapter 4 attends to concepts of life and death in relation to events of several loved ones’
untimely passing. The impotence, sadness, and pain of loss and grieving are introduced in a
fictionalized conversation with a composite character named Philip. Multiple conversations
occurred with many diverse individuals in a variety of settings, and these were crafted into a
short composite sketch of a situation tending towards such intense sadness that Philip
contemplated ending his own life. Though this is offered as a composite, the actual events and
conversations it was crafted from lead me to question the affective forces of language and to
attempt a modest onto-epistemological experiment that interfered with the pattern of grief and
sadness Philip experienced that tended to verge on self harm—to shift and move our bodies from a state of woe to a state of whoa, as Philip phrased it. Thus, the everyday experience of conversation is explored and I highlight its extra-linguistic dimensions, it rhythmic, gestural, and affective dimensions that constitute a force of language. I explore this force of language, which is distinct from or exceeds its content but is nevertheless conjoined with it, in relation to animacies (Chen, 2012), animality (Massumi, 2012), and music (Langer, 1942/1957; Nietzsche, 1883/1969). Here, the question I contend with is both what does the force of language do—how does it animate, shape-shifting bodies along transversal lines between human and animal—and how can this force be experimented with to actualize a joyful, expansive interchange. I attempt to exploit the ambiguities along these lines where the purely semantic, which lies at the heart of conventional communication models, becomes affectively crossed so as to effectively issue potentials for a becoming-art of conversation. Ultimately, this chapter identifies the movement of speaking as its move salient aspect for contending for and ethics of joy in the midst of intense sorrow. The rhythmic and gestural aspects of talking bear an affective potential to shift bodies from feelings of impotence toward increased capacities to not only move on with life but to also live life in ways that ethically create conditions for its endurance and sustainability (Braidotti, 2010; 2013).

Chapter 5 explores the concept of transcendence as a sociocultural cliché that recurs as a refrain in common, everyday incitements toward heroism. During the writing of Chapter 4, many well-intentioned friends and love ones urged me to overcome, press through, and get beyond the trauma of loss, to muster a heroic strength to finish this dissertation, and to transcend feelings of anxiety in relation to this ethical work. However, one friend in particular suggested that I watch Ward’s (1998) film What Dreams May Come as well as explore his installation
artwork (2011) *Breath—The Fleeting Intensity of Life.* In this chapter the composite character Philip returns as the voice of this friend (as well as others) who encouraged I explore Ward’s works of art as well as engage in a modest experiment in breathing in a Bikram Yoga practice as a way to come to terms with my grief and overcome my anxieties. When watching the film and exploring the installation artwork, I began to notice the intense visuals that worked to repulse me from notions of transcendence and drew me instead into a space of pure potential (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011), where getting beyond my anxieties was supplanted with a desire to modestly experiment with what can be ethically and joyfully created in their midst. Thus, chapter 5 offers lessons from Ward’s artworks alongside my own modest experiment in breathing as part of a Bikram Yoga practice where the noisiness of my body, the spinning confusion of anxiety, and the uncertainty of living immanently was affirmed in a small space of breathability. This chapter explores questions of seeing too much, trauma, and survival, but in ways that engender an ethical affirmation of living immanently rather than living as a hero.

Chapter 6 is something of a culmination of ideas explored in the two preceding chapters. During the time I was writing about and grieving the untimely loss of a loved one and the ethical urgency of carving out small spaces of breathability, a meme began to circulate through social media websites. The meme simply read: “I Can’t Breath.” These were the last words of Eric Garner, one of many unarmed African American men unjustifiably killed by white police officers. The vulnerability of bodies, especially those of social minorities, was made palpable by this meme’s circulation. Whereas I previously contended with my own vulnerability or that of loved ones, this chapter wrestles with the precarity of Others, particularly a group of African American teenagers who regularly trespass through my next-door neighbor’s yard.
This seemly benign act of trespassing—something young people of multiple races are given to do without much provocation—gave rise to multiple racial and racist tensions and confrontations within our neighborhood. These events prompted me to question the concept of race and racism, and within this chapter I work for an ethical approach to living in my neighborhood, living neighborly in relation to Others. I explore various affective dimensions of these events, such as the conditions making trespasses possible, the feelings of paranoia and segregation that spread along the racial lines in my neighborhood, and the productive aspects of a schizophrenic and schizomorphic orientation to the geopolitical problem of race and racism. Ultimately, music offers a way to conceive of trespassing as an affirmative act but only when one is willing to lose space, authority, and rigid claims to sovereignty. This chapter resists the clichéd invocation of a unified humanity as a possible solution to these problems. It also resists any transcendent notion of justice, working instead for a people to come (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011). The ethical project in this chapter is grounded in the embrace of losing identities and belongings in rigid geopolitical situations for the sake of various becomings-minoritarian (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011) in deterritorialized, open spaces. Bringing the composite character of Philip back to express the voices of many friends and family members and leveraging music as a creative act of trespassing in relation to these events that occurred in my neighborhood does not resolve any questions of how to ameliorate racial and racist tensions; rather, the work in this chapter is to leave space open and loose so as to engender a different way of living in their midst. Thus, the modest onto-epistemological experiment I undertake is a productive re-imagining of race as a schizophrenic operation whereby something as simple as a fence lining a lawn can be broken down for migratory becomings.
Each of the chapters that follow (Chapters 4, 5, and 6) work as modest experiments in living. These experiments are onto-epistemological, attempting to think, feel, and live differently in relation to everyday events. Music and art operate as fuel for these experiments, leveraging space to open enclosed, impotent, and sad situations toward joy. Each chapter, in their own way, involves a way of living, *a life* (Deleuze, 2005) that is unfinished, untidy, and messy, becoming. This work of *a life* is necessarily unfinishable. Although I attempt to frame each chapter as individual experiments, these pieces ultimately bleed and spill over into each other and continue on. My desire for you as you engage these chapters is to continue this work, to expand the spaces in your own life where a life may be composed with joy.
CHAPTER 4

THE SUPERIORITY OF MUSIC: “MUSIC IS THE BEST”

*Information is not knowledge. Knowledge is not wisdom. Wisdom is not truth. Truth is not beauty. Beauty is not love. Love is not music. Music is the best.* –Girl from the Bus (Zappa, 1979).

My old friend, Philip, and I were sitting in a car downtown when he told me he was nearing the edge (of despair) and wanted to jump—suicide! He asked for a reason not to go over the edge, and I offered three: “tomatoes, sex, and music.” Speaking through his chuckles he responded, “what?” “Its as good a reason as any,” I said with a grin. “Look, man. You have to open yourself up to feel again. You’re stuck in your head.” And I proceeded to tell him about another conversation with a guy I barely knew:

“Two things to remember when we start,” Leigh shouted over the din of the crowd. One, forget everything you think you know about the music and two, just start with a feeling.” We were standing in the wings of a stage erected in a hotel conference center. This was by far the largest audience to hear me play, and Leigh’s words elaborated a previous statement, a response to two questions requiring answers before going on. Walking from the green room, through backstage, and into the wings, I rubbed my cold, wet palms against my jeans, and asked: “So, tell me exactly what you want me to do again—how do you want me to play on these songs? Like, what kind of vibe are we going for?” Leigh
only offered two words, hence the slight elaboration, but words that haunted me ever since: “Play ignorantly.”

I offered this as a parable for life to Philip: “If you want to make music out of your life, you have to take a cue from Leigh—stop thinking about it so much, take risks, play, and feel it.” Philip shrugged and played it off, although I knew he got the gist of what I was saying, but his response was solemn and illustrated the difficulty of doing anything artistic with life:

So, here’s my feeling. This is what I feel. Everyone is dying around me, and it’s fucking with me. Two summers ago Diane died, last summer Wesley died, and yesterday Matt’s son—you know, Austin; nine years old—died. Summer sucks. I can’t take it.

Tears welled in his eyes as his body crumpled in the passenger seat. I tightened my grip on the steering wheel, twisting my fists forward, looking left for traffic, hoping like hell to make a turn and avoid watching my friend melt down. No luck. Idling at the intersection and staring out the windscreen, I could not find the words. “I hear you. I’m sorry—I’m really sorry.” It is habit to apologize for the problems another experiences, although my apology was also for my stupid story. Philip lifted a limp arm and flicked on the radio. “Let’s go back to my house and get fucked up,” he said. And so we did.

It was a short but quiet drive, save for the radio. A reporter came on with information about another home invasion, a murder, a bunch of stolen credit card numbers. “Bad news on the radio,” I quipped; referencing an old cover we used to play when we were in a band. But levity was hard to come by. I flipped the stereo over to my iPod and set it to shuffle. The first song was Packard Goose, a hilarious track from Frank Zappa’s (1979) album Joe’s Garage: Acts I, II, III. Philip turned up the volume and sang along with Frank: “Fuck all them people / I don’t
need no excuse / For being what I am / Do you hear me, then?” I laughed out loud and smiled uncontrollably, “Yeah, man! I hear you!”

Philip didn’t smile; he meant it. He shouted it. I was concerned about him, but at least he was moving and animated. We listened to the entire 11 minutes and 34 seconds of the track, finishing most of it in his driveway. I made us some open-faced sandwiches while Philip put on an old vinyl of Brewster and Shipley (1970). “One toke over the line,” he shouted from the porch. His words bounced around the kitchen tile as the distinct smell of skunk wafted through the windows. Holding two beers under my left arm and a plate in each hand, I said: “Can you smell this? It’s so good. You have to use this dense rye bread, a little mayo, and a thick slice of heirloom—the uglier, the better—with some salt and pepper. Taste it. You’ll see what I mean.”

We sat on the porch in the twilight of a late summer evening glowing amongst a collection of empty bottles and lingering smoke. Amidst the growing noise of bullfrogs and cicadas and an intensifying light show of fireflies pulsating around us, Philip talked about losing friends, mothers, and children. I listened, nodding in affirmation.

That’s what Matt wanted: “keep talking about him so he doesn’t become a memory.” But how do you talk about a nine-year-old without remembering his life was too short. Fucking cancer!

Yeah, that’s what he told me too.

But, you know, talking about him makes me think about everybody else. You know, it’s the same thing they said at Wesley’s funeral too, but how do you talk about that—suicide! It’s just so stupid when you think about his total lust for life. And like, Diane—a mother to all of us—hit by a car!

I don’t know. Its messed up.
Shit! I just remembered another one—Chris’s heart attack! It doesn’t make sense, because no one had a bigger heart than Chris.

Fuck.

The exchange continued in this way for hours as we rifled through crates of records, boxes of cassette tapes, folders of CDs, and iTunes libraries, playing any song we could as quickly as it popped occurred to us. We listened to the music, the sounds of our voices, and all the foolishness of our talking. Magnetic tape, grooves etched into vinyl, lasers, and electronic signals sent us reeling into the night, traveling through time and space to long forgotten scenes, to times and places we never witnessed or that maybe never were, and to many yet-to-be destinations.

“This is what you need to write about in your dissertation,” Philip exclaimed:

I mean, this is an intensity of life—all this stuff. I mean, I don’t know anything about affect, except for what you share with me, but something’s happening here! Don’t you think? Like, how do we jump from song to song, talking about stuff that’s tragic, about losing hope in the world, and somehow end up laughing—while we’re crying? What is that? Like, how can things go from there to here and stuff? Like, from a state of woe to a state of whoa?!

I told Philip I would write about it, about what language, talking, and music can do, how their capacities to affect and be affected can be explored, and how we can joyfully experiment with these capacities—but only if he promised not to go over the edge on me. “Got it,” he cackled, “one toke over the line but not over the edge.”
The Force of Language

Language, conversation, talking, sounds, voices, and music: what do they do? Philip and I experienced a confluence of sorts between these distinct but interrelated things that evening on his porch. For us, on that occasion, they blended in a convalescent, akin to the affect of comfort one of Nietzsche’s (1980/2011) conceptual personae, Zarathustra, experienced in a conversation with the animals that populated his world. Zarathustra spoke of it thusly:

How sweet it is, that words and sounds of music exist: are words and music not rainbows and seeming bridges between things eternally separate? . . . Appearance lies most beautifully among the most alike; for the smallest gap is the most difficult to bridge. . . . But we forget that, when we hear music; how sweet it is, that we forget! . . . Speech is a beautiful foolery: with it man [sic] dances over all things. How sweet is all speech and all the falsehoods of music! With music does our love dance upon many-colored rainbows. (Nietzsche, 1883/1969, p. 234)

During moments of intense sorrow, it is far too easy for speech to become impotent, crumpled like Philip’s body in the passenger seat, unable to arise to the occasion, to do anything more than offer clichéd apologies: SADNESS (Spinoza, 1677/1994).

In such instances, the affective force, the heaviness of loss, crumples everything. Bodies fold in on themselves, wilt, and wither, seemingly enclosing potentials to bloom and blossom in joyful openings: words lie crumpled at the feet of crumpled friends. Yet, at the same time, talking can exercise a threshold of minimal movement, shifting what can be done in a situation. The potential for alteration, for opening, is always a remainder existing outside the crumpled masses. Sometimes the words of another are critical to open again, to feel, move, and become animated differentially to the crumpling weight of depression, even the brutally frank words of
Zappa coming through a car stereo. A threshold, in this sense, is not between an internal and external, subject and object, nor oppositional states of emotion; rather, it indicates a critical junction of complicity, co-participation, involution, reflux, and intermixture between these heterogeneities, regardless of the terms delimiting their location and/or identity in a thoroughly mixed bag. An outside potential is outside terms yet inside affectivity, and terminology requires a passage through a threshold of movement to enliven its otherwise terminal condition.

In other words, what is important about a chinwag is the wagging, the movement, the production of movement and sounds beyond any terminal content. The important thing about sound waves emanating from a car stereo is the capacity of frequencies to impact the nervous system, to shock a body into animation with a similar force, punch, or blow as a death pronouncement. Zappa (1979) said, “Fuck,” and, in a sense, that is all that can be, needs to be, said (or done). We knew what the word meant, but not what it can do: how it can potentially animate, move, and affect bodies in its expressiveness, giving a minimal degree to act, to live in the face of death. Play it again.

The threshold figures as a juncture between modes of capture and potential, between any number of virtual capacities to affect and be affected, to move and be move, to animate and be animated, and those affects, movements, and animations as owned and recognized personal states of being and emotion (Massumi, 2002). Potential lingers, remains in excess to capture, just like Philip’s words bouncing in the kitchen and smoke wafting through the windows: it is sensed, felt, heard, smelled, and inhaled first-, second-, third- . . . (n+1) hand, but never fully captured. Potency and volume may dissipate, but the potential for affective encounters remains, lingers, hangs in the air. An outside potential is beyond full capture of any somatic or psychic
capacity and it is precisely what cannot be captured—the affective remainder—that lends experience its intensity (Massumi, personal communication 7/12/14).

The important thing about tomatoes and sex is less a content serving biological, psychological, or physiological needs and ends, and more the qualities of the bodies and activities that make them worthwhile but stubbornly defy linguistic capture. Adding to Wittgenstein’s challenge to describe the smell of coffee, Gale (2014) asked: “What makes a note ‘blue’? What is it in a chord that delves to the bottom of your soul, fuels that drifting feeling of melancholy and makes your sadness retch out of you like a mouthful of sour wine” (p. 1)? In Gale’s (2014) estimation, scents, moods, tones, flavors, and textures exist in indeterminacy, as “in-between states, conditions, particular materialities” (p. 1). Writers are often adept at deftly casting such indeterminacies in various forms (e.g., narrative, poetry, lyrics, etc.), but such instances require an extra-linguistic element that affects grammatical and syntactical rules, often produces sufficient friction, and bends the rules to such an extent as to pass through a threshold thereby necessitating a new game, a genre specific to its mode.

Although Gale (2014) questioned the use of grammar and syntax, he stopped short of changing the game; instead, he urged that the task of linguistic capture through description of experience not be forsaken in spite of it persistently lying just out of reach. Further complicating the situation: if that which gives intensity is precisely that which evades capture, in language, emotion, and the senses, what can be said of affective experiences at all? Any expletive will do, and how often do these words arise as unconstrained expressions, as if one is possessed, of a momentary affective intensity—whether joyful or sad. Although description of intensive indeterminacies fails, Gale’s (2014) urgency is not without merit. Implicit in his discussion is a
question related to the *force* of language, its materialities and affective capacities that imbue its structure, which are particularly relevant when considering what language can do.

Following cognitive and anthropological linguistic traditions, Chen (2012) explored one mode of language’s affectivity. That is, she examined the grammatical and lexical rules of language as animated by and animating, in differential, hierarchical degrees, the bodies implicated by this linguistic game, which operate via the assignment of terms delimiting bodies as passive or active according to their relative proximity to a presumed hierarchical apex of human being. The term Chen (2012) borrowed from these traditions to denote this affective dimension of language is *animacy*, which refers to the “grammatical consequences” of a “set of notions characterized by family resemblances . . . described variously as a quality of agency, awareness, mobility, and liveness” (p. 2).

Speculatively derived from phenomenological processes whereby groups of similar type or kind are linguistically constructed within a hierarchy of animacy, where those most like the man-standard (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011) are ordered grammatically with greater levels of agency, mobility, awareness, and liveness and where those of difference are linguistically pinned to a point further down the presumed scale (Chen, 2012), the consequences become apparent: the construction of discourses hinging on the binary opposition of presence/absence in terms of animate/inanimate and sentient/insentient. In sum, a life/death binary is erected in relation to notions of consciousness and mobility where bodies associated with lesser capacities or states of mental and physical ability are not only deemed less-than-human but also further-from-life or closer-to-death, and it does not take much mental acuity to conjure the many atrocities “justified” by this way of thinking.
This affective element of language, animacy, brings material effects to bear, and the man-
standard, of which Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2011) wrote, referred to the prototypical “[able 
bodied-]adult-white-heterosexual-European-male-speaking in a standard language” (p. 105).

The hegemony of molar-standards inscribed in language, they asserted, is anathema to life:

“Language is not life; it gives life orders. Life does not speak; it listens and waits.” Waiting and 
listening, life is ordered, word-by-word, into hierarchical striations of differential de/animations,
capacities to affect and be affected. From the hierarchical vantage of linguistics, Chen (2012) 
took two terms used to describe processes whereby bodies become linguistically ordered along 
the scale in relation to the molar-standard: dehumanization and objectification. Though the rules 
of language are not set in stone, as they often undo themselves through ambivalences, leakages,
and slippages in relation to animacy that complicate locution, they more often than not fixate or 
become stony in their effects (Chen, 2012). Language orders life, sedimenting and regimenting 
bodies within a certain conceptual framework that acts to assign and delimit certain life 
capacities.

Philip and I relived all the dehumanizing pronouncements about our many loved ones as 
they neared an ultimate threshold where movement, animation, and vitality came under the 
threatening sign of voidance in the pronouncement of a final word—death. As if their bodies 
were passing from higher to lower forms of life on an inevitable decline toward total absence, we 
were told that Diane would be a “vegetable” if she survived at all. Wesley’s last words were a 
series of “animal” gestures and grunts. Chris’s arteries had become “stone.” And cancer and its 
treatments left Austin a tiny “shell” of a boy. Partially removed from their status as human and 
the agency that label presumes, these bodies became wards of clinical caretakers. They could 
not go home, act of their own volition, and, for a time, remained “human” only to the extent that
nonhuman chemicals and machines sustained a minimal level of “liveness.” But even the most basic notions of what it means to be “human” are too limiting for the lives we actually live as humans. Certainly we have never just been “human” but always already not-just-human!

In humanism, human bodies become objectified and dehumanized through animacy, often simultaneously. Consider the case of Terri Schiavo whose non-speaking body was objectified and became the subject of “contentious national, legal, and interfamilial debate for seven years, culminating in the court-ordered removal of her feeding tube in 2005, [and becoming] a politicized linguistic event as well as a politicized discussion about life and death” (Chen, 2012, p. 42). Language was at the heart of the matter, and at the heart of the language was a set of notions of what it means to be human (or not), questions of identity, of where life begins and ends, and the utter indiscernibility of clear and unambiguous distinctions between these matters. Different language bears a potential for different politics as well as different legal consequences: “severely disabled woman,” for example, retains a greater level of animacy than “vegetable” (Chen, 2012). Equally, a different concept of life, of what is considered bare life, affords potentials to produce different language with different affects as well as effects. Indeed, St. Pierre (2013) made this point plain: “thought enables rather than represents being” (p. 225).

Certainly the conditions under which human bodies are thoroughly fused with nonhuman and nonorganic bodies, including but not limited to various medical procedures (e.g., transplantations of nonhuman organs to human bodies; dialysis, respiratory, and feeding machines, among others), encourages new images of thought regarding concepts of life and death beyond the presence/absence of animation and sentience, affecting subsequent ontological divisions between so-called “higher” human life and those so-called “lower” modes of animal and vegetable.
What consequences would come of a shift in identity from brain to cell, from consciousness or sentience to non-conscious matters dispersed along a broader ontological continuum (Hayles, 1999; Bennett, 2010)? What consequences would be wrought from greater acknowledgement of the fusion of nonorganic bodies, of machines with human bodies variously augmenting human existence (Haraway, 1991; 1995)? Doubtless the human subject would scarcely recognize itself as such, becoming-cyborg, becoming-animal, and becoming-vegetable in various transmutations across ontological divides. Indeed, this would invoke a posthuman and even postconscious entity (Braidotti, 2010; 2013; Hayles, 1999), an assemblage of heterogeneities unbeholden to any filiation: *sui generis*—a singularity rather than a superior/inferior type or kind based upon sameness/difference along a presupposed continuum. Any such re-configuration involves, at minimum, refusing our conventional understanding of human being, but must this refusal necessarily be thought as a negation or can it be thought as positive, affirmative, and ethically joyful—as a relinquishing of the too limiting and often terminal ordering of life?

I will return to this last question toward the conclusion of this section; however, for the present let me stay with the question of the force of language. Linguistic structures often presume a hierarchy with human being at the apex, and that is not surprising considering how language itself is often considered one of the distinguishing traits of “higher” human evolution, along with art and tools. Yet even this most basic distinction between human and nonhuman is worthy of skepticism. Certainly nonhuman animals have language, if by that we understand language as a tool for communication; and certainly tools arise as correlates of language, if by that we understand communication to implicate specific things (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011). Like art that does “not wait for human beings to begin, but we may ask if art ever appears among
human beings, except under artificial and belated conditions” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 320), communication as language with its concomitant tools is not the exclusive prerogative of human being. Consider, for example, how a rabbit’s foot stamping out danger makes of the earth a tool for its communication. Is the cultural evolution of human languages less owing to biosemiotics than nonhuman animals?

Indeed, a clear and unambiguous distinction between human and nonhuman communication is difficult to determine. Human language shares a great deal with certain animal and insect modes of communication. If any distinction can be drawn, it perhaps lies in the over simplified, common notion of linguistic communication as a bipolar transmission of a syntactically coded content between a sender and receiver. There may or may not be syntax to certain animal and insect communication, as Massumi (2012) argued, but “there certainly is to the dance of the bees” (p. 42). The distinction between human and nonhuman communication, therefore, is neither a question of coding, although different codes exist, nor necessarily of syntax, but of a capacity to retransmit the communication to a third party. Of the communicational systems found in nature, human language appears most apt for third party, indirect relay, and with this capacity comes “the inevitability of noise and the accompanying distortion of message content,” of which “a fuller model than sender and receiver, with a coded message passing between them, would be a combination of the games of ‘telephone’ and musical chairs” (p. 43).

Language proper to humans, as opposed to bees, is a matter of hearsay. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2011), “the first determination of language is not the trope or metaphor but indirect discourse” (pp. 76-77, emphasis added). The word Massumi (2012) used to describe this distinctly human characteristic of language was gossip, which makes language
less a matter of personal expression and more a social assemblage of utterances or enunciations (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011). Writ large, indirect discourse constitutes the immanent social field fertile for language’s emergence, or a molecularized, “prehuman soup” of potential (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 64). Elaborating on this notion, Massumi (2012) called this domain of language’s emergence “sociability giganticus” (p. 55), as that which, following Blanchot (1989; 1993), belies individuated speech acts as proprietary to a “sovereign,” bourgeois subject by way of “the anonymous murmur” that is both the moving ground of language and its outside limit” (p. 48).

It is possible to understand the force of language both in terms of its grammatical consequences or animacy and in terms of gossip or indirect relay—two sides of the same coin—which is to say that language carries a reciprocal relation to itself and to the bodies it inscribes both in its effects and affects. The moving ground of the anonymous murmur, the infinitely sociable “soup” from which any individuated utterance arises, relies upon a conceptualization of language not as a bounded whole but as “a boundary region: a region of contact, a crossing point” (Massumi, 2012, p. 76) between what may be thought as language’s formal structure and “the extra-linguistic noise of gesture, body, animality, our perceptions and memories, our habits of attention and learned responses, our tropisms and acquired tendencies, our skills, hopes and desires” (p. 47). If language is not life but that which gives life orders, as Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2011) asserted, it is because “the organizing center of any communication . . . is not within the individual but in a collective outside” (Massumi, 2012, p. 47) ensemble of this extra-linguistic noise. The noise of gesture, desire, perceptions and memories, habits, tropisms, skills, tendencies, and hopes is not the disruptive, unstructuring negative or opposite of ordered language but the very ground from which individuated speech acts may arise as geological
reliefs, or like the contraction of otherwise stilled social currents into a cresting wave of expression (Massumi, 2012). Thus, the very act of speech, communication, and language is dependent upon these extra-linguistic matters for its emergence, and though human language is properly distinguished from nonhuman animal and insect communication by its capacities for infinite indirectness, it is thoroughly complicated by these noisy zones of indistinction it shares with nonhuman modes of communication.

Human language may be thought as a complex of animality crossing with formalized structures specific to human being, shaping the grammatical consequences of animacy; however, it is precisely what is not specifically human, its extra-linguistic noise, that initially constitutes its force that becomes extended through the noisy discourses shaped by animacy. Distinct from semantic content, the *theme* of any particular speech act is that which singularly marks its cresting or relief-ing amidst the noise. The theme of language marks its affectively performative dimensions, not its sign, which is extra-syntactic and extra-verbal. The accent, tone, rhythm, gesture, or facial expressions of the speech act constitute its force as pertains to content and meaning. It is not heard or read as much as felt in its force. Following Vološinov (1986), Massumi (2012) asserted that “there is only one word for language segregated from theme and reduced to its semantic content and formal structure: ‘dead’” (p. 51).

Language primarily transmits its theme rather than its formally structured semantic content: “One must be just informed enough to not confuse ‘Fire!’ with ‘Fore’” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 76)! What comes across is the rhythm, as “the most perceptually salient dimension of language,” derived from its phonetic particularities and materialized in statistical form; however, “phonemes disappear into their meaning,” as they are not heard to the exact degree they are understood (Massumi, 2012, p. 42). The rhythm of phonetic-frequency asserts
itself as “an experienced something-extra that conveys an emphasis, accent, tone or mood,”
which carries “the force of the phrase, above and beyond its structure and meaning” (Massumi,
2012, p. 42). Everyday conversation shares this particularity with music. Attempting to forward
a linguistic theory of music in relation to symbolism, Langer (1942/1957) nearly subverted her
own project insofar as musical expression exceeds conventional notions of semiotics and cannot
be brought into analogous symmetry without convoluting both domains.

What music gives us in relation to language, according to Langer (1942/1957), are
expressions of life’s rhythms, its crests and dissipations, contractions and dilations, and its
intensities as crescendos, diminuendos, accelerandos, and ritardandos: in short, “the life of
feeling” (p. 223). The life of feeling, she painstakingly emphasized, is not a representation or
reflection of any individualized knowledge of emotion, whether of a particular composer,
conductor, musician, or listener, but necessarily an abstracted, distanced, and impersonal feeling
that exceeds any capacity, regardless of how capricious, to externalize, internalize, evoke, or
interpret them as such. The multiplicity of moods carried in a score shift, morph, and intermix
with the velocity of the signs recorded to mark their movement (e.g., allegro, adagio, presto,
allegretto). The musician, like the composer and listener, may “work out” emotions with music;
however, that is not music’s primary or most positive function. Although impersonal, the
primary act of music is not the invocation of affects, as if beseeching a specific feeling; rather,
music’s dynamic and affective potential lies in taking something across its border region, where
rhythm is most critically and saliently at work (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011). Much like
talking, conversation, and language, music’s rhythm is its adventitious crossing of border regions
enacting a transmission between milieus of a something-extra to its written or verbalized
content-score.
By what chance is one suddenly struck by words and music? If we apply Massumi’s (2012) conception of language emerging as individuated crests amidst an impersonal and inexhaustible reservoir of utterances and enunciations—the anonymous murmur—to music, it is possible to understand the uncanny feeling of déjà vu experienced when encountering a new pop song about love or loss. Such songs carry echoes and resonations of each previous song from the anonymous murmur, the reservoir of previous utterances that acts as the condition of its potential emergence. Likewise, my habitual apologies extended to Philip in his moment of despair were spurred by the force of language, its capacity to shape itself in the moment while simultaneously inscribing a sorry-sender and unconsolable-receiver in the act of speaking. As Spinoza (1677/1994) emphasized: “It is not in the free power of the mind to either recollect a thing or forget it,” nor are actions under the full control of the mind; for “the madman, the chatterbox, the child, and a great many people of this kind believe they speak from a free decision of the mind, when really they cannot contain their impulse to speak” (p. 157-158). At the risk of over simplifying a complex situation, .it was a random shard, splintered from a fragmentation of life that stirred the murmur, bringing an apologetic crest to break upon unconsolable ears, washing them in the residues of all previous apologies, perhaps directed toward me or overheard in their direction toward another in times of grief but repeated without conscious thought.

Philip and I talked and exchanged coded content, but neither of us could say that we were speaking entirely of our own volition. When life fragments, splintering in all directions, we are more or less caught in the affective turbulence of its wake. As we sat on Philip’s porch that evening, indirect discourse crested violently. We repeated stories we heard about friends and loved ones without conscious thought. Like the music we listened to, they simply popped up with a velocity and force that could not but be spoken. One story spawned another, just as one
song drew another from our archives. We listened to the sound of the music and our voices with similar levels of attention—just enough to recognize the something-extra coming across their various border regions, just enough to catch their rhythms, and just enough to recognize the moment to nod in affirmation as each new sound rising from the archives shifted in orientation and direction enough to keep us moving.

Conversation has often been referred to as an art (Blyth, 2009; Burke, 1993/2007; Baker, 1907), but what is most artistic about conversation lies not in supposed equilateral give-and-take, call-and-response, between two parties as most communication models purport. Rather, it is in the rhythmic crossing of the semantic lines, where all manner of voices outside the two-way channel of polite conversation assert themselves. To be artistic in conversation, one must listen less for the content and more for the rhythm and be willing to ride its force and surf its various crests in messy, noisy, distorted indirectness. It is not unlike the work of inquiry, thinking, and writing, which requires a practice of “deliberate imprecision” (Law, 2004, p. 3), where the thinking, inquiring, and writing form themselves in the act of doing (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). It is far less important to fret over subjective or intersubjective meaning or content than to allow a thought, a question, and a word to form. After forming, one might examine its implications for bodies, its animacies; however, to begin from a place of caution severely inhibits movement.

As mentioned earlier, the important thing about a chinwag is the wagging, the movement, the production of movement and sounds beyond any terminal content. One will undoubtedly misspeak, telling a story that does not quite fit with the undercurrent rising to crests that necessitates apologies, but it quickly recedes if one is willing to not fixate or become stony in speech, if one is willing to back off and back down in assertions, allowing another wave to come.
One can experiment with the rhythmic crossing of border regions by inserting crests from other milieus into the mix, but the potential of generating interference rather than resonance is a constant danger. Sometimes a pattern of interference is necessary, especially when a friend talks of dying and death, when the mood, accent, and tone of speech verge on self-inflicted violence. When a friend asks for a reason not to go over the edge, it is important to listen and to offer something, even tomatoes, sex, and music.

Philip asked for a reason, and my three-word response was not the tool he needed to fight the sadness he experienced, but rather reminders of things he loved, that might themselves become tools for the fight. In and of themselves, words can lend very little to struggle, but they are no less important because of it. It is the extra-linguistic, affective elements of gesture, rhythm, accent, tone, and mode that language live and becomes potent for our struggles. Like music, words never reflect an object in transparent reference; rather, they are iridescent, shimmering with memories, desires, hopes, tendencies, and all manner of animality and animacy knotted in a web of indirectness. Music sounds the way moods feel, according to Langer (1942/1957), and its power is that it can be “true” to the life of feeling in a way that language cannot, which is to say that it does not portend any transparency of content but exploits its inherently ambivalent iridescence by traversing its border regions. Music lives by crossing its border regions, and language, too, can live when not reduced to its semantic content and formal structures (Massumi, 2012). It can produce movement.

The process of reduction, then, is the death of language, its arresting of potential movement. As Philip talked, I listened and nodded in affirmation. Our conversation generated movement. How useless would it be to fixate on the content of Philip’s speech, to arrest it or pin
it down into meaning that might arrest these movements, locking us into searing pain. Our movements, our wagging, signaled our becomings.

Listening to the sounds of bullfrogs and cicadas and watching the lightshow of fireflies, it is difficult not to be struck by an uncanny sense that they are talking to each other. Amidst the sights and sounds of amphibians and insects on the porch that night, our talking brought out the animal in both of us. Our mouths, teeth, and tongues flapped, clicked, and sputtered along, producing gestures more than meaning. Not unlike a dog licking its wounds or the wounds of another, our tongues gestured toward an antiseptic, healing, and consoling motif of becoming-animal. Our breath, laden with scents of alcohol and smoke, marked the vegetative comfort of becoming-plant with each sound we produced. And the more stoned we became, the more we skipped the parts of stories we did not like, becoming-music in our transversals across border regions, shimmering in the iridescence of more pleasant memories. For example, we talked about Wesley’s decade-long battle against heroine addiction as less a tragic, life depleting and diminishing struggle, and more as a marker of his unconstrained lust for a quick life of unbridled velocity. As we spun a record of one of his favorite songs—Iggy Pop’s and David Bowie’s (1977) *Lust For Life*—our memories of his arrest record, times in rehab, and betrayals of our trust during that period of addiction began to spin in new directions. He lived fast and hard, and his end seemed a fitting capstone for his lust for life. Playing John Lennon’s (1970) *Mother* helped us not only to say goodbye to Diane, who we talked about as “a mother to us all,” but also to forget the many instances when she overstepped her bounds and was overbearing or just plain nosy. Yet we remembered how she nurtured our artistic endeavors, taking us in and feeding us when we were poor musicians in a band, a kindness she also showed to Wesley. Never minding
how Chris died, we remembered his generosity, kindness, and his “big heart” as we listened to the Adele’s (2008) *Melt My Heart To Stone*.

We experienced something akin to Zarathustra when he talked with the animals of his world, which was itself a becoming-animal: a beautiful foolery in all the falsehoods of speech and music, making our love dance upon many-colored rainbows (Nietzsche, 1883/1969). To the question of what language, talking, and music can do, the answer is simply: move us, transmute us toward joyful becomings. Yet, such transmutation exceeds any agentic capacity of the living; it relies upon an outside ensemble of noise, an assemblage of noisy indirectness, as the conditions for its potential: moving crest-by-crest as we surf its waves, wagging across border regions. And when one listens to this wagging process, one cannot help but be struck by the uncanny feeling that one has not only already heard what is being said but that what has been heard before is also being said for the first time. To move from “a state of woe to a state of whoa,” as Philip put it, requires first of all movement, wagging, and one that involves an animality of which our chinwags are indissolubly linked.

**Zoe: Death in Life**

Not so simple, on the other hand, are the animacies produced by speaking. Earlier it was said that a threshold is not between an internal and external, subject and object, nor oppositional states of emotion, but that it indicates a critical junction of complicity, co-participation, involution, reflux, and intermixture between these heterogeneities, regardless of the terms delimiting their location and/or identity in a thoroughly mixed bag. I want to briefly speak to this statement in relation to the life/death binary erected and sustained through linguistic animacy by leveraging a specific conceptual tool—*zoe*. Braidotti (2010; 2013) forwarded *zoe* less as a word or signifier and more as a conceptual tool to break open the life/death binary, which she
related to a sociocultural fixation on *bios* as an over-determining concept regarding life. We have all become subjects of bios and its concomitant regimes of ordering of life (e.g., biopower, biocapitalism, biopolitics, and bioethics, among others).

Zoe is not the polar opposite of bios, but “the poor half of a couple that foregrounds *bios* defined as intelligent life” (Braidotti, 2010, p. 207). Bios is a personal individuation of zoe as this or that life signified by degrees of animation and sentience. Zoe, however, is an impersonal, relentlessly generative and affirmative life-force, a type of vitality unconcerned with the many lines of distinction drawn according to animation and sentience (Braidotti, 2010; 2013). Zoe has “nothing in common with the postmodern emphasis on the inorganic and the aesthetics of fake, pastiche, and camp simulation. It also moves beyond ‘high’ cyber studies, into post-cyber-materialism” (Braidotti, 2010, p. 203). Likewise, nothing could be further from Braidotti’s (2013) conceptualization of zoe than notions of transcendence and the divine; rather, zoe indicates the vitality of all matter constituting the cosmos and all that comes to inhabit it. And this vital matter, to which zoe refers, intersects with bios in living bodies and turns the human body in particular, the physical self, into a contested space and political arena whereby the mind-body dualism that “historically functioned as a shortcut through the complexities of this in-between contested zone” becomes untenable (p. 207).

Zoe is of the so-called “lower” orders of the molecular as opposed to the molar order of the man-standard (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011), of vegetable, animal, child, woman, etc. (Braidotti, 2010; 2013). As such, its intersection with bios in the body always supports a potential fragmentation and dislocation of the traditional humanist unity of the embodied subject as well as its shift from anthropocentrism and phallogocentrism (Braidotti, 2010; 2013). Human life is only half human (*bios*, as in biological intelligent life); the other half is animal (*zoe*, as in
zoological). Zoe marks the impersonal, inhuman life in all matter—vitality, life-force, unbeknownst to and destabilizing socially constructed borders—that “exuberantly exceeds bios and supremely ignores logos” (Braidotti, 2010, p. 208). Zoe is the inhuman side of human life that is intrinsic to being yet independent of the will, demands, and expectations of sovereign consciousness.

This zoe makes me tick and yet escapes the control of the supervision of the self. Zoe carries on relentlessly and gets cast out of the holy precinct of the “me” that demands control and fails to obtain it. It thus ends up being experienced as an alien other. Life is experienced as inhuman because it is all too human, obscene because it lives on mindlessly. (Braidotti, 2010, p. 208)

Zoe is the impersonal force of life that makes various bodily transmutations in becomings-cyborg, becomings-animal, and becomings-vegetable possible “through assemblages or webs of interconnections with all that lives” (Braidotti, 2010, p. 210) because it persists relentlessly and finds expression wherever it may, without regard for ontological divisions. Yet, zoe ultimately “leads to becoming-imperceptible” (p. 208)—death being just another spatiotemporal sequence or passage between thresholds of existential modes. From this perspective, “the subject is an autopoietic machine, fuelled by targeted perceptions, and it functions as the echoing chamber of zoe,” which expresses both a nonanthropocentric “love for Life as a cosmic force and the desire to depersonalize subjective life-and-death” (p. 210). In this view, the experience of living is “just one life, not my life,” and the “life in ‘me’ does not answer to my name: ‘I’ is just passing” (p. 210).

By emphasizing the impersonal in life as zoe, Braidotti (2013) posited an analogous reflection on death, which is to say death is not so much an absence but, rather, the event of zoe
passing on to other becomings at the molecular level. As she explained, “because humans are mortal, death, or the transience of life, is written at our core: it is the event that structures our time-lines and frames our time-zones, not as a limit, but as a porous threshold;” death as “a creative synthesis of flows, energies and perpetual becomings” (p. 131, emphasis added). For death to be conceived as creative, generative, and even affirmative, it must be thought in relation, not in opposition, to an impersonal life, though it signals both the literal and conceptual death of the individual subject. Death is “ever-present in our psychic and somatic landscapes,” and as such it is the “virtual potential that constructs everything we are” (pp. 131-132). Yet, to consider life and death as both impersonal and interrelated, death in this sense is the event that “has always already happened” (p. 132).

Awareness of the transitory nature of all that lives is the defining moment of existence, according to Braidotti (2013), that not only “structures our becoming-subjects, our capacity and powers of relation and the process of acquiring ethical awareness,” but that is also “written obliquely into the script of our temporality, not as a barrier, but as a condition of possibility” (p. 132). Death, in this sense, is always already behind us—in awareness—and with it fear, terror, and anguish of being extinguished is a past that haunts the present. Yet, this impersonal death is the “precondition of our existence, of the future,” which calls for the ethical work of “installing oneself in life as a transient, slightly wounded visitor” who lives to “recover from the shocking awareness that this game is over even before it started” (p. 132). This ethical work is that of “making friends with death” and drawing from that “friendship” ways for life’s endurance, continuity, and sustainability (p. 132). It is to live life suspended by its proximity to death, not in transcendence, but in the radical immanence of life itself, “here and now, for as long as we can and as much as we can take” (p. 132). This is not to say that life unfolds on the horizon of death,
nor to deny the many horrors of death and ways of dying that accompany historical and contemporary life or the necessities of grieving. Rather, it is “to re-work” a productive aspect of life and death so as to “assert the vital powers of healing and compassion” as an affirmative ethics, as a different way of dealing with pain and trauma by bringing out the “life beyond the ego-bound human” (Braidotti, 2013, p. 132-133).

Again, from Braidotti’s (2010; 2013) perspective, death is not the teleological destination of life; it is already behind us as an event that took place at the level of consciousness. Yet, death enfolds with human life’s unfolding on the non-conscious level of desire:

What we humans truly yearn for is to disappear by merging into this generative flow of becoming, the precondition for which is the loss, disappearance and disruption of the atomized, individual self. What we most truly desire is to surrender the self, preferably in the agony of ecstasy, thus choosing our own way of disappearing, our way of dying to and as our self. This can be described also as the moment of ascetic dissolution of the subject; the moment of its merging with the web of non-human forces that frame him/her, the cosmos as a whole. (p. 136)

In desire, death is in life, not only as an already past event at the level of consciousness but also in the non-conscious ontological expressions of a desire to live intensely: “the wish to die can consequently be seen as the counterpart and as another expression of the desire to live intensely” (p. 134). Braidotti’s (2010; 2013) conceptualization of zoe not only encompasses death but also displaces the boundaries between living and dying, where the question is not whether one may live or die, but rather how: an ethics in/of intensity.

Living intensely, ethically, and affirmatively in relation to death, according to Braidotti (2013), lies in paradox:
Self-styling one’s death is an act of affirmation because it means cultivating an approach, a “style” of life that progressively and continuously fixes the modalities and the stage for the final act, leaving nothing un-attended. Pursuing a sort of seduction into immortality, the ethical life is life as virtual suicide. Life as virtual suicide is life as constant creation. Life lived so as to break the cycles of inert repetitions that usher in banality. Lest we delude ourselves with narcissistic pretenses, we need to cultivate endurance, immortality within time, that is to say death in life” (Braidotti, 2013, p. 135).

The human desire that infuses death in life is, thus, a desire for becoming-imperceptible but to do so within the spatiotemporal coordinates, in a manner and style, of one’s own choosing. This becoming-imperceptible is not the antithesis of an intensely joyful life, lived in self-satisfaction—a nihilism—but, rather, the stretching of one’s very human existence toward an inhuman expanse of life itself, a cosmic, vital energy in all matter, beyond the confines of the ego. And this stretching is merely the performance of an already-happened in the daily struggle for survival where “all ‘I’ can hope for is to craft both my life and my death in a mode, at a speed and fashion which can sustain all the intensity ‘I’ is capable of” (pp. 135-136).

Death is merely a becoming-imperceptible, the disappearance of the subject into a generative flow of perpetual creation. Though it is the actualization of the virtual corpse we have always already been, it marks “a reversal of all that lives into the roar of the ‘chaosmic’ echoing chamber of becoming . . . the generative force of zoe, the great animal-machine of the universe, beyond personal individual death” (Braidotti, 2013, p.136). This recognition “makes us able to be worthy of all that happens to us: amor fati being the pragmatic acknowledgement . . . of successive waves of becoming, fueled by zoe as the ontological motor” (p. 136). Life goes on, as neither human nor divine but as relentlessly vital material that evacuates and becomes
evanescent in the moment of imperceptibility. Becoming-imperceptible is the ultimate
deterritorialization of a body that propels vital energy in transmutations across values into
affirmation as expressions of Life as potentials for becoming through its persistent positivity.

One is seduced into Life through a “break from the spectral economy of negativity” by
“making friends with impersonal death” (Braidotti, 2013, p. 137). This way of viewing death in
life is far removed from the notions of an “inanimate and indifferent state of matter, the entropic
state to which the body is supposed to ‘return;’ it rather spells desire as plenitude and over-
flowing, not as lack,” where death is the becoming-imperceptible of the subject, as “yet another
form of interconnectedness” with the ultimate outside, “the frontier of the incorporeal,” where
death “dissolves into ever-shifting processual changes, and thus disintegrates the ego, with its
capital of narcissism, paranoia and negativity” (p. 137). To remember those who have already
actualized their virtual becomings-imperceptible is an act of sustainability and endurance.
Remembrance brings with it a coherence of the selves that still live as such, embedding and
embodying different vital interrelations, expressions, acts, and interactions with others, even
those who are now imperceptible. Remembrance affords a modest measure of faith in the future,
enabling ethical living in the present. Most of all, remembering that the life one now lives “is
not marked by any master signifier and it most certainly does not bear your name” (p. 138),
engenders a modest capacity to forget what we have been taught far too often, that the pain and
burden of loss and grief are yours to bear alone; rather, we come to remember that it is shared,
crossing spatiotemporal borders that describe our bodies.

“Why Me?”: A Refrain that Deterritorializes Itself

The chinwag with Philip about life and death not only produced multiple becomings but
also a refrain. Listening to our stories, one may rightly ascertain the refrain though it was never
spoken as such. It was carried in the extra-linguistic matters of gesture, tone, accent, and mood that constituted the rhythmic something-extra of our talking. The refrain was, quite simply: “Why me?” This is doubtlessly a question that haunts, a trailing and lingering question of humanism. How difficult it is to escape these stuck, looping refrains! From the posthuman view of life and death I just offered, what answer can be given? Is answering the question really necessary? Or did the refrain deterritorialize itself in our non-human becomings?

I called Philip on the phone about a week after our initial conversation to check on him. He was still struggling, particularly with wrapping his head around the loss of a nine-year-old boy. Philip has two young children of his own, and the thought of potentially losing them was too much for him to bear. We talked for about an hour, about how there is no sufficient answer to the “why me” refrain—except that there is no reason at all—and about how his thought of suicide was strangely an expression of a desire to live intensely, about finding ways to remember and forget, eking out ways to live that generate endurance and sustainability while honoring those who have passed and those to come. He shared with me that he not only takes time to “really be there” for his kids but also takes every opportunity to hug and kiss them, for any opportunity to show how much he loves and cares for them.

I shared with him a couple of lines from one of Gibran’s (1923/1951) poems:

Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of Life’s longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you,

And though they are with you yet they belong not to you. (p. 17)

Philip offered a few lines from one of Sting’s songs, I’m So Happy I Can’t Stop Crying (1996):

I took a walk alone last night
I looked up at the stars
To try and find an answer in my life
I chose a star for me
I chose a star for him
I chose two stars for my kids and one star for my wife
Something made me smile
Something seemed to ease the pain
Something about the universe and how it's all connected

Exchanging lyrics and verses, borrowing words from others, we passed the hour slipping out from under the crumpling impotence of sadness by acknowledging the joy of interconnection, of an impersonal death in an impersonal life that stretches to the cosmos that not only makes one joyful to experience one’s individuated life but gives it something extra—an intensity.

Thresholds are everywhere, and sometimes we slip through them in a flash. We might notice the passage by a shift in the affective atmosphere, a lightening of tone. Yet, in passage one does not go from one state to another; rather, the passage marks a slippage, a bleed and intermixture. Philip and I shifted from sadness to something else, not a passive resignation but rather an active affirmation of living on a threshold where the joy of cosmic interconnection did not overshadow the sadness of loss but brought out the light within its darkness: a thoroughly mixed bag. If it were in our powers to do so, we would like to shut the door to sadness; however, we found ourselves residing at the threshold looking for a way to jump across to a promised purity of joy. Yet, we have no such power; the door cannot be shut. Just as our loved ones did not have any say in the manner and style of their deaths (aside from Wesley), which makes the loss that much more intense, we had only the threshold as an intermixture of sadness and joy.
It happens—death, sadness, joy, and interconnection happens, without much say from those involved. In talking, conversation, and music, the potential exists—beyond the capture of formalized content—to move in the in-between, to become attuned to the intermixture of joy and sadness, of life and death, and for the movement to generate potentials for a sustained and endurable life. In times of grief and mourning, we feed each other, tell stories, and listen to music—and sometimes we also get fucked up. These practices do things; they move us! They shift our habits of attention within the threshold to notice something coming rhythmically across their border regions. The rhythm shifts our bodies, adjusting them to the speed of the something-extra that comes across. Residing at the threshold, Philip and I recognized our own temporality and a rhythm producing movement, which was the most important thing—to keep moving!

In spite of all of Philip’s talking, all his transmission of information, it was impossible for me to know his pain. Likewise, any empathic knowledge of his pain would not engender wisdom in how to respond, much less help. Even if I possessed such wisdom, I could not presume to posses any “truth” related to the matter. Neither could any “truth” of the situation somehow turn its horrors to beauty. And the love I have for Philip simply does not resemble the potency of music. Music is far superior to knowledge, wisdom, beauty, and love, as Zappa’s (1979) girl from the bus said: “Music is the best.” Music is the rhythmic crossing of border regions that presents the potential for alteration and change, however subtle and modest. Perhaps Leigh’s words were not that inappropriate to share after all, if we want to ride the music—“forget what you think you know.” It is the best place to start if we want to attend to the “why me” refrain, which requires less an answer and more a complete displacement by non-human becomings.

All becomings transpire at the molecular level. Philip and I were two able-bodied-adult-white-European-men-speaking in a standard language, molar entities par excellence; however,
our intimate proximity to the many becomings-imperceptible of our loved ones produced an affective wake in their passing. Reeling in the wake of those losses, our molar bodies emitted molecular particles, bits of ourselves, identities with spatiotemporal borders, to join the particles emitted from our loved ones in their many passages from human to animal to vegetable to stone to imperceptible. Our becomings followed theirs. We imitated nothing: not animal, vegetable, stone, nor imperceptibility in music. Rather, we became animal, vegetable, stone, and music on a molecular level. It is not metaphor, but a becoming-molecular, becoming partially rent from our molar status in relation to the speeds of our movements so as to enable a momentary dislocation of the molar human functioning of organs to perform different, more expressive roles.

What I am careful to say, by not saying too much, is that we could not initiate our becomings any more than we imitated those bodies we became; rather, an event—death—was the precipitating locus, motor, and engine driving these shifts. Death drew out the inhuman within our bodies to join with the world in quite unusual ways, to express something not-just-human, and to be moved by indirect affective elements already at play in the cosmos. On the other side of the becomings, becoming becomes history: we resumed our molar forms, but differently. Pieces of our bodies went out, and upon leaving the scene where Philip and I became, we felt differently, thought differently, and moved differently. We did not change the circumstances that surrounded us, nor did we suddenly find ourselves with an absence of pain.

Our becomings generated affective shifts in mood and tone, making it slightly easier to move on with life. Anything at all can precipitate becomings, which for us was the event of death. This event stirred the murmur, causing crests to form as speech acts as well as our ontological shifts. These cannot be controlled, any more than the bodies they involve contain
them. The terms we use to describe or assign these moments are never transparent or exact. Language deceives us, but quite sweetly, because it is nothing less than iridescent, thoroughly enfolded with all the textures and colors of the great “prehuman soup” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 64) of potential, which is nothing less than its precondition.

Likewise, we could scarcely control or contain the impersonal life in us anymore than the personal, individual deaths we experienced. Zoe encompasses death as impersonal, and it is the incomprehensibility of a cosmic roar of energy, potential, and Life that presents an epistemological limit and an ontological threshold (Braidotti, 2013). The uncontainable excess of zoe as that which exceeds any individuated life or death is what lends the experience of living its intensity. Thus, potential always remains, as excess to modes of linguistic, psychic, and somatic capture. All we have are thresholds, critical junctures of complicity, intermixture, influx, and involution: passage, where passage is a bleed, producing a thoroughly mixed bag.

Philip and I could not deterritorialize the “why me” refrain, except through becoming-music, by foregoing content in favor of rhythm. Such deterritorialization is not consciously performed, except insofar as one must be willing to submit to the messy, distorted, noise of indirect discourse. That is to say, one must be willing and capable to sustain passages across border regions, to hang in rhythm and not get hung up on content. There is no reason “why,” only a rhythm to a life of feeling, which is full of crescendos, diminuendos, accelerandos, and ritardandos. To ride such rhythmic waves is to become-music, which is to become-imperceptible insofar as one begins to skip over, between, and across various motifs of a particular life, be they memories, tendencies, tropisms, habits, or what have you, thus forgetting oneself in passage. Lost in music, in molecular passages, one may (not so) simply keep moving, and though this does not change the complexities surrounding discourses and politics of death, shifts in the way
we think about it, and subsequently talk about it, undoubtedly changes the way we live in its midst.
Figure 8: *Music Lives* (Bassett, 2014). Gouache on paper.
Artists are like philosophers. *What little health they possess is often too fragile, not because of their illnesses or neuroses but because they have seen something in life that is too much for anyone, too much for themselves, and that has put on them the quiet mark of death. But this is also the source or breath that supports them through the illnesses of the lived (what Nietzsche called health).* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1991/1994, pp. 172-173)

If the previous chapter attended to the force of language and the many ways human bodies become otherwise along its cresting, rhythmic motions, it was also about a something-extra, an excess, to that which can be contained or captured in any individuated speech act or living body. In one sense, that something-extra figured as rhythm itself, as a crossing of border regions, the conditions of potential for their very emergence. And from this sense of rhythm as a something-extra, impersonal forces were highlighted as that which lends intensity to a personal experience precisely because of the impersonal exceeds full containment or capture in any individuality. In relation to language, the concepts of *animacy* (Chen, 2012) and *indirect discourse* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011) constitute its impersonal force. In relation to life itself, I used *zoe* (Braidotti, 2010; 2013) to refer to an impersonal force of life and vitality that not only encompasses death as a rhythmic passage into “a creative synthesis of flows, energies and perpetual becomings” (2013, p. 131) but also surpasses any individuated, personal life and death. Though I used different terms to examine this excess and its generative potentials for
alteration of the refrain so often repeated during times of grief—“why me?”—these terms all synergized around a Spinozan-Deleuzian concept of *affect*, as an impersonal and open-ended social capacity to move and be moved, to feel and be felt, to become and change in various modulations of these forces.

In the previous chapter I used an everyday conversation to explore a potential for becoming-music, becoming-art, and becoming-intense—a modest onto-epistemological experiment—which involved rending the molar or majoritarian status of human being and the rising-up of a molecular or minoritarian agent in animality, vegetality, and musicality to induce these becomings and alterations. The rhythm of the something-extra, the affective excess that catches one up in its flows and sweeps one away in becomings, “never lasts more than a flash,” according to Massumi (1987, p. xiv), “because the world rarely leaves room for uncommon intensity, being in large measure an entropic trashbin of outworn modes that refuse to die.”

In this chapter I examine *transcendence* as a concept that is particularly outworn and especially resistant to its displacement or death. I do this by engaging *What Dreams May Come* (1998), a film directed by Vincent Ward, which is discussed herein as a film of uncommon visual intensity. In relation to hue, saturation, and value, color works at an uncommon level of visual intensity and undermines both the rather pedestrian, mawkish dialogue and the recurring refrain of a hero’s passage to transcendence common in Hollywood narrative (Fleming, 2011).

The first half of this section describes the material constitution of the film in color through Ward’s creative process of motion painting (Devenport, 2011), which effectively subverted the classical, Homeric narrative of a hero’s journey toward transcendence (Fleming, 2011). Along the way, I probe questions related to the gaze, particularly the moments when *seeing too much* not only involves a dual operation of fantasy and trauma but also becomes a
generative *breath* or source for sustainability through life’s many illnesses and neuroses. The second half of this section looks at breath and breathing more intently, drawing on Ward’s (2011) installation artwork *Breath—The fleeting intensity of life*. Though Ward’s installation is discussed only briefly, giving way to my own modest experiments in breathing as they relate to a recurring refrain of anxiety that I regularly experience, this latter portion attempts to open, in similar ways to the previous chapter, a space to rethink life when we depart from the injunction to overcome its difficulties, to be a “hero,” to get over, beyond, and past troubles. Finally, I conclude this chapter by speculating on an affirmation of life, its traumas, and intensities, when one leaves behind the inherited, narrative traditions of transcendence, of a life *beyond*, and instead begins to see too much of life in a gaze detached from the self in lateral, transversal movements toward the materiality of an impersonal life of immanence. Instead of offering a prescriptive resolution to questions of what may come of a life in such moments, I simply offer a counter-injunction to the many provocations toward transcendence: Don’t be a hero, but carve out space for breathability, an in-between space that affirms the precariousness of a life in the balance and in the threshold.

**What Dreams May Come**

The viewer of Ward’s (1998) film, *What Dreams May Come*, witnesses the collision of two boats in two scenes, the opening and the closing of the film, but the story is as ancient as Western thought itself, and the scenes merely mark the beginnings of revised iterations of its looping, retelling as a refrain. This refrain is discussed as the structure of myth so aptly mapped by Campbell (1949/2008) as the hero’s journey. Just as the title of the film is a not-so-subtle citation of Shakespeare’s (1603/2012) *Hamlet*, wherein the infamously poetic lines read “For in that sleep of death what dreams may come, when we have shuffled off this mortal coil” (p. 127),
much of the film is organized around visuals that not-so-subtly refer to medieval and Romantic works of art, such as Bosch’s (1503-1504) *Garden of Earthly Delights*, Friedrich’s (c. 1830s) *Man and Woman Contemplating the Moon*, and Barlach’s expressionist prints of the early and mid 1800s. As the visuals organize around these reference points, the film’s script, musical score, camera angles, and editing frequently work to underscore Hollywood’s tendency to adhere closely to a romanticized, though thoroughly classical narrative motif of the hero’s journey.

The film begins with a shot from above, a bird’s eye view of a small wooden rowing boat enframing a sprawled body dressed in white. The body is immediately recognized as the protagonist of the story played by the late actor/comedian Robin Williams. Williams speaks through a voiceover: “When I was young, I met this beautiful girl by a lake.” With gentle guitar arpeggios infusing the scene with a reflective tone, a second boat, piloted by actor Annabella Sciorra who plays William’s counterpart in the film, careens into the bow of the first. Entering into frame from the bottom left and drifting toward top right, the eye is drawn to this second boat as a locus of action. Propelled by its scarlet sails, a moment is dramatized: instead of two ships passing in the night, the two bodies adrift in an unknown body of water intersect in a startling jolt, the force of which sets up the film’s subsequent story. At the film’s conclusion, this same scene is repeated; however, it is performed with a telling difference. Identical boats drift into frame, shot from the very same angle, yet the boats are absent of actors, and, instead of drifting on, they sink beneath the water’s surface after their collision. As the final scene unfolds, the camera reveals two young children sitting on a pier. They laugh and exchange sandwich halves as William’s voiceover is repeated: “When I was young, I met this beautiful girl by a lake.”

What happens in-between these two scenes in the course of the film’s 113 minutes that bring the scenes to enfold with one another as if the story line is sinking beneath the surface of
the visuals is another collision between two worlds, between the world of Hollywood narrative that insists upon the classical hero’s journey (Campbell, 1949/2008) as its almost uniform mode of representation and that of a post-classical sensibility characteristic of Ward’s filmmaking (Fleming, 2011), which generates an affective world that effectively subverts the story’s telling with its stream of intense visuals (Fleming, 2011). This affective world is not visible as such, though it is marked by the film’s many stunning scenes and is one the spectator enters not by choice but perhaps unwillingly by the torrential force of the film’s optic intensities. Though these visual intensities mark this affective world, their very presence in the film works to unsettle, disrupt, or demark (Deleuze, 1983/2013; 1985/2013) the flow of interrelated and mutually interpretable series of images, scenes, and narrative. The affective world is that which the viewer feels, responds to autonomically, an excess and remainder to the narrative’s (re)telling. It is the world into which the spectator is drawn, with all manner of memories, fantasies, and desires, so as to experience a new spectacle of thinking-feeling through the artistic medium. It is the world of becoming, where time and space are dislocated from their commonsense coordinates, rendering the distinctions separating the “real” world of the viewer and the “imaginary” world of the film indiscernible (Bogue, 2003a; b).

This affective world conflicts with the Hollywood tradition that constructs a world of classical narrative continuity of a mythic hero’s journey (Fleming, 2011). The hero’s journey (Campbell, 1949/2008) may rightfully be thought as the basic structure of myth, and as such it hardly warrants retelling here. Nonetheless, though many variations of this basic structure exist, its primary features may include: a call to action to which the hero (a figure of molar identity) responds by passing from the everyday, known world into an unknown, special world to fulfill an impossible quest to overcome all manner of impasse and obstacles and to achieve an ultimate
goal. During his journey (gender is not coincidental), the hero encounters unknown dangers, temptations, helpers, and mentors and undergoes a revelatory transformation, makes atonements, and ultimately re-emerges in the known, everyday world with new significance and vitality (Campbell, 1949/2008). This hero’s journey is difficult to disentangle from a collective, Western imagination that produces an impulse toward or desire for transcendence (Fleming, 2011). The very passage from an ordinary, known, everyday world into a special, unknown, and extraordinary world resonates with this impulse toward transcendence. Moreover, the hero’s passage through the unknown world, where he overcomes all manner of obstacles and trials, acts to redouble this tendency with each successive victory. In his return to the everyday world, these various iterations of a transcendent journey combine to confer the status of “hero.”

The screenplay of What Dreams May Come (1998) does not deviate from this form. Indeed, the film’s musical score was composed specifically to punctuate and emphasize each passage with a tone and mood lending an additional cohesive element to this narrative trope, which was necessary, according to Fleming (2011), precisely because the film’s visuals continually threatened to undermine its continuity. Yet a cursory glance suggests that the visuals equally play into the tropism of transcendence, with their emphasis on light, color, and an ambient glow.

As figure 9 below illustrates, the story line of What Dreams May Come sets out on a journey “towards the light” as it questions notions of transcendence both in terms of a life beyond death, beyond the material, everyday world, and in terms of whether there is a transcendent moment in film when light and color are pushed to their limits (Fleming, 2011). The various still images illustrate dramatic intensities of color, light, and darkness to emphasize unsubtle tropisms that associate vibrancy of light and color, of visibility itself, with joy,
happiness, and harmony, and darkness, or non-visibility, with confusion, grief, trauma, and disruptions to a meaningful, coherent life (Brinkema, 2013). As I will discuss later, the film works against these tropisms in particular moments where the vibrancy of light and color not only become the source of disruption but also render an affective repulsion in relation to the impulse toward transcendence.
Figure 9: A sample of images from *What Dreams May Come* (Ward, 1998) demonstrative of the Classical hero’s journey (Campbell, 1949/2008), seemingly reinforcing the many tropes associated with life and death, transcendence, as well as sadness and joy.
From these still images taken from *What Dreams May Come* (Ward, 1998), the story becomes clear. On the one hand, it is a story that explores questions of life and death, of what happens when we die. On the other hand, it is a story about undying love between life partners that acts as the impetus for the hero’s journey, his descent into the film’s version of hell, and his decision to remain there with his partner, a sacrifice that completes part of the journey of fulfilling his impossible quest. The story concludes with the two characters being “reborn,” as the film phrased it, into a new life as children that reignites another telling yet to unfold. Not only do these still images illustrate the mythic hero’s journey (cf., Campbell, 1949/2008) and its attendant impulse toward transcendence, they also reveal the associations of visibility and light with joy and darkness with trauma and sadness. The larger versions of images 10, 11, and 12 (below) show “hell” as dark and confusing, an association the film’s dialogue emphasized by explaining victims of suicide as those caught in a cycle of perpetual repetitions, a replay of the many dark moments precipitating their deaths. Conversely, images 6, 7, 8, 9, and 13 (also offered in larger version below) relate the vibrancy of color and light to the ecstasy and joy of its version of “heaven.”
Figure 10: Images 10, 11, and 12: Hell as darkness, confusion, and trauma.
Figure 11: Images 6, 7, and 8: Heaven as light, continuity, clarity.
The rather mawkish and pedestrian dialogue, as well as the musical score, pulls at the heartstrings of the spectator, evoking sentimentality not only for human companions but also for animals that one may have lost to death. The first companion Chris meets in his new paradise, his painted world, is his dog, which lends a comic element to an otherwise melancholy narrative. Whether melancholic or comic, these instances where an individual spectator’s memories,
experiences, and/or sentiments are aroused by the film’s narrative and images, drawing initial connections between the world of the viewer and that which is viewed on the screen, are moments of affection. Affection operates on the level of emotion, sentimentality, and the interconnections between the filmic experience and those of other times and spaces of a viewer. These moments of affection not only draw the viewer into the story as an active participant, but also mark the beginnings of the affects that arise once the qualities of these moments become detached from their commonsense space-time coordinates within the film’s narrative as well as from their associations with personal and individual bodies of viewers. When detached and autonomous, these qualities become affective and induce impersonal feelings resonating in the materiality of viewer and film with an uncommon intensity.

Images 6, 7, 8, and 9 (Figures 11 and 12, above) are examples of what Deleuze (1983/2013) classified as an affection-image, which he defined as “the close-up, and the close-up is the face” (p. 87). The affection-image, the close-up, deterritorializes the face, operating as a process of abstraction, removing the face from its commonsense spatiotemporal coordinates and normative functions that distinguish or characterize an individual person, manifest social roles, and facilitate communication (Bogue, 2003b). When abstracted from its spatiotemporal coordinates and personal markers, the face becomes expressive of impersonal affects, as qualities and/or powers (as shifts between distinct qualities), which are decontextualized from their determinate positions in the film’s narrative sequencing. In the close-up, the face becomes an immobile receptor plate for the character’s perceptions, the register whereby external movements in specific filmic situations are converted into intensive micro-movements within facial features (e.g., brows, pupils, lips, nostrils, etc.) (Deleuze, 1983/2013). Detached as they are, the affects expressed as qualities/powers in the close-up no longer pertain to viewer sentimentality and/or
emotion; rather, something impersonal that has not yet been experienced arises, endowed with a potential for new thoughts and feelings in relation to the images’ affective detachment from the story and personal coordinates within a viewer’s repository or archive of previous experience.

Although image number 6 (revisited in Figure 13 below) is a still shot, which effectively removes the very micro-movements the close-up accentuates, it nonetheless demonstrates a stilled moment of the affection-image. The camera lens focuses attention on the qualities of the face—the down-turned corners of the lips, the squinted eyes, the furrowed brow, and flared nostrils—abstracted and decontextualized from larger narrative content and sequence of images. The film’s sequences of action and reaction are momentarily suspended as the spectator’s gaze floats and drifts along the landscape of Williams’s face, encountering the affects of confusion, uncertainty, and bewilderment released by the close-up. The viewer’s face may respond in like manner to that captured in the film, resonating materially by squinting eyes and furrowing brow, perhaps in an attempt to make sense of the scene. However, the affection-image has shifted the viewer’s engagement from one of sentimentality to something quite different, an affective moment that must be experienced impersonally in virtual conjunction with the images and qualities framed in the screen. As the scene unfolds, the camera shifts to reveal a greater depth of field, and the character and spectator are offered a cursory glance at the moment’s connection to the larger narrative content.
Though image number 7 (figure 14 below) does not focus on the face, it equally demonstrates this operation of the affection-image. The close-up *facializes* (Deleuze, 1983/2013) the painted world; it converts the painted flower in Williams’s hand into a decontextualized, immobile surface upon which its micro-movements become expressive of qualities/powers or affects. In this instance, the viewer witnesses the affective qualities of color, light, and paint as it oozes and gushes in Chris’s grip. Far from a recognizable emotion or sentiment, the affect in this scene is one of a fluid, nonhuman potential, an unknown landscape of moving color, light, and texture in which the film’s characters and spectators interact in new and previously unimaginable ways. In the images numbered 8 and 9 (figure 14 below) the affection-image involves the imbrication of color, light, and space, intensifying the tactile qualities from example number 7. What is facialized in these scenes is this overlap of space, color, and light itself, which detaches the painted world as a space of varying color-light arrangements from any proper coordinates and metric relations.

The space of the painted world becomes one of infinite potential, or what Deleuze (1983/2013) called an “*any-space-whatever,*” which is a space detached from “its metric

Figure 13: Image 6: Affection-Image as close-up.
relations or the connections of its own parts, so that the linkages may be made in an infinite number of ways. It is a space of virtual conjunction, grasped as pure locus of the possible” (p. 109). It is not an abstract, universal space but one whereby the affection-image detaches its potentiality for the actualization of various actions from metrics of distance in terms of space and time. Thus, potentiality itself is the affect released in these scenes by way of facializing color-light-space, decontextualizing and deterritorializing such qualities/powers from their commonsense spatiotemporal coordinates (Bogue, 2003a; b). Unimaginable actions become possible, such as the oozing pigments of a painted flower, in this any-space-whatever.
Figure 14: Images 7, 8, and 9: Affection-images as *facilitation* and *any-space-whatever*. 
What the viewer witnesses in the scenes depicted by the images above numbered 8 and 9 is the fusion of color, light, shadow, and landscape within a flattened surface that largely removes perspectival depth. The flattening of these elements into a singular frame does not so much distort a sense of distance and its concomitant, ordered positioning of shadows, light, and color to determine distinct spaces in relation to one another as it works to completely remove the metric of distance all together. These images retain the heterogeneities of elements, of light, color, shadow, various plant, animal, and human bodies, as well as various objects in the scenes while simultaneously effacing any linearity of relations. The flattened surface intensifies potential connections without linearity and equally muddles and distorts the linear flow, continuity, and depth of narrative content. Through this process of decontextualization and deterritorialization in these affection-images, color, light, shadow, and landscape become an additional character in the film but one that does not neatly conform to the scripted narrative and its impulse toward transcendence.

In these affective moments, the viewer’s eye is forcibly bound to engage with color, light, shadow, and landscape as a tactile body, no longer merely a backdrop for the story’s sequences of action and reaction, but as a character that ambiguously flits in-between coherence and disruption of the narrative and its many tropisms. This character made of various shades, hues, and saturations of color, light, and their imbrication with a painted landscape generates uncommon visual sensations in the viewer’s body. When witnessing these scenes for the first time, it is easy to simply “read” them as symbolically reinforcing the narrative trope toward transcendence; however, a closer viewing and critical engagement reveals a material and affective repulsion from this tendency. On one hand, one witnesses the brightness of “heaven,” the darkness of “hell,” a metaphorical movement “toward the light” embedded in the narrative
and symbolically reinforced through the composition of elements in each frame. Such associations are readily available to the viewer, given the filmic content, its sociocultural tropisms, and the various emotions and sentiments it arouses.

Yet, on closer inspection, particularly with regard to the film’s many affection-images, the deployment of color and light in the painted landscape becomes an excess, a remainder, a character, quality/power, an affect that cannot be “read” as such but can be felt in the viewer’s body. In creating the film’s visual effects, the director developed a technique he called motion-painting (Devenport, 2011). The painted world was constructed by dressing actual, analog scenes, actors, and movements with props that exaggerated the visual sensation of color, which were then “digitally analyzed into their constituent visual components and re-mapped as ‘particle clouds’ to which motion information [was] attached” (Fleming, 2011, p.153). Additional visual information, such as analog footage shot at certain locations, computer-generated foliage, and 3D pigments and paint strokes, were then attached to the digitized maps, and these were then re-attached to the analog, actual scenes, which gave the visuals their uncommon intensity (cf., Fleming, 2011). The painted world sequences of What Dreams May Come (Ward, 1998) were created by attaching paint pigments and strokes to the pixels constituting the filmed footage, rendering the sequences an uncommon visual feature of the film, a character, quality, and affect in itself.

Of course computer-generated imagery is common in contemporary film, most often seamlessly infusing the digitized effects into the analog actuality of a scene. In the majority of contemporary films, the result is a believable image where one encounters a digital-analog hybrid that blurs their distinctions. What marks the visual effects in What Dreams May Come (Ward, 1998) as extraordinary amongst other contemporary films is the re-attachment of the
digital effects to the analog in a way that exploits their distinctions, that produces an unbelievably image, and that forsakes hybridization in favor of a new visual spectacle of uncommon intensity. It is the spectacle of the painted world sequences that imprints on the viewer an affect beyond that of the film’s story and the various emotions and sentiments it arouses. Equally, it was Ward’s process of motion-painting (Devenport, 2011) that generated the film’s affective repulsion from the impulse toward transcendence, which is further discussed below.

Beyond the complex techniques involved in digitally generating visual effects, motion-painting (Devenport, 2011) demonstrated a conceptual entanglement of what Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2011) distinguished as the virtual and the actual. In the painted world sequences, and in those stilled affection-images featured above, the pure potentiality of the virtual (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011) becomes materially manifest in the actuality of the film, which not only imprints the viewer with uncommon visual sensations but also renders the actuality of the scenes a virtual space of un-believability. This un-believability operates in the film to disrupt the narrative lines that were previously described as the undying love of a hero that served as the impetus for his impossible quest. At times, this un-believable painted world becomes more believable than the film’s narrative tropes; but its visual intensities and its virtual space of pure potentiality that emerges in its many affection-images has a material operation beyond the realm of the metaphorical. During the painted world sequences, the viewer of Ward’s (1998) *What Dreams May Come* witnesses a transversal movement of color and light from a visual representation to an affective intensity (Fleming, 2011).

The viewer witnesses the pushing of these constitutive elements of color, light, and space to their limits. Ward (1998) increased their visual spectacle through motion-painting
(Devenport, 2011), rendering the entirety of the visual field something more than representational. The visual field becomes more than a painted scene or unsubtle reference to Romantic or Medieval works of art with each increase in their intensity—to the increases of the colors’ saturation, hue, and value—often infusing scenes with an ambient glow or vivid vitality. The scenes work on an affective level that breaks narrative continuity, leaving an imprint of the virtual potentialities of the space upon the body of the viewer. When a viewer is caught up in these visual sensations, the spectacle is one where the whole of the film’s narrative decomposes visually into the constitutive material of the film, into its paint, pigment, and colors (Fleming, 2011).

The viewer is left less with a lasting impression of what the story was about and more with an intense visual sensation of the materiality of the film sequences itself. When witnessing this decomposition of the whole of the film’s narrative into paint, the body of the viewer is left floating, suspended in similar ways to those moments of the affection-image (Deleuze, 1983/2013). The narrative is thoroughly disrupted by the visual intensities of the film, thus necessitating musical cues to reconnect, re-establish, and re-arouse viewer sentimentality and narrative cohesion. Yet in these painted world sequences, as well as in the affection-images, the visual sensations that are actualized “cure us visually of the impulse toward transcendence. We end up in a sticky . . . painting—better than that, in its paint—instead of journeying on into the represented light” (Fleming, 2011, p. 155).

The visual curing of this impulse toward transcendence takes place at the level of affect. The sensation one encounters when viewing Ward’s (1998) *What Dreams May Come* is almost sickly sweet. The visuals are of such intensity that they become almost unbearable. By pushing the limits of color and light, Ward rendered a space that became almost syrupy, like the
Romantic and Medieval works of art that served as the film’s organizing visual references. This visual intensity becomes affectively repulsive in relation to their associated notions of transcendence. Yet because the film does not rely on these images as a backdrop for the narrative but rather develops their intensities to alternatively function to decompose such tropes into the material, constitutive paint of these film sequences, the impulse toward transcendence is equally materially cured in visual sensation (Fleming, 2011).

The gaze of the viewer is drawn to various iterations of fantasy and trauma during the film’s duration. The film is thoroughly awash with fantasmatic and traumatic imagery, and the viewer’s gaze often involves both simultaneously. Depictions of “hell,” “heaven,” loss, death, grieving, and being “reborn” focus viewer attention in varying ways to images that arouse memories of previous pain and grief as well as joyful moments of excitement and ecstasy. Yet in the painted world sequences and affection-images, the gaze involves fantasy and trauma simultaneously, or perhaps the gaze is swept into a traumatic fantasy. In the sickly sweet, syrupy visions of the painted world, the viewer sees too much vibrancy, light, and color, where visibility is no longer the hallmark of joy and clarity but becomes a traumatic experience in itself.

This experience of visual trauma is thoroughly imbricated with the images’ functioning to disrupt a clear, meaningful narrative, force a suspension of action-reaction sequences with readily identifiable associations to personal experience, and the release of affects that decompose the viewer along with these other elements into the materiality of the painted scenes themselves. Drawn into the painted scenes, the viewer’s body and associated sentiments and emotions become decomposed through the affective force of the visual intensities that sweeps them up, through the gaze, into something that does not resolve as does a particular narrative. One becomes suspended in the affection-images, as well as in the painted sequences, which convey
too much information, decontextualized and deterritorialized, into a singularity that exceeds the limitations of commonsense spatiotemporal coordinates. One witnesses the paint sticking to the body of the actor on screen as one experiences the sticky affects of seeing too much, of a traumatic fantasy induced by uncommon visual intensities. As mentioned previously, these affects are not necessarily the associated affections, sentiments, or emotions of confusion, melancholy, or comedic irony, but the pure potentiality of the virtual manifest in the materiality of the film’s painted imagery.

Yet, the traumatic-fantasmatic gaze of the viewer in these moments follows this transversal, lateral movement the film, which decomposes its story line into its materiality rather than returning these visual intensities to a master narrative. The viewer’s gaze moves transversally—it does not return to the narrative anymore than it reverses to the self; rather it turns toward the materiality of the painted world, the paint itself, the materiality itself. When leaving the viewing experience, after the film has run its course, the imprint left upon the viewer’s body is the sticky materiality of the film, its color, paint, and light intensities. One is not left with the melancholic narrative, the setup for the story’s retelling at the concluding scene, or the sense of fantasy and trauma the images depict; rather, one is left with the intensities that exceed these points along the film’s trajectory. In these scenes and sequences, one witnesses the becoming-paint of the narrative, its decomposition into the materiality of the film’s images; and in like turn the body of the viewer becomes a site of virtual potential, a scene of not-yet-determined potentials to become-otherwise. In both instances, that of the narrative’s becoming-paint and the viewing body’s becoming-potential, this operation takes place at the molecular level, in micro-moments where the film’s many painted sequences and affection-images rend the figures of narrative and determinate human being from their molar positioning by way of the
rising-up of a minoritarian agent with each increase in the visual’s intensities of color and light, which cease to function merely as a contextual backdrop and symbolic representation for the story line’s unfolding so as to become an excessive, subversive, and affective force instead.

The rejoining of these visual intensities into a master narrative of transcendence is the task given to the film’s musical score and scripted dialogue; however, the visuals, when taken on their own merit, work in a contrary manner. In relation to how the film’s visual intensities undermine an impulse towards transcendence, one leaves the viewing experience with an answer to the questions the film explores: whether there is transcendence in terms of a life beyond the material of which it is composed and whether there is a transcendent moment in film when color and light are pushed to their extremes. The answer is that instead of looking beyond the materiality of which life is composed toward transcendence, the very act of pushing color and light to an intense limit, as Ward’s experimental practice of motion-painting (Devenport, 2011) demonstrated, returns one to the materiality of its very composition. Too much intensity, too much information rendered visible by the additive process of motion-painting (Devenport, 2011), is not only fantasmatic but also traumatic; and instead of arriving at a transcendent moment, whether in the filmic experience or in relation to what happens when we die, the answer offered by What Dreams May Come (Ward, 1998) is that we simply return to the materiality of substances that compose these bodies, yet in a way that detaches from the personal and presses instead toward an impersonal space of virtual potential. And it is the visual excess, generated by the experimental process of motion-painting, the very intensities that emerged from that process that resists neat conformity to the screenplay and narrative acting as its own contrary character and affect in the film’s unfolding, that works to bring this repulsion to or cure of the impulse towards transcendence.
If we follow this movement of the film’s visual intensities that work to dispose this outworn mode of thought—transcendence—by detaching our gaze from the self to an impersonal, excessive intensity, to a material constitution of an impersonal life, the only “beyond” one experiences is that of moving from the personal to the impersonal, from representation to affective intensity, from being to becoming. In this instance the becoming-paint of the narrative parallels the becoming-potential of viewing bodies. One is drawn in these propitious moments of uncommon intensity, in a flash, into a molecular becoming, yet one that remains not-yet-determined. The narrative would instruct one to be a hero, to overcome, to press through various trials and impasses so as to transcend the material arrangements of circumstance constitutive of our lives. But because this trope is suspended and subverted, a molecular, transversal movement catches the viewer into micro and fleetingly temporal moments that suspend the various individual narratives of one’s life and opens to an affective space, where the materiality of one’s existence becomes living and breathing intensities of a not-yet-determined potential to dream one’s life into alternative and otherwise configurations. And, in a sense, this is the invitation the film offers to its viewers: to dream with all uncensored reverie about what may become of life when the mortal coil is not thrown off but intensified at the level of its material composition.

Seeing too much is traumatic, and seeing too much is what constitutes the visual intensities in this film. Yet when seeing too much involves the materiality of our constitution, it also bears the potential to become a source of sustainability through its many moments of trauma. Though dreams and reveries of what may become of life within a space of pure potentiality certainly involves fantasy and might be nothing more than fantasy, it is nevertheless necessary to open to a space where one’s positions within various sociocultural narratives and
tropisms can be reimagined, rethought, and potentially reconfigured. Because the becoming of the viewing body was described as that of a not-yet-determined potential induced by the flattened space of the affection-image and the many painted sequences of the film, this opens such reconfigurations to virtually infinite connections across the divides of social strata. Yet herein lies the real work of ethically imagining the potentialities of life: one must refrain from the expectation of a grand rupture or shift in master narratives and look, instead, at the micro-level for spaces to expand, augment, and increase one’s capacities to think and feel in the midst of stories that refuse to die. What the film demonstrated was that narratives persist; however, on the micro-level they also decompose, become OTHERWISE.

If one is looking for the grand ruptures, one potentially misses the micro-decompositions and becomings-otherwise that compound a life’s capacities to think, feel, and act in ways that are joyfully errant of a master narrative. The film’s beginning and concluding scene repeated, setting up the narrative’s (re)telling; however, in-between these scenes, in the midst of the film’s affective moments, one experiences a thinking-feeling that involves a suspension of what is known or knowable, of what immediately connects to a personal archive of previous experiences. One thinks-feels this suspension as one is imprinted with a sensation that is fantasmatic and traumatic but that does not end there—it presses on toward a joyful and ethical potential of reimagining a life in the midst of its fantasies and traumas. It is in the middle that the film’s narrative decomposes into its materiality, and it is in the middle that the film works to assert its intensities to draw a viewing body into a space of pure potential. Moreover, it is to the middle that the film returns a viewer, to its material constitution and not its beginnings, endings, tellings, and retellings.
Rather than look for the grand master narrative, it is wise to launch into the middle of things where tropes of transcendence are undone by the intensities of life’s materiality, thus affording a breath—a scene of pure potentiality, of the not-yet-determined where one must think and feel anew—for sustaining our lives in the midst of difficulty. Yet such intensities rely precisely on seeing too much, which is doubtlessly traumatic. One would be wise to not imagine a passage through life without moments of these sticky affects, of the suspension of logical action and reaction, of uncertainty and disjuncture of readily accessible meanings, and of moments of becoming stuck in such a situation. What Ward’s (1998) film offered is simply a momentary breath for sustaining one through such moments by returning to an intensity of materiality and affording a visual glimpse at virtually infinite potentials for becoming-otherwise. To live in such a way as to imagine the virtual potentialities of becoming-otherwise, one necessarily capsizes like the boats that sink beneath the water in the concluding scene, becoming immersed in the materiality of one’s composition and the virtual conjunctions with an infinite range of other bodies. One must sink into the middle of things and work on a micro scale with modest experiments to exploit such moments for a joyful and ethical life.

**An Experiment in Breathing**

In 2011, Vincent Ward, the filmmaker of *What Dreams May Come* (1998), exhibited an installation artwork at the Govett-Brewster gallery in his native New Zealand. The installation consisted of various moving and photographic images taken from his many films, which were often reconfigured, recast, and recreated in other settings and with other performers to capture a distilled moment of intensity (Ward, 2011; Devenport, 2011; Nowra, 2011). The motivation behind the exhibition was to provoke a “primal consideration” of “birth, the struggle to stay alive, to even just breathe, dying, existential terror, fear, and awe” (Nowra, 2011, p. 32) as
fundamental intensities of life that often surpass capacities to make sense, that defy rational explanation, and that bring a non-conscious, affective, immediacy of the experience of living to the fore. Writing about his exhibition, Ward (2011) described an experience of early childhood when he nearly drowned in a river, his resignation to death, and the terror of breathing water instead of air. This experience lent much to the exhibition in terms of its content, becoming the criteria for the selected images and the intention behind its title—*Breath: The Fleeting Intensity of Life*.

In many ways, this exhibition may be thought as Ward’s own modest experiment in the midst of stories that persist toward the grand, toward heroism, and triumph by focusing on the micro level of breathing. Instead of working in an additive manner as he did with motion-painting in *What Dreams May Come* (1998), here the experiment was to strip down, subtract out, and narrow attention upon a very specific aspect of the material composition of bodies that the film discussed in the previous subsection pressed viewers toward. His experiment was to provoke non-conscious and affective moments of intensity through repetitive gestures that work as visual motifs of struggle and trauma. These motifs accentuate the contraction of lungs, the terror of asphyxiation, and the trauma of suffocation while also forcing spectators’ attention to their own lungs’ dilation with life-sustaining breath in ways that imbue the experience with an intense joy or, at least, relief that one is indeed breathing. As the figure below illustrates, the visual motifs of struggle and trauma that are indissoluble from the experience of living not only reference images in his film but also accentuate the qualities of vulnerability and fragility that necessarily accompany such trauma and struggle.

The images on the outside edges of figure 15 below were taken from a series included in Ward’s (2011) exhibition titled *Born in a Caul*. The images consist of a photograph, pigment
inks, and archival paper. The reference to a caul is most readily apparent in the first image to the far left, as the body holds a somewhat fetal position while the water and sheer material surrounding the body are suggestive of the safety of amniotic fluid. The image to the far right features a contrary situation suggestive of struggle to reach the surface, to breathe, and to emerge from the site that has shifted from safety to danger. Between these two is a close-up, cropped image from *What Dreams May Come* (Ward, 1998), where the protagonist is drawn into a body of water on his quest to locate and retrieve his recently deceased wife. In his discussion of these images, Nowra (2011) concluded that the sense they impart to a viewer is that of a precarious threshold between life and death, between being born and remaining trapped in an increasingly hostile milieu after a period of gestation. In his account, the exhibition, and these images in particular, work to emphasize a necessity for continual movement as circumstances change and potentially become hostile toward life, as if one is being born anew in each passage, actualizing shifts in one’s capacities to live. From the middle image taken from *What Dreams May Come*, it is possible to speculate that the immersion is into a hostile milieu, given the film’s narrative content and the inverted position of the character in contrast to those of the exhibition’s images.
Regardless of the bodies’ positions and speculative meanings or messages, the three images are illustrative of recurring motifs throughout Ward’s artistic body of work, which presses viewing audiences to consider the materiality of life, its fragility, its autonomic processes of respiration, and its many intensities that often straddle a threshold between life and death. The outer images that are suggestive of safety and/or struggle for emergence emphasize this precarious relation between life and death, and how this relation is felt in breathing. The exhibition was intended to accentuate non-conscious and affective intensities of life, of its struggles and traumas, through this autonomic and non-conscious act of breathing. And in these images, one is struck with intense sensations and affects of a precarious life, one in the balance, in the threshold between life and death. In the image to the far right of the figure above, the
body thrashes violently, and one cannot help but to gasp for breath in the affective immediacy of its viewing. The bodies portrayed in the two outer images from Ward’s (2011) exhibition were stripped of clothing, accentuating their vulnerability and fragility, inducing a sense not only of suffocation and asphyxiation but also of clenching breath in the midst of struggle and trauma.

These images and their sense of death and life being but a single breath away resonate with my own recurring refrain of anxiety that I have experienced frequently since adolescence and that intensified during moments of writing and thinking my way through this dissertation. When engaging the previously discussed film and the images from Ward’s (2011) installation artwork, I began to reconsider my recurring refrain of anxiety that induces sensations of suffocation and asphyxiation, that intensifies feelings of vulnerability and fragility, that leaves my body struggling to breathe as if suddenly immersed in a pool of hostility and desperately needing to reach the surface. Rather than resign myself to the many tropes offered by well-intentioned loved ones, friends, and professional therapists to push through, overcome, and summon some kind of heroic strength to reach a space beyond these traumatic moments, I began to experiment with the lessons offered by Ward’s (1998) film as well as his installation (2011) by simply turning my attention toward the materiality of my body, its breathing, and the intensities that bear a potential for modest experimentation and micro-alterations. In other words, my own experiment emerged from what I witnessed in Ward’s, a modest experiment related to a question of what may come of a life when we depart from the inherited impulse to transcend circumstances that render our bodies vulnerable and attempt to reside in the midst of those circumstance to locate micro-level instances ready for exploitation toward an ethically joyful sustenance of life. Phrased yet another way, I wanted to see what could be created in the midst of, not beyond, the trauma of anxiety.
My modest experiment took the form of a Bikram Yoga practice. My dear friend, Philip, credited this practice with relieving some of his own pressures and stressors and suggested it as an experiment in living that may actualize some joyful differences in how I contend with anxiety. As he said, “It has really helped me reach another level of consciousness—like, a whole different plane of clarity in my thinking.” Yet, he also warned that Bikram Yoga is a unique practice that takes place in a room heated to approximately 105 degrees Fahrenheit and that the most important aspect is breathing:

It’s hot, so wear something you don’t mind sweating in. And as the instructors always tell me, “it’s not yoga if you’re not breathing, no matter how well you hold the poses”—and it’s breathing through your nose not your mouth!

Not given to athleticism and underestimating how hot the room actually becomes with approximately 20 bodies in a contained, heated space, I arrived to my first session wearing jogging pants, a t-shirt, and a ball cap. The instructor advised me to strip down, as many of the others present were wearing little more than their underwear. Modesty prevented me from doing so, and I suffered through 90 minutes of drowning perspiration, clinging clothes, and dizzy spells, where controlled, nasal breathing was completely forsaken for gap-mouthed and wide-eyed, tongue-dragging gasping.

Red-faced and flushed from my initial encounter, I returned for the next session better prepared. And over the course of several weeks of attending sessions on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, I eventually went shirtless, in spite of fearing my classmates’ seeing too much. Not only was my lack of a toned and muscular midsection a source of anxiety, but also the scars my body bears along its ribs where a tumor was once removed and along its back where I was once struck by a car. Each scar, as well as my atrophied muscles, bears witness to moments of
personal trauma—even the trauma of being wedded to a sedentary life behind a computer screen—that intensified feelings of vulnerability when exposed to my classmates’ gaze. Though they may or may not have looked, I felt a compulsion to explain: “This scar is from where I was hit by a car; this one is from a pretty awful surgery.” The very potential of seeing too much of me induced sensations from those previous traumas: of having my clothes cut from my body by paramedics as I lay sprawled and unable to move in a busy intersection, and of lying in a hospital bed for weeks being poked and prodded in most undignified ways leading up to and following my surgery.

Our bodies are nothing more than a collection of memories, desires, and experiences (Manning, 2013; Massumi, 2013) that manifest as scars, lines, colors, shapes and all manner of anomalous features that territorialize this body as this collection, this clustering, this assemblage of intimate and sometimes painful, sometimes joyful, events. My body is noisy, a cacophony of events echoing in a fleshy assemblage. The noise of my body, the coil of life events shown on its surface, produced intense dis-ease when exposed in the yoga studio. To be amongst what, by comparison, I considered extraordinarily beautiful bodies, I felt something I worked hard to avoid for most of my life—exposure, vulnerability, and self-consciousness. Stretching bare-chested in the back row of this Bikram Yoga studio reactivated the feeling of lying sprawled and bare in a busy intersection. I felt my breath intensify—shortening, quickening, stuttering—as my skin flushed with blood. The heat of the room, the slight circulation of air through its ventilation system, and the light streaking across our bodies from the windows, all become increasingly intense sensations upon the exposed surface of my body.

Philip periodically asked how my yoga practice was going, and I always answered with a modest “fine,” but secretly I hated the experience. Nonetheless, I persisted, attempted to breathe
and experiment with life in modest ways. Though my experience did not approach body
acceptance, self-love, or even the higher consciousness that Philip lauded, I did find a short
interval of time before the classes began, between the moment when the studio opened its doors
and the other bodies started filling in the rows, a micro-moment when the room was empty,
quiet, and clam where I could breathe. In this ten-minute space before class, I sat on my knees,
closed my eyes, and breathed through my nose.

Without the other bodies, without my cell phone, computer, and wearing nothing but a
bathing suit, I found a space of breathability. With the sunlight filtering through the windows
bathing my scars in its warmth, I simply breathed, quietly and calmly. And for the first time in
many months of writing my dissertation, the anxiety began to fade. If there was an
intensification of life in this experience, it was only in a small window of time where I could feel
the warmth of sunlight on places I kept hidden, in the quiet of a hot room, in a space that was
quasi-private before it was populated with the beautiful, where I could breathe and be exposed
quasi-privately and feel these sensations in different and new ways. Whereas Philip derived
some benefit from the actual poses, sweating in the intense heat, and working his body toward
what he called “greater consciousness,” I simply found a micro-space of breathability, in-
between the studio’s opening and the beginning of class.

Don’t be a Hero

Our lives are full of undying stories, of narratives that demand heroism, transcendence,
and superiority to life’s many hostilities that traumatize our bodies, drowning them in a flood of
anxiety. These stories are nothing more than fantasies, phantasms (Deleuze & Guattari,
1980/2011), and they often work to compound the cruelty, painfulness, and hurtfulness of life
events. When we work against these inherited demands, when we attempt to launch into the
middle of circumstances to exploit moments where they become undone by a material
intensification of that which composes our existence, we may find ourselves suspended. In
Ward’s (1998) film, *What Dreams May Come*, suspension worked to interrupt logical action-
reaction sequences of narrative and as the opening of a space of virtual potential (Deleuze &
suspension worked as a stilled moment of affective intensity. In my modest experiment in
breathing, I found only a small micro-space of breathability that involved momentary suspension
of the gaze, judgment, and comparability—where the noise of my body momentarily subsided.
In each instance, trauma was thoroughly involved with the act of seeing too much.

In my space of breathability, the gaze and potential judgment of classmates was deferred
as the haunting memories of previous traumas that mark my body were momentarily suspended
in quasi-privacy. When we return to the materiality that composes our bodies rather than try to
transcend or step beyond it, we cannot help but also return to the events that mark and
territorialize them as a particular (noisy) collection or assemblage of circumstances, events, and
happenings (Manning, 2013). This return does not necessarily mean we return to the stories or
narratives that such marks involve; rather, it offers a modest space to reimagine how we live in
their midst. When we reimagine what can come of a life in the midst of living with our scars and
marks, we engage the body as a site of virtual potential (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011). It is
possible to experiment with reconfigurations of our bodies, and, as in my experiment with
breathing, this may lead not to a radical alteration but to a micro-level experience of feeling
sensation in new ways and in areas that are otherwise carefully hidden. Sitting in a yoga studio
was certainly not a radical departure from my life’s many stories; however, in that small space of
breathability, new sensations and feeling became bearable as anxiety began to fade.
It was in that small space of breathability that previous moments of trauma and their haunting memories began to intermix with an immediacy of a now-moment where the past and future intermix in ways where the now also becomes a not-yet and already-has-been. The fear of having too much of me seen, the recurring nightmares of being sprawled and bare in a city street, and the in-between now-moment linked these times and spaces in a virtual conjunction that wrought from their mutual influence a vital affect of straddling a threshold, lingering in the balance, in the in-between space of what was, is, and becoming. Within this threshold, the future was not-yet-determined, and the past was re-felt; however, the space in-between became that of breathability, a sustenance for moving forward in spite of what lies behind. Again, I cannot claim this modest experiment resulted in a revelatory experience of body-acceptance, self-love, or higher consciousness any more than I can claim that my body was reconfigured in any radical alterations.

Indeed, the only consciousness I felt was that of heightened self-consciousness; and instead of deterritorializing my body into a new assemblage, I was acutely aware of my body’s territorialization, its function to name itself as “me.” Yet, something affective arose both in the experiment as well as in writing that story for you here. That is simply an affirmation of living as a collection, clustering, or assemblage of intimate events—sometimes joyful, sometimes traumatic—in spite of how their various manifestations as lines, colors, scars, and shapes are perceived by the world. And this affirmation is of that which calls for living on the threshold, in-between the past and the not-yet, in-between the determinate and the not-yet-determined, and in-between the inherited injunction to transcend life’s woes and the inevitable next moment of its future iterations. This affirmation is that which induces as suspension of commonsense spatiotemporal coordinates (Bogue, 2003a; b) to open a space of virtual potentiality (Deleuze &
Guattari, 1980/2011) and that abducts one into a space to think, feel, and live differently, however modestly, within suspended moments of breathability via an affective force that is as irresistible as it is perhaps unwelcome.

This space of suspension in the in-between is akin to Berlant’s (2011) conceptualization of an *impasse*, which figured not only as a block or obstacle to overcome, but equally as a small dint of breathability in the midst of hostility. As she admonished: “The urgency is to reinvent, from the scene of survival, new idioms of the political, and of belonging itself, which requires what the baselines of survival should be in the near future, which is, the future we are making” (Berlant, 2011, p. 262). Pounding a small dint of breathability into the midst of suffocating circumstance is not only the recognition of the necessity to escape the continual incitements to sovereignty, rationality, intentionality, and willfulness but also an affirmation of multiple modes of sustaining life in spite of these injunctions. The ethical work of carving out breathable space cannot be prescribed; rather, it must be engaged in the in-between. To paraphrase Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2011), the question is not whether to overturn circumstances but *how to live in their midst*. Though multiple modes are potentially actualizable in this in-between space, for me it was matter of refusing the hero-injunction, finding space to breathe, and in doing so my life not only expands in its duration but also in its capacities to think, feel, and act—the very definition Spinoza (1677/1994) offered of joy. And if there is a maxim to be drawn from this experiment, it is perhaps: *Don’t be a hero, become something else.* That something else remains not-yet-determined, but by carving out a modest space of breathability one may afford moments to expand not only one’s lungs but also one’s life.

A final note. Life is complicated and noisy, much more so than the practices of even the most experimental filmmakers that push the limits of what is visible and invisible, that extend
and sometimes disturb our perspectival senses, and render something of life in an intensity that may also sustain one through moments of trauma. It is far too simplistic to simply lay one artistic medium on another, even when those works were produced by a single artist. Moreover, it is too complex a thing to attempt a symmetrical discussion between these works of art and my own modest experiment in breathing. Nevertheless, what I wish to emphasize in this final note is that what we see, our powers of seeing, and the qualities of the images we see can become detached from the personal, rendering them with a great intensity. In other instances, what is seen or potentially seen becomes inextricably attached to the personal, involving an intensity of another kind. In the process of making art, Ward (1998; 2011) offered intensities of the first type, which moved from the personal to the impersonal. In my experiment, the territorialization of my body that makes it personal became intensified to such an extent that the only emergent quality or affect experienced was that of an act of affirmative living on.

If these three instances, the film, installation artwork, and my modest onto-epistemological experiment share any common ground for thinking through this intensity, it is the virtual space of pure potential. This becomes the ethical work of experimentation, to happen upon many “ayes,” or even just one in the midst of, or in spite of, too many “eyes.” This affirmative space of breathability does not resolve life’s troubles or difficulties, nor does it simply reinforce inherited or self-perpetuated narratives of what a life means or portend an agency to direct its becomings in future iterations or alterations; rather, it troubles such simplicity, disrupts and suspends logical action-reaction circuits, and forces a feeling-thinking, a reimagining in the midst of a threshold in-between what is known, representable, repeatable and that which is not-yet-determined, as-yet-unthinkable, and perhaps even unimaginable. The point is not to assign success or failure to an experiment such as mine but to do something. Try. Take
a stab. It may help you breathe in the midst of dagger-eyes piercing your flesh. And how often are “eyes” felt? Is it not time to feel “ayes” too? With the last breath in this section, I say, “Yes!”

Figure 16: Breathable Space (Bassett, 2014). Gouache on paper.
CHAPTER 6
LINES, LINES, EVERYWHERE LINES

“And the sign said anybody caught trespassin’ would be shot on sight / So I jumped on the fence
and-a yelled at the house, ‘Hey! What gives you the right? / To put up a fence to keep me out or
to keep mother nature in / If God was here he'd tell you to your face / Man, you're some kinda
sinner’” (Emmerson, 1971)

In the two preceding chapters, there are spaces where the text pauses to make certain
points (e.g., “Don't be a hero, become something else;” “The important thing about a chinwag is
the wagging.”). There are also spaces where the text becomes pointless⁵, becomes
deterritorialized into a rhythmic series of crests, waves, and lines radiating and diffracting
through the words, ideas, and concepts of a friend, theorists, and philosophers. These pointless,
rhythmic, deterritorialized spaces are the most critical, because they are the spaces where this
work can become something living, active, and mobile in affectivity. They are the spaces where
the linearity and regularity of habit is disrupted, where thought ceases to be pathological by
trespassing, deviating, and swerving productively away from the pre-authorized, pre-meant, and
pre-determined toward a margin, an edge in-between the known and unknown. Equally crucial,
these pointless spaces are where the sense of this deviation becomes palpable, where the acts of

⁵ By “pointless,” I do not mean meaningless; rather, this word is used to indicate spaces lacking
systematically defined and clearly delineated structure. What I mean by “pointless” is a space
that exceeds systematicity and bordered structures.
wagging a chin, resisting a hero-injunction, or pounding a small dint of breathability into suffocating circumstances can become textually felt as well as thought.

I am reminded of a lyric from John Lennon’s (1980) Beautiful Boy (Darling Boy): “Life is what happens to you / when your busy making other plans.” The pointless spaces remind me that life happens, rhythmically and sometimes without a point; that too much scrutiny, too much analysis, too much busy-ness planning or plotting points can actually preclude attention to life’s happening. That life happens, that life is eventful, that life exceeds meaning, is what the pointless spaces point to. It is necessary to swerve from pathological habits of thought, and it is important to acknowledge that, at this juncture, we may all feel a certain swerve-fatigue. Yet, this act of trespassing, swerving, and going beyond the authorized, regularized, and habitual routes of thought and movement is what this third and final section of this chapter is all about.

Much like its predecessors, this third and final section relies upon the swerving, deviating, and trespassing movements in a pointless, rhythmic, deterritorialized space to think life as an open-ended, unfinished project—as becoming. This section is concerned less with signs (logos) and more with lines—lines of desire, lines of flight, and lines of connection—networks of lines upon which life traffics and expresses its discontent to stay within structures, borders, and encampments, as attempts to hem it in/out as mine, yours, ours, or theirs. The following pages explore these lines in relation to a series of events that occurred in my neighborhood, in my neighbor’s lawn and on my porch as well as in the streets and sidewalks of Ferguson, Missouri and New York City, New York, although similar events continually occur throughout the geopolitical and world-historical landscape not only the United States but also around the globe. I speculate on how the events of unjustifiable and incomprehensible murders of African-American men at the hands of police officers, who are part of a global system of
control generated by late, neoliberal capitalism, may intensify racial tensions within my neighborhood. Thus, this discussion delves into questions related to race and racism, which, according to Colebrook (2013), force us to contend for conditions for life’s endurance and sustainability, reversing its race toward extinction. Here, I attempt to draw from art and music lessons on the affirmative, creative, and productive aspects of trespassing as a way of cultivating and proliferating conditions for life and an ethics of intense joy. As the above epigraph, taken from the song Signs (Emmerson, 1971) by the Five Man Electrical Band indicates, there is point I attempt to make from all the swerving, deviating, and trespassing: “Hey, what gives you the right?” Indeed, this question is a refrain that haunts every line that follows—what gives me the “right” to write about race; what gives one the “right” to trespass; what gives one a “right” to keep bodies separated by artificial borders; and what give one the “right” to fence life in? Although there are many possible answers to these questions of “rights,” I wonder if they do not contribute to a sense of disempowerment. Perhaps a different focus, one on ethics, lines of flight, and joy, can imbue a greater sense of empowerment.

A Tangled Mess of Traffic

There is a line running through my neighbor’s lawn, which is, in many ways, a pointless, deterritorialized space (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011). Mostly an untidy tangle of weeds, brambles, and fallen branches, her property has no clearly marked points of entry or exit, aside from her driveway and the small, stone path leading to her front door. The borders of her lawn are thoroughly porous; her front-, back-, and side-yards bleed, spillover, and meld with the adjacent lots. The conditions are such that its borders are almost entirely imperceptible. At one

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Note: the word “for” is deployed rather than the word “with,” because the primary concern is to find a way to not only wrestle with these conditions, or the issues related to their possibility of existing, but to directly work for their existence. The emphasis throughout this section is ontological, a direct experimentation for conditions making life endurable and sustainable.
point, my neighbor’s property was neatly manicured and contained within a wooden fence on all sides; it was clearly defined and controlled, with flows of ingress and egress restricted to unambiguous gates along its perimeter.

All that remains of that fence is the portion partitioning her property from mine, a small, white picket fence running the full length of our lots that joins with the fencing I erected around my backyard. Yet, I am constantly cutting back the seepage, the Virginia creeper and poison oak vines twinning their way through my fence’s slats, up and around the azalea and rose bushes lining my side of the fence. The line running through her lawn is the only clearly defined element in that space. It lies parallel to, and just inches from, this small fence. Running the full length of the fence, the line was cut into the undergrowth by persistent pedestrian processions, the trespassing traffic of people passing from one neighborhood to another. The line is an improvised bypass, a shortcut that deviates from the authorized routes, the streets connecting the neighborhoods, by way of a space of least resistance, my neighbor’s lawn.

Although it is relatively easy to describe my neighbor’s lawn as a deterritorialized, pointless space, and the line that runs through it as the only clearly defined element within that space, it is much more difficult to explain the process of its deterritorialization. Equally difficult is the task of accounting for the affects this space and its line involve. The space itself is affective, engendering and making possible the shortcut in the first place; however, the line that was left in the undergrowth, as the trace of that affective capacity, traffics in more than just trespassers. The line itself traffics in at least two affects: 1) a paranoid, segregative affect that fuels my neighbor’s desire to rebuild her fence and regain control of the access to her property; and 2) a schizophrenic, nomadic affect that fuels the trespassers’ desire to shortcut through her property, cutting, splitting, and subdividing that space in the process—contrary to, or indifferent
to, normative rights to privacy and property. Both affects—the paranoid-segregative and the schizo-nomadic—are part of larger social, economic, and political forces operating as vectors that affect the property’s de/territorialization under the sign of late capitalism (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/2009).

During the early 21st century, the housing market was full of promise. Subprime interest rates and the easy lending practices of several large mortgage firms generated a boon of possibility. Houses sprung up everywhere as builders desperately raced to supply the demand. Yet, by the end of the first decade, “easy lending” was seen for what it was—“predatory lending”—and when the bubble burst it heralded the most significant risk to the U.S. economy in nearly a century. Large international banking institutions, preoccupied with their practice of trafficking in toxic assets, bilking money wherever possible in a desperate attempt to stay afloat during the crisis, were eventually bailed out by the U.S. government as it was deemed these institutions were “too big to fail.” Their collapse, it was thought, would undermine the global economy, and potentially scatter the world into a financial ruin eclipsing the great depression of the 20th century.

Although Citibank, Goldman Sachs, Capital One, and others still stand, their failure was evident as millions fell upon hard times, loosing their homes, jobs, and suffering other dire repercussions. Within my neighborhood, the housing bubble brought an expansion of its borders, an interconnection between existing neighborhood and new developments. Local land barons capitalized on the influx of toxic cash by developing virtually every available space, laying new roads to connect the new growth with the existing infrastructure. What was once a small, three-street neighborhood became a complex maze, a multiplex of neighborhoods with a few connecting streets. Yet, with foreclosures and short sales, these properties induced a
palpable transience to an otherwise stable suburb. Houses left vacant for years were purchased for pennies on the dollar, and repurposed as rentals for the working-poor.

In many ways, the line in my neighbor’s lawn may be read as a trail of suburban decline, as an event of forces well beyond the control of the property owner and the individual steps of trespassers. The economic forces that enabled her to purchase her home in the late 1990s now turned against her. Although she has multiple jobs, she simply cannot afford to maintain the property, and, as she often shared with me, “I just don’t see the point.” Although she is actually quite house proud, and a professional with a good administrative position, the economic forces affecting her lot in life forced a shift in priorities: “I’m busy making sure I can pay my bills. I’m trying not to lose my home, but I’m going to eventually have enough to fix this fence.” Although economic forces, as well as social and political ones, are impersonal, they often manifest in ways that come too close to home. And when they run through your lawn, they give rise to multiple re-valuations of the space, enlist personal investments, and, on occasion, tensions erupt on its surface.

There is both an official and unofficial social code regulating life within my neighborhood. The official code is the legal framework that defines the traffic along this unauthorized path through my neighbor’s lawn as trespassing. The unofficial code is the normative conventions of conduct that names the traffic as disrespectful, ill-mannered, or boorish. Yet, like the lawn itself, which spills over, bleeds into, and melds with its adjacent lots, these official and unofficial codes are difficult to distinguish from larger political and social forces. The seemingly benign act of walking in an unauthorized zone is doubtless an extremely dangerous act.
In Ferguson, Missouri, it was indeed dangerous for Michael Brown, an unarmed African-American teenager, who was harassed by and eventually shot six times (twice in the head) by a police officer who saw jaywalking as a capital offense. Selling a cigarette, although a different kind of traffic, on a sidewalk in New York City, New York, is equally as dangerous. Eric Garner, an unarmed African-American man, was choked to death by police officers after arguing over their zealous, harassing, and obsessive application of the law over the petty allegation that he was selling “loosies,” a single, untaxed cigarette. Although the “facts” of these cases remain highly debated, there is no question that the failure to indict these officers on homicide charges rendered the racial lines within the social code palpable. The cultural atmosphere was charged with depressive, paranoiac, and schizophrenic affects, which Deleuze and Guattari (1972/2009) recognized as the racist and racial delirium of state-stimulated capitalism.

In the wake of these events, these affects spread along lines—veritable battle lines—between heavily armed and armored police forces and protesters decrying the racism built into the cultural, political, and economic infrastructure and pleading for justice. The paranoia of police marked each person in the streets as suspects, and they often pointed their assault rifles at passersby going about their daily business. Arrests were frequent and the hostility intense. Lines of protesters blocking traffic manifested in interstate highways, slowing the processions of daily life. Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter were ablaze with video clips of the scenes, often tagged #blacklivesmatter that circulated encounters and incidents globally with unprecedented velocity. Small gestures of solidarity for one side or the other flooded social media networks, infiltrating the domestic lives of well intentioned people perhaps wishing to stay out of the fray or simply uncertain of how to engage the unfolding dynamics and discussions of race and racism within the United States.
It is difficult to imagine a life not touched by these events, although it is quite easy to imagine impotence, resignation, or overwhelming confusion related to forces beyond one’s control, impeding many from joining either party along the battle lines. The schizophrenic affects were manifest in various individuals’ crossing the racial divide, speaking up and speaking out for the cause that, by all appearances, seemed contrary to their own racial group’s general position. Several African-American men produced YouTube videos in which they advocated for personal responsibility, a sentiment of many white people in defense of police actions. Equally, many white individuals intentionally exposed their privileged social positions, called their privilege into question, and critically examined their own racist micro-aggressions in small gestures of solidarity for the cause of another racial group. The schizophrenic ripples in the wake of these events produced a fragmentation of social aggregates, identities based not only upon phenotypical traits and cultural patterns but also on un/official party lines. These people risked becoming true individuals because they partially forsook a herd-mentality and hazarded the chance of not belonging to any particular group although this does not mean that their transgressive statements and positions are any less pathological.

By pathological, I mean to say there are certain behaviors, thoughts, and feelings related to race and racism that are built into the system, part and parcel of the infrastructure (e.g., guilt, shame, pity, fear, grief, etc.). These feelings may produce appeals to a “unified humanity,” a line of thought carrying a general tenor of democratic equity, dignity, and respect for all persons regardless of the color of their skin. They may also arouse resentful political counter actions, or enrage a broad hatred of the system and/or one’s self as part of the system. Although there are many other responses and reactions, and they may all be legitimate, some may also be more legitimate than others—legitimized by the very system that produces them and which they may,
in fact, reproduce. The exposure and critical examination of one’s privilege within the system is a laudable action, particularly as a gesture of solidarity for the cause of an underprivileged social group; however, it does not necessarily mean that it is not, in some measure, produced and even sanctioned by the system itself, or that it does not, in some way, reinforce that very system. *I need something other than white guilt.*

Of course, these affects also spread along gradients, and there is no single way to characterize their effect because there are shades of difference in intensity, duration, and force all across the landscape. However, what is pertinent for the line in my neighbor’s lawn is how these events and their affects contracted and intensified into the one-third acre lot I have described. When I consider the larger economic, social, and political forces at play in racism, they seem tangled in an untidy mess of weeds, brambles, and fallen branches just like my neighbor’s lawn. Lines appear when one transgresses the social code, steps beyond the authorized zone of one’s belonging, and dares to question the authority of those setting the limits. The trespassers who wore this line into my neighbor’s lawn did not belong there; they bore different racial identities, came from different places, and held different values than my neighbor and myself—even though my neighbor is an African American woman! The racially charged events that I discuss below are complex, and it the notion that a racial identity is merely a matter of phenotypes—particularly skin color—that my African American neighbor and the African American trespassers should naturally be grouped within one marker is untenable. As I attempt to move through the tangled mess of forces that intensified the racially charged events, I hope to forward an orientation that recognizes that such simplistic categorization is too limiting for an ethics of joy. Rather, race must be thought as a continually transmorphing assemblage of social, cultural, and political problems, which cannot be universally assigned to groups of people based solely
upon their skin tone. Thus, the real crime of these African American trespassers was not their unauthorized passage through my neighbor’s lawn but being different—being composed differently by social, political, and cultural forces, than those along their path. In what follows, I explore the delirium of race, which arises from these forces, in relation to some of the tensions that erupted in my neighbor’s lawn—shouting matches laced with overt threats of physical violence, police involvement, and intensifying paranoia such that an event similar to Ferguson felt imminent. I also lay the ground work for seeing the considering the trespassing traffic as an affirmation of life’s differences.

**The First Deviances**

Like the tangled mess of social, political, and economic forces under the sign of state-stimulated capitalism, its racial and racist delirium is difficult to untangle. While writing this chapter, many well-intentioned white friends and family members attempted to mollify my worries about some of the undercurrents in my neighborhood and beyond. For example, my friend Phillip made an appeal to how we are “all one race, a human race.” His intentions were good, bearing a general tone of equity and equality that all humans should be treated with fairness, dignity, and respect. Yet, this appeal is precisely what Colebrook (2013) saw as a pathological trope ultimately fueling a race toward extinction. In her view, there is a fundamental problem with this way of thinking: it does not acknowledge, account for, or recognize that by appealing to a unified human race, one is invoking the unspoken, but always active, standard by which this supposed race is measured. This standard, according to Deleuze and Guattari (1972/2009; 1980/2011), is that of White Man.

( . . . )
June 2014: Seeds of paranoia. I could hear it from my bedroom. Voices, unintelligible but undeniably close and unmistakably heated. Stumbling down the stairs from my bedroom to the front door, I stepped out onto my front porch to witness the end of a brief but violent exchange between a group of five teenagers and my neighbor. Before I even released the doorknob I heard my neighbor roar, “That’s your final warning! If I catch you out here again, I’m going to turn my dog loose on you.” One of the teens complained, “we aren’t hurting anybody.” Another mumbled, “I’ll fuck your dog up.” Yet, most of the group ignored her, avoided eye contact, and continued walking as if she was not even there. Following them out to the street, she continued to shout warnings, “Don’t think I won’t call the police or go find your parents, because I will.”

Visibly shaking with anger from the exchange, my neighbor walked over toward the fence where I met her. “I don’t know what I’m going to do. You see this line they wore in my yard?” Wishing to stay out of the conflict, I only agreed that there was indeed a visible path where they walked and that it was indeed a complicated situation. Despite my desire to stay out of things, she attempted to enlist me in her cause by seeding fear and paranoia:

“Do you know who those kids are? Do you know what they’re capable of? All I know is you better start making sure you lock up your shed, crawl space, and car. The cops were out here looking for someone the other day, and they were all back in your yard.” I objected, “Yeah, but those aren’t necessarily related.” But before I could finish, she re-asserted, “but you don’t know they weren’t either. You just don’t know!”

(...)

From this White Man standard, the first deviances, the first deviations, are racial (Colebrook, 2013; Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/2009; 1980/2011; Saldanha, 2013). Others follow:
linguistic, sexual, geographic, class, able bodied-ness, etc. Phillip’s well-intentioned statement in actuality reinstates this molar standard by effacing, or erasing, the many differences constituting individual bodies. The idea of a single species that subsumes these varied differences (among others) into a unified humanity ignores the process of speciation, the emergence or becoming of individuals and social groups (Colebrook, 2013; Manning, 2012). This first deviation reveals that, “in actuality humanity is not a race; it becomes a racial unity only via the virtual, or what Deleuze and Guattari describe as a process of territorialization, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization” (Colebrook, 2013, p. 35).

Indeed, one may argue that most antiracist politics underemphasize the fact that such politics must not only be sociocultural but also geopolitical. If the first deviances, or deviations, from White Man are racial, it may also be argued that an individual body is only secondarily “lumped together with other bodies, to give rise to populations circumscribed on the basis of perceived similitude and proximity” (Saldanha, 2013, p. 10). From Colebrook’s (2013) view, the problem with racism is not that it discriminates, nor that it takes one natural humanity and then perverts it into separate groups. On the contrary, racism does not discriminate enough; it does not recognize that “humanity,” “Caucasian,” and “Asian,” are insufficiently distinguished. (p. 36)

What Colebrook and Saldanha seem to suggest is that any individual organism, body, person, not only precedes but also exceeds, social, cultural, and political groupings based on phenotypical characteristics and behavioral patterns alone. Far from an appeal to some sort of essentialized individual identity, this sort of thinking recognizes that a body, any body, is always a social phenomenon; however, it also recognizes that individual differences mark each body as a singularity.
July 2014: Paranoia intensified. All we did know, unmistakably, was that the trespassing teens also happened to be African-American. But somehow this became the sign of an immanent but ambiguous threat. The shouting matches continued through the summer months and eventually lead to an informal meeting between myself, my neighbor whose lawn was involved, and a second neighbor across the street from her, a white, retired army sergeant. We meet at the fence and inspected the line. He proposed chicken wire, a temporary fix until a proper fence could be built. As this retired army sergeant reasoned, “If they bend or break down the chicken wire you’ll have something besides this line to document for the police. You may even catch them doing it and you might even get a picture or two as well.” The chicken wire solution never materialized, but at the conclusion of our impromptu meeting, he volunteered to keep an eye out for my neighbor whenever she is away and to document any incidents as best as he could.

Several weeks later, unintelligible but unmistakable voices roused me to back to my front porch. This time it was the retired sergeant and the teens yelling back and forth. The “N-word” was used by the sergeant; “cracker” by the teens. Walking to the edge of the street, the sergeant picked up a fallen tree limb and held it in his hands as the teens walked by. When they did not engage him but walked on their way, he spoke plainly and calmly to the young African-Americans: “The only yard you should be walking in is a prison yard.” As I witnessed this exchange, I could not help but think: “We’re the crazy ones, the real danger, the real threat.”

A human body engages in a “reality” that “precedes that of the species to which it belongs” (Saldanha, 2013, p. 10). It takes an unfinishable trajectory of individuation through which various inhuman elements of that “reality” is engaged to endow it with a unique
morphology. An individuated human body is not an essence, but a “fuzzy collection of biological, social, and political problems, an obscure attractor actualized in varying degrees, thereby itself permutating” (p. 10). Likewise, the racial categories into which individual bodies are subsumed are non-essential, but nonetheless “a real territorial process” as can be witnessed in the “residential segregation characterizing any city” (p. 10). Belonging to a minority group is a reterritorialization of one’s body based upon various deviations from White Man.

A reterritorialization is an aggregate state, which directs or diverts individuals into a lesser position. It equally tends to arrest the process of individuation, the permutations of bodies in becoming. Any repose upon identity as an aggregate state, or especially as a “unified humanity,” threatens the vital processes of life itself, those processes that give rise to diverse modes of life in the first place. Such repose upon identity can give way to a black hole, an inescapable and destructive trap foreclosing any possible movement, change, or alterations to the social ordering of various groups and individuals. What is dangerous about such repose is that it generates both resentment and exceptionalism, which are common obstacles to combating racism (Saldanha, 2013).

( . . . )

August 2014: Resentment, shame, and guilt. With the shouting matching continuing from multiple sources, but now laced not only with threats but also with racial slurs, the situation was quite intense. My wife called to warn me of an incident she saw in the local crime blotter and said, “Apparently a gang of some sort beat a kid unconscious with a baseball bat, right out on our street!” Because I typically write outside on our porch, she questioned whether it was safe for me to continue that practice. While talking to her, I walked out to get the mail, and the sergeant from across the street met me and offered a warning that “someone’s been stealing air
conditioning units in the neighborhood—they better hope I don’t catch them.” I was still talking with my wife as I headed back to my house when my next-door neighbor shouted to me, “If you got a minute, I want to run something by you.” I ended my conversation with my wife and met my neighbor at the fence. She said,

Look, I want to be clear that I don’t approve of his language—I mean its offensive! I personally believe we’re all one people, and I feel sorry for those kids. I mean, look where they come from. I don’t know if they have parents, what kind of education they have, or what kind of income they might have. It’s just a mess over there, and they probably need a lot of help. But I can’t help them, and this nonsense in my yard has to stop. They need to figure things out over there and not bring it over here. You know what I’m saying?

I explained to my neighbor, “my concern is that they just want to get from one place to another and, if he [the sergeant] keeps on, its just going to blow up and get ugly.”

A few days after our talk, a cloud of black smoke billowed up from “over there” on an adjacent street. I drove over to find an older African-American man burning tires in his driveway. On seeing me, he nodded his head and waved. I rolled down my window and explained, “I thought someone’s house was on fire.” His response started me. He was not waving to say hello; he was simply acknowledging that he “knew me.” Cocking his head down and glaring at me with a scowl, his spoke sharply: “I know you. You live over there with those folks messing with everybody. Best tell that man to shut his damn mouth too! Shit can get real!” Before I could say anything, he continued, “I’m minding my own business over here; why don’t y’all try that sometime.” I waved, apologized, and drove on.

( . . . )
Racism often induces feelings of resentment, shame, guilt, and indebtedness. Reterritorializations of identity along racial and racist lines plunges the racializing society into a vicious cycle that renders minority bodies as both “problem” and “victim.” The problem is that these individuals are deemed a threat to the established order, which engenders pity or a patronizing compassion born of guilt for their apparent victimization (Gilroy, 1991; Saldanha, 2013). This problem-victim cycle is difficult to overcome. It enacts an entrapment of identity in reterritorializations—they simply do not distinguish enough between the different ways by which identities are shaped by impersonal forces, especially geopolitical forces (Colebrook, 2013). Moreover, this cycle often produces reactionary, resentful politics that seldom actualize sufficient social changes.

According to Milevska and Saldanha (2013), “racism returns as reactionary resentment” (p. 229). Deleuze (1970/1988) explained that Spinoza denounced the “resentful man, … who makes wretchedness or impotence his only passion” (p. 25), for whom the only thought is “how to keep from dying” (p. 26). Although reactionary, resentful political actions may be quite active, they are insufficient insofar as they cannot fully arise to an occasion to overturn the system. One seeks to better one’s lot in life, to increase the probability that one will not die, but one remains in a problem-victim cycle. However, the way out is not through a “unified humanity.” Despite its liberal and democratic tenor, such notions also generate deleterious effects, giving rise to broad notions of human exceptionalism as an additional force fueling the economic, political, and social engine of state-capitalism.

Although a “unified humanity” is often invoked as a liberal democratic ideal, it manifests as a neo-liberal and fascist reality. It reintroduces the White Man standard under a new guise, one that purports the impossible—a homeostatic and homogenized people. In actuality the state
of late capitalism is far from equilibrium. It verges dangerously toward unsustainable and unendurable conditions for life itself. The spread of neo-liberal late capitalism brings not just a blurring of national borders in the name of economic advancement but also the very real capitalization and commodification of all existence (Clough, 2007; Colebrook, 2013).

The capitalizing, commodifying, and consuming engine of late capitalism with a “unified humanity” at the helm drives the world toward extinction. Consider, for example, the many species already facing extinction, not to mention those already extinct, due to humanity’s imagining itself as a divinely appointed master over nature. As Colebrook (2013) remarked, “this unified humanity that has become intoxicated with its sense of self-positing privilege can only exist through the delirium of Race, through the imagination of itself as a unified and eternal natural body” (p. 37). This “delirium of Race,” Colebrook (2013) continued, affirms the possibility of anything becoming extinct, and points to “racism” as “a neurotic grip on survival” (p. 38). The neurosis of survival is the desperate attempt to maintain the status quo, the paranoid actions to keep diverse bodies in well-regulated, authorized, and policed territorial zones. In this way, Milevska and Saldanha (2013) asserted that “what is marginalized—the homeless, the insane, the addicted, the jobless, the illiterate, the elderly—is actually central to the system” (p. 226).

Biopolitical regimes to cure, employ, educate, and care for these marginalized bodies are attempts to reinforce the molar standard of White Man under the guise of compassion and/or civic duty. Yet, what keeps the established order clearly defined is the absence of obfuscated geopolitical borders. The result is a bourgeois, assimilationist multiculturalism insufficient to disturb the paranoid, segregative borders of the status quo. Assimilationist multiculturalism
actually reinforces this broad notion of a “unified humanity,” which can unintentionally induce purification programs of racism (Saldanha, 2013).

But as mentioned previously, the tangled mess of social, political, and economic forces under the sign of state capitalism also produces schizophrenic, nomadic conditions and affects. On a certain level the territorial borders that prevent the toppling of the status quo exist as ideological, which do not always coincide with the forces that produce them. In witnessing the blurring of national borders in the name of global capitalism, there arises a palpable potential for transience, even a sense of being pulled apart on the spot by capitalist flows and desires (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/2009; 1980/2011). Deleuze and Guattari’s (1972/2009; 1980/2011) treatment of capitalism proposes schizophrenia as the event of its globalization. The event of schizophrenia, of being pulled apart by capitalist flows and desire, indicates something below the world historical, biopolitical, and geopolitical capitalist order where we catch a glimpse of an “intensive order”:

What is the nature of this order? The first things to be distributed on the body . . . are races, cultures, and their gods. The fact that has often been overlooked is that the schizo indeed participates in this history: he hallucinates and raves universal history, and proliferates the races. All delirium is racial, which does not necessarily mean racist. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/2009, p. 85)

Although schizophrenic hallucinations are racial, schizophrenia itself is not racially determined, but the event of a “concentrated short-circuiting of capitalist colonialism, that implicates in brain intensities the exotic clichés, phobias, and sadisms which circulate in extensive globalization” (Saldanha, 2013, p. 13). Schizophrenia presents the possibility of new or hybrid identities through its process of creative racialization. What schizophrenia reveals
through its intensive order is that a body’s skin, hair, or other organs do not represent racial differences as much as they exist as zones of intensity or fields of potential through which phenomena of individualization are produced. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1972/2009), these zones are constantly shifting, morphing, or otherwise moving as we pass through processes of individuation, processes that do not end but that are rather ongoing: “We never stop migrating, we become other individuals as well as other sexes, and departing becomes as easy as being born or dying” (p. 94). Schizophrenia induces the transgressive, trespassing, and deviating movements across psychic and somatic borders as well as biopolitical and geopolitical boundaries. This is not, however, to laud mental illness. If anything, it is an indictment of capitalist structures that its productive space for transgressing its structure is located within one of its deleterious affects/effects.

( . . . )

December 2014: A schizophrenic bakes a duck. My friend, Philip, happens to be schizophrenic. He also happens to be a virologist, an accomplished musician, a furniture artisan, and an avid home chef. Spending the Christmas holidays with me and my wife, he took over the kitchen on Christmas Eve and ranted about the racial and racist problems in my neighborhood. He began, “So who is that asshole across the street? I heard him talking shit to some kids.” Before I could answer, he shifted gears: “I was robbed by a black guy once, at gun point. The cops flat out told me they weren’t going to even bother looking for him.” Then he attempted to pick up where he left off but lost his train of thought while looking for a roll of tin foil: “So who is he to bother anybody? Do you think he ever stops and asks whether it’s even worth it—like with colonialism, right? Do you think Bush and Cheney ever stopped to ask if it was even worth it?”
Wrapping the duck in foil, he jumped tracks again: “But we also saw a couple of white dudes mug a black guy in Rock Island. Nobody cared, and we were even told “that’s just how it is here.” I admitted to Philip that I had no real idea what he was talking about, and so he tried to summarize:

What I’m saying is that there are assholes everywhere. Some are white and some aren’t. Some are Mexican and blast their oompah music all night like your other next-door neighbors. Some wear uniforms and some wear baggy pants. One definitely lives across the street from you. Some listen to Public Enemy and some listen to Tchaikovsky. Some burn tires in their driveway, and some end up being president and burn down nations. I tend to see them everywhere or maybe I can’t always make out which is which, which is why I take medication! And why I’m not a too reliable when it comes to these things. And why I’ll never be on a jury—that and my degree. But here’s the thing: What’s important isn’t what’s wrong, but what’s right. There’s space enough for everyone, even people like me! Which reminds me, do you think I could get a ride downtown later?

( . . . )

Schizophrenia reveals that world history, global capitalism, and individualization in terms of race and racism are not only rather ugly but also rather open-ended. The potential of schizomorphic permutations of identity along racial lines are always illegitimate. They are illegitimate in the sense that they hold no fidelity to history, normative conventions, or any propriety. Schizomorphic racial creations are bastardized in the etymological sense of having no claim or rights to an inheritance. Though schizophrenia may be tied to the global system of capitalism, it is not its heir. Its illegitimacy does not designate a familial state, but the drifting of the races (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/2009).
Paranoid segregation and schizophrenic nomadism are not dialectic. Race leads to racism under certain conditions and when established, racism domesticates the productive dimensions of race. Although domesticated, this productive dimension is not destroyed. Schizophrenia partially retrieves the mobility, indeterminacy, and subversion in race, although in a highly problematic way. If mobility, indeterminacy, and subversion are retrieved, they return as illegitimate, deviating, and transgressive. And in this way, “bastard and mixed-blood are true names of race” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/2009, p. 379). Schizophrenia shares this illegitimate, transgressive, and deviating movement with art as a voyage in immanence: “everything comingles in these intense becomings, passages, and migrations—all this drift . . . [across] countries, races, families, parental appellations, divine appellations, geographical and historical designations, and even miscellaneous new items” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/2009, p. 84-85). Although these passages are not absolved of their destructive capacities, in the next section I attempt to explore their generative, creative, and affirmative potentials as musical migrations.

**Musical Migrations**

I lost myself somewhere back there amongst the weeds and brambles, somewhere amidst the fallen branches. Somewhere in the tangled mess of forces that territorialize, deterritorialize, and reterritorialize, my sense of identity disintegrated. Living amidst the delirium of race in relation to the events of my neighborhood ripped apart any sense of stability and security I had previously felt. My friend, Philip, and I were taking a road trip shortly after these events. Along the way, we pulled into a Chick Fil A for lunch. I was happy to be away from the constant worry of what might happen in my neighborhood, perhaps in my own front yard, and the restaurant seemed a respite from that turmoil.
Sitting in the Chick-Fil-A restaurant with tears welling in my eyes, I could not distinguish heads from tails. It was “Pirate Day” at the restaurant. Servers dressed in pirate garb took patrons’ orders, and children scrambled here and there to have their photographs taken with a woman dressed as a princess, various people in cow costumes, and miscellaneous others wearing plastic hooks on their right hands, eye patches, and paper hats. A makeshift pirate ship occupied the wall just behind our table where these photographs were staged, and as the children waited for their turn many patted my leg, bumped into my chair, and looked curiously at my face.

I longed for some safety, something to eat, and a place of repose to collect myself; however, the events of my neighborhood taught me that capitalism and its various affects/effects are everywhere, that there is no outside this system. Having shared my work with Philip, he looked at me, laughed, and said, “This is what you’re writing about—this sort of madness. What’s the next thing to be Disney-fied? Thugs? Gangsters? I mean, pirates are not the cute, sweet, caricatures that Disney makes of them, are they?” Suddenly, the tears welling in my eyes started to trickle down as a smile cracked across my face. “There is something mad about it all, isn’t there,” I responded. And the irony of being surrounded by “pirates”—figures of the violent capacities of trespassing unconcerned for geopolitical borders, proprietary identities, and property rights—was not lost on us!

Back on the road, we listened to music. Philip said, “this is how you find yourself—through music.” He shoved a CD of Paul Simon’s *Graceland* (1986/2011), one of my favorite albums, into the CD player and turned up the volume. I proceeded to describe Simon’s process of making that album, which was quite controversial and problematic, both from a business standpoint and an ethical one. “He was just coming down off of a couple failed adventures: the first, a failed marriage with Carrie Fisher; and the second, a failed reunion with Art Garfunkel.”
As Marre’s (1997/2005) documentary, *Paul Simon: Graceland*, explained, the album was the product of a chance encounter. Simon was randomly given a tape of South African music around the time his marriage and his proposed reunion with his partner fell apart. The music gave rise to an experiment, a concept, a migration, and ultimately a controversial album, a series of concerts, and videos.

It is relatively easy to critique Simon’s (1986/2011) album as an act of musical appropriation and cultural colonialism perpetrated through the global, consumptive economics of popular music—particularly in light the unofficial code amongst musicians of international fame at that time to boycott venues in South Africa as a protest of the State’s official policy of apartheid. Equally problematic is the album’s title, *Graceland*, as well as its track by the same name that narrates a pilgrimage to Elvis’s home, Graceland, something of a landmark of the relentlessly consumptive forces of capitalism. Despite this narrated, figurative migration to Memphis, Tennessee, the album itself was born of a literal migration and worked to cut transversals lines across genres, cultures, and geographical borders.

From Marre’s (1997/2005) documentary of the album’s creation, it is relatively easy to trace the trajectories of these migrations and transversal cuts across various borders: the way the various musicians took multiple trans-Atlantic passages between South Africa and the United States; the way the relatively simplistic time signatures of Western popular music began to give way to the complex signatures of African music; the way the African musicians elected to insert relative minors to complement Simon’s Western musical style; as well as the way the initial tracks felt odd, unmarketable, and foreign to record executives backing the project. The album began as a concept—a simple collaboration with South African musicians—and the concept lead to multiple compromises and concessions to render the album listenable to Western ears. But it
is in each micro-moment of compromise (e.g., inserting a relative minor, writing in complex time signatures) that the music and the artists become transgressive, trespassing and deviating from molar standards of Western culture with the White Man at its helm.

Philip listened to my exegesis and then interjected: “Yeah, but that doesn’t change the fact that a white guy made money off of the black South Africans.”

Although Philip was correct, I objected, “It also doesn’t diminish the fact that the album gave rise to multiple voices that were otherwise unheard in the global circulation of music and ideas. Like, that’s how I heard about apartheid and saw that it doesn’t make any sense.”

Philip asked, “You remember that song by Drivin’ N Cryin’, where he says ‘Punk rockers sellin’ their faces for the TV’? Is it like that? Like, South Africans selling their voices for the CD? Like, you wouldn’t credit stuff like this with the fall of apartheid, would you?”

I said, “No, it’s not like that. It’s like music just creates this smooth space where things get detached from any place of ‘origin’ to operate in new ways. It doesn’t change all the complicated things that give apartheid its rise or fall, but it cuts across those things—in ways that are equally as complicated—to make space for something else, on a micro-scale. Like, it comes up in-between these points, where all that remains is the line of deterritorialization, a line of flight.”

Philip responded, “Good, because I think you need to be careful where you step with all of this. There are a lot of land mines, and you need to cover your tracks carefully.”

“But, that’s just it,” I said. “That’s why I’m all torn up. I can’t cover my tracks any more than I can walk carefully though this mixed up space. The tracks are all that’s left after the migrations have occurred. And I can’t even account for them all, much less remember where all we’ve been.”
He asked, “So what are you going to do?”

I replied, “I don’t know. I don’t know if I have to do anything, because it happens all around me all the time.”


“Listen,” I said, “*Shenandoah*, an American folk song, but totally disruptive of the romanticized narrative of Western conquest it typically induces.” Frisell’s treatment of *Shenandoah* mixes motifs from rock and roll, ambient electronica, and jazz to generate rhythmic cascades of sounds that are foreign to the well-known American melody. The effect is a sonic deconstruction of the tune and its socio-cultural meanings.

Listening to the track, Philip asked, “What’s that right there, that thing that sounds awesome but weird?”

I explained, “He’s borrowing chords from another mode, another key, and then deconstructing the melody to play along new lines. That space is where the rock influences are mixing with jazz and ambient electronica to really suspend the tempo. What you’re hearing is the rhythmic intrusion of other genres into a folk song.” There are transversal movements throughout the song that exploit its open-ended-ness, that render it porous, forcing permutations along lines that challenge the narrative’s legitimacy.

While listening to the track, Philip remarked, “I can see the traveling in the song, but it’s not taking me back to childhood where I sang this in grammar school; it’s taking me some place else, somewhere I’ve never been—like, a whole different America.”

“That’s the point,” I said. “It’s about hearing something new or different even though the tunes are very familiar. It’s familiar enough that the dissonant and interrupting patters can take
you somewhere else. But it’s on the micro-scale, those intrusive spaces, where the migrations occur. What’s left is just this recorded track and your imagination.”

Philip put in a CD by the Beastie Boys, _Hot Sauce Committee Part Two_ (2011) and he asked me what I thought about it: “Don’t you think it’s easier for white folks, like Frisell or the Beastie Boys, to cross genres and boundaries than for African-American’s? Like these guys totally appropriate an African American art form, right?”

Although it is absolutely easier, what seems to escape attention in any discussion of race and music is not only how difficult “appropriation” is but also that all these migrations are ultimately minoritarian. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2011), all must become-minoritarian, even minorities, because none are outside of, or exempt from the White Man standard through which society is structured. Music produced by Hip Hop and Deejay artists are exemplary in this respect, and their becomings occur by way of deterritorializing the voice. Consider how a deejay samples the voices, speech, and sonic patterns of various others (artists, politicians, passersby, etc.) and remixes them into a new work of art.

These voices are deterritorialized from their “original” sources, “appropriated” from any place they may be found, and then re-inserted into the larger soundscape of music in a completely different form. At its most effective, the art of deejays is akin to the literature of Kafka, the Czech Jew “who wrote not in Hebrew (reterritorializing on race) or Yiddish (reterritorializing on folklore), but German, the language of Kant and Goethe—as well as of Bismarck and Hitler” (Saldanha, 2013, p. 17). Just as “Kafka’s minoritarian status is derived from his forcing a dominant language to do things its guardians never expected it could do” (p. 17), Hip Hop and Deejay artists force the dominate economies of language, sound, and popular music to do things its guardians could never expect.
Philip asked, “So you’re saying it disrupts the status quo?”

“Yeah,” I said, “it challenges the legitimacy of the dominant standards. It bastardizes that dominance, delegitimizes claims of intellectual property by sampling and delegitimizes claims of propriety by introducing disruptive sounds into the mix.”

“So people like Tipper Gore weren’t railing so much against the overt sexual and violent content of Hip Hop, but trying to censor the disruptions to the narrative?”

I answered, “That’s one way to think of it. It deterritorializes THE VOICE—not so much a particular voice, but the idea of a standard voice through which all our cultural values and norms are expressed. And people like the Beastie Boys are delegitimizing themselves by crossing racial, musical, and socio-cultural borders, too.”

Driving along our road trip and listening to music, Philip concluded by saying, “Maybe nothing artistic happens without some type of migration or crossing or passage.” I agreed, and as we turned down the highway on the last leg of our trip he asked, “So did you find yourself?” I responded, “No, but it helps me realize that to live ethically and even joyfully—the way music makes me feel—doesn’t need sure borders but enough of a disintegration of them to open a line of flight.” And that was the gist of our conversation on that road trip. Explaining what I thought to Philip helped me sort out my thoughts on the potentially productive aspects of transgressive, trespassing movements in a deterritorialized space, where a disruptive line of flight can make life in my neighborhood less worrisome and even open space to live joyfully, musically, and ethically!

**An Unfinished Project**

I did not find myself on the road-trip or in the music we listened to; however, I did find pleasure and joy in discussing various musical migrations with Philip. And when I returned
home from our road trip, I found that a tree had fallen during a thunderstorm, smashing several sections of the small, white picket fence running the length of my lawn, as well as the fencing around my back yard. In effect, it demolished the corner juncture. Economic, social, and political forces were now compounded with forces of nature. My neighbor greeted me at the fence as I unpacked the trunk of my car. “I’m sorry about my tree; I can help you fix your fence if you want.” I told her not to worry about it; that I would figure something out and that she did not owe me an apology.

Finding yourself is impossible for the self is not a pre-given. As one looks for one’s self in music or other activities, one may actually find additional complications. Like musical migrations, transgressions, and deviations from the standard, the self is a complex process of de/re/territorialization. The joy I derived from my conversation with Philip was in the realization that music challenges us but in ways that are pleasurable—it is, indeed, a pleasurable disruption. As I looked down the fence and the line in my neighbor’s yard that runs parallel to it, I saw the scattered debris of slats and the tree trunk cutting perpendicularly across its otherwise straight and upright form. Standing in the mid-afternoon sun, I remembered that home, too, is not a pre-given. Home is a fluid form that must not only be located and maintained, but also left! Home ceases to be home if one cannot leave—it becomes prison.

As Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2011) explained, a home, territory, or abode consists of three simultaneous movements of a refrain: 1) the stabilizing and calming center in the midst of chaos; 2) the maintenance of its perimeter; and 3) a destabilizing line of flight. What connects these three movements of the refrain is that they are performed with/as music. We hum to calm ourselves when chaos threatens, we sing a little ditty as we maintain the physical space of our domains, and we leave “home of the thread of a tune” (p. 311). There are things we do, or can
do, to either entrench our borders or expand them, and as I wrestled with the racial issues that charged my neighborhood with paranoid-segregative and schizophrenic-nomadic affects, I began to critically question my involvement. Am I an outsider, simply observing these events? Certainly not! There is no outside, or exclusion, from these issues. They engulf and embroil all of life.

Am I paranoid or schizophrenic? If I rebuild the corner of fencing, is it to keep those different from me in *their* place and out of *mine*? Am I willing to let people of difference pass through my lawn, or will I resist like my neighbor? Do I value my space more or differently when its deterritorialization is marked by a fallen tree? Am I willing to allow migrations, deterritorializations, and even trespasses?

Although I move among these positions like most of us, one thing I am certain of, I do not wish to become a resentful, argumentative old man who shouts “get off my lawn” whenever someone steps foot inside its border. Are there lessons I can take from music to work this situation into something productive, affirmative, and generative of life? Reactionary politics like the unofficial boycott of international musicians against South African venues, have their place, but they also impede movement across borders. Is there something musical about leaving the fence open? Can my identity be productively reconstructed along lines similar to those Frisell took to alter nationalistic identities through his sonic deconstructions of folk music? And like the de-legitimization of *the voice* that Hip Hop and Deejay artists create, can I live with a potential delegitimization of my authoritarian voice over this space? Can my lawn become a smooth space for travelers-in-identity?

There are at least two ways one may go through life, according to Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2011): 1) as an assassin; and 2) as a poet.
The assassin is one who bombards the existing people with molecular populations that are forever closing all of the assemblages, hurling them into an ever wider and deeper black hole. The poet, on the other hand, is one who lets loose molecular populations in hopes that this will sow the seeds of, or even engender, the people to come, that these populations will pass into a people to come, open a cosmos. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 345)

The assassin is the paranoid, segregative; the poet, schizo-nomadic. Can I cultivate something other than azaleas and roses in my lawn? Can my lawn become a space where the seeds of a people to come may be sown?

Is there something poetic or even musical in a way of life that leaves a fence open, broken-down, porous for a people to come? Is there a potential for a grace land, not as a monument to capitalistic excess but rather as an easement for passage across its structures? Is there a way to cultivate an expansion of another type similar to Frisell’s (2009) Shenandoah, one that subverts the relentless imaginations and machinations of human exceptionalism, Western expansion and colonialism, as well as capitalist imperialism—a type of loss for White Man piloting that destructive machine, a deconstruction of space, a celebration of impure mixtures? Is a becoming-minoritarian in the vein of Kafka, Deejays, and Hip Hop artists possible?

I do not know, but the potential of Deleuze and Guattari’s (1980/2011) assertion offered a chance. I did not repair the fence, but cut the log into pieces to line a path through to my lawn. I removed the scattered debris, and used the pieces to make a small sign that reads: “←PASSAGE.” Who will come? I woke up early one morning to find two young children playing on my front porch. Upon seeing me they asked, “Do you have any kids that can play?” I
told them I did not. They giggled through their snaggle-toothed grins and asked, “Do you want to play?”

What would play reveal? Would playing with space reveal color, race, phenotypes, or behavioral patterns? Or would it rather induce ambiguity, uncertainty, and indeterminacy? Perhaps the ambiguity of playful spaces reveals that race is not as clearly defined as we were taught. Perhaps it returns us to the intensive zones and fields of potential so as to afford passage across various social structures and categories. Perhaps it may reveal my neighbor’s paranoia is more about not looking like me, her dread of being revealed as of “them” yet over “here.” Perhaps I am a nodal point in this tangled network of forces, where my white skin intensifies her worry. Yet, maybe it is all together more complicated. Maybe playing with space reveals that we are all unfinished, that we are all on an unfinishable trajectory of becoming. Opening space, leaving it unfinished, engenders a people to come. Who are they? Who are we? What are all, or any, of us? These are good questions, but a better question is what can we do. How can our various capacities affect this space?

“Do you want to play?”
Figure 17: *Loosing Yourself* (Bassett, 2014). Gouache on paper.
CHAPTER 7

SPILLING OVER

Throughout Chapters 4, 5, and 6, I explored not only intense moments within my life but also moments and spaces where my life became intensified, augmented, and expanded in terms of its capacities to think, feel, and act within everyday situations. Spinoza (1677/1994) called this type of intensification, augmentation, and expansion “joy.” Ironically, the situations where the potential for joy became most salient for me were those where I felt enclosed upon, entrapped, or otherwise impotent. From my vantage point, a more foreclosed, ensnared, or stuck situation than the grief surrounding the death of a nine-year-old is difficult to imagine. Equally, the anxiety of being exposed, bare-chested and scarred, to the gaze of others was a difficult situation about which to imagine joy or affirmation. And finally, racist and racial tensions spreading along various affective lines presented a precarious situation for exploring joy.

Throughout those chapters, I used music, and filmmaking as fodder for modest experiments in living that may open space to think, feel, and live contrary to various clichéd, pathological tropisms regarding various concepts that order and structure my life. These experiments were onto-epistemological—refusing any binary opposition between thinking, feeling, and living. Moreover, each onto-epistemological experiment was a modest work of ethics, specifically an ethical work of opening sad situations and spatiotemporal assemblages towards joy. Simply beginning with what came near, what was dear, what touched me affectively, I then engaged in this onto-epistemological ethics of experimenting with these
situations to think, feel, and live differently in their midst. These modest experiments in living exploited the small spaces where the potential for joyful expansions, augmentation, and intensifications produced tiny shifts, alterations, and modifications of larger problems. In Chapter 4, the experiment was to create a pattern of interference with Philip’s desire to self-inflict harm. In Chapter 5, I attempted to locate a space of breathability in the midst of anxiety. And in Chapter 6, the modest onto-epistemological experiment was to leave a boundary open and porous for a people to come.

In each chapter, I used literature germane to the larger social concern to leverage new or different thoughts, feelings, and actions, prying loose the typical, normative tropisms regarding language, heroism, and race. Although these experiments by no means altered the grand scheme of things—the ordering of life through language, the consistent social incitements to sovereignty, rationality, intentionality, and willfulness, or even the racism built into our social infrastructure—they did generate modest shifts engendering endurance and sustainability in the midst of the structures and events I discussed. Joy, in light of these modest onto-epistemological experiments, must not be thought as an emotional state; rather, it must be thought as an ethical opening, a way out of the enclosures such situations often impose. Within each chapter I attended to impersonal, affective forces that exceed the individual emotions, agency, and will of the humanist subject. In Chapter 4, I explored forces of language and life itself to open a modest space that made it a bit easier to move on with life in the wake of death. In Chapter 5, I used affective forces of color, light, and space to find a breath (what Nietzsche called health) in the midst of life’s illnesses and woes. In Chapter 6, I explored forces of capitalism and race to make migrations of identity possible.
It was precisely in undertaking this very difficult work of ethics, enacting joy as an opening (a line of flight out of clichéd, sociocultural tropisms) that new or different thoughts, feelings, and actions arose in the affective turbulence of each situation. In Chapter 4, I made friends with death by understanding it as impersonal and this shifted my ontological capacities to live in its midst. In Chapter 5, I not only began to understand the fragility and vulnerability of my body but also its imbrication with space, which increased my capacities to live affirmatively as a noisy body in the midst of many eyes. In Chapter 6, I saw race and racism as a geopolitical problem and worked to open and space for ontological difference within the borders of my lawn.

It was precisely by contending for ethics that these modest experiments ceased to be purely about understanding a different aspect or finding a different way to think about them (epistemology) and become a task of finding a different way to live in their midst (ontology). Throughout each of the preceding chapters (Chapters 4, 5, and 6), I wrote to the limits of my capacities—and writing is an onto-epistemological practice! The aim was to push to the very edge of the known and unknown, to an epistemological limit, so as to pass through knowledge to ontology. The waning of my capacities to write, think, feel, and act was evident as each section became increasingly ontological. Doubtless, we think more about epistemology than we do ontology; however, the writing of Chapters 4, 5, and 6 was not merely the reporting of information but the very act of creating new thoughts, feelings, and actions—an onto-epistemological experiment in living. The epistemological rigor related to the force of language in Chapter 4 yielded an ontological break in how Philip and I lived in the midst of loss of grief. Chapter 5 drew epistemological lessons from Ward’s (1998; 2011) artworks, which yielded a modest ontological experiment in a yoga practice. And Chapter 6 featured my ontological fragmentation as loosing
myself (and my space) in ontological experiment of an ethics of joy in relation to race and racism within the geopolitical borders of my lawn.

As Braidotti (2010) wrote, this type of work forces one to crack up a little, and though this became most perceptually salient in Chapter 6 (in loosing myself and my space), it was also a critical component of Chapters 4 and 5. Writing with Philip helped to move my cracked-up, onto-epistemological experiments forward. To reiterate, Philip was a composite character composed of various fragments of thoughts, voices, activities, and perspectives of various friends, professors, family members, and myself. Although the situations, comments, activities, and ideas associated with Philip were all very real, I presented them ambiguously to protect the identity of individuals in my life. It is worth noting, however, that in Chapter 4 Philip was a composite of myself and another friend. Philip could say the things I could not. He was the voice of myself, my other self, the one that despaired with such intensity that he thought living was not worth its trouble and pain. In generating a pattern of interference, I worked against my own tendencies and tropisms, my own stuck-in-grief-self.

Philip was not a representation, however, but an intensification of the non-representable—of various intensities that glowed so hot that I could scarcely mention them alone. Writing Philip into these modest onto-epistemological experiments afforded a means to speak the unspeakable. Making friends with death, for example, is slightly easier with a companion. Discussing the various forces that give my life its shape and form, that exceeds the personal, that proliferates differences, and that caused me to crack up, split, spill over into different identities, and meld with the world in unusual ways is made slightly easier with a friend. Writing in this way is indeed onto-epistemological, as the various iterations of Philip that
appear in this work is not so much an act of reflection as a melding of myself with the various others from which Philip was composed.

In Chapter 4, Philip and I talked about all these events of loved ones’ becoming-imperceptible, and we actually got fucked up. In doing so, however we do not remember separately because we melded in a composite. In character 5, the character I named Philip borrowed from various professors who made kind suggestions for my experiments in living. In Chapter 6 he was an atrociously impure, mercurial amalgamation of strangers, family members, and myself. There was no point to Philip’s existence except to move action along and in this way he risked becoming a trope in and of himself. But he was necessary for me because getting through this work without his companionship seemed too daunting of a task. Philip is the Watson to my Sherlock Holmes; the monster to my Frankenstein; the Marcy to my Peppermint Patty! Yet in naming this character, I chose Philip because the name is derived loosely from the Greek for of love. Without this companionship, and dare I say love, these modest onto-epistemological experiments in living may not have been possible, nor as rich.

Equally important to Philip’s companionship is the untiring and generous company of my dear friend Erin Bassett who created the various paintings featured throughout this dissertation. Erin is a visual artist and musician with whom I have a long history of collaboration. Throughout this dissertation, her paintings were inserted to break up the page with a visual resonance of the ideas discussed. Like Philip, these painting were not representations, but resonations, responses to the felt intensities of the ideas I discursively composed. Throughout the writing of these many pages, I emailed her copies to read. She then painted freely whatever was affectively felt in response. Emailing her paintings to me, I then rewrote some of my pages as a felt resonation of the visuals she rendered. On occasion, we sat across from one another at a
table where I wrote and she painted. We shared the experience of thinking, feeling, and acting in relation to this work as an additional onto-epistemological experiment.

We found ourselves in a reciprocal, positive feedback loop, a loop of affective resonations and reverberations. My writing spilled over into her painting, as she produced and published 30 plates from her encounters with my work. Her paintings, too, spilled over and influenced my writing. It was a manic attempt to enact joy, to relentlessly press ourselves toward a margin and an edge where we could no longer fully distinguish the origin of our respective works. Her paintings are hers—they territorialize her as the artist—and they were included herein with her permission and citation. Yet, they bear some of my words, as well as some of the words of theorists and philosophers with which I composed. We were willing to share credit and the images, and took immense joy not only in the sharing but also in producing them. There are potentials to affect and be affected in ways similar to Erin’s and my work. There are potentials for productive, positive feedback loops where pools of resonance can be created. Yet, what was most joyful for Erin and I was the coming together to do something creative.

Erin and I share very little in common, aside from our love of creating art, and it is this affective pulling together—through an affinity—that I wish to focus upon in my future inquiry. Much work is needed to forward a politics that does not repose upon filiation: identities based upon likeness or sameness, decent, or reterritorialized aggregates of populations. From this initial work with Erin, I began to see an affiliation, an attachment, and a belonging based not upon our respective identities but upon a shared affinity, a love, an affective investment in making art. I can envision a line of inquiry that investigates strange belongings shaped by, held
together by, and enduring through a germinal, affective force of love, the love of an activity, an object, a space, or idea, which is commensurate with the ethical work this dissertation initiates.

Yet, to evaluate this collection of modest onto-epistemological experiments, we must not is it right or wrong, but “does it work” (Massumi, 1987, p. xv). We must ask, “What new thoughts does it make possible to think? What new emotions does it make possible to feel? What new sensations and perceptions does it open in the body” (Massumi, 1992, p. 8). In many ways, Chapter 4 was the most important. Philip still lives! The experiment worked! He lived to write the second and third sections, and opened to feel something other than despair. He began to consider life as impersonal, as encompassing death, and as a relentlessly generative force in excess of the personal losses he experienced. It opened his body to feel the sensations of transversal movements across the plane of immanence to become-otherwise (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011): a becoming-music in forgetting some pain and remembering instances of joy.

In writing Chapter 4 I began to find a renewed faith in the world. It seemed less and less like a bad movie with mawkish dialogue and a pedestrian screenplay. In Chapter 5 I explored the trauma of seeing too much, which may also bear a potential for sustaining our bodies in the midst of trauma—a breath. Living as an “I” in the midst of many “eyes” may become sustainable with a modest “aye,” a humble affirmation. This is not the same as passive resignation, but an activity of living, of enacting joy as an affirmation of ambiguity, contingency and even hurt, anxiety, and fear. Time is complex, and living in-between a past that hurts and an uncertain future warrants a crack, a momentary suspension, whereby the seemingly benign act of breathing takes on political urgency: “The urgency is to reinvent, from the scene of survival, new idioms of the political, and of belonging itself, which requires what the baselines of survival should be in
the near future, which is, the future we are making” (Berlant, 2011, p. 262). Pounding a small
dint of breathability into the midst of suffocating circumstance is not only the recognition of the
necessity to escape the continual incitements to sovereignty, rationality, intentionality, and
willfulness but also an affirmation of multiple modes of sustaining life in spite of these
injunctions. If there is any doubt about the political urgency of breathing, consider Eric Garner’s
last words—“I can’t breathe”—which he repeated with increasing urgency as police officers held
him in a chokehold.

Fear, anxiety, and paranoia were targeted in the Chapter 6—not in the psychological
sense but as a modest onto-epistemological experiment that resists such clichés! Realizing the
impossibility of disentangling the complex forces of race and racism in my neighborhood and
beyond, I chose to actively work against these forces by leaving the borders of my own yard
open. In many ways, my improvised path, constructed from debris left by the destruction of my
fence, facilitated an easement, easing some tensions in my neighborhood. This small act actively
deterritorializes my own rights to property and privacy. The path worn into my lawn marks
ambiguity related to occupancy and ownership. As a path becomes worn into my lawn, its mark
names an ambiguous proprietary occupant. One question it raises is, “Who lives here?” A more
appropriate question, however, is, “Who passes here?” The answer to both questions is the
same, “A multiplicity.”

A self is always more than one (Manning, 2013), just as a body is always a social
phenomenon (Butler, 2009). Throughout this work, I attempted to trouble and disrupt the most
rock-like structures of identity—the ordering of life by language, the stories that surround our
bodies and name them as an “I,” and the territorial borders that circumscribe various zones of
proprietary identity. At times I named the small shifts and alterations my modest experiments in
living occasioned: becomings-animal, -plant, -vegetable, -music, -imperceptible, and -potential (Chapters 4 and 5). In Chapter 6, I used not specific names but, suggested—becoming-bastard, becoming-deteriorialized. Another way to describe this is to simply say, “I lost myself.” And I did.

I resonate deeply with Cho’s and Kim’s (2005) description of transgenerational hauntings experienced by those whose lives and bodies are in continual flux due to war and/or adoption—haunted as I am by my own experience as an adoptee and time spent in group homes and foster care. The sense of transience I attempted to capture in Chapter 6 brought back many haunting memories of fundamental and basic questions of belonging and identity I wrestled with during my childhood: To whom do I and where do I, belong? What is a family? And what is a home? Much like the in Chapter 5, where I became exposed and vulnerable to the gaze of others, leaving the borders of my lawn open and porous was contrary to what I desired and worked hard to produce most of my life—a secure sense of identity and belonging. In my decision to leave the fence unfinished, I do not suggest that my bastard identity (my proper, etymological nomination) was recovered and celebrated; rather, I suggest that it opened space for a potential to become-bastard, a potential to forsake any claim or rights to any properly nominated identity. In Chapter 4, I mentioned becoming a sui-generis, a singularity unbeholden to any filiation; here, I am suggesting becoming a sui-referential existential territory (Guattari, 1995): a “set of conditions that make it possible for individual and/or collective factors to emerge as a sui-referential existential territory, adjacent or in a determining position to an alterity that is itself subjective” (p. 196).

To think identity as a sui-referential existential territory, one must consider the body a complex of zones of intensity and fields of potential as well as the actual geographic and
geopolitical spaces in which a body moves, feels, and thinks (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/2009). A spatial consideration of the body views the skin, hair, lips, eyes, nostrils, and other organs not as referents to a type or kind, as a mode of reterritorialization upon race for example, but as affective zones that are fluid, in flux, and constantly differentiating from logics of types/kinds based upon what these zones gather to themselves or repulse. In my neighborhood, these zones encouraged an intensely paranoid gaze of suspicion—their real crime was not trespassing but being different from those along their path. In my yoga practice, I feared my skin was repulsive to the gaze of others. It is important to consider how these bodily zones affect and are affected by the physical spaces in which they live, move, and breathe.

In regards to race and racism, one cannot sit on the fence. There is no outside of race, everyone is implicated. However, one can cultivate conditions that make movement across a fence or border easier. In this work I attempted to exploit ambiguous spaces to facilitate movement across borders. Particularly in Chapter 6, this was quite literal. Since creating my improvised pathway and its attendant sign, I have met several people using the path. One passed through to help his friend repair a car on another street. Another pushed a lawn mower through, looking for odd jobs. The mower destroyed my little sign, and the pathway took new divergences. We cannot imagine what will come, but we can cultivate a less paranoid, more open andimaginative receptivity to a people to come.

Ultimately, this work was about learning how to live better and to enact joy in relation to ambiguity, uncertainty, and indeterminacy, particularly with regards to identity, relationships, and belonging. I hope this work leads to a dismantling of sacrosanct notions of consciousness and intentionality by exploring proprioception (cf. Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011), the dethroning of consciousness, as Deleuze and Guattari explained. We can learn to think of our
brains as the nervous hub where spatial-temporal-bodily assemblages are reterritorialized into various meanings, assigned various significations, and treated to various interpretations.

The space of this dissertation did not allow thorough discussions or explorations of proprioceptive entanglements—that is my work in the future. Additionally, future inquiry must necessarily involve greater exploration of music, of specific artistic works, genres, and artists. Music served as a conceptual language, a conceptual framework and a vehicle for exploring intensities of life. Though music and language are never symmetrical or analogous, thinking them together helped me escape the harsh orders words impose on life. (cf. Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011). Ultimately, however, this dissertation forced attention to the everyday. Joy, like life, is actually all around—in the everyday activities of talking, watching a movie, practicing yoga, taking a road trip, and sitting on a porch. If we are looking for the grand displays of joy we may miss its actualization in the micro-moments and micro-spaces of everyday activities. Furthermore, we may miss opportunities to enact joy—as the opening of spatiotemporal assemblages that otherwise seem stuck in a looping refrain. This dissertation offers two fundamental implications for the larger scholarly (and social) community: 1) attend to the seeming minutia, banalities, and mundanities of the everyday—that is where potentials for joyful life exist; and 2) contend with the everyday to open space to think, feel, and live different from the clichéd, pathological, normative, pre-authorized modes of existence they imply. Attending and contending to the everyday is not as simply as it may seem, particularly in the ways this dissertation demonstrates. It requires that we lay aside humanist, epistemological projects of understanding and/or critiquing the existence of clichéd, pathological tropisms (or modes of existence), and embrace a post-humanist ontological experimentation with how to actively produce difference as a life (Deleuze, 2005), to take up a more properly active and ethical
orientation to the everyday. The ethics involved in this dissertation questioned how I could cultivate conditions for enduring and sustaining life in the midst of grief, breathe in the midst of anxiety, and open space so people could walk from one place to another against the paranoic-segregative affects surrounding racial tensions in my neighborhood. My modest attempts to attend to these ethical questions and problems did not resolve them; rather, they remain very much like Chapter 6—ongoing and open-ended.

I doubt I know more than I did at the beginning of this project; however, as Law (2004) noted, “‘knowing’ is not the metaphor we need” (p. 2). And to be clear this project was not merely epistemological. It was primarily ontological. What I can say without ambiguity is that I live differently now than I did before. I fret much less about my writing or speech. My concern now is to keep moving and to embrace the entanglements of which I am always already a part. What I accomplished with my modest experiments in living cannot be taken as prescriptive but as a proscription against pathological ways of living that dare not venture from comfort, security, and safety. Thus, a third implication to the larger scholarly community is offered: Resist the cliché!

And with this last implication, I also offer an invitation to the larger scholarly community—to experiment. We can offer the world a million tiny experiments every day to counter the normalized pathological way of life we have been conditioned to accept. My advice would be not to worry about changing the world but to attend to the micro-levels of speech, breathing, and movement as a way to contend for an ethics of joy in the everyday. I do not think we should absolve ourselves from the minutia, banal, or mundane; rather, we do well to intently focus on these aspects of everyday life as the plane of a immanence, where new and different ways of living may be opened toward joy. I suggest we make art and philosophy of it and in the
midst of it. I hope we don’t fear those who are different but remember that we are always already entangled with them. There are a million and one ways to cultivate conditions for joy, to enact joy, and to live musically. Form a band, a pack. Invent a Philip, and make a pact to experiment. Collaborate, create, and compose with a Philip or an Erin! BECOME-MULTIPLE!

The challenge, therefore, is to not just to live and endure but also to generate, create, and compose! The everyday is everywhere, as is life and potentials for joy. Find pools of resonance and multiply openings, augmentations, and expansions of life’s capacities in the midst of the most stuck, looping refrains! Love, generously, even at the risk of losing yourselves! I lost myself long ago. I am imperceptible. To find intensity of life and joy, one does not need to leave the everyday behind or move past troubles (transcendence) but embrace it, experiment with it (immanence). When done ethically, one may find one’s self thinking, feeling, and living the unimaginable. One may speak, write, or paint words once thought vulgar but that now take on a vital intensity as an expression of life and joy!
Figure 18: Zappa Said (Bassett, 2014). Gouache on paper.


APPENDIX A

TOWARD A METHODOLOGICAL STYLE AND ANGLE OF APPROACH
Foucault wrote, “We are condemned to meaning” (Cited in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 88). This is perhaps nowhere more fully recognizable than in a search for methodological strategies commensurate with affect-based inquiry (Dewsbury, 2010). Although Foucault was indicating a certain inescapable and unavoidable imperative to locate meaning (Jackson, 2013), his words take a more literal tenor when read under the weight of “hegemonic and domanitory pretensions of certain versions or accounts of method” (Law, 2004, p. 4), which seem to invariably route inquiry toward issues of meaning. In spite of the considerable deconstructive work effectively carried out by poststructuralism, “a combination of empiricist ontology, positivist epistemology, and a scientific version of naturalism” constitutes an underlying “methodological positivism” (Steinmetz, 2005a, pp. 277-278), which persists as the “epistemological unconsciousness” of the social sciences (Steinmetz, 2005b). Though qualitative methodologies have long disavowed logical positivism/empiricism, these research methods are thoroughly permeated by this condition, despite contestations to the contrary (cf., St. Pierre, 2011; 2013; Lather & St. Pierre, 2013; Jackson & Mazzei, 2012; Coleman & Ringrose, 2013; Dewsbury, 2010).

When viewed from a theoretical orientation of affect, this condition is readily identifiably by Massumi’s (2002) ponderings: “The divorce proceedings of poststructuralism: terminable or interminable” (p. 27)? Insofar as Clough’s (2009) assertion that “attending to affect necessarily is performative, . . . [it] cannot be a matter of containment . . . interpretation, meaning, signification or representation” (p. 49) is correct; “creativity in research design and methods still needs to be unshackled” (Lorimer, 2005, p. 89). Although diagnosing the ways in which “methodology and methods lag behind” relatively well developed and sophisticated theorizing, and although the “need for methodological innovation and experimentation” (Lorimer, 2010, p.
238) is crucial, the problem is not merely a matter of bringing method up to speed, or playing “catch up,” with theory. It does not hold that theory and method occupy purely separate and distinct terrains; they always interpenetrate in myriad ways, thoroughly mangled, enmeshed, and mutually imbricated on all fronts: two sides of a single, but multi-sided coin. It may, in fact, be suggested that from a theoretical orientation of affect, certain accounts of method require less renovation and more reinvention, reinterpretation, and, in some cases, removal from the equation all together.

Law (2004) coined the phrase method assemblage as a way to highlight the ways in which theory and methods are both mutually constitutive and a creative enactment of the realities research putatively reflects, all of which flow together from “a hinterland of pre-existing social and material realities [that] have to be built up and sustained, . . . a bundle of ramifying relations” (p. 13). Law (2004) deployed the term “hinterland” in an attempt to draw attention to the all those “costly literary and material relations that include statements about reality and the realities themselves; . . . a topography of reality possibilities, impossibilities, and probabilities [as] a concrete metaphor for absence and presence” (p. 160). Method, as such, always already presents limited possibilities for inquiry’s results. Affect-based inquiry is primarily concerned with potentials rather than possibilities: The distinction lying in the former term’s signification of a pluripotent zone of the not-yet-determined and the latter term’s indication of a pre-existing form, a back-projected stencil of a pre-determined reality that is overlaid upon inquiry. Thus inquiry often is a matter of resemblances, reproductions, and tracings of an already-determined reality-possibility.

When scholars take up affect as a theoretical approach, methodology ceases to be a matter of orthodox procedure, protocol, and strategy; rather, it becomes a site of political
contestation. Within this domain, “methodology is far from dull: it is extremely political” (Dewsbury, 2010, p. 323). So much so, that Dewsbury (2010) called for a “serious political critique of the restrictions that methodological protocols might impose on what can count as knowledge,” and, following Thrift (2004), described affective inquiry as a performance of “cutting into the ‘dogmatic image of what counts as thought’ and destabilizing the ‘know-and-tell’ politics of much sociological methodology” (p. 321). When it comes to amorphous, irregular, indefinite, and ephemeral qualities of life, such as affect, it is questionable whether “knowledge” or “‘knowing’ is the metaphor we need” (Law, 2004, p. 2). And from a Spinozan-Deluezeian orientation to affect, the world itself is in continual motion, flux, and transformation that may, in many ways, “necessarily exceed our capacity to know” and defy any form of “orderly accounting” (Law, 2004, p. 6).

The operation of methodological positivism is, from this perspective, one of distorting complexity into clarity and generally making a further mess of what is already diffuse (Law, 2004). Conversely, a practice of “deliberate imprecision” (Law, 2004, p. 3) through what Law described as a slow, vulnerable, quiet, multiple, modest, and uncertain method, may afford ways to extend what is possible or barely possible to think, feel, and do in relation to the rhythms and sequences of contemporary social life. Though Law’s (2004) concept of method assemblage signals a coming together of heterogeneous elements from a highly politicized hinterland that is always already in process, and not fully under any form of deliberate control, the concept also indicates an unavoidable and part-intentional enactment of relations and boundaries between what is present and absent. It is in this latter form that method assemblage can generate “more flexible boundaries, and different forms of presence and absence. Other possibilities can be imagined, for instance if we attend to non-coherence” (Law, 2004, p. 85).
It is in this sense that method assemblage inheres potentials to disrupt the automaton practices of normative research. A method assemblage—as a part-intentional, yet open system—is created through the ongoing work of inquiry, as heterogeneous elements converge in ways to better attune to and amplify the gaps, holes, discontinuities, and disconcerting elements of research in its iterative enactment that MacLure (2013a, b) argued are either subtracted, dismissed, or perhaps missed altogether under normative methods operating under the broad rubric of coding. These are the very elements that can afford a heightened attunement to affect and potentials for extended thought, feelings, and actions. What Law (2004) suggested is a “broader, looser, more generous” (p. 4) version of inquiry, one that no longer seeks “the definite, the repeatable, the more or less stable” (p. 6). Yet, the question remains: how does one proceed along these lines intelligently without assuming anything goes? What evaluative criterion is useful to gauge the efficacy of such a mode of inquiry?

The purpose of this article is to attempt to attend to these questions, as well as forward a methodological “style” or “angle of approach” (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010; Massumi, 2002) commensurate with a Spinozan-Deleuzian theory of affect. Following Dewsbury (2010), this methodological “style” is offered in relation to a series of proscriptions against normative modes of inquiry rather than prescriptions for an “orthodox” approach to affective inquiry. The “style” of engagement advocated affords ways to better attune to affect and the ways it is induced, transduced, and transmitted across human and nonhuman bodies. Additionally, this approach is grounded in both the form of critique Dewsbury (2010) called for and the Spinozan-Deleuzian theory of affect espoused by Massumi (2002) as an ontological orientation. This article is organized in three sections: The first attempts to provide an overview of a Spinozan-Deleuzian theory of affect; the second section is an attempt to articulate an angle of approach for empirical
inquiry; and the third attempts to demonstrate a mode of application. Throughout this article the aim is to attend to matters of “how” as described by Seigworth and Gregg (2010):

The “what” of affect often gives way to matters of “how” in the rhythm or angle of approach: thus, why a great many [scholars] do not sweat the construction of any elaborate step-by-step methodology much at all, but rather come to fret the presentation or the style of presentation, the style of being present, more than anything else. (p. 14)

**A Spinozan-Deleuzian Theory of Affect**

It is important to note that there is no one single theory of affect. There is no unified oeuvre that delimits this theoretical terrain. Multiple disciplines have taken up affect in myriad ways, each infusing particular nuance into their theorization (e.g., Sedgwick & Frank, 1995; Massumi, 2002; Brennan, 2004). Regardless, the primary source for how affect is theorized is Spinoza’s (1677/1994) monolithic work *The Ethics*. Although Deleuze is uniformly considered the heir to Spinoza’s philosophy, his theory of affect is a complex amalgamation of philosophies stemming not only from Spinoza, but also those of Nietzsche and Bergson (cf., Colebrook, 2007). The remarkable difference in Deleuze’s theory of affect is his development and articulation of an ontology of becoming. When affect is espoused herein as theoretical orientation, emphasis is given to this ontological difference. This ontology is crucial, although difficult to understand, as it necessarily involves the introduction of several concepts that overturn the orthodoxy of an essentialized human subject. The theoretical orientation discussed below is labeled Spinozan-Deleuzian, and is intended to present the ways in which the two philosophers’ work merge in significant ways; however, this discussion is but one articulation and should not be taken as *the* authoritative and definitive interpretation. This Spinozan-Deleuzian orientation to affect nonetheless affords a way to think about existence and the
potentials for change. The Spinozan-Deleuzian tradition espoused below affords means to move beyond the image of a self as both the first cause and final director of ends, life as enclosed and contained in individual bodies, and time as the narrativizable, linear sequence of meanings (Deleuze, 1970/1988; Colebrook, 2007; Massumi, 2002).

Spinoza’s (1677/1994) theory of affect is a crucial beginning to understanding the fundamental differences Deleuze’s (1970/1988) and Deleuze and Guattari’s (1972/2004; 1980/2011) philosophy posed. Equally important to note is affect does not equate to emotion as commonly assumed. Emotion is affect “owned and recognized . . . the sociolinguistic fixing of [its] quality” (Massumi, 2002, p. 28). Contrary to emotion, affect is the impersonal and open-endedly social “force or forces of encounter” (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010, p. 2) that arise between bodies (human and nonhuman alike), and manifests as moods, atmospheres, and feeling tones that “can become the nonphenomenal background of existence or the affective tone or generic context of a way of life” (Clough, 2009, p. 49). Its origins are always accidental (Spinoza, 1677/1994) and affect is without teleological ends—it “is purely transitive” (Deleuze, 1970/1988, p. 21). Affect registers as intensities, flows, and modulations of tempo, speed and slowness, often autonomically “at the surface of the body, at its interface with things” (Massumi, 2002, p. 25). As an impersonal force of encounter, affect directly corresponds to a body’s capacity to act and be acted upon either to a greater or lesser capacity, signaling either an intensification or diminution of life (Spinoza, 1677/1994; Deleuze, 1970/1988).

Intensification or diminution of life likewise corresponds to either joy or sadness, respectively, which indicated the movement of a body into either a greater or lesser state of perfection (Spinoza, 1677/1994). That is to say, a body is either removed from (sadness) or approaches (joy) its ultimate capacity to do things (Deleuze, 1970/1988). The joyful passions (or
affects, or modes of existence) result from the forces of encounters with bodies that enter into, or join with, a body in a complementary mode of composition (Spinoza, 1677/1994). It enhances and compounds that body’s capacity to act, or its degree of power. Contrariwise, forces of encounters result in a diminution of a capacity to act, or degree of power, if the bodies tend towards decomposition: the sad passions (Deleuze, 1970/1988).

Contrary to emotions, these passions are never personal and are not a matter of consciousness. Consciousness is a three-fold illusion that takes in effects yet remains ignorant of the causes by which they are determined (Spinoza, 1677/1994). Consciousness appeases this ignorance by “reversing the order of things, by taking effects for causes (the illusion of final[ity])” (Deleuze, 1970/1988, p. 20, emphasis in original). In so doing, it assumes volition over the body, which indicates the illusion of freedom. When the sufficiency of consciousness runs out, and is incapable of imagining itself to be both the first cause and director of ends, “it invokes a God endowed with understanding and volition, operating by means of final causes or free decrees in order to prepare for man [sic] a world commensurate with His glory and His punishments (the theological illusion)” (Deleuze, 1970/1988, p. 20, emphasis in original).

Thus, the groundwork for a posthumanist ontology is laid: a Spinozan-Deleuzian orientation to affect is incompatible with hierarchical or vertical ontologies, whether the Aristotelian metaphysics of genus/species/individual or the Kantian God/Man/Nature chain of being (Bennett, 2010). It may be rightly noted that from this orientation, there are only affects, as capacities and forces, that assemble bodies in a process of creative involution that simultaneously deterritorializes and reterritorializes entities as modes of existence: Ontogenesis (Bogue, 2003; Massumi, 2002). It is a horizontal, lateral, and sideways ontology. These passions (joy and sadness, corresponding to capacities to act and be acted upon), according to a
Spinozian-Deleuzian orientation to affect, are always constructed in assemblages with other bodies. Spinoza (1677/1994) refused a distinction between mind and body in his philosophy, and he defined a body in terms of its kinetic and affective capacities. That is, Spinoza defined a body by the motion and rest (speeds and slownesses) between the infinite number of particles that compose it and by the thresholds of its capacity to affect and be affected. The body, therefore, cannot be thought as a closed system, as simply an organization of organs, substances, functions, or as even as a subject or object (Deleuze, 1970/1988; Massumi, 2002). From this fundamental difference, the body as an organism—as a closed system—is obsolete. The body is produced in assemblages, which signals the ongoing obsolescence of the body as the condition of change. Each incremental increase or decrease in a body’s capacity to act signals a change and renders its previous state obsolete (Massumi, 2002).

All forms, functions, and positionalities, thus, emerge from a body’s movement and affectivity, not the opposite (Massumi, 2002). Bodies are, thus, a matter of invention, ontological experimentation on the plane of immanence, or “the immanent plane of Nature,” which is Spinoza’s (1677/1994) concept of a single of substance and univocity of attributes of which all things are modes. Each thing “is defined by the arrangements of motions and affects into which it enters, whether these arrangements are artificial or natural” (Deleuze, 1970/1988, p. 124). Additionally, for Spinoza (1677/1994), all bodies are conative and associative modes composed of a greater number of extensive parts that come to it from elsewhere (Bennett, 2010). Bodies can be simple or complex, or to use Bennett’s (2010) terms, “protobodies” or “mosaicized” (p. 22). In both cases the body is a mode and expresses conatus as either a stubborn tendency to persist or as the effort to maintain the movements and rest that define that mode (Deleuze, 1970/1988). Regardless, “what it means to be a mode is . . . to form alliances
and enter assemblages: it is to mod(e)ify and be modified by others,” which is “not under the
control of any one mode—no mode is an agent in the hierarchical sense” (Bennett, 2010, p. 22).
The term “assemblage” does not suggest a static organization of predetermined parts into an
already-conceived whole; rather, it is the process of heterogeneous elements organizing in
relation to their qualities and affects in such a way to constitute a group and express a particular

Although there is an obligatory contingency to assemblages—always imbued with a
certain chance—it is not accurate to classify assemblages as completely random or arbitrary.
Assemblages are constellations of elements organizing “in such a way as to converge
[(immanence)] artificially and naturally; an assemblage, in this sense, is a veritable invention”
(Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 406). Affects “circulate and are transformed within the
assemblage” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 257). That is, what a thing can do is modified,
changed either to a greater or lesser degree of perfection (joy or sadness), and the ontological
status of anything is emergent from what it can do, its capacities, and its continual
mod(e)ification in and through assemblages. Because each mode suffers the actions on it by
other modes, continual (re)invention is required if it is to persist. Modes “must seek new
encounters to creatively compensate for the alterations or affections it suffers” (Bennett, 2010, p.
22).

Since a capacity to act is always modified by a thing’s assembling with other bodies,
ontology is a matter of becoming rather than being—the former term indicating continual
movement, flow, change, and modification and the latter term indicating a peculiar stasis and
arrestment. “Affects are becomings: [sometimes] they diminish our strength of action and
decompose our relations (sadness), sometimes they make us stronger through augmenting our
force, and making us enter into a faster and higher [capacity for acting] (joy)” (Deleuze & Parnet, 1977/2007, p. 60). Affect marks a body’s “belonging to a world of encounters or; a world’s belonging to a body of encounters but also, in non-belonging, through all those far sadder (de)compositions” (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010, p. 10). As such, Massumi (2002) described affect as a “transidividual, transductive contagion” (p. 121), as “world-glue” (p. 217) that spreads socially to form an overall mood affording potentials for change. And if theories of affect portend anything, it is a body’s capacity for change, “to an elsewhere and otherwise than it is, in any here and now” (Massumi, 2002, p. 5). Yet, it does not follow that affective ontological becomings always promise something better “as if affect were always already sutured into a progressive or liberatory politics . . . as if affect were somehow producing always better states of being” (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010, p. 10). Affects, as forces of encounters, both “impinge and extrude for worse and for better, but (most usually) in-between” (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010, p. 2).

In contrast to the anthropocentric, hierarchal ontology inherent in much of normative modes of inquiry—which, it must be acknowledged, does not have a stellar record of success in ameliorating human suffering—Bennett (2010) suggested another “way to promote human health and happiness: to raise the status of the materiality of which we are composed” (Bennett, 2010, p. 12). The ethical aim is “to distribute value more generously” (Bennett, 2010, p. 13) to bodies “across a wider range of ontological types” (p. 9). That is, to think beyond the anthropocentric concept of human being toward “extension into the posthuman . . . bringing to full expression . . . what the human shares with everything it is not: a bringing out of its inclusion in matter, its belonging in the . . . material world in which every being unfolds” (Massumi, 2002, p. 128). What Massumi (2002) suggested is the ontogenesis of anything can be understood by examining
its affective capacities. Beyond subjective meaning, attention must be given to the impersonal forces between human and nonhuman bodies alike that give emergence to various existential modes. Bennett (2010) advocated for this posthumanist orientation as a potential to expand capacities by understanding how nonhuman ontological types may intensify life.

This move toward a posthumanist ontology is commensurate with a postsecular ethics, which Braidotti (2010) described as “the ethical process of transforming negative into positive passions, introduce[ing] time and motion into the frozen enclosure of seething pain . . . creating the conditions for endurance and hence for a sustainable future” (p. 214). Time is not static, end-driven, or merely a matter of past-present-future; rather, from the Spinozan-Deleuzian philosophical tradition, it is better conceived as duration: the state of suspended animation, an “in-between of space and time” composed of “accumulated movements [that] bleed into one another and fold in upon [a] body” (Massumi, 2002, p. 57). Duration indicates the “impossible timing of the present in the passing of time . . . and [illustrates] affect as bodily capacity, or incipient act” (Clough, 2010, p. 213). It signals the affective event as that which is “quasi corporeal” moving between time-space in a “pure relationality of process, . . . a measureless gap in and between bodies and things, an incorporeal interval of change . . . it is a time that does not pass, that only comes to pass” (Massumi, 2002, pp. 57-58).

A Spinozan-Deleuzian orientation to affect, thus, confronts social scientists with a series of fundamentally problematic assumptions if inquiry is intended to locate, interpret, measure, signify, and represent experience and/or meaning. Affect exceeds linear conceptions of time, sociolinguistic registers of meaning, and any transcendent, explanatory, and/or structural concepts (e.g., “Capitalism,” “the State,” “the Individual,” etc.). Affect-based inquiry has no repose in such immobile concepts. In deed, affect-based inquiry returns to the “twilight zone . . .
that bustling zone of indistinction” (Massumi, 2010, p. 66) where structural binaries are thoroughly muddled and blurred to such an extent that they lose relevance. The ontological orientation required for affective inquiry presupposes a world that is in flux, continual movement, and defined not only by actual properties and dimensions but also by virtual capacities—an ontology of becomings (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011; Bogue, 2003; Massumi, 2002). The stasis, arrestment, and stability assumed by normative modes of inquiry is insufficient when attending to such a world. The question, then begs, how does one inquire into such a world?

A Methodological Style and Angle of Approach

Having articulated a Spinozan-Deleuzian theory of affect and demonstrated the incommensurability of this theoretical orientation with various foundational concepts (i.e., transcendent concepts of various stripes), there are two proscriptions that must be leveled. The first is, most appropriately, set against foundationalism; the second, against interpretation. Along with these two proscriptions, there are corresponding incitements to utilization, experimentation, and speculative philosophical engagement. Consider these proscriptions and corresponding incitements as overarching theoretical commitments for affective inquiry. On a more micro-scale, five stylistic maneuvers are offered to link the overarching commitments to a lived-theoretic-practice of inquiry.

It must be noted that by setting forth the following methodological style and angle of approach, it is not a one-size-fits-all, universal, or mechanistic approach that can be overlaid onto each and every research project. Rather, this should be taken as merely one articulation of an approach, as broad considerations that may serve to spur further methodological inventiveness as unique as the projects they are intended to investigate. In deed, for all of the theoretically
sophisticated work generated by scholars attending to affect (e.g., Bennett, 2012; Chen, 2012; Cvetkovich, 2012; Berlant, 2010; 2011; Stewart, 2007; Brennan, 2004; Massumi, 2010; 2002), there is no model, no blueprint, no “how-to” manual to follow. In the absence of any existing methodological guidance, theory is to be intentionally privileged as the driving impetus of empirical inquiry (cf., Jackson & Mazzei, 2012; Massumi, 2002; Gregg, 2010; Stewart, 2007).

To reiterate, “attending to affect necessarily is performative, . . . [it] cannot be a matter of containment . . . interpretation, meaning, signification or representation” (p. 49). Conventional humanist qualitative research, thus, is insufficient for affect-based inquiry. Humanist qualitative inquiry, based upon subject/object and observer/observed hierarchical divides, is fundamentally problematic for the horizontal and posthumanist ontological orientation required for affective inquiry. Methods relying on researcher interpretation and analysis via coding systems, are also problematic (cf., MacLure, 2013a; b). Thus, affective inquiry must adhere to a “broader, looser, more generous” (Law, 2004, p. 4) version of inquiry, one that no longer seeks “the definite, the repeatable, the more or less stable” (p. 6), and one that subverts the hegemony of “methodological positivism” (Steinmetz, 2005a, p. 277) persisting as the “epistemological unconsciousness” of the social sciences (Steinmetz, 2005b).

Schizoanalysis (cf., Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/2004; 1980/2011; Guattari & Zayani, 1998) is a useful theoretical tool for leveraging space for alternative approaches. Schizoanalysis is not a methodology; Rather, it is an orientation to knowledge as lived. It fuses theory and practice together as a mode of lived-knowing in which we all participate in the creation of multiple realities. Additionally, schizoanalysis rejects the authority and tradition of humanistic methods, which Biddle (2010) described as “the application of a finite and structured way of doing things, the logic of the assembly line applied to the production of human psycho-
simulacra” (p. 19). By refusing hierarchical dyads and reductionist comparisons, schizoanalysis seeks difference by examining diverse entities (material, cultural, discursive, etc.) mutually imbricated in assemblages (Biddle, 2010). The possibility for change is, thus, always immanent and “it is the positive force recognized as ‘potential’” (Biddle, 2010, p. 20). Such difference must be made—the prospect of cold, hard data collection and analysis detached from an assemblage is anathema to schizoanalysis—it does not exist as a thing in itself waiting to be discovered (Biddle, 2010).

Schizoanalysis is a provocative term that has garnered critique, as many have interpreted it as valorizing mental illness (cf., Grosz, 1994); however, the term is not intended to glorify madness. Rather, it denotes a refusal of the presumed unity of the subject in favor of multiplicities while also acknowledging the schizoid conditions of late capitalist society that create unavoidable tensions, contradictions, and paradoxes. Schizoanalysis provides a framework to attend to these conditions without promising a resolution or reconciliation. Furthermore, it affords a framework for the “intimate integration, interaction, intervention, and subterfuge of the material and discursive in every aspect of its constitution for the purpose of effecting change to the socius and not to reify representation” (Biddle, 2010, p. 19).

Proscription 1:

“Refuse the “straight-laced and straight-faced” (Massumi, 2002, p. 69). Schizoanalysis is “playful, does not conform to logical reasoning, and promotes intellectual creativity” (Biddle, 2010, p. 20). By describing the situation broadly as a chicken-and-egg scenario, Massumi (2002) identified the ways in which foundationalism invariably returns and haunts the more established modes of social scientific research. On one hand, the individual may be taken as the constitutive “chicken” of society: “When notions such as function, exchange, contract, or reason
are used to explain the constitution of society, the individual is the chicken” (Massumi, 2002, p. 68). On the other hand, society may likewise serve as this constitutive “chicken” from which individuals are interpellated: “Approaches privileging such notions as structure, the symbolic, semiotic system, or textuality look first to what the other wing puts second: an intersubjective frame. Society now figures as an a priori, a principle of intersubjectivity hatching individual subject-eggs” (Massumi, 2002, p. 68).

Although the former constitutive-chicken of the individual can be discarded as more or less appealing to a myth of origins, the latter merely “effects an inversion of the first foundationalism” (Massumi, 2002, p. 68). Each wing, in its own way, operates by order of subtraction: the former by subtracting the social and the latter by subtracting the individual. Massumi (2002) identified a third, mutant wing—hybrid approaches—that sought to effect change by queering and bordering the other wings, yet fell short insofar as such approaches retained a necessary reference to their progenitors, “without which they vaporize into logical indeterminacy” (p. 69). Each of the three wings refers back to a form of foundationalism that Massumi (2002) labeled the “straight-laced and straight-faced” (p. 69). And perhaps this is an insoluble problem.

Yet, another approach is possible if the middle, the in-between, is given a logical consistency and ontological status of its own—the failure of the hybrids (Massumi, 2002). Such an ontological status is indispensable if social change is to be conceptualized as anything other than a negation, deviation, rupture, or subversion of the already constituted, determined, and foundational (Massumi, 2002). This is a methodological move quite contrary to common approaches characterized as empirical, which typically operate by taking
pregiven terms, extracting a permutational system of implicit positionings from their form, projecting that system to metaphysical point before the givenness of the terms, and developing the projection as a generative a priori mapping—these moves are common, in varying ways, to phenomenological, structuralist, and many poststructuralist approaches. They back-project a stencil of the already-constituted to explain its constitution, thus setting up a logical time-slip, a vicious hermeneutic circle. (Massumi, 2002, p. 70)

Under such empirical operations, how can anything new be actualized, if it is already given?

In response to this question, I offer the first of the stylistic maneuvers referred to earlier: Broaden, rather than focus, the field of vision so as to operate by additivity rather than subtraction. To operate by additivity is to replace the ontological “verb ‘to be’ . . . [with] the conjunction, ‘and . . . and . . . and’” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/2011, p. 25). This is a move commensurate with a horizontal orientation of the world that rejects the vertical, hierarchical ontology typified by Deleuze and Guattari’s (1980/2011) figure of the tree of knowledge. Schizoanalysis does not operate by either/or comparisons; it is not dialogic or didactic. It is a process that resists any form of exclusion in favor of exuding and (per)forming the multiple (Bates & Stroup, 2007). Yet, this is not to suggest that schizoanalysis is a form of synthesis. Rather, it rides difference and takes contradictions and tensions as propitious routes to split, divide, and become multiple (Bates & Stroup, 2007). The methodological rallying cry of the approach advocated here is, thus, “make multiple” (Massumi, 2002).

In addition, affective inquiry is also concerned with the qualitatively more that exceeds structural foundations, specifically movement and sensation. As Massumi (2002) noted, much research of the past two decades tended to investigate “body—(movement/sensation)—change,” but by bracketing the two unmediated middle terms have “significantly missed the two outside
terms” (Massumi, 2002, p. 1). Sensation signals an always more to the less of perception: “Sensation is the registering of the multiplicity of potential connections in the singularity of a connection actually underway” (Massumi, 2002, pp. 92-93). According to Van Doorn (2013), perception, along with place, memory, and imagination, is one of the primary “constitutive components of qualitative knowledge production” (p. 394). Yet, Massumi (2002) asserted that affective inquiry must look to that which exceeds perception, memory, and experience: “sensation is the key to accessing the more-than regularized action and perception” (p. 104).

To narrow the gaze of research to the body or change alone is to miss sensation, and with it, movement. Here, the second stylistic maneuver is proffered: Attend to the literality of movement. “Look only at movements—and they will bring you to matter” (Massumi, 2002, p. 206). To be brought to matter is to be brought to the point where the concrete and the abstract converge in potentials for more: “In motion, a body is in an immediate, unfolding relation to its own nonpresent potential to vary” (Massumi, 2002, p. 4). That is to say, the potential to vary, to change, for difference, is real but abstract; it is material but perhaps not-yet-materialized, signaling a futurity of potential that exists virtually in duration even if it never fully arrives in actualization (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010). Attention to movement attunes inquiry to affect as a very real-material-but-incorporeal dimension of the body—“of it, but not it . . . real, material, but incorporeal” (Massumi, 2002, p. 5). This incorporeal dimension is to the body as energy is to matter, “mutually convertible modes of the same reality” (Massumi, 2002, p. 5). Through attunement to this real-but-abstract dimension of the body, the ontogenetic difference within assemblages can be conceived as that which emerges from movement, sensation, and affect as a point of empirical investigation (Massumi, 2002).
Law’s (2004) incitement to practice “deliberate imprecision” can be elaborated slightly further in a third stylistic maneuver, building upon a heightened awareness of the literality of movement: Practice inattention equally vigorously as attention. This practice necessarily should be equally applied as tools for any form of engagement with an empirical field of investigation, whether that is in reading, writing, observing, listening, etc. When engaging a text, for example, one does not merely see letters, words, and their relative meanings. One sees though the letters, words, and meaning towards periodic moments of interest, confusion, and distraction. These moments are signaled by bodily movements such as a furrowed brow, rolled eyes, or rapidly turned pages, clicked hyperlinks, or changed channels. Likewise, the practice of writing is thoroughly embodied, marked more so by physical movements—speeds and slownesses corresponding diversely to gradients of attention and inattention—than merely the construction of letters and words. The question is, thus, what do the gradients of attention and inattention via bodily movements indicate about the perception (or lack of perception) of affect: what is being perceived, lost, crowded out, or intensified affectively; and what potentials exist as a virtual in the actual?

Finally, it is critical to note that writing affect-based inquiry within a schizoanalytic framework, the location of the researcher is not omnipresent, outside, or external: “researchers are situated within the analytic body, and are neither central nor authoritative” (Biddle, 2010, p. 20). The process is thoroughly collective, “it works from the inside-out, rather than the outside in—as even the most immersive ethnography does” (Biddle, 2010, p. 20). When applied to the “almost-imperceptible matter of what makes us act, feel, and think, schizoanalysis is capable of producing warm bodies of data” (Biddle, 2010, p. 20), or, conversely, to “keep the researcher alive” to data, “to change and chance, to . . . new twists and turns of direction and focus”
As such, schizoanalysis is an experiment in “generating new productive constellations” of social arrangements (Biddle, 2010, p. 20). Within schizoanalysis there is no final word, no authoritative writing, no conclusive, brute, evincing data of a reality: “Expression, the collective operative goal of research methodologies, is the primary enemy as it poses a meaning outside of and detached from the process and hence blocks the process” (Biddle, 2010, p. 20).

Proscription 2:

“Experiment, never interpret. Make programs, never make phantasms . . . But from fragment to fragment is constructed a living experiment in which interpretation begins to crumble, in which there is no longer perception or knowledge, secret or divination (Deleuze & Parnet, 1977/2007, pp. 48-49).

Affective inquiry cannot be relegated to schemas of coding, decoding, or providing alternative readings of social formations (Massumi, 2002). All such methodological moves brings meaning or alternative meanings back into frame, even if the intent is to forward an understanding of a structure of a socially constructed meaning. From the perspective of schizoanalysis, the social world and its “assemblages are NOT to be interpreted” (Biddle, 2010, p. 20). The question is not one of structure or meaning but of utility: What can an assemblage do; how can things be reconfigured to do something different?

Stylistic maneuver 4: Utilize over analyze. Jackson and Mazzei (2012) advocated a methodological mode of “plugging” (p. 4) data, theory, and multiple researcher-selves into each other in ways that generate new connectives, become mutually constitutive, and creative of something new. They conceived data as a “little machine” that must be plugged into other machines (theory, multiple subjectivities, etc.) in order to do something. Although Jackson and
Mazzei (2012) specifically called for a disruption of the theory/practice binary through “plugging in,” their model still relies heavily upon a distinction between theory and data in order that one might be plugged into the other. While effective and generative, their results still closely resemble alternative readings of a coded social milieu.

This too may be an insoluble problem; however, in spite of Jackson and Mazzei’s (2012) movement back towards a foundation in their approach, they offered an initial way to rethink the functions of theory and data. Yet, their work can be extended in ways more congruent with the Deleuzoguattarian theories from which they built their texts. For example, a more closely aligned approach may propose that theory is data; or, at least, there is no “data” without “theories” that give them occasion to appear (St. Pierre, 2013). Again, as Law (2004) made clear, the relation between so-called “theory” and “data” is more complex than that purported in certain hegemonic versions or accounts of method. To this it may be rightfully added that such accounts dictate what can be construed as data, “evidence, warrants, claims, reason, knowledge, and, of course, truth” (St. Pierre, 2013, p. 1).

Nonetheless, one must begin somewhere. And from the “style” advocated here, that somewhere can be anywhere. Dewsbury (2010) argued that inquiry is already underway the moment one begins to think about a potential topic, engage with theories, and develop questions. Methods emerge in process. It is arguable that, from Dewsbury’s (2010) perspective, the beginning of affect-based inquiry necessarily involve the contested site of what counts as knowledge, thought, and method. From the approach advanced within this article the beginnings are doubtless within the affective middle, where one lives and engages with the world in its vast complexity. The end point of affect-based inquiry, however, is not the arrival at a “truth” or “meaning,” but to do something, to make something different, new, and generative in
the complex lived-space of the affective middle. Yet, there is one last stylistic maneuver to forward: Wherever one looks to inquire, “see the body get rigged. See the flesh suffuse with artifice, making it as palpably political as it is physical. For the artifice is always cued, and the cuing is collective” (Massumi, 2002, p. 66). The body is always already rigged, and this is equally so for those engaging in research. It is imperative to understand this rigging, particularly in various research assemblages.

**Toward an Application**

To summarize the previous section, two proscriptions were leveled against foundationalism and interpretation. Using schizoanalysis as a tool to leverage these proscriptions, affective inquiry was described as an experimental approach to lived-knowledge in ways commensurate with a horizontal ontological orientation. Connecting these overarching theoretical commitments to the micro-scale of praxis, a series of five stylistic maneuvers were posited. These stylistic maneuvers are summarized thusly: 1) adopt a broad field of vision to operate by additivity rather than subtraction; 2) attend to the literality of movement to attune to the incorporeal dimensions of the body; 3) practice inattention as vigorously as attention so as to question what is affectively happening within engagement with the world; 4) utilize over analyze to make something new and different; and 5) witness the rigging of the body as a collective politicizing process.

Taken together, this one articulation of an approach to affect-based inquiry moves away from conventional humanist research methods and is more aligned to what may be broadly identified as a Deleuzian mode of inquiry (e.g., Lather, 2013; Coleman & Ringrose, 2013; Davies, 2010; Clough, 2010). Such inquiry is intrinsically “affirmative and experimental” (St. Pierre, 2013, p. 7), and places primacy on philosophy over the epistemic: “Thought enables
rather than represents being” (p. 7). Thus, affective inquiry must examine new modes of existence emerging in thought. Davies (2010) emphasized focusing on a specific case of a concept, or a case-of-thought. “A case,” in this sense, is empirical—the Deleuzian emphasis on concrete singularities rather than abstractions: “You place yourself where thought has already started, as close as possible to a singular case and to the movement of thought” (Badiou, 2000, p. 13). From this view, the case is not an object for thought, but “what forces thought and renders it impersonal” (Badiou, 2000, p. 13). The case may provide an empirical point of investigation, but is not an end-in-itself. It denotes a mode of inquiry where thought is unfolded contemporaneously and concurrently throughout close inspection of thought already moving around a concept in various circuits (Davies, 2010). It is the catalyzing of emergent thought, which Massumi (2002) described as “philosophy in action” (p. 176). It is experimentation with the not-yet-determined potentialities of becomings, directly emergent in thought.

To engage with a specific case-of-thought is to perform “a creative repetition of concepts” and not an apprehension of a reality in itself (Badiou, 2000, p. 15). Contrary to a concrete phenomenology of signs and images, a Deleuzian mode of inquiry seeks to engage in a “conceptual practice” (Tomlinson & Galeta, 1989, p. xv) whereby, through a repeated practice of the case-of-thought, “an adventitious value” or an “impersonal power of the concept” emerges in its movement and circulation, not in what the concept is presumed to “give to be thought” (Badiou, 2000, p. 15). Thus, one may begin with a concrete-case-of-thought in a repetitious conceptual practice, following its circulation in various directions to generate an augmented value of the concept.

Multiple fragments of social life, given rise in relation to the specific case-of-thought, are assembled into the repetitious practice to augment its value. Anything can be a fragment,
although Deleuze privileged items from literary traditions. The stylistic maneuvers outlined above can focus engagement with such fragments so as to avoid slipping into foundationalism and/or interpretation. The intention is not to engage until a meaning is discovered between the lines as is common in documentary research (McCulloch, 2004; Prior, 2003), but to (per)form a rhizomatic or nomadic engagement (Deleuze & Guattari, 2011/1980), seeking the disconcerting moments where meaning unravels (MacLure, 2013a, b) as adventitious points to generate new connectives (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). Repetition affords a way to become intimately acquainted with the details of the case, and to find the singular example, or “haecceity” (Deleuze & Guattari, 2011/1980), of the concept in action.

Haecceity is the just-this-ness of a situation:

a moment of pure speed and intensity (an individuation) – like when a swimming body becomes-wave and is momentarily suspended in nothing but an intensity of forces and rhythms. Or like when body becomes-horizon such that it feels only the interplay between curves and surfaces and knows nothing of here and there, observer and observed. (Halsey, 2007, p. 146)

A haecceity of the affects involved in the case-of-thought is the becomings sought. It is from this point onward that connections are to be made, further experimentation and multiplication. It is the burgeoning of utilization, invention, and creation, the emergence of a potential towards new thought, feelings, and actions.

An additional repetitive move is always in writing. Each haecceity must be written and rewritten to further explore differences that can be generated through multiple iterations. The intention is not for a more refined account, but for further experimentation. The repetitive process of engaging and writing across a broad range of fragments of social life generates a
portfolio of exposures to the concept in action, which is less about meaning, or even depth, than it is about finding “lightening rods for thought” (Dewsbury, 2010, p. 327).

By engaging a case-of-thought according to the stylistic maneuvers described above one may identify how becomings emerged through the affective assemblages of various social worlds and understand the ongoing transference, modulation, resonance, intensification and/or diminution of the affective capacities such becomings pose. This is not to seek a mere legacy, tradition, routine, or habit, but the ongoing change, transformation, and reconfiguration these affects induce as potentials, even if they are not fully actualized. Additionally, the intention is not to judge the circulation of thought surrounding a case as good or bad, but to investigate a virtual futurity of potential. The question is always, “what might become.”

If the questions is “what might become,” the benchmarks for affective inquiry are likewise quite difficult to identify. Or it may be more appropriate to say they are quite difficult to reach, if Massumi (1992) is to be taken at his word in his description of appropriate evaluative criterion: “What new thoughts does it make possible to think? What new emotions does it make possible to feel? What new sensations and perceptions does it open in the body” (p. 8). There are no safe guards or procedural safety nets to fall back on to insure that such a goal is reached. Failure is a very real and immanent potential for anyone attempting affect-based inquiry; however, Dewsbury (2010) remarked, “researching, . . . whatever the methodology, has always been and is always about ever trying and ever failing” (p. 321). The difference with affective inquiry, according to Dewsbury (2010), is that we must be unafraid of failure and unashamed in experimentation: “don’t fret about risks of experimenting, it is a justifiable way of proceeding that works better if you really embrace it” (pp. 321-322).
A final speculative word: all affective inquiry is necessarily speculative in the philosophical sense (Massumi, 2002). Though affective inquiry may have many angles of approach, it must always retain a commitment to the act of philosophy. In particular, it must speculate about the normative ontological emergence of becomings. And one cannot know what potentials exist prior to the act. This means one must be willing to embrace knowing what one did not know, even if it is silly or stupid. To be experimental, one must be willing to “affirm” even one’s “own stupidity” (Massumi, 2002, p. 8). Let the experimentation begin!

Conclusion

Throughout this article I attempted to articulate a Spinozan-Deleuzian theory of affect, propose an angle of approach and methodological style commensurate with this theoretical orientation, and demonstrate a mode of application. The modest attempts made in this article towards these ends, I hope, may spur further creativity, invention, and imagination within affect-based inquiry. In conclusion, I wish simply to issue a call for greater experimentation. As researchers, we ought to acknowledge that there are many procedural lines, or methodological approaches, as Massumi (2002) suggested, that such experimentation can take, and the more the better. It is merely a question of what angle one takes when slipping into the affective middle. One may begin with the sociolinguistic, examining, for example, public and private programs, institutions, or documents. Or one may enter through the experiential, through direct personal or collective experimentation with the world and various modes of existence that emerge from such encounters.

Regardless of the angle one takes to approach the affective middle, the implications of an affect theoretical orientation necessarily change how we view inquiry. To reiterate, once again, Clough’s (2009) lucid assessment: “Attending to affect necessarily is performative. . . . [It]
cannot be a matter of containment . . . interpretation, meaning, signification or representation” (p. 49). If most scholars attending to affect “do not sweat the construction of any elaborate step-by-step methodology much at all, but rather come to fret the presentation or the style of presentation, the style of being present, more than anything else” (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010, p. 14), it becomes a matter of how one can modulate the rhythms, tempos, and intensities—quickening them—in order to notice the virtually imperceptible movements of intensities in ordinary life. It is a matter of speeding up enough to actively feel that which is normally passed over and only felt in its effects.