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# A Queer Politics of Imperceptibility: A Philosophy of Resistance to Contemporary Sexual Surveillance

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## Abstract

This thesis journeys through a series of events to develop a concept of "imperceptibility" as a mode of resistance to contemporary sexual surveillance. The events I examine include biometric recognition of gender and race at airport security checkpoints, the heteropatriarchal colonial surveillance of Indigenous peoples at Standing Rock, various protest actions, and the political potentials of glitch art. Exploring their unexpected points of connection, my goal is to bring into view acts of resistance against sexual surveillance that already operate below and above the threshold of everyday perception.

The project advocates for a philosophy of resistance that underscores the political importance of creating new modes of existence. Rather than engaging in the problematic of devising a new model of subjectivity, I argue that what is needed to escape from contemporary systems of capture and control is to turn from the Self as the primary site of concern and affirm instead the potentials of becoming-imperceptible. Imperceptibility signals not invisibility, but the act of relinquishing identity in favour of moving toward becoming everybody/everything. Far from a homogenizing or unitary endeavour, I propose imperceptibility as a radical celebration of *difference* that surges a revolutionary desire for social transformation through interconnectedness.

Activating Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's pragmatic philosophy and style of writing, which emphasize multiple relations over binary oppositions, I introduce "a queer politics of imperceptibility" as a conceptual framework that takes a both/and approach to consider resistance. That is, I work with and between the tensions of feminist theories of

recognition and Deleuze and Guattari's nonrepresentational philosophy. I develop this framework in each chapter by mapping a constellation of interacting forces and affective intensities between bodies, both human and non-human. *A Queer Politics of Imperceptibility* makes an important intervention into the fields of feminist surveillance studies, posthumanism, affect theory, postcolonial theory and queer theory by revealing the ways in which imperceptible relations of resistance cascade into the political to generate new potentials to act in the world.

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When discussing these acknowledgements with a friend, we joked that I should include the names of the scholars, both alive and dead, whose work laid the groundwork for my own. Although perhaps still a laughable idea, I do want to extend a word of gratitude to the scholars (both those I align with and those I critique) for labouring to contribute their thoughts with the world. Having now experienced the joys and pains, twists and turns, loves and losses of writing over a sustained period of time, I am truly appreciative of and humbled by the sheer force and vitality of my brilliant teachers including those I have acknowledged above and those that will appear in the pages below.

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| | |
|---|---|
| *AO* | *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* |
| *ATP* | *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* |
| BRP | Biometric Residence Permit |
| CATSA | Canadian Air Transport Security Authority |
| CCTV | Closed-circuit television |
| DAPL | Dakota Access Pipeline |
| *DR* | *Difference and Repetition* |
| *DP* | *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* |
| HP | Hewlett Packard |
| *HS* | *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* |
| *LS* | *The Logic of Sense* |
| MMV | Millimeter Wave |
| *N* | *Nietzsche and Philosophy* |
| NoDAPL | anti-Dakota Access Pipeline movement |
| *NS* | *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* |
| *NT* | *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti* |
| NTAC | The National Transgender Advocacy Coalition |
| *PI* | *Pure Immanence: Essays on A Life* |
| PIC | Prison Industrial Complex |
| *TA* | *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* |
| TSA | Transportation Security Administration |
| *UG* | *User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari* |

# 1

# Introduction

This dissertation locates imperceptibility as a mode of resistance to sexual surveillance. It takes an exploratory approach to theorize how embodied experiences of resistance spark fresh ways of thinking, feeling, and connecting in the world. The project advocates for a philosophy of resistance that underscores the political importance of creating new modes of existence. However, it is not interested in the problematic of devising a new model of subjectivity—unless it is one that considers the possibility of a "subjectless subjectivity" (Bains 2002). As it has been well argued, the problem with the traditional notion of the subject is that it presupposes a discernable and unitary self that is both distinct and separate from the object it perceives. This proposition enables the subject to become the object of others and reduces difference to a notion of given oppositions rather than recognizing difference as a spontaneous event that draws things into relation. Surveillance operates by way of subject/object dualisms—the subject is surveilled as a static object and represented through a system of signification. The body is either divided into discernable chunks of information or it is observed as a surface of truth. What is needed to escape from contemporary systems of capture and control that reduce the body to a fixed and essentialized notion of identity is to abandon the Self as the primary site of concern and affirm instead the potentials of imperceptibility. "Becoming-imperceptible," which is not the equivalent to being invisible, is the idea of relinquishing

identity in favour of becoming everybody/everything.  Far from a homogenizing or

unitary endeavor, becoming-imperceptible is a radical celebration of *difference* that

surges a revolutionary desire for social transformation through interconnectedness.

This thesis journeys through a series of events to theorize a strategy of resistance

that, despite its imperceptibility, I see as already in action.  The events I examine include

detention at the airport for additional security screening, the failure to be recognized by

biometric machines, the heteropatriarchal colonial surveillance of Indigenous peoples,

various protest actions, and the process of making activist artwork.  Exploring their

unexpected points of connection, I reveal the under-theorized ways in which surveillance

and resistance affect the capacity of a body[1] to act and be acted upon.  Mobilizing Gilles

Deleuze and Félix Guattari's pragmatic philosophy and style of writing, which emphasize

multiple relations over binary oppositions, I consider the "eventfulness" of each situation.

I explore the interacting material and immaterial forces intrinsic to each occasion of

surveillance and resistance I discuss.  As we shall see, investigating the eventfulness of

surveillance permits an exploration of a wide range of relations that contribute to specific

instances of sexual surveillance and control.  These include relations of power, relations

between bodies, ideologies, digital technologies, and the interplay between social and

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[1] By "body" I do not refer to a unitary structure or a self-contained organism.  Rather, following Rosi Braidotti, I understand the body as "a surface of intensities and an affective field in interaction with others" (*NS* 25).  That is, throughout the project I consider the body to be a fluid non-unitary assemblage composed of multiple relations with other bodies, both human and non-human.

material forces that precipitate varying degrees of gendered, racialized, ableist, nationalist, classist and sexualized practices of discrimination. At the same time, analyzing surveillance as an event reveals the imperceptible flows of resistance that circulate therein. Resistance is conceptualized here not as an oppositional force but as an event that *moves through* the eventfulness of surveillance.[2]

My main argument is that although contemporary surveillance attempts to capture and control the body by reducing it into a static *being*, the potentials for escape are already at play given that the body is perpetually *becoming* and always exceeding the boundaries of being. The concept of "becoming," as I will discuss at length in chapter three, signals an intensive state of transformation that undercuts the notion of identity. What is at stake is that the intensity of this resistance and the consideration of its political potentials may be dulled by an overemphasis on highly visible forms of resistance, such as representation and recognition, that continue to take up the theoretical spotlight. My goal then, is to develop a conceptual framework that brings into view becomings as acts of resistance that *already* operate below and above the threshold of everyday perception. This framework, what I call "a queer politics of imperceptibility" maps a constellation of interacting forces and affective intensities to consider the social and material ways in

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[2] My argument that resistance moves through surveillance corresponds to Deleuze's contention that "The event is not what occurs (an accident), it is rather *inside* what occurs, the purely expressed" (*LS* 149, emphasis added). I explicate this notion further in chapter three where I explore how Indigenous resistance emerges as an event within the occurrence of colonial violence and heteropatriarchal surveillance during the anti-Dakota Access Pipeline demonstrations at Standing Rock.

which resistance actualizes as political action. The following questions underpin my investigation: *How does resistance work? What can a politics based on imperceptibility do? How do imperceptible and embodied intensities of resistance cascade into the political to generate new potentials to act in the world?*

Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic philosophy is particularly suited to my project because it provides the concepts and theories necessary to map the imperceptible movements of resistance that I wish to explore. The concept of the rhizome questions the hierarchical organization of knowledge and binary structures of thought that make superficial cuts between ideas, bodies, events, and things. Against this "arboreal logic," Deleuze and Guattari introduce the notion of "rhizomatic thinking" which emphasizes multiplicities over dichotomies. They explain that "unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states" (*ATP* 23). The value of rhizomatic thinking is that it draws new lines of thought by mapping unexpected connections between various points. In accordance, a rhizomatic approach to sexual surveillance considers relations between highly organized structures of control and molecular flows of the body to locate unexpected interactions and map new lines of escape. In addition to the rhizome, I draw on several of Deleuze and Guattari's concepts including "becoming," "desire," "faciality," "lines of flight," and "abstract machines" amongst many others as they are needed. I do not attempt to "apply" Deleuze and Guattari's concepts to "describe" sexual surveillance and resistance; rather, I

use them as tools to map a *new* line of resistance.[3] I define resistance as an *affective*

*encounter* that transforms relations of power by generating new and unpredictable

intensities to act. In this sense, resistance does not have an origin or terminus. It is, as

an event, an atmosphere that "rise[s] like a vapor from states of affairs themselves" (*WP*

127). Resistance creates a "zone of indiscernibility" (*ATP* 280) in which new events of

resistance may be brought to bear.

I introduce a "queer politics of imperceptibility" as a framework of resistance that

considers how political action might be thought beyond recognition, identity, and

subjectivity. However, the schematic I develop attempts to hold the theoretical tension

between a philosophy of becoming-imperceptible and feminist theories that stress the

importance of a politics of recognition centered on the subject. My reason for this is

twofold; first and quite simply, I want to resist the tendency to oppose one theory against

the other in hopes of circumventing the construction of yet another dualism

(imperceptibility of the subject *versus* recognition of the subject). My second reason for

considering recognition alongside a politics of imperceptibility is more complex. I

passionately believe that a feminist contribution to knowledge of this magnitude should

propose concepts and theories that can be put into practice and that provide politically

useful insights on the ways in which to view and initiate social change. Of course, as

feminist theory has shown time and again, such an endeavor requires a careful

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[3] I call this new line of resistance the "line of pure resistance." I introduce and develop my
concept of the line of pure resistance in chapters three and four respectively.

consideration of the politics of location by asking: for *whom* is this project useful?  In responding to that all-important question, I necessarily engage "the subject" and questions of recognition in order to locate the *politics* of imperceptibility.  It is clear to me that if a politics of imperceptibility is to be considered seriously as a strategy of resistance it ought to propose a philosophy based on developing affinities with other feminist perspectives that have, for perhaps good reason, maintained the theoretical spotlight.  Although I will thoroughly address the contentious relationship between imperceptibility and recognition in chapters three and four, where I also spend considerable time hypothesizing the possibility of a reconciliatory coalition, I want to offer some preliminary arguments on their frictions here.  This will allow me to provide a more detailed sketch of the queer politics of imperceptibility I propose.

In the following paragraphs, I provide a brief overview of Judith Butler's queer theory alongside Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming to define sexual surveillance and sexuality.  Although I do not revisit Butler or queer theory explicitly in the remainder of the dissertation, I discuss them here to lay the groundwork for my forthcoming elaboration of how a philosophy of becoming can be developed in relation to (rather than apart from) queer theories on sexual subjectivity.  Importantly, I want to be clear that despite my attempt to point toward the potential for a theoretical alliance between two disparate approaches to political autonomy, I remain firmly critical of the

*regime* of recognition.[4] As I will argue in chapter three, recognition whether practiced as a politics of resistance or enforced by the State, not only upholds oppressive structures endemic to the subject/object binary, but also solicits practices and technologies of sexual surveillance.

While sexual surveillance is broadly defined as the observation and data collection of gender and sexuality, it should be immediately understood that I am not interested in engaging surveillance as a distinct and separate object that acts on an otherwise knowable subject. Instead, I theorize surveillance as a rhizomatic *assemblage* of technologies and practices that *overcode* sexuality as identity. Surveillance, as I will demonstrate in chapter two, operates as an *apparatus of capture* that *suspends* the body's movements, relations, and potentials to act in the world. It gridlocks the positive flows of potential that emerge *between* bodies by capturing and categorizing the rhythms, intensities, tactilities, textures, and corporealities of sexuality within a rigid system of signification. As we shall see, sexual surveillance subjugates the *movement of sexuality*—its happenings—to a regime of representation and recognition that exhort regulatory practices of sexual identification.

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[4] By "regime of recognition" I refer to the institutional structure of recognition, namely State forms of recognition. By "a politics of recognition," I mean feminist politics that engage in the discourse of rights and recognition and that seek acknowledgment for subjects based on making identity claims.

My characterization of sexual surveillance as an apparatus of *capture* follows from my understanding of sexuality as an *impersonal movement* that materializes *between* bodies as a positive and connective force, which has nothing to do with sexual reproduction. Sexuality is thought here as a "peopling by contagion" (Deleuze and Guattari *ATP* 241)—which is "not the man and woman as sexual entities, caught in a binary apparatus, but a molecular becoming" outside of identity (Deleuze and Parnet 102). Importantly, I am not suggesting that sexuality precedes or exists exterior to the body, nor do I understand it to be in any sense apolitical or generalizable. The movement of sexuality will vary in intensity, speed, and duration depending on the body's territorial relations; that is, its embedded and embodied social location. By "impersonal movement" and "connective force" I refer to the *unrepresentable* qualities of sexuality that extend beyond the boundaries of flesh and signification—which is to say that sexuality is thought here as an *affective energy* apart from genitality and the notion of "sexual orientation."

Emphasizing the *a*subjective aspects of sexuality does not repudiate its social construction nor does it deny the diverse ways in which sexuality is experienced and expressed through a complex interplay of material, social, and symbolic forces.[5] But it

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[5] For example, in *The Epistemology of the Closet*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues that the multiple and varied manifestations of sexuality demonstrate the ways in which sexuality always retains an element of "pure *difference*" that is capable of disrupting normative notions of sex, gender, and (hetero)sexuality and activating new potentials for how sexuality can be thought (25, emphasis original).

does posit sexuality as a *productive force* that germinates new modes of existence

through the "circulation of impersonal affects" (Deleuze and Guattari *ATP* 233).

Throughout the text, I refer to the *act* of circulating affects as "conjugations." Deleuze

and Guattari use the term conjugation to signal a non-*re*productive[6] temporary and

mutual exchange or streaming[7] of intensities between bodies. Conjugation extends

beyond human-to-human interaction to include relations between humans and non-human

entities including conjugations with technology, atmospheric qualities, the environment,

and so forth. While "conjugation" (the circulation of affects) does not entail sex *per se*—

it is nonetheless *sexual* insofar as it is productive. The concept of conjugation enables us

to consider sexuality as an affective and *materially* productive force without slipping

back into an "arboreal logic" of filiation and *re*production.

Furthermore, using the term conjugation to gesture toward the productive potentials

of sexuality emphasizes that sexuality is a movement that never moves alone. That is,

sexuality is one of "several fluxes [that] combine to form a bloc of becoming" (Deleuze

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[6] Deleuze and Guattari also use the term "involution" to designate non-reproductive creativity. The term involution is meant to signify a transformation that is neither linearly successive (evolution) or regressive (devolution). Involution signals the *involve*ment between things that moves each from one state to another. (*ATP* 164, 238-9).

[7] I am particularly attracted to the word conjugation given its frequent use in the sciences to define non-human practices of production. For example, in biology, the term conjugation is used to refer to the productive transport of nutrients and proteins within a cell, also called "cytoplasmic streaming." The term is also used when referring to an exchange of matter between protozoans. "Conjugation" then, illustrates how affect and the embodied experience of its circulation is a *productive* event that happens beyond identity.

and Parnet 102). As Deleuze and Claire Parnet state, "Sexuality can only be thought of as one flux among others, entering conjunction with other fluxes, emitting particles which themselves enter into particular relationships of speed and slowness in the vicinity of certain other particles. No assemblage can be characterized by one flux exclusively" (101-2). It is not surprising then, that the *assemblage* of sexual surveillance, as I will demonstrate in chapters two, three, and four, is characterized by several fluxes of control that conjugate sexual discrimination with anti-black racism, ableism, settler colonialism, Islamophobia, and xenophobia.

As I mentioned above, my thinking of sexuality as a creative flux and flow between bodies is informed by queer theory on the one hand and Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy on the other hand. For some, this theoretical pairing may appear at odds given their ostensible incompatibility: queer theory begins and is concerned with the subject whereas Deleuze and Guattari wish to decenter the subject and attend instead to the "prepersonal intensities" of desire and sexuality—that is, the ways in which desire moves the body from one experiential state to another (*ATP* xvi). Moreover, queer theory considers resistance in terms of subversion and *re*signification while Deleuze and Guattari affirm the political potentials of novel creation through *a*signification.

I do not mean to suggest that the entire field of queer theory is centered on the subject or concerned only with representation. There is not one queer theory from which all others follow. Indeed, any attempt to provide a pithy summation of queer theory's

multiple, dynamic, and contested undertakings would unfairly paint it with too broad of a brush.  To be specific then, the queer theory I refer to is that which challenges monolithic understandings of sexuality by examining the discursive and linguistic formation of the subject and that aims to destabilize the notion of a natural or fixed identity by positing an analytic of performative resignification.  Espoused most notably by Butler, this branch of queer theory insists that gender is not a given but constituted through the compulsory repetition of norms (*Gender Trouble* 179).

In brief, Butler argues that the gendered subject only becomes intelligible as such upon receiving recognition for its "repeated stylization" of social, political, and historically sanctioned gender norms, which "congeal over time to produce… a natural sort of being" (*Gender Trouble* 43-4).  Yet, in addition to the performative self, she affirms that there exists a psychic self who is neither reducible to the performance of norms nor who can be recognized as being either this or that ("he" or "she" and arguably "they").  She argues that with every performative iteration of gender, this "unintelligible" self destabilizes the norm by its failure to be wholly captured within it.  Gender performativity, the embodied repetition of norms through speech acts and symbolic representation, is, to use Butler's phraseology, an "internally discontinuous" imitation of an uninhabitable ideal (179).  The *inevitable* failure of the subject to fully adhere to the norm undermines the hegemonic structure of gender and queers the seeming naturalness of heterosexuality.

In her comparative essay of Butler and Deleuze, Claire Colebrook further explicates that "For Butler a queer theory is one in which the conditions of being a subject are *essentially* queer—one must claim to speak as a self but can do so only through an other who is *not* oneself.  At the same time, the condition for *being* queer is being a subject: one must be *recognised* as having a claim to speak, be and exist" ("On the Very Possibility" 20, emphasis added).  In other words, gender performativity both troubles and constitutes the subject; it is both the subject's doing and undoing.  Butler argues that internal to the performative act then, is an expropriative *queering* of gender norms and the heterosexual matrix that governs them (*Bodies that Matter* 177).  Rather than positing this as an escape route from norms and binaries, Butler firmly asserts that the "undoing" and agency provided by performativity "is not freedom, but a question of how to work the trap that one is inevitably in" (Butler qtd in Kotz 83).  The trap of normativity catches the subject in an incomplete and ongoing struggle of obtaining intelligibility within a structure that maintains its authority *precisely* by ensuring the continuance of certain subjects' unintelligibility.  In response, Colebrook argues that queer theory does *not* "queer" anything insofar as it is unable to dismantle the stronghold of identity.  Indeed, she claims, that queer, in Butler's theorization, becomes the *condition* of gender identity rather than its subversion given Butler's proposition that queer (understood as the failure to perform the norm) is *integral* to performativity.

"Working the trap" is a catch-22 situation.  It means battling the structure of recognition by asking for recognition.  A politics centered around recognition, in which

its constituents ask to be seen and heard as intelligible subjects (i.e. as *normative*), risks

perpetuating the "naturalness" of the norm and its authority to decide which bodies are

perceptible and which are not. "Working the trap," as Butler acknowledges,

paradoxically entails fighting against political derealization and dehumanization by

speaking from a recognizable and coherent subject position. The problem with both

queer theory and recognition politics is that although they call into question the

conditions of "the subject," albeit in different ways, they never allow the subject to

escape from regulation. Thus Colebrook argues that queer theory only seeks to *retool*

the subject rather than affirm its capacity for autonomy beyond subjectivity—that is, its

ongoing process of becoming. In this regard, she argues that queer merely beseeches the

normal insofar as it "allows for the (albeit problematic) maintenance of identity politics"

("On the Very Possibility" 15). She reasserts that Butler's theory of gender

performativity is therefore *not* fundamentally queer in the sense that it offers something

new from which to view politics but is queer only insofar as "the queer body becomes

exemplary" as a subversive site of resignification (14). Queer theory *confers* that

naturalness of identity by heralding it as *the* site of difference (20).

Attempting to develop an alternate notion of queer, Colebrook claims that because

Deleuze organizes his philosophy around the notion of *pure* difference (difference *itself*

beyond any notion of the subject) then it follows that a Deleuzian queer theory would

also consider queer *not* as difference *from* (the norm) but a difference that is radically

new. She claims, "For Deleuze, then, the conditions of the queer and the conditions of

the new are the same" ("On the Very Possibility" 20). Hypothesizing Deleuze's take on

queer theory, Colebrook argues that the concept of queer cannot (or should not?) be

reduced to notions of identity, subversion, and resignification. Instead, she asserts that

the function of queer ought to *actualize* difference by staging an *encounter* with various

intensities that exist beyond "the self and the organism" (20). Queer, she posits, is a

*becoming*. For Colebrook then, Butler's brand of queer theory, which focuses on

performative acts of deviation and subversion from the norm, is predicated on a post-

Hegelian theory of dialectical negation. Against this, she advocates for an anti-Hegelian

Deleuzian-inspired queer theory, which, in accordance with the notion of becoming,

offers the affirmative "power to create relations, to make a difference, to repeat a power

beyond its actual and already constituted forms" (23).

Unlike Colebrook, I do not think it is necessary to choose one frame over the other.

As we can see from her evaluation, the primary disjuncture between Butler and Deleuze

is that the former considers agency as that which is always mediated through the

discursive formation of identity, whereas the latter envisages autonomy as a prepersonal

intensity beyond subjectivity *and* discursive thought. The queer politics of

imperceptibility that I propose considers how *both* perspectives may be thought together

in politically fruitful ways. This approach does not aim to collapse one theory into the

other to create for example a Deleuzian queer theory or to queer Deleuzian philosophy;

instead I begin from the *middle* to explore the imperceptible potentials of resistance to

sexual surveillance that exist *in-between*. That is, I attempt to theorize a queer approach

to becoming that acknowledges that while there is no such thing as a unitary subject, identity, or entity, the experiences and expressions of a body's becoming are deeply entangled with its social and material relations including its relation to identity (Braidotti 2011).

Rosi Braidotti's feminist philosophy that proposes the concept of "nomadic subjectivity" is instructive because it approximates a reconciliation between queer theory's "maintenance of identity politics," as Colebrook puts it, and Deleuze's concept of becoming. Braidotti acknowledges that all becomings must begin from somewhere. Every becoming has a territory composed of unique and dynamic relations that are embedded, embodied, and embrained ("A Theoretical Framework" 7). In her formulation, "Being a nomad, living in transition, does not mean that one cannot or is unwilling to create those necessarily stable and reassuring bases for identity that allow one to function in a community. Nomadic consciousness rather consists in not taking any kind of identity as permanent: the nomad is only passing through" (*NS* 64). Braidotti's nomadic philosophy simultaneously acknowledges the importance of decentering the subject to envision a new political landscape of affirmative interconnectedness *and* that identity is often an act of survivance that enables a body to endure becomings of this scale. The politics of identity does not foreclose the potentials of becoming so long as it is thought rhizomatically—as fluid and transitory; hence her concept of *nomadic* subjectivity.

Braidotti is careful to warn, however, that a nomadic approach that zigzags between the politics of location and a philosophy of becoming is neither an easy nor a painless feat. Indeed, as I have discovered in writing this text, moving between feminist theories that center the subject and a philosophy of imperceptibility that decenter the subject is a rather tricky situation that risks running up against several conceptual contradictions. But, these contradictions, as I have hoped to show, should not be taken as theoretical deficiencies or critical impasses; rather, as I see them, they are opportunities for new rhizomatic ways of thinking. As such, the framework of queer imperceptibility that I propose welcomes contradictions; it dares to venture between imperceptibility *and* recognition, becoming *and* identity without ever compromising on the argument that to escape sexual surveillance one must dismantle the Self, divest from psychic attachments to identity, and go beyond a politics of recognition.

Imperceptibility is not a strategy of resistance that seeks political recognition. It is an affective encounter with other bodies, both human and non-human, that initiates a becoming beyond the self. It seeks to increase the potentials of *every* body to act. The queer politics of imperceptibility I propose prioritizes an encounter *between* things above all else. As I will attempt to demonstrate, becoming-imperceptible as a mode of resistance forces new thought through sensation. The qualities of resistance that I see in becoming-imperceptible align with the following passage from Deleuze:

Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of

recognition but of a fundamental *encounter*…It may be grasped in a range of

affective tones: wonder, love, hatred, suffering. In whichever tone, its primary

characteristic is that it can only be sensed. In this sense it is opposed to

recognition. In recognition, the sensible is not at all that which can only be

sensed, but that which bears directly upon the senses in an object which can be

recalled, imagined, or conceived…The object of encounter, on the other hand…

is imperceptible precisely from the point of view of a recognition. (*DR* 139-40,

emphasis original)

In similar fashion, becoming-imperceptible is an encounter with resistance beyond

recognition.

Nevertheless, I have spent some time outlining Butler's queer theory above because

I want to make it clear from the outset that I agree with her that it *is* critical to "mobilize

the necessary error of identity" (*Bodies that Matter* 174). This is particularly true when it

comes to sexual surveillance. We will see in chapter two, for example, that

contemporary practices and technologies of surveillance use identity error *against* certain

bodies to sanction increased practices of control. In response, in chapter five I consider

the emerging art activist practice of glitching digital images as a creative means to

corrupt repressive systems of identification. With reference to my art project *Queer-Alt-*

*Delete,* I illustrate the ways in which glitch art mobilizes computational errors of identity

to play with the political potentials of asignification.

Against this theoretical backdrop, *between* the vicissitudes of queer theory and Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic philosophy, and *with* Braidotti's nomadic feminist philosophy, I pose the following questions: How does contemporary surveillance restrict social and political mobility by rearticulating the body and autonomy in terms of identity and recognition respectively? In what ways can we disarticulate sexuality from contemporary systems of control? What new modalities of political action does a politics of imperceptibility reveal? How does *becoming*-imperceptible generate the potential for new ways of existing? And, how does the concept of imperceptibility galvanize new ways of thinking-feeling-doing resistance? The conjunction "thinking-feeling-doing" signals the inextricable ways in which thought, sensation, and activity move through one another in the course of a body's becoming. Inspired by Brian Massumi's concept of "thinking-feeling," the phrase *thinking-feeling-doing* as it appears throughout the dissertation refers to a *style* of resistance in which new thought emerges during political action. It is thought perceived through bodily sensation—a felt difference (Massumi *Semblance and Event* 44). The notion of thinking-feeling-doing emphasizes the dynamic momentum and imperceptible movement of change that happens during an act of resistance—or rather, that happens as resistance *itself*. It elevates the experiential and embodied qualities of resistance while it sets in motion a new idea for social transformation. Becoming-imperceptible, so I will argue, is a movement that cannot be perceived but that is perceptible nonetheless—it is perceptible because there is a felt change or transformation. However, this change of state is not

concerned with subjects or objects but with the passages between them.  As will be discovered in the pages that follow, a queer politics of imperceptibility stitches together various threads of intensity— bodies, politics, space, affects, activisms, and so forth—to weave a new pattern of resistance into the fabric of life.

**2**

**Surveillance Assemblages**

Surveillance is often theorized as a system of control that captures the subject in a state of perpetual oscillation between visibility and invisibility. The individual is rendered visible while technologies of observation are carefully hidden from view. To escape the machinic all-seeing eye, one must become invisible to its expansive field of vision. However, this strategy of resistance that attempts to subvert the mechanical gaze and its enhanced powers to see, either by thwarting visualizing technologies or hiding from their perceptual reach, miscalculates the *techne* of networked surveillance and its all-encompassing operations of *somatic control.* At the same time, activist efforts that attempt to turn the gaze back on itself by "re-claiming" and saturating the field of visibility fail to transform the *non-visualizing* mechanisms of surveillance, ultimately leaving systems of capture and control intact. The failure to transform systems of surveillance occurs because contemporary forms of surveillance enact control not only by manifesting the individual in a field of visibility but also through networked processes that fragment, modulate, divide, and *overcode* the body as data. Contemporary surveillance has transformed the panoptic diagram of power that produced individuals through disciplinary techniques; now, bodies are partitioned into quantifiable information as flows of power are redistributed along axes of automated control. If power is a

modulating force as well as a visiblizing practice, the question that arises is: how can "we" effectively resist surveillance and forms of control that operate *beyond* visibility when feminist strategies of resistance continue to centre on invisibility and visibility as the respective problem and solution?

This chapter takes issue with ocularcentric preoccupations in surveillance studies and forms of resistance. Privileging vision as the dominant mode of control fails to address the *affective* interactions between surveillance and the body's *sensuous* expressions and experiences in the world. Moreover, relying on vision-based metaphors and terminology, such as watching, monitoring, the gaze, the all-seeing-eye, Big Brother, exhibitionism, exposure, and observation to analyze surveillance, limits how we imagine political opposition, and at the same time, it obscures from view the *rhizomatic* arrangements of control. Concomitantly, while I maintain that visualizing techniques of surveillance have transformed, it must be clearly stated that panoptic and disciplinary practices of control continue to subjugate individuals. For this reason, I take issue with *both* ocularcentric and anti-panoptic[8] trends in surveillance scholarship that privilege one schema over the other as *the* critical site of investigation. To understand multilayered systems of oppression we need to understand multilayered surveillance practices. I am therefore interested in the ways in which an *assemblage* of surveillance mechanisms, that

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[8] By anti-panoptic I refer to the trend in recent surveillance studies scholarship to dismiss the significance of panopticism in favour of a post-panoptic model of surveillance that is wholly concerned with the datafication of bodies, which, as I discuss below, tends to minimize hierarchical forms and experiences of surveillance that stem from gender, racial, ethnic, disability, and sexual discrimination.

operate on *both* visual and non-visual planes, work *synergistically* to produce *affective* states of fragmentation, restriction, and agitation that capture the body as code and restrict its social and political mobility. As we shall see, these techniques of affective control transubstantiate subjects from individuals to anatomized bodies, and in the process affect the body's *sense* of capacity for political autonomy.

In what follows, I develop a framework of surveillance to outline the ways in which I understand sexual control to operate. I define surveillance as an *assemblage* of overlapping, intricate, and dynamic mechanisms of capture that restrict the body's movement. I am primarily concerned with three interrelated techniques of surveillance: 1) spatial arrangements of in-visibility, 2) the digital modulation of the body, and 3) what I term "somatic suspension." Briefly, I define *spatial arrangements of in-visibility* as a panoptic mode of surveillance that confines the movement of the body in a field of invisibility and visibility. Different from ocularcentric perspectives on panopticism that focus on "the gaze," following Michel Foucault, I understand in-visibility as a *spatial* technique of surveillance. The second mechanism of control is *digital modulation,* which, as Deleuze outlines, is a mode of surveillance that controls by turning the body into data and networked information. The third mechanism I define as *somatic suspension*, which I argue occurs *between* the previous two. I introduce this term to signal the occasion when the body's movement is suspended, either physically or affectively, from crossing a *threshold.* I suggest that these three mechanisms of control—spatial arrangements of in-visibility, digital modulation, and somatic

suspension—form a "surveillance assemblage" in which subjects are made to authenticate a socially constructed identity to gain access to political mobility. Below, I outline each of the three techniques of control separately; however, it is crucial to understand that in practice they perform in and through one another, as will be demonstrated in the following chapters.

## 2.1    The "Gaze" in Surveillance Studies

> Bentham's [Panopticon design] is archaic in the importance it gives to the gaze; but it is very modern in the general importance it assigns to techniques of power.

-Michel Foucault, "The Eye of Power"

Although there is a consensus among scholars in the field of surveillance studies that there is not one monolithic model that can be used to describe the vast and varied technologies, purposes, and effects of surveillance, surveillance is typically conceptualized in one of two ways: as a technology of observation that functions through a *dichotomy of in/visibility* or as a mechanism of control that operates along a *continuum of in-visibility*. For the former, surveillance is a technology of enhanced vision that reveals a *preexisting* subject and controls the subject by making her *more* visible. For the latter, surveillance is a system of power that *produces* subjects through overlapping patterns of exposure *and* concealment. Despite their differences, both approaches require that the individual become visible to enact control. But to *whom* one becomes visible remains unclear. This unidentified gaze in surveillance studies is paradoxically

represented as one that is embodied—which is to say that scholars continue to insist that surveillance, *even if* it is automated and unmanned, keeps subjects in line by virtue of the possibility that some-*one* (another person) could be watching over them at any given time. While not an inaccurate summation of panopticism, an overemphasis on "fear of the guard" as the primary technique of control provides only a cursory explanation of how surveillance functions. The notion of a "could-be-embodied" and anonymous gaze perpetuated in surveillance studies scholarship frames surveillance as a wholly top-down intersubjective exercise, which fails to address the diffuse and disperse flows of power that function through *spatial arrangements* of control. Granted, localized, embodied, and hierarchical practices of surveillance absolutely exist, which I will discuss later in the chapter, but the problem with this generalized approach to panopticism—that privileges the gaze above all else—is that it consequently oversimplifies the whole of surveillance as a perceptive and *perceptible* apparatus of control.

The trend of personifying the gaze and its operations of visibility and invisibility is evident in recent theories of surveillance that attempt to expand concepts of surveillance beyond a panoptic model. Although Michel Foucault's conceptualization of panopticism has been pivotal to surveillance studies, contemporary scholars argue that its usefulness as a theoretical framework is limited in that it can no longer account for the myriad structures of surveillance in the 21st century. Thus, there is a surge of post-panoptic concepts in the literature that attempt to address current formations of surveillance, such as the "superpanopticon," "omniopticon," "electronic panopticon,"

"poly-panopticon," "synopticon," "synopticon 2.0," and "interpersonal-panopticon" just to name a few. For example, Thomas Mathiesen introduces the concept of the "synopticon" as a direct counterpart to the panopticon. He argues that mass media scopophilia along with advancements in digital technology that provide quick and easy access to information reverse the relations of power from the few surveilling the many to the many now watching the few (e.g., reality television, celebrity updates, political watchdogs[9]). Building on Mathiesen, Nicholas Gane proposes the concept of "synopticon 2.0" to account for the ways in which the many also watch over themselves (623). Relatedly, the "omniopticon" refers to the distribution of the gaze so that the many are now capable of watching the many (e.g., social media). And, "interpersonal panopticism" refers to the ways in which people involved in intimate relations watch each other through social media (Manning and Stern 2018). These spin-off theories both continue to uphold the idea that the gaze and its corresponding control can be located in a *subject*, whether the subject represents a few or many.

The tendency to designate surveillance as an intersubjective process merely aided by technology rather than produced through it is the result of a misinterpretation of Foucault's theorization of panopticism. Panoptic surveillance is commonly described as a theory of "the gaze" whereby subjects watch over other subjects. However, Foucault

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[9] As others have noted, Mathiesen's concept of synopticism is tied to a top-down way of theorizing surveillance (Doyle 283). The concept is specific to an analysis of mass media surveillance, particularly as it relates to television. Thus, synopticism, unlike the panopticon, is a narrow concept that engages surveillance at the level of the audience/spectatorship and runs into conceptual issues when applied to larger systems of surveillance (296).

insists that the gaze need not be embodied at all: "[panopticism] is an important

mechanism, for it automates and *disindividualizes* power.  Power has its principle not so

much in a person as in a certain concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights,

gazes…" (*DP* 202, emphasis added).  As Foucault gestures, surveillance is not

intersubjective (operating between people); the gaze is an automated and institutionalized

mechanism of power.  Discipline in the panoptic schema is produced not through the

embodied gaze of another person but through the *material-discursive* spatial

arrangements of visibility.  Consider Foucault's compelling statement: "He who is

subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the

constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in

himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the

principle of his own subjection" (202-3).  Discipline is not enforced on subjects by other

subjects.  Panopticism is self-automated: the subject regulates her behaviour by

internalizing the gaze as a governing structure.  As we shall see next, Foucault's theory

of panoptic power is much more complicated than the maxim "the few watching the

many" would have us believe.


## 2.2    The Spatial Arrangements of In-Visibility

> By the effect of backlighting, one can observe from the tower, standing out
> precisely against the light, the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery.
> They are like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone,
> perfectly individualized and constantly visible.  The panoptic mechanism arranges
> spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and to recognize

immediately.  In short, it reverses the principle of the dungeon; or rather of its three functions—to enclose, to deprive of light and to hide—it preserves only the first and eliminates the other two.  Full lighting and the eye of a supervisor capture better than darkness, which ultimately protected.  Visibility is a trap.

-Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*

As Foucault indicates then, spaces of enclosure are a mainstay of punishment from the archaic dungeon to the birth of the modern prison.  However, exile alone is not productive for society; social pariahs are cast out but left idle.  For punishment to be productive, the individual must be shaped and controlled by exacting mechanisms of discipline capable of regulating the body and its behaviours.  These mechanisms require knowledge and observation of the body, and this knowledge becomes its own form of punishment.  Regimented through schedules, exercise, chores, diets, labour, and procedures of cleanliness, the body is never left untouched nor is it left unseen.  In the modern prison, the exiled are not cast aside as an indistinguishable group of lepers;[10] they are registered and observed, each becoming an individual to be controlled and confined.  Prisoners are separated by individual cells and inspected from an inspector who remains hidden from view.  Panopticism is a diagram of power in which surveillance is internalized and discipline runs like an automated machine.

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[10] Foucault explains that panoptic power began with the plague in which the contagious had to be contained and the healthy sorted from the diseased.  This required an elaborate system of inspection, classification, and isolation, effectuating a new form of continuous surveillance. (Foucault *DP* 195-200).

In his study of Jeremy Bentham's architectural design of the Panopticon prison, Foucault argues that panopticism is a mechanism of power that disciplines the body by subjecting individuals to a field of permanent visibility. The Panopticon prison is designed as a circular building containing a ring of individual cells with a single observation tower that stands in the middle of the ring. The prison cells each have two windows—one looking in toward the guard tower and the other facing outside. The light cast from the window facing outside backlights the prisoner thereby bringing her silhouette into the guard's full visibility. At the same time, the guard is hidden through a carefully orchestrated system of light and dark. The guard tower windows are outfitted with venetian blinds so that the prisoners' view of the guard is blocked. Inside the tower, an elaborate maze of hallways and partitions enables the guard to pass through the observation quadrants so that her presence is never betrayed by shadow or light (Foucault *DP* 201). Unable to see the observer, the inmates never know when or if they are being watched. As a result, the prisoners learn to behave as if they are under constant surveillance. Each individual inmate adheres to the rules and regulations because her body is always visible within the confinement of the prison cell.

The remarkable aspect of panopticism is that it disciplines the individual even in the absence of observation. Surveillance is automated because it is both visible and unverifiable: the individual must always be aware of surveillance but be unable to detect with absolute certainty when she is being watched; she must remain sure that constant observation of her is possible (Foucault *DP* 201). As such, invisibility—the invisible

presence or absence of surveillance at any given moment—is crucial to ensure the self-regulation of behaviours and actions. In Foucault's worlds, there is an axial relation of in-visibility that functions "to arrange things [so] that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary" (201). Unlike codified power, in which the power of the sovereign must be visible to control the populous, in the panopticon schema it is the populous that is made visible while power conceals itself.

Foucault explains that prior to the enclosed prison structure, executions and other bodily punishments took place in the town square, allowing the public to witness the sovereign's power through the prisoner's affliction. Foucault notes that the palatability of the tortured body on display incited sympathy for the prisoner and disdain for the executioner and the laws governing him. Hence, if power and discipline are visible, they are susceptible to opposition. As a solution, the modern prison ushered in an "out of sight, out of mind" system. The burden of witnessing punishment was lifted from the public and concealed behind prison walls. Power became diffuse, invisible, and unknowable; it resided not with the King but with the institution.

In addition to the power of the guard's hierarchical gaze, Foucault argues that *lateral* vectors of invisibility "guarantee order" (*DP* 200). For example, prisoners are separated into single cells and their line of sight is restricted solely toward the guard tower. Inmates are thus prevented from communicating with one another. According to

Bentham, the isolation of inmates lessens the likelihood of revolt (Foucault *DP* 200).

The separation of prisoners prevents them from witnessing one another's subordination.

A shared sense of injustice is eliminated through the panopticon's spatial arrangements of

invisibility.

The function of invisibility in Foucault's formulation of panoptic power is twofold:

first, it conceals the operations of disciplinary power, such as the absence or presence of

surveillance, and second, it partitions individuals to decrease the likelihood of political

mobilization. Invisibility and visibility are not a dichotomous pair; they are forces of

power that *overlap and move through one another*. Foucault's insistence that "visibility

is a trap" should not be taken to mean that being seen is a trap and going unseen is an

escape; rather, what snares the individual in the process of subjugation is being caught

between spatial arrangements of in-visibility central to the disciplinary machine.

For Foucault, Bentham's prison serves as a model of power for the modern age, but

the specific techniques of visibility in the prison are not meant to be *representative* of all

relations of power or of surveillance as a whole. The school, hospital, barrack, and

factory each have their own panoptic techniques of observation and inspection.

Therefore, one model of panopticism cannot be used to explain the relations of power in

all other places. In the school, for example, constant visibility does not control students;

control is exercised by examination and routine inspection. Each assemblage of

panopticism exercises power through different disciplinary techniques and it is possible

for them to shift within any given model. For example, if something in the Panopticon prison were to change—a second guard tower is added, or another structure is built behind the prison, altering the play between light and dark that serves to illuminate each cell—relations of power and disciplinary techniques necessarily change. Panopticism is not a structure but a malleable *system*. In the modern prison, for example, panopticism functions not only through the guard's gaze and the gaze of CCTV cameras, but also through extended requirements of observation and evaluation such as probation and parole that extend control beyond the enclosed space of the prison. When the *spatial* arrangements of in-visibility change so do the relations of power; elsewhere visibility may be automated but not to the same degree. Discipline may work on the body but not in the same way; different techniques of surveillance will have different effects. However, regardless of how the technique changes, if surveillance functions to *discipline,* a model of panopticism remains.

As mentioned above, recent surveillance studies scholarship argues that panopticism is an outdated model of surveillance because it only references top-down forms of control. For example, Kevin D. Haggerty characterizes panopticism as "the functioning of a microscope where specific marginalized or dangerous groups are situated under the unidirectional gaze of the powerful who can watch while remaining unseen by their charges" ("Tear Down" 29). He argues that the introduction of data collection subjects all of society to surveillance and not just the few—everyone is visible under the microscope of those in power. Such critiques present panopticism as a singular and

embodied gaze. However, as Foucault illustrates in his analysis of Bentham's prison, it is the *spectre* of the gaze—the *idea* of microscopic surveillance and not its actual existence—that produces relations of power. Panopticism is horizontal and controls the individual through institutionalized and *internalized* flows of surveillance such that disciplinary power produces how the individual sees herself. In fact, continuous surveillance is only possible because it does *not* require "the unidirectional embodied gaze of the powerful" that Haggerty suggests. Indeed, to think that a unidirectional embodied gaze exists is *precisely* panopticism's trick.

Foucault asserts that "This Panopticon, subtly arranged so that an observer may observe, at a glance, so many different individuals, also enables everyone to come and observe any of the observers. The seeing machine was once a sort of dark room into which individuals spied; it has become a transparent building in which the exercise of power may be supervised by society as a whole" (*DP* 207). The point that is missed, but clearly elucidated here by Foucault, is that panopticism is not a locatable gaze because it is not a specific *technique* of power that can be harnessed by an individual person or entity: panopticism is a *diagram* that produces power. He writes, "The panoptic mechanism is not simply a hinge, a point of exchange between a mechanism of power and a function; it is a way of making power relations function in a function, and of making a function function through these power relations" (206-7). In other words, the function of panopticism cannot be reduced to that of a microscope. Panopticism functions to produce the function of the gaze; it is not the gaze itself. Panopticism brings

things into relation to discipline the body. Foucault further states: "[panopticism is] a

*figure* of political technology that may and must be detached from any specific use" (205,

emphasis added). In other words, the Panopticon prison, with its totalizing techniques of

unrestricted and unobstructed visibility, must be conceived of as "the diagram of a

mechanism of power reduced to its *ideal* form; its functioning, *abstracted* from any

obstacle, resistance or friction, [and] must be represented as a *pure* architectural and

optical system" (205, emphasis added). The Panopticon prison is an *idealized* rendering

of disciplinary power. The critical distinction between a technique of power and a

diagram of power is often overlooked and has led surveillance scholars to reject

panopticism on the basis that it cannot account for surveillance technologies that function

beyond the gaze. And yet, when taken as a *diagram* of power, panopticism can precisely

address what scholars believe is lacking.

Foucault's view that panopticism is a diagram of power rather than a specific form,

technique or example of power allows us to consider how disciplinary surveillance moves

beyond the notion of the gaze. A diagram locates and arranges power by mapping

relations *between* forms and techniques. Different than an example (of power), which

fixes an object by representing something that has already passed, a diagram (of power) is

unstable and open to mutation—it changes as new coordinates between techniques are

mapped. An example is something that has already left its mark. Panopticism produces

power in varied ways depending on its context; its operations are always mutating as can

be seen with disciplinary practices of probation and parole in the modern prison system.

For Deleuze, Foucault's diagram of power can be understood in several interlocking ways: "it is the presentation of the relations between forces unique to a particular formation; it is the distribution of the power to affect and the power to be affected; it is the mixing of non- formalized pure functions and unformed pure matter [and] it is a transmission or distribution of particular features" (*F* 61-2). Deleuze's tetravalent definition of panoptic power highlights its diagrammatic function which is to *arrange* relations between forces.

Drawing on Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of the will to power, Deleuze explains force as virtual—something that is real but not actual.[11] Force is the power to affect and be affected (*N* 62-64). For Nietzsche, force represents the natural and chaotic forces of the world that act outside of knowledge and cannot be measured. Nietzsche identifies two types of force: active and reactive. In the most basic sense, active and reactive forces are two different ways that phenomena act. The acting of force on force produce new phenomena (which are forces themselves). Everything is the result of force acting on force and everything produces new relations of force. For example, for Nietzsche and Deleuze, a chair does not exist because of our perception of it. A chair is the result of interacting matter, properties of metal, the biology of sight, and forces that remain unknown. In this way, the chair is a *multiplicity* composed of relations of force that can affect and be affected by other multiplicities (metal, fabric, vision, human). The chair is more than an object perceived in our field of vision. It exists in relation with things both

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[11] I revisit Deleuze's concept of the virtual in greater detail in the next chapter. For a brief definition see p.151.

in and beyond human perception. The concept of force enables us to conceive of all that there is as actions and potentials rather than as predetermined structures or distinct and separate objects. I will expand on the definition and function of the concept of multiplicity in the next chapter. What is important to know here is that the concept of force enables us to consider that within the panoptic diagram there are real virtual potentials for new relations of power (and resistance) to actualize.

Deleuze explains that for Foucault, knowledge is "the thing that brings about or actualizes relations between [virtual] forces" (*F* 66). Deleuze calls this process of actualization the "statement-curve." The statement-curve joins potential points in the diagram of power together. However, "the individual points themselves, with their relations between forces, do not already constitute a statement: they were outside of the statement" (66). Visible matter in the prison such as various materials like metal, the human multiplicity, and sunlight, did not already constitute discipline. Each exists outside of disciplinary power as do their relations of force. Hence Deleuze's insistence that "the diagram is highly unstable or fluid, continually churning up matter and functioning in a way likely to create change" (30). The statement-curve, the discourse of discipline, for example, joins these points (bodies, light, materials) together so that they function to produce a new relation of power—"a new kind of reality, a new model of truth" (Deleuze *F* 30).

Foucault explains that before the panopticon diagram there were other diagrams of power (sovereign power, for example), and there will be new diagrams to follow. Each diagram produces the conditions necessary for the next. Deleuze describes this relationship as a "Markov chain," which is a statistical term used to define "a sequence of events [where] the probability of each is dependent only on the event immediately proceeding" (*F* 71). All of this is to say that if panopticism is an "outdated model," as Haggerty and others suggest, it is not because its function—to discipline—is obsolete. It is outdated because the *conditions* of relations of power have changed. There are new points on the diagram that the statement-curve cannot map. Panopticism is not a tool or example of surveillance; it is a diagram that "exposes a set of relations between forces" (71). A diagrammatic understanding of panopticism reveals the potential for new relations of force to actualize and the possibility for relations of power to change. Further, conceiving of panopticism as a diagram, or as an "abstract machine" as Deleuze also calls it (*F* 30), demonstrates that it is the *relation between things* that actualizes control; control does not precede relations of power and the same can be said of resistance. Therefore, to examine surveillance and envision resistance, we need to look at the relations *between* the actual and virtual, discursive and non-discursive, knowledge and power to consider how and what relations function as mechanisms of surveillance.

Panopticism can be summarized as a controlling function that formalizes through three mechanisms: spatial relations of separation, diffuse flows of power, and relations of forces without origin. Spatial relations of isolation and separation cut off the "human

multiplicity" from all other human multiplicities, reducing the human to an *individual* (Foucault *DP* 218). The individual is produced by measuring, recording, and regulating every aspect of the human multiplicity. Discipline reduces and restricts a multiplicity's rhizomatic relations and *movement* by turning it into a unity. Foucault elaborates:

> This is what discipline fixes; it *arrests or regulates movements*; it clears up confusion; it dissipates compact groupings of individuals wandering about the country in unpredictable ways; it establishes calculated distributions. It must also master all the forces that are formed from the very constitution of an organized multiplicity; it must neutralize the effects of counter-power that wishes to dominate it: agitations, revolts, spontaneous organizations, coalitions— anything that may establish horizontal conjunctions. (219, emphasis added)

Discipline moderates the force of a human multiplicity by blocking its movements. It separates bodies to multiply its own controlling force. Accordingly, panopticism discreetly "bring[s] into play the power relations, not above but inside the very texture of the multiplicity" so that the human becomes coextensive within and caught by the production of disciplinary power (Foucault 220). In short, the subject becomes the mechanism of her own subjugation. Foucault describes the second mechanism of panopticism, diffuse flows of power, as the "panoptic modality of power," which is the notion that power is not constrained to spaces of enclosure or hierarchal apparatuses and institutions, but neither is it independent of them. Panopticism is *relational*—it

formalizes the relation between discursive and non-discursive elements and fastens them together; it produces a body-prisoner-light-shadow-machine-complex[12]—or what we could call an *assemblage*. Panopticism does not reduce the human multiplicity to an object of the gaze; it *unifies* the human as a subject with the apparatus of production and control.

Lastly, panopticism functions as a relation of forces without origin. It is continuous, inconspicuous, and unknown. It has the capacity to multiply and expand beyond all recognition. Foucault argues that at its prime, panopticism will no longer require techniques of observation to discipline bodies; it will be so internalized that its automation will be undetectable: its previous "necessarily spectacular manifestations of power, [are] extinguished one by one in the daily exercise of surveillance, in a panopticism in which the vigilance of intersecting gazes [is] soon to render useless both the eagle and the sun" (217). Here, Foucault argues that the diagram of panopticism is not a structure but an *abstract machine* that runs on forces and functions rather than gazes and subject-to-subject control, enabling examinations without examiners, surveillance without observation, isolation and imprisonment without enclosed space.

The three overlapping functions —separation and partition, diffuse flows of power, relations of forces without origin—function through spatial arrangements of in-visibility that operate beyond the unidirectional gaze. These aspects of panopticism are often

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[12] Foucault makes this argument earlier in his chapter "Docile Bodies." See *DP* 153.

ignored by critics in favour of a more simplified version of panopticism simply defined as

"the few watching the many" (Haggerty 2006).  Perhaps Foucault was right when he said,

"…panopticism has received little attention.  It is regarded as not much more than a

bizarre little utopia, a perverse dream" (*DP* 224-5).  Panopticism is not akin to Orwell's

nightmarish Oceana.  It is not Big Brother; its gaze is not unidirectional— its operations

are so subtle that those it controls are unaware that they are under control.  Foucault

writes, "We are neither in the amphitheatre, nor on the stage, but in the panoptic machine,

invested by its effects of power, which we bring to ourselves since we are part of its

mechanism…At the moment of its full blossoming, the disciplinary society still assumes

with the Emperor the old aspect of the power of the spectacle" (217).  What does this

mean?  It means that the moment we think panopticism has disappeared is the very

moment it takes full control.

## 2.3   Digital Modulation

Control is not discipline…The control society is the disciplinary society.

-Gilles Deleuze "What is the Creative Act?"

In his succinct and pertinent essay, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," Deleuze

contends we have entered a new digital era of capital control.  Unlike discipline that

produces the individual through constant observation and meticulous examination,

control divides the individual into data so that its fragmented pieces can be bought and

sold to the corporation.  For Foucault, the prison and factory are emblematic of

disciplinary power. For Deleuze, the corporation and "the operation of markets is now the instrument of control and forms the impudent breed of our masters" (6). According to Deleuze, disciplinary environments of enclosure are in crisis. The individual no longer moves from one closed disciplinary space to the next—church to school to factory to home. Control spreads across all aspects of life so that "nothing is left untouched for too long" (4). The prison, factory, and school merge not because they operate alike through similar disciplinary techniques of power, but because they are networked through free floating forms of corporate regulation (6). The individual is split, everywhere all at once. Control operates not through rules and regulations but quantification and rapid rates of *digital modulation*.

Recall that disciplinary power, through spatial arrangements of in-visibility, establishes a continuous relationship between the visible and invisible. The society of control perverts the regime of visibility by ignoring the invisible altogether (Colwell 215). Deleuze argues that surveillance in a control society only takes interest in the *exterior* movements of the body—its surface and outward manifestations, positions and identities—what it can quantify and code like "a sieve whose mesh will transmute from point to point ("Postscript" 4). In disciplinary societies the prison, school, and factory are like moulds or castings that shape the individual as an indivisible unit (4). Differently, Deleuze argues that in a control society, control seeps between the cracks of enclosed spaces like a "gaseous mass" that moves with the body everywhere—in open space (4). In this new system of domination, surveillance does not seek to make the

subject visible to society or to oneself but relies instead on the disciplined individual's internalized desire to be seen, which in turn, opens one up to control. A society of control *modifies* the disciplinary mechanism of visibility so that the visible is not what can be seen but what can be *counted*.

In the society of control, surveillance no longer disciplines individuals or masses through signatures or numbers: instead, surveillance controls by vivisecting the individual into undulatory segmentations where "individuals have become 'dividuals,' masses, samples, data, markets, or 'banks'" (Deleuze "Postscript" 5). Corporations do not want individuals; they want discrete datasets that can be entered into an endless loop of capital circulation. It is through the numerical compartmentalization of the body's behaviours and movements that, "we have passed from one animal to the other, from the mole to the serpent, in the system under which we live, but also in our manner of living and in our relations with others" (5). Capitalism promotes rivalry and competition, opposing individuals against one another, dividing them apart from each other as well as dividing each individual from within (5). Capitalism divides through deformable and transformable mechanisms of perpetual training, performance assessment, and micro-management enforced not by an individual owner or private corporation but "transient" and coded figures (5). Capitalist control reduces life to a series of repetitive short-term activities and tasks where subjects focus only on "getting ahead" and what is promised to come. This form of power prevents the subject from sustaining and enduring the temporality of the here and now.

To summarize Deleuze's comparison between control and discipline, we could say that *discipline* fine tunes the body, regimenting its behaviour according to the proscribed norms of a particular place. Whereas *control* invests the body in perpetual training and retraining so that it can exceed the norms and progress forward on an endless trajectory that aligns with the telos of the corporation. Access to space is not a matter of adhering to norms but of modulating one's movement at the borders of various spaces to acquire the right "passwords" that either grant or deny the body access to "orbit in a continuous network" (5). In this schema, control functions by granting or denying the codes necessary for political, social, and physical mobility.

Thus far, I have contrasted discipline and control to mark out their differences as Deleuze sees them. However, in their provocative video essay, Clare Birchall, Gary Hall and Peter Woodbridge question such a comparison and the usefulness of Deleuze's framework altogether. Their concerns merit attention because they illustrate the risk of a misreading and dismissal of Deleuze's analysis:

> Can… disciplinary societies and societies of control be so easily contrasted? Didn't forms of what Deleuze refers to as "control" exist in disciplinary societies and vice versa? Are the institutions of the disciplinary society really finished? Everywhere? Isn't this a too linear and straightforward model of development? Don't some societies in other spaces and places around the world still rely on the deployment of disciplinary technologies of power and production and so on? (…. And if that is so,

doesn't "control" rely on and support a disciplinary and disciplined other?) Don't

even some aspects of our own society still rely on disciplinary technologies—not

least the prison system? Surely the deterrent of incarceration relies on its break

from the more quotidian flow of controlling forces in our lives? It relies upon its

distinctive disciplinary powers. (6)

Birchall et al. argue that Deleuze's analysis of control falls back on a structuralist

understanding of power. They claim that Deleuze's conception of power in a control

society relies on several sets of structuring binaries—discipline/control,

prison/corporation, body/gas, machine/computer and analogue/digital— which produces

a linear narrative of historical development and progress whereby the latter terms are

given privilege over the former. They argue that "Postscript" offers a seductive, yet

simple, theory of power that "meets a need for large explanations of contemporary

societies, the workings of which can otherwise often appear too ambiguous, complex, and

difficult to grasp" (6). Birchall et al. claim that these explanations have "an added

advantage in that they can also be contrasted to previous 'structuralist (post- or

otherwise)' theories, thus helping the user to feel as if they are indeed, very much at the

'cutting edge' of some fashionable new 'Deleuzian' paradigm" (8).

   To challenge Birchall et al., in my view Deleuze does *not* claim that we are leaving—

or have left— disciplinary societies behind in their *entirety* or that disciplinary mechanisms

of power no longer exist ("Postscript" 7). He argues that disciplinary society has *adapted*

and *transformed* its techniques of control with the introduction of the computer and networked technologies (Saladdin Ahmed 5). He does not propose an opposition between discipline and control (this also goes for the binaries listed above that Birchall et al. point to); rather, he understands the pair as an entanglement of relations that divide the individual as one moves between the clashing *and* complementing mechanisms of discipline and control.[13] Societies of control do not supersede disciplinary societies so much as they fold into them.

If we consider Deleuze's claim that societies of control transpose onto and mutate, rather than supplant disciplinary societies, and that power circulates in an endless loop among the two, the idea that disciplinary society proper still exists today is an illusion. Take for example, Birchall et al.'s assertion that the prison continues to operate as a disciplinary enclosure in contemporary society. Is this wholly the case? If "control is

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[13] Deleuze's philosophy is not based on binary dualisms. Although concepts often appear in pairs (deterritorialization and reterritorialization, virtual and actual, stratified and smooth space, etc.), it is not the opposition or the similarity of terms that interests Deleuze. What he is concerned with is the relation between the two and the basis by which that relation is formed. He does not seek to collapse binaries, free one from the subordination of the other, or add additional terms to overcome the constraint of two (Grosz "Bergson, Deleuze" 6). Dualisms are the representation of an underlying "stratum" of difference in which binaries are produced through differences of degree between impulses, energies, and tensions (6). Thus, any pair that Deleuze names should not be thought of as a dualistic binary but a relationship between degrees of difference. Each term is a multiplicity that acts on another multiplicity and thereby forms a relation. Going forward, any concept introduced by Deleuze should be understood as an intensity that is in flux and changes depending on its interactions, functions, and forces. The multivalent quality of Deleuze's concepts can be attributed to their changing nature. For example, it is not uncommon for the definition of a concept to change or contradict the way in which it was used prior. If the meaning of a concept changes it is because its relation has changed (it has entered into a new relation with different concepts).

short-term and of rapid rates of turnover, but also continuous and without limit," as Deleuze states, we can surely see this happening within the prison system. The revolving door of incarceration creates a growing population of people with criminal records, while court and bail hearings, parole, probation conditions, revoking voting rights, criminal record checks— enact "limitless postponements of control."[14] While Birchall et al. might be right to argue that the prison still *signifies* disciplinary space, and is therefore used as a *symbol* of power to deter people from committing crimes, the prison does not actually *function* as a disciplinary space. It does not seek to produce "the individual" nor is it an enclosed space that can be simply avoided by adhering to the law. The prison is a system that is networked with advanced capital control and systemic class racism.

The Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) constitutes a flow of overlapping capitalist and government interests that extend control beyond the prison walls and penal system. The PIC encompasses not just the prison but probation, parole, policing, surveillance, the economic limitations imposed on families of those incarcerated, as well as the corporations that profit from the prison system. The prison is a machine, not an enclosure. The PIC modifies and divides individuals—creating "dividuals"— by continually extending and transforming the terms of incarceration. Sentence length and quality of life in the prison adjust to capital flows of power. For example, feminist theorist Sherene Razack contends that "The state criminalizes Blacks both in order to

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[14] For example, the U.S. has the highest rate of incarceration in the world with the lowest rates of crime (Razack 2).

benefit from their labour in prison, but also to mark them as racially defective and outside

the bounds of humanity and citizenship" (2).  Extending American scholarship on racism

and the PIC to Canada, Razack argues that both Black and Aboriginal people

overpopulate Canadian prisons: "As with Blacks whose labour and collective

stigmatization enriches Whites, a direct connection can be established between

incarcerated Aboriginal peoples and land" (2).  Thus, we could add settler colonialism as

another profiteer of the Prison Industrial Complex.

   In the prison, control, just as it manifests in Deleuze's description of the corporation,

is cultivated through "states of perpetual metastability" ("Postscript" 4).  These states

may operate through prison privatization, forced labour, and State racism that coincide

with larger structures of capital.  For example, prison labour is a capital endeavor that

provides lower operational costs for the prison system while turning a profit for the PIC's

corporate investors.  Prison factory jobs produce goods for corporations at slave labour

wages.  Human rights organizations and activists condemn the prison industrial complex

for its well-known labour exploitation, dubbed as modern-day slavery.[15] As Angela

Davis puts it, the prison system has simply moved Black people from the "prison of

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[15] Corporations pay prison workers in North America extremely low wages that average twenty-five cents per hour (Pelaez).  And, in some prisons, if inmates refuse to work, they are placed in solitary confinement (Pelaez).  Scholars argue that the disproportionately high incarceration rate of people of colour, particularly Black men, is linked to this labour exploitation and the corporate demand to fulfill low-paying jobs contracted to prisons.  See Davis, Angela.  "Masked Racism: Reflections on the Prison Industrial Complex." *History is a Weapon.* http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/davisprison.html

slavery to the slavery of prison" (Davis quoted in Razack 2).  The PIC works through *both* discipline and control.  The disciplinary mechanism of labour streamlines the prisoner into a vast network of capital control.

The pivotal difference between disciplinary societies and control societies, as Deleuze understands it, is not how they work but what they produce.  Discipline produces *the individual* and control creates the modulated *dividual.*  In C. Colwell's formulation, disciplinary "power is less concerned with what we do than it is with ensuring that we construct our identities out of what we do.  The body is simply a means to producing effects on interiority" (212).  However, discipline, it should be noted, *is* concerned with what we *do*.  As Foucault elucidates, the body in the panoptic schema is regulated through schedules, rules, examination and so forth not only to ensure the construction of an identity but also to increase productivity, obedience, and order in the interest of the State.  The principal difference between discipline and control for Colwell then, is that control, unlike discipline, is concerned *only* with the exterior actions of the body.  In Colwell's words, "[control] is concerned less with how we construe ourselves than with how we act" (212).  The body as *surface* is the prime target.  Colwell continues that the more destabilized the individual is and the more attuned she is to the body as a surface the more effective control becomes (212).  Control incites short term "identities" that arise immediately in relation to situations and activities.  These identities are transient and appear just as fast as they disappear depending on the space through which one moves.  Yet, Birchall et al. maintain that Deleuze does not offer a new

conceptualization of power and only gives us different technology-based metaphors—computers, codes, machines and so on—to describe disciplinary power. But for Deleuze, technology is *not* a metaphor for control, like pulleys, levers, and clocks are for Foucault's discipline. Deleuze understands technology as a *rhizome* that *effectuates* the ways in which control flows. The "Postscript" essay has received as much criticism as it has praise. Deleuze is either criticized for not offering anything new or different from Foucault's model of disciplinary power or he is accused of proposing a radical new theory of power that repudiates discipline.

Little has been said on how discipline and control work together in the essay—or more interesting still, what new mechanisms of power might exist *between* discipline and control. Deleuze's essay should not be taken as an either/or proposition of power (either discipline or control). The point of the essay, as I understand it, is to illustrate the ways in which control societies *repurpose* and *modulate* the disciplinary tools of the past. Disciplinary power conditions the emergence of the society of control—one diagram moves into another. Disciplinary power coerces individualization through mechanisms of surveillance to discipline the body whereas control fragments this identity. Discipline constrains the body by enforcing the norms of each enclosed space onto the individual; control regulates access at the borders of those spaces. The field of visibility remains but what we consider "visible" has changed. Rather than considering how one society produces the conditions for the next and how they are therefore capable of working together yet remaining distinct, Birchall et al. unlink discipline and control from their

Markov chain.  Perhaps therefore they have a tough time understanding the distinction Deleuze makes between the two societies—which is the way in which each diagrams relations of power.

Birchall et al. conclude their essay with a second and more inventive critique of "Postscripts." After questioning the relevancy of Deleuze's essay on control given that it was written before the Internet as we know it, they note that he presents a model of control whereby the definition of control itself is continuously modulating and transforming—which, they argue, begs the question: how can we map contemporary mechanisms of control if control is in constant flux?  How can Deleuze create a concept of control if control itself cannot be pinned down?  In their words: "Is there a danger that using this concept [of control] to interpret the web will not only run counter to Deleuze's emphasis on creativity and experimentation (as opposed to representation) by saying 'this is that,' but will in effect result in an attempt to discipline the web in order to make it more like Deleuze's philosophy?" (10).  While this question is worthy of consideration, Deleuze's essay does not provide a *framework* for a new type of power.  He is not imposing a concept of control to make definitive statements on the operations of modern power.  Deleuze posits the society of control as a new *diagram* of power to expose new relations of force.

"The society of control" gives us new tools to consider contemporary relations of power, which enables us to envision different tactics of resistance that, like control,

modulate and mutate the organization of power. Deleuze affirms that disciplinary power

is susceptible to "the passive danger of entropy" and "active danger of sabotage," and that

control is vulnerable to the passive danger of "jamming" and active danger of "piracy and

the introduction of viruses" ("Postscript" 6). He makes a point to note that one society is

not worse or better than the other—societies of control are equally qualified as

disciplinary societies to create repressive regimes as well as liberatory potentials (7). His

point is that we need to look for new "weapons" if we are to resist the encroaching,

machinic, modulating, and disperse patterns of control that we now live with (7). As I

have argued in this section, both control and discipline function in relation to each other

and result in the formation of new mechanisms of power. Control does *not* replace

disciplinary mechanisms including the spatial arrangements of in-visibility, it *modulates*

them.


## 2.4    Reassessing "The Surveillant Assemblage"

In 2011, Rogers Canada, the biggest communications conglomerate in Canada, launched

a software system called Rogers Smart Home Monitoring with the added tagline "more

than just security." When the system was first introduced it offered users the ability to

have their home monitored around the clock by "certified security staff" who work at

Rogers' "central monitoring station" ("Rogers Launches"). Rogers marketed the system

as an effortless way to have remote access to your home both for security and for

convenience. For example, in one of their early commercials they advertise the service

as a way for you to turn lights on and off, adjust the thermostat, and receive alerts to let you know when your child has arrived home from school ("Rogers Launches").

In more recent commercials the phrase "home automation" is emphasized above security. In 2016, they introduced the "small appliance module" that allows you to connect the Monitoring system to virtually any electronic in the home: "set the coffee maker so that there is a fresh pot in the morning, connect the fan to give the cats a nice cool breeze on demand, or give the housekeeper some music while they work by connecting the stereo, the options are nearly limitless" ("Get to Know Rogers"). In this updated commercial, there is no mention where the data is going and who is watching. Home security systems may provide conveniences, but they also open your home and its inhabitants to corporate monitoring, data collection, and to the risk of "unauthorized" people who are capable of exploiting cybersecurity vulnerabilities. For example, in 2015, a family in London, Ontario realized their home security system had been hacked when they heard someone whispering through the video monitor in their child's room that they were being watched ("Family's Home-Monitoring"). The family was shocked and fearful that someone could *actually* be watching ("Family's Home-Monitoring"). The success of home monitoring systems, despite their failure and security vulnerability, demonstrates the ease with which users consent to the collection of personal data. Personal data in this example is the collection of legal names, identification of family members, passwords, nicknames or aliases, income, age, employment, gender, time and dates of activities in the home, identification of visitors, acquaintances, and pets,

communication tracking, your daily schedule and habits, even what time you drink your coffee in the morning; as Rogers' says, "the options are nearly limitless." While data collection of personally identifiable information typically leaves users of convenience-based surveillance unperturbed, the exchange of privacy for efficiency is not a hard trade to make when data appears impersonal. Yet, it is not hard to imagine the Orwellian implications and possibilities of home monitoring technologies. The Rogers example is comparatively mild not least because it applies to a certain social class who arguably do not experience the ill effects of surveillance on a continuous basis. Of greater concern is the way in which everyday encounters with surveillance acclimate the perception of data collection as neutral.[16] The popular notion of "the surveillant assemblage" in surveillance studies tends toward this characterization.

In their frequently-cited 2000 essay, Kevin D. Haggerty and Richard V. Ericson introduce the term "the surveillant assemblage" to describe the rhizomatic structure of contemporary surveillance. Referencing Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of the "assemblage" and "rhizome," they argue that surveillance functions as a convergence of discrete mechanisms that turn the body into flows of information. Surveillance no longer watches over embodied subjects—it disassembles (deterritorializes) and reassembles (reterritorializes) the subject "into distinct 'data doubles' which can be scrutinized and targeted for intervention" (606). Haggerty and Ericson reject panoptic metaphors of top-

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[16] Both Magnet and Browne argue that representations of biometric technology in the media, particularly in television and film, familiarize the public with identification technology while also sensationalizing its capabilities (Magnet 147, Browne 120-121).

down surveillance that focus on the discipline of individual bodies. Instead, they maintain that surveillance is a nebulous web of power and technology with no preferred targets. "The surveillant assemblage," for Haggerty and Ericson, is a mass of surveillance technologies which converge to simultaneously abstract information from the body. In turn, the body becomes a continuous outflow of information that is disorganized and reorganized as data.

Haggerty and Ericson contend that surveillance does not recognize individuals, nor does it seek to discipline or punish a body. According to them, the surveillant assemblage is indiscriminate; it takes in a "limitless range of phenomena such as people, signs, chemicals, knowledge and institutions" as equal forces so that no one element has priority or privilege over another ("The Surveillant Assemblage" 608). Although it is meticulous with its numerical measurements, quantifying everything at every turn, they claim that the surveillant assemblage collapses hierarchies. The body is analyzed only as "pure information" before its effects are "directed toward a particular cyborg flesh/technology amalgamation" (614). Flesh disappears into algorithmic control and the body is rendered into a series of datasets. Therefore, Haggerty and Ericson assert that the surveillant assemblage "decorporealizes" the subject into "pure virtuality" (611). Although the concept of a "data double" provides a useful way to understand how the subject is circulated and calculated in digital space, it is not coextensive with the operations of surveillance and control. For example, questioning the common use of the term "surveillance assemblage," Jasbir Puar asks: "Is the informational body, the data body

that precedes and follows us racial, or racist, and if so, how is this articulated within profiling?" (*TA* 175). In short, how does the notion of a "data double" help us understand the practice of racial profiling?

Haggerty and Ericson draw on John Fiske's 1998 study of racial profiling to support their erroneous claim that surveillance hierarchies are being "levelled" ("The Surveillant Assemblage" 614). In his essay on the racially differentiated surveillance of Black men in public space, Fiske argues that Black men in the US are webbed to institutional structures of racism and hyper-surveillance that seek to map the movement of Black bodies in public space. Drawing on several case studies, Fiske demonstrates how Black men experience more CCTV and police surveillance on a day-to-day basis than white men. Fiske then summarizes: "although surveillance is penetrating deeply throughout our society, its penetration is differential. The lives of the white mainstream are still comparatively untouched by it. But in Black America, its penetration is deep" (85). In response, Haggerty and Ericson write: "while the targeting of surveillance is indeed differential, we take exception to the idea that the mainstream is 'untouched' by surveillance" (617). They continue, "surveillance has become rhizomatic, it has transformed hierarchies of observation, and allows for the scrutiny of the powerful by both institutions and the general population" (617). There are two observations to be made here. First Haggerty and Ericson mischaracterize Fiske's essay. Fiske discusses the different degrees, effects, and frequency of surveillance of Black men *compared* to the *white* mainstream. He does not argue that the mainstream is *entirely* untouched by

surveillance.  Haggerty and Ericson gloss over this crucial aspect of Fiske's work by omitting from their response the crucial words: "comparatively" and "white" to describe the mainstream.  If we re-contextualize their response to Fiske might it be possible to read Haggerty and Ericson's statement another way: while surveillance is indeed *racially* differential, we take exception to the idea that the *white* mainstream is *comparatively* untouched by surveillance?  Does our capacity to "scrutinize the powerful" level the social hierarchies embedded in racially motivated surveillance?  Why do Haggerty and Ericson resist acknowledging that surveillance is experienced in different degrees of intensity for different bodies?  If they acknowledge that surveillance is indeed "differential" then how is it not hierarchical?  In short, of what value is the concept of "the surveillant assemblage" if it does not account for racialized and racializing[17] practices of surveillance?

Haggerty and Ericson argue that bodies are "abstracted" from their "territorial settings" and "separat[ed]… into a series of discrete flows" therefore "leveling the hierarchy of surveillance" (606).  This utopian vision of a non-hierarchical, or even a less-hierarchical, model of surveillance that simply records what it sees or counts without imposing bias is reminiscent of what Donna Haraway calls the "god trick."  The god trick proffers the possibility of a neutral and disembodied instrument of visualization that sees everything from nowhere.  The trick is that visualizing technologies are not objective;

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[17] Browne uses the term "racializing surveillance" to define a "technology of social control where surveillance practices, policies, and performances concern the production of norms pertaining to race and exercise a 'power to define what is in or out of place'" (16).

they are tied to histories of militarism, capitalism, colonialism, and heteropatriarchal control (189). Haraway warns of the danger of being swept away by the promise of new "dazzling" technologies that promise to operate through neutral automation. She asserts that technology and objectivity are mediated by patterns and webs of objectification and oppression that control who gets to see, who is seen, and who remains invisible. She affirms that the only subjects who can envision a world without mediated vision are "those occupying the positions of dominators," who are "self-identical, unmarked, disembodied, unmediated, transcendent, born again" (193), and we can add here from Haggerty and Ericson, "decorporealized" and "purely virtual."

Although it is doubtful that the biometric research industry is reading Haraway's critical text on situated knowledges and partial perspectives, it is not fair perhaps to lay this charge against Haggerty and Ericson. In their more recent work, they note that some populations of people experience disproportionate levels of scrutiny. In the introduction to their anthology *The New Politics of Surveillance and Visibility,* Haggerty and Ericson list racial profiling as one of the "political axis of surveillance" that combines the "historical legacies of racism" with the operational logics of surveillance systems (17). However, they continue to hold on to the idea that "hierarchies of visibility are being levelled, as people from all social backgrounds are now under surveillance. While surveillance has not eliminated social inequalities, certain groups no longer stand outside the practice of routine monitoring" (6). The paradox in Haggerty and Ericson's presentation of surveillance—that hierarchies are being levelled while

racially discriminatory practices continue—stems from the idea that everyone, regardless of race, class, gender, ability, citizenship status, social location, and sexuality is subject to a *degree* of advanced capitalist surveillance.[18] While that might be true, the underlying assumption that we are all in this together—we are all under surveillance—proffers the illusion that "we"[19] are all subject to the same nexus of surveillance and control.

The inability to account for structural differences of surveillance and oppression is symptomatic of a mischaracterization of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "assemblage." Haggerty and Ericson define the surveillant assemblage as a "convergence" of "once discrete surveillance systems" (605). For Deleuze and Guattari an assemblage is a multiplicity of heterogeneous elements that do not lose their specificity—they do not "converge"—they stay discrete. The assemblage functions through the relations *between* elements. These relations produce the capacity for an assemblage to act and be acted upon. Foucault's diagram of panopticism is also a surveillance assemblage. It is composed of light, shadows, metal, human multiplicities, penal code, windows, bars, the architectural design of the prison. The relation between elements produces the disciplinary effects of visibility. The elements do not converge or collapse into each other; light does not merge into metal; they interact with one another.

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[18] Taking issue with Haggerty and Ericson, Sanjay Sharma and Jasbinder Nijjar argue that race (and I would add gender, sexuality, ability, class) cannot be divorced from algorithmic renderings of bodies as data because race is not only an "embodied phenomena" but also an epistemological doing intermeshed with material and ontological experiences of race and racism (77-78).

[19] I will expand on the politics of using "we" in the next chapter when I discuss the politics of location as defined by Adrienne Rich and also Rosi Braidotti.

This is an important distinction because it signals that when one relation between an element changes so does the entire assemblage.  If the bars were removed from a prison cell, for example, the element of confinement (produced through a relation; the relation of bars and the human multiplicity) would necessarily become different and change the prison assemblage's function (to confine).  Foucault's panoptic perspective, in chorus with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of assemblage, considers both the mechanism of surveillance as a whole and at the same time accounts for the specificities of its elements.

Thomas Nail contends that the English translation of "assemblage" has created confusion regarding how Deleuze and Guattari understand the concept to function.  The original French word that Deleuze and Guattari use is "agencement," which means "a construction, an arrangement, or a layout" (Nail 22).  "Assemblage" (in both its English and French definitions) means "'the joining or union of two things' or 'a bringing or coming together'" (22).  The critical difference between the two terms is that "agencement" does not imply a unification of elements whereas "assemblage" tends toward this definition in his commonplace usage (22).  This distinction is of the utmost importance to Deleuze and Guattari who argue that within any given assemblage elements do not lose their specificity— they do not collapse into one another—they do not "converge" to make a whole, they arrange through their relationality.  As such, *it is possible for an assemblage to have elements with structures without itself becoming a structure*.  Although the assemblage is not constructed as a hierarchal arrangement, the relations between elements may be hierarchical insofar as the intensity of one is stronger

than the other, or elements may also belong to hierarchical structures as for example, the system of law and justice in the panoptic assemblage. Similarly, one might find hierarchical relations between elements in historical, social, and political structures attached to various technologies in any given surveillance assemblage. For Deleuze and Guattari everything is a multiplicity, and everything is an assemblage, but their philosophy does not discount the existence of social hierarchies. The Deleuze and Guattari assemblage concept allows us to consider the unstable relation *between* elements that affect the systems and structures in our lives. If these relations are unstable, then they are open to transformation—to intervene we must intervene at the site of relationality— which is to say we must explore the *between* of technologies, histories, bodies, data, and discourses of gender and race.

The concept of surveillance as an assemblage opens possibilities for intervention at sites not normally seen. The conceptual model of the assemblage allows us to get specific, local, and unpack the relations of power between discourse and material. The assemblage is not an overarching schema. When Haggerty and Ericson identify the surveillant assemblage as "multiple, unstable" and one that "lacks discernible boundaries or responsible governmental departments" they conclude that "the surveillant assemblage cannot be dismantled by prohibiting a particular unpalatable technology. Nor can it be attacked by focusing criticism on a single bureaucracy or institution" (609); they miss precisely the critical aspect of an assemblage as a concept, which is that any change in relation between elements in the assemblage changes its capacity to act. The prohibition

of a specific surveillance technology or practice, such as racial profiling, would *necessarily* change how the surveillant assemblage functions.  Haggerty and Ericson neither identify nor acknowledge the critical importance of the heterogeneity of elements of an assemblage.  Instead, they present a solid structure, or even a supra-structure of combined technologies:

> In the face of multiple connections across myriad technologies and practices, struggles against particular manifestations of surveillance, as important as they might be, are akin to efforts to keep the ocean's tide back with a broom—a frantic focus on a particular unpalatable technology or practice while the general tide of surveillance washes over us all. (609)

Haggerty and Ericson present a bleak outlook.  They do not offer a strategy of resistance and conclude their essay with the contention that anonymity no longer exists in society and thus the surveillant assemblage controls by producing "the disappearance of disappearance" (620).  Rather than getting washed away with the tide as it were, feminist and anti-racist scholarship on surveillance has taken up a more powerful "broom" than the one envisioned by Haggerty and Ericson.  As I will discuss next, feminist and anti-racist interventions critique surveillance studies by examining the relation between race and gender and biometric technology.

## 2.5    With Whose Blood were Biometrics Crafted?

> Vision is always a question of the power to see—and perhaps of the violence implicit in our visualizing practices.  With whose blood were my eyes crafted?
>
> -Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*

What does contemporary surveillance technology tell us about historical and social structures of racism, anti-black racism, sexism, classism, ableism, colonization, Islamophobia, transphobia, and homophobia?  How do identification technologies make certain bodies and communities of people vulnerable to heightened surveillance and increased control?  In what ways are social constructions of race and gender coded into biometric recognition software?  When technology fails what does its failure tell us about systemic and structural forms of discrimination?  Biometric surveillance is an element in the surveillance assemblage.  It includes body scanners, facial recognition software, finger printing, iris scanning, olfactory detection, voice activation, mapping bodily behaviours such as gait and facial expressions, measuring palm prints and DNA verification.  These technologies measure parts of the body and calibrate biological information for the purposes of identification and verification.  There are three different types of biometric recognition failure: 1) a false rejection rate: the failure to recognize a user as themselves; 2) a false acceptance rate: the recognition of someone other than the intended user is recognized; and 3) failure to enroll (the failure of a technology to enroll the user's biometric data in the first place) (Magnet 22).  The consequences of recognition failure are many: extended wait times at airports, the inability to access

money from a bank machine, denial of entry to space, denial of mobility, identity theft, security breaches of personal information or private space, interrogation by authorities, or enrollment in a database as a possible security threat based on one's initial potential to evade identification technology. Some degree of failure is inevitable given that machines are not immune to error. However, following Shoshana Magnet (2011) and Simone Browne (2015), I assert that the failure to recognize certain bodies is more than a processing hiccup or algorithmic glitch; it is programmed at the level of code.

Biometrics are marketed as prejudice-free security technologies that remove the possibility of human bias and error in the identity recognition process. For instance, the Canadian biometrics company, AcSys claims that their facial recognition software is "completely race independent—eliminating risk of racial profiling" (AcSys Biometrics Corp qtd in Magnet 24). And industry researchers promise that "facial recognition systems do not focus on a person's skin color…a typical system uses objectively measurable facial features such as the distance and angles between geometric points on the face" resulting in a more "human-free" technology that is "free from many human flaws" (Woodward et al. qtd in Magnet 24). Recently these claims have been largely dispelled. In April 2016, *The Atlantic* published a disparaging report on the racial bias of facial recognition titled "Facial-Recognition Software Might have a Racial Bias Problem." The report contends that biometric technologies fail to recognize the faces of Black people more than any other racial group (Gravie and Frankle). These claims are publicly supported by individual consumers who share their experiences of biometric

failure on social media. For example, in August 2017, Chukwuemeka Afigbo uploaded a video to Twitter titled, "Racist Soap Dispenser?" followed by the caption, "If you have ever had a problem grasping the importance of diversity in tech and its impact on society, watch this video" (Afigbo). The video begins with a white man waving his hand underneath an automatic soap dispenser. The machine instantly recognizes the hand and dispenses the soap. Next, a Black man with dark skin uses the same waving motion underneath the sensor but the machine does not register his hand. He continues waving back and forth to no avail while someone in the background jokingly shouts out "too black!" (Afigbo). To demonstrate that the dispenser failed because of his skin colour, the man places a white paper towel underneath the sensor, and presto out comes the soap. "Racist Soap Dispenser" is one video among many that demonstrate the inability of automated recognition technology to enroll Black skin.

In another viral video uploaded to YouTube in 2009, entitled "HP Computers are Racist," two co-workers, Desi Cryer and Wanda Zamen, demonstrate how Hewlett Packard's web camera fails to track Black skin. In the video, "white Wanda" is tracked effortlessly as we see the camera pan along with her movements. However, when "Black Desi" enters the frame the camera stops moving and returns to a stationary position unable to detect his face—interestingly, this is a reversal of human-to-human racial profiling practices in which people of colour are readily tracked and made hypervisible. Hewlett Packard released a statement in response that read: "the camera

might have difficulty 'seeing' contrast in conditions where there is insufficient foreground lighting" (Browne 161). In other words, the technology was optimized for users with lighter skin.

In her incisive study on the surveillance of blackness, Browne contends that experiences like Cryer's with the HP camera tell us that "technology privileges whiteness, or at least lightness, in its use of lighting and in the ways in which certain bodies are lit and measured in the enrollment process" (113). In a tongue-and-cheek response to HP's statement, a different user on YouTube uploaded a video which showed the operation of a web camera on five different people with both dark and light skin tones. HP's camera appears to track everyone the same way, but the video ends on a satirical note: the user jokes, "if you have this camera or are planning on buying one just make sure you have a lot of lighting!" (*Re: HP*). As Browne and Magnet both note, the inability for biometrics to "see" Black skin in low contrast lighting is an extension of the "culture of light" that Richard Dyer examines in his 1997 study on white-centricity in the history of photography. Briefly, Dyer traces the history of film development and reveals that photography is premised on racially loaded associations between visibility, light, whiteness, purity, and knowledge in which the "undesirable evils of shadows" are associated with Blackness (Dyer 96, 125).

The failure of certain bodies to enroll can be attributed to the practice of "prototypical whiteness," which Browne defines as the privileging of whiteness or lightness in the development and design of biometric recognition technology (36). The

use of white features and skin colour as prototypes to develop biometric technology

inscribes racializing schemas in surveillance technology.  The schemas increase the

fallibility rates for non-white users and, as we have seen, affects convenience-based

recognition technology, such as automated soap dispensers.  Racialized schemas may

incur more grave consequences such as restricted access to space and the mobility to

cross borders.  In 2004 the United Kingdom introduced IRIS, a biometric recognition

immigration system based on iris scans that would give travellers automated clearance at

the border once their iris was verified.  The technology failed to recognize the iris images

of people with dark skin (Magnet 29).[20]  Indeed, activists protesting the program

discovered that the technology had a higher recognition rate for blue eyes (29).  In

response to the failures of IRIS, the UK government stated that their technology was

tested on a diverse population which, as Magnet points out, contradicts the industry's

claims that biometrics are supposedly "race-neutral" (29).  The program was

decommissioned in 2013 and a new program was developed called the Biometric

Residence Permit (BRP).  BRP is a mandatory permit for temporary residents and

immigrants who apply to stay in the UK.  BRP contains a person's fingerprint and

photograph along with "soft biometric" data such as age, gender, immigration status,

reason for visit or conditions of stay, and stipulations on whether a person can access

public funds for health services.  What are the dangers when fingerprints do not register

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[20] The justification given for this failure was that the technology had difficulty locating the iris against dark skin.  However, as Shoshana Magnet points out: "This response fails to explain why skin colour would make a difference, as the irises of all people are sounded by the white of the eye" (29).

at a security checkpoint, or irises do not enroll? How does prototypical whiteness create the conditions for increased racial discrimination when one becomes a suspect based on the failure to enroll?

Writing on the biopolitics of biometric technology, Joseph Pugliese argues that biometric failure can be traced back to an "infrastructural calibration to whiteness" (64). He argues that the inability for recognition technology to enroll Asian women's fingerprints, for example, is a product of prototypical whiteness. Pugliese asserts that it reproduces a racist logic through the language used to describe enrollment failure, for example, "Asian women's fingerprints [are described] as "faint," "lower quality," or the result of "delicate skin" (64). In actuality, the failure to enroll fingerprints is based on the inability to account for ridge variation which can be affected by race, age, and the deterioration of skin from using harsh cleaning chemicals that affect ridge characteristics (Browne 113). Pugliese argues that racially-loaded language masks the infrastructural whiteness of surveillance technology and makes both prototypical whiteness *and* the non-white subject who fails to enroll invisible (64). But, in this failure, the non-white subject is not wholly invisible, as Pugliese suggests; the failure of recognition becomes a point of *hypervisibility* in which the subject is subjected to additional scrutiny.

A 2004 study, problematically entitled "Rapid Pose Estimation of Mongolian Faces Using Projective Geometry," suggests that anthropometry is used to create algorithmic templates for race recognition. Anthropometry is the practice of measuring the human

body to classify differences.  Anthropometry is historically linked to a discourse of

scientific racism in which its subset practices of phrenology and craniology were used to

measure the skulls of different races to determine intellectual capacity and criminality.

In the eighteenth-century, anthropometry was used to measure and compare racial

differences of sexuality.  At that time, the so-called "differences" between Black and

white women's genitalia were measured and compared to support racist ideas

surrounding Black women's sexuality (Somerville 1997).  Anthropometry is largely

dismissed today as pseudoscience not least because of its archaic practices of craniology

and phrenology, but also because the practice of measuring bodies against one another to

determine racial difference suggests that race, gender, and sexuality are biologically

based rather than socially constructed.  Despite these criticisms, Magnet reports that there

has been a resurgence of anthropometry-based research in the study of biometric

engineering.  For example, in their paper on "Mongolian" faces, Li Hau-Ming et al. state,

"The difference of Race is obvious, and it is the central field of the research of

anthropology, Anthropometry is a key technique to find out this difference" (Li et al. qtd

in Magnet 39).  Racial difference is determined by the measurements of the size of the

nose and the width between the eyes.  They conclude that "as a result of using the

statistical information of the Mongolian Race's feature, our method is suitable to be used

in the north of China" (Li et al. qtd in Browne 113).  Browne argues that the

contemporary use of anthropometry, such as that outlined in Hau-Ming et al.'s study, is a

form of "digital epidermalization." Browne defines digital epidermalization as the

practice of digitizing the body into code in ways that fracture the body from its humanness thereby making one into a racial Other (98).

Biometric surveillance technology is part of contemporary surveillance assemblages. These technologies are informed by social constructions of race and hierarchical practices of profiling. As Browne demonstrates, prototypical whiteness and digital epidermalization are folded into the "surveillant assemblage" in ways that beg the question: are bodies ever really "abstracted" from their "territorial setting," as Haggerty and Ericson suggest? What does the *process* of "decorporealization" entail? Are "data doubles" prototypically white? Are they anthropometrically determined? Are they encoded with cultural assumptions about race? If not, does this mean that "the surveillant assemblage" is *infrastructurally* white?

The title of this section, "with whose blood were biometrics crafted," is not meant to imply that race, gender, sexuality, or identity can be located in blood. It is meant to gesture toward the ways in which biometric technology participates in a colonial logic of identification—i.e. when identity is established and verified based on biological markers. In Canada, for example, the *Indian Act* reduces the legal Status of Native peoples to biological traits such as blood quantum. Under the 1876 *Act,* Indian identity was verified by tracing the patrilineal heritage of a Native person to establish their blood descent. Although the current *Act* does not mention blood, the Status stipulations are clearly based

on blood lineage.[21]  In her dissertation, *Beyond Blood: Rethinking Aboriginal Identity*

*and Belonging,* Pamela D. Palmater argues that blood quantum laws in Canada are a form

of race classification that "perpetuates racist stereotypes about Aboriginal people based

on a physical characteristic (blood), which is no less objectionable than had the

characteristic been the height of [a person's] cheekbones or the colour of their skin"

(405).  Status laws create a situation of choice where "people are forced to take blood

quantum/descent and status into account when considering their marital and/or parenting

partners" (407).  The politics around blood quantum laws are gendered, complex, and

contested.  Space does not permit for a full discussion here on the nuances of the *Indian*

*Act* and its relation to blood quantum.  I want to suggest however that Status laws should

be considered a form of biometric surveillance technology.  Although rarely mentioned

in surveillance studies scholarship, Status stipulations operate through the same

biometric logic of identification and enrollment: access to space and Status are

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[21] Contemporary laws in Canada on Indian Status are intentionally complex.  Briefly, there are
two types of status.  The first is 6(1) status which means that both a person's parents have status.
The second is 6(2) which indicates that only one parent has 6(1) status.  Both 6(1) and 6(2) have
equal provisions.  However, if a person with 6(2) status has a child with someone with no status,
whether they are Native or not, their child has lost status.  This is often called the "second
generation cutoff." Embedded in these laws is a history of gendered violence; historically, if a
Native woman married a white man, she would lose status.  Though the law was amended in
1985 to remove gender discriminatory provisions by inaugurating 6(1) and 6(2) status, those
people whose status lineage is primarily maternal often meet the second-generation cutoff sooner
and/or have difficulties claiming status.  In 2010-11 the Indian Act was amended again to address
gender disparity, but imbalanced remained.  In 2016, after a Quebec Superior Court ruling found
that the Indian Act violated the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom, Bill S-3, an amendment
to the Indian Act that eliminates gender-based inequalities in status registration, was introduced.
In December 2017, Bill S-3 received royal assent.  In addition to the historical legacy of sexism,
status laws in Canada are regularly criticized as an intergenerational surveillance system that
tracks racial purity.

determined by verifying one's identity. Blood quantum laws, like "digital epidermalization," do not extract information from the body; clearly, they *impose* notions of race, identity, and belonging *onto* the body.

With respect to colonial signification of blood, OmiSoore Dryden contends that blood quantum practices in Canada, as well as other countries, "rely upon blood to produce knowledge about bodies, purity, lineage, and relatedness...[and] narrate the constitutive making of bodies and framings of belonging" (122). Blood quantum laws are "used to construct white bodies, limit nation-state citizenship, and map borders of nationals through racialization (and othering) of specific bodies. These bodies, perpetually excluded, are tethered to the nation and necessary for the nation's construction" (123). Dryden raises important questions on the relation between blood and surveillance: In what ways is the state using blood quantum and Status laws to surveil and track Indigenous peoples? How does a legacy of blood quantum law support national security discourse on surveillance and terrorism? In the next chapter, I discuss the surveillance of Indigenous peoples more thoroughly and argue that colonial surveillance is a contemporary mechanism of control that seeks to construct and authenticate Native identity in ways that support the heteropatriarchal undercurrents of the so-called war on terror.

Thus far, I have presented examples of spatial arrangements of in-visibility and digital modulation to reveal their coexistence in the same surveillance assemblage. The

quantification and calibration of bodies as data have been socially situated in similar

ways as the politics of vision. Briefly, Puar contends that the visual field is a racially

contested terrain and "seeing" is not simply a biological mode of perception, but seeing is

also an interpretation, signification, and a practice of "reading" bodies through social,

political and historical lenses (183). The digitization of bodies cannot be separated from

those practices of "seeing" where legacies of racism and contemporary practices of

discrimination are coded into recognition and control. The field of data is an enfleshed

terrain based on human assumptions of race and gender that shape the ways in which

one's biometric identity is enrolled or not enrolled. The insidious and pervasive nature of

networked surveillance perpetuated by corporate interests, does not eliminate the fact that

*individuals* are visually tracked and identified through perceptual and panoptic systems

that are completely unconcerned with "decorporealized data doubles." Clearly, the

concept of the assemblage as advanced by Deleuze and Guattari would not deny

hierarchical practices of surveillance. Indeed, their concept of assemblage would

inherently acknowledge the relations of elements in a surveillance assemblage and would

enable us to locate, expose and examine the effects of over-policing in Black

communities, gendered forms of surveillance, or Islamophobic practices of terrorist

profiling.

Kelly Gates demonstrates in her study of facial recognition technology that

technology is not used to profile terrorists based on "pure information." Terrorist

suspects are not abstracted from their body and territory and then rendered into a

digitized face, which is then objectively cross-listed against a list of known terrorists.

Instead, the "face of terror" is socially constructed through a system of classification

based on the image of a mythic racialized enemy (Gates101-2).  When bodies are

converted into numerical code, individuals and groups are differentially sorted "according

to calculated levels of privilege, access, and risk" (Gates 58).  Thus, while Haggerty and

Ericson's "data doubles" are cleared through a security checkpoint another person's data

double may be detained precisely because of the body and territory from which the

double came.  If we accept that recognition technology is developed through a relation

between ways of seeing and ways of coding, then it follows that failure occurs at the site

between the analogue and digital.  This site of failure between visibility and modulation

gives way to a third mechanism of control, which I call *somatic suspension*.

## 2.6    Somatic Suspension

> It's all about checkpoints…They lie in wait for you at key points.  You come to
> them, and they're activated by your arrival.  You're free to move, but every few
> steps there's a checkpoint.  They're everywhere, woven into the social landscape.
> To continue on your way you have to pass the checkpoint.  What's being
> controlled is right of passage – access…When you pass the checkpoint you have
> to present something for detection, and when you do that something registers…Or
> something fails to register, and that's what lets you pass, like at airport security or
> places where there's video surveillance.  In either case what's being controlled is
> passage across thresholds.

> -Brian Massumi, *Politics of Affect*

To successfully pass through a checkpoint one must smoothly oscillate between visibility

and the digital field of modulation.  The body must be readable and recognizable, but also

malleable enough to be divided into code. When the body fails to enroll in either the field of vision or the field of data a moment of *suspension* occurs in which the body is unable to cross a threshold. When a body scanner at an airport is unable to verify the gender of a traveller for example, the body is suspended not only between departure and destination, but also between the categories of identification and indiscernibility: female/male and *?* Innocent/suspect and *?* Citizen/terrorist and *?*

In this section, I will briefly outline "somatic suspension" as a third mechanism of control. This mechanism works by restricting certain bodies from crossing a threshold or checkpoint. Like the previous two mechanisms discussed earlier—spatial arrangements of in-visibility and digital modulation—somatic suspension also controls through relations of *movement*. The first mechanism controls by *confining* the body to spatial arrangements of in-visibility (i.e. the body is caught in the perpetual effects of regulatory norms) and the second operates by *dispersing* the body in digital space—the third mechanism controls by *suspending* the body between the two.

When bodies fail to verify as a recognizable identity they are momentarily suspended from the rapid flow of information. They glitch the system and cause a hiccup in automated control. Somatic suspension is not constrained to high-tech forms of identification. It can occur in low-tech or no-tech instances, for example: when trans bodies are barred access to public bathrooms, the quotidian flow of movement in public space is disrupted. These specific instances, that unexpectedly actualize at the site of

error, disruption, or failure characterize a mechanism of control: the suspension and restriction of the body's movements. Nonetheless, I also argue that during somatic suspension there exists the potentiality for resistance. But first, I want to explore somatic suspension as a form of capture and control that is effectuated by the relation and tension *between* panoptic visibility and digital modulation.

The careful choreography of travelling through airport security checkpoints:

> *Wait in line, don't fidget, don't look nervous, divert your eyes from the agent walking through aisles of travellers, or smile reassuringly with an expression that says, "I have nothing to hide." Boarding pass out, passport in hand, liquids in plastic bags, shoes off, one item per tray, do not forget to remove your jewelry, empty your pockets. Wait until you are waved on, enter the body scanner, face this way, hands up—freeze (literally assume the posture of submission), wait for clearance… cleared? You pass the threshold. Pulled aside? The next steps will require some unchoreographed improvisation— the security agent will take the lead.*

The passenger's skillful performance of airport choreography demonstrates to an audience of travellers the individual's willingness and ability to submit to surveillance. Rachel Hall contends that submission to security scanners neutralize the politics of surveillance by supporting the notion that security screening is objective and impersonal (132). Alternatively, refusing to enter the body scanner results in a secondary staged

public performance in which a human inspects the traveller. Hall argues that this either/or situation, body scanner or agent pat-down, creates a "charged distinction between machine and human" in which innocent citizens are parsed from deviant or suspect travellers based on vision versus touch (131). Those who submit to the body scanner and who are willing to make themselves transparent are depicted as "good citizens" while those who "opt out" and choose a pat-down inspection are rendered opaque and considered suspicious with something to hide. Hall contends that the division created by airport security screening technology promotes a discourse of terrorism that establishes a fundamental difference between the innocent servile Westerner who submits to the machine and the guilty deviant non-Westerner who (since pulled aside and pat down by a security agent whether by choice or not) would rather be touched (131).

The body scanner is a prime example of an instance of panoptic spatial arrangements of in-visibility performed by the machine and not the human. The security machine sees all, and, like the guard tower, individuals regulate their behaviour around the spectacle of the scanner, patiently waiting for the approval of its inevitable gaze. However, before arriving at the body scanner travellers are already under surveillance: everyone's actions are watched, documents checked, luggage screened, such that the machine does not abstract "pure information" from bodies to be objectively calculated and evaluated so much as it verifies what has *already* been seen. Take for example the ways in which airport security scanners operate through a gender binary system. Before a traveller enters the scanner, the security agent must select from a pink female button or

a blue male button. The button that is selected is not based on the traveller's preference, passport, or other identification documents, but on the agent's *subjective perception* of the traveller's gender. According to the U.S. Transportation Security Administration (TSA) website, "When you enter the imaging portal, the TSA officer presses a button designating a gender (male/female) based on how you present yourself. The machine has software that looks at the anatomy of men and women differently… if a pat-down is performed, it will be conducted by an officer of the same gender as you present yourself" (TSA).[22] Together, the body scanner and agent create a moment of somatic suspension.

In their examination of the relationship between body scanners at airports and visibility, Gloria González Fuster, Rocco Bellanova, and Raphaël Gellert argue that security scanners perform a new type of surveillance *beyond* panopticism. Hastily critiquing panopticism, they argue that invisibility, as an integral and structural element in the operations of power, is undermined in panoptic theories. As a corrective, they propose the concept of "dis-appearance," which "refers to the process whereby a visible element becomes invisible, or an invisible element becomes visible. It assumes that invisibility does not mean irrelevancy: the disappeared element might, indeed, still be active and productive despite its newly acquired invisibility" (515). However, for Foucault, invisibility is not irrelevant nor is it inactive: the guard tower in the panopticon

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[22] On the Canadian border security (CATSA) website it notes that trans travellers may request a male or female agent to perform a pat-down or a "split-search" may be requested in which a man and woman pat-down the traveller. They also state that travellers can request pat-downs in a private room with a witness of their choice ("Trans Passengers").

schema is opaque, and the prisoner is illuminated by light and each depend on the other to actualize a relation of power. The invisibility of the guard and the visibility of the prisoner are required to automate discipline. What is also important to note is that the guard, if we are to believe that there is one in the tower, is subject to discipline herself through the requirement that she remain *invisible*. Recall Bentham's elaborate design of the interior of the guard tower with its partitions and passages that the guard must maneuver to travel from one observation window to the next to avoid being detected by the presence of her shadow. The guard's movements are disciplined by (the threat of) light and visibility; the guard tower is its own prison cell that disciplines the guard by mandating invisibility. The panopticon is not restricted to the few watching the many. The many also watch the few.[23] Visibility and invisibility are of the same order, they belong to the same diagram of power and continuously flow into one another. Fuster et al. maintain however, that "dis-appearance" is entirely different than the relation between in-visibility.

Returning to the security scanner, Fuster et al. argue that the introduction of millimeter wave (MMW) scanners in airports ushered in a new form of surveillance. Prior to 2013, North American airports used backscatter x-ray scanners (full body

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[23] The notion that panopticism included synoptic power (the many watching the few) is evident in Bentham's panopticon-shaped school where children observe the teacher and in his notion of the constitutional-Panopticon in which society watches those who govern. As Maša Galič et al. point out, these aspects of Bentham's panopticon are largely absent from surveillance studies scholarship that tend to focus on Foucault's analysis of the prison (11-15).

scanners) to produce clear and detailed images of the traveller's organic body (fig. 1).

The images rendered by the backscatter x-ray scanner are akin to a negative photograph;

they clearly outline the shape and features of the body not unlike being able to see-

through someone's clothing. Due to privacy and health concerns full body Backscatter

x- ray scanners were removed from airports and MMW "security scanners" were

introduced. MMW scanners do not use radiation waves and cannot produce an image of

a naked body. Instead, a rough and generic outline of a body appears on screen (fig. 2).
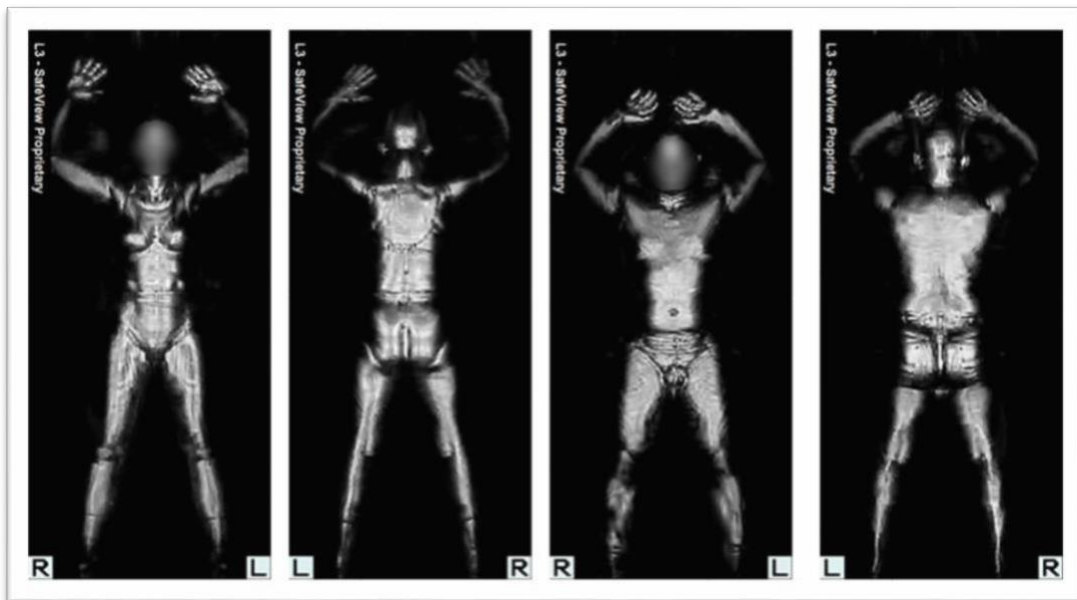


Fig. 1: Full body X-ray Image from the Transportation Security Administration (TSA).

Inorganic and metal materials appear as ambiguous shapes on the generic body outline.

Fuster et al. argue that security scanners produce a mode of surveillance that uniquely

renders the body out of view: "the scrutinized bodies… disappear into [a] new… system

now able to transform individuals into subjects of surveillance not by making them more

visible, but by translating them into anonymous objects: *non-gendered* silhouettes" (516,

emphasis added). They reason that the security scanner "vanishes" the subject (and

gender) by turning the fleshy material body into a nondescript digital image.[24] What

interests Fuster et al. is that the disappeared subject remains present and can be forced to
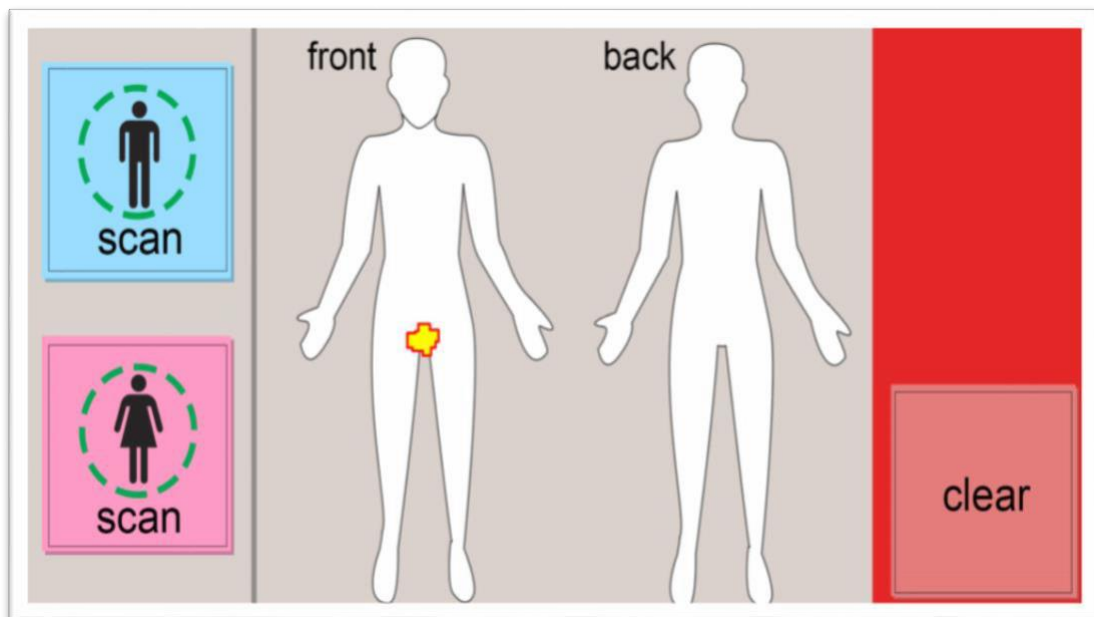


Fig.2: Artist illustration of L3 ProVision ATD's gendered security scanner screen implemented in
North American airports in 2013. Currently, the technology is used internationally. Image courtesy
of Phoebe Lim, 2015.

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[24] Fig. 2 illustrates that unlike body scanners that use penetrative X-rays to see through clothing to
reveal suspicious objects, MMV scanners detect objects by using an algorithm that measures the
body's shape against a default template. As Merav Amir and Hagar Kotef explain this template is
defined by "certain predetermined definitions of the human body, as base-line" (243). In other
words, the MMV scanner calculates, configures, and constitutes "safe travellers" based on gender
and ableist norms.

reappear if authorities deem necessary.  The fluctuation between appearance and

disappearance, they argue, cannot be accounted for in panoptic theories of surveillance or

the dyad of in/visibility.  They conclude that the space between exposure and

concealment, or between disappearance and appearance, may indicate a productive site of

resistance for subjects to escape visualizing forms of control.

Fuster et al. claim that dis-appearance "allows for the study of the ways in which

control can be forced upon dynamic and changing entities, without the need to fix them

into definitive beings" (517).  But in the case of the security scanner, it is *precisely* the

fixing of the body that underpins the technology.  The subject must adhere to a *preset*

series of bodily markers or take the risk of being marked as a threat.  There is no room

for ambiguity; the traveller's body must always remain discernible to the machine.  The

body scanner works through intensities of in-visibility, cloaking some parts of the

subject, such as the materiality of the body, while exposing others, such as gender.  The

subject never "vanishes" from view as Fuster et al. claim.  To pass through the security

checkpoint, one must be visually recognizable as *either* male or female, not only to the

TSA agent but to the machine as well.  Even if the TSA agent selects the correct gender

with which the traveller identifies (assuming the gender is either male or female and not

non-binary or gender variant), the machine may flag body parts that do not comply with

the machine's preprogrammed template of a cisgender or non-intersex male or female

body.  "Non- compliance" has resulted in extra surveillance of trans travellers who wear

genital prosthetics or chest binders.  It is important to note here that the concept of dis-

appearance does not account for the ways in which trans subjects become *more* visible

via scanner screens rather than disappearing from view.[25] In addition to this failure to

dis-appear, Fuster et al. seem to forget that the traveller never fully escapes the field of

visibility. While the individual may be able to temporarily "disappear" via the body

scanner screen (depending on one's gender), the traveller is still, and at the same time,

subjected to the gaze of airport security personnel, fellow travellers, CCTV cameras,

and potentially biometric surveillance such as facial, iris, and fingerprint recognition

technologies.

Instead of making the body dis-appear, I suggest that airport security scanners

*suspend* the body. The body is captured by the scanner and divided into verifiable

chunks of data which are then reassembled in ways that either permit or restrict one's

movement beyond the security checkpoint. Apprehended while crossing a threshold, the

body suspended is subject to increased scrutinization through the imposition of identity

and identification. Helpful here is Massumi's notion of the "grid of identification." The

identity grid is an *overcoded* organization of the body that slices the body into various

identity categories: "The grid is a proliferating series of exclusive disjunctive synthesis

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[25] In 2015, for example, the CBC reported that transgender traveller Shadi Petosky was detained
by TSA agents because the security scanner detected an "anomaly." While detained Petosky was
interrogated about her gender (in)visibility (see https://www.cbc.ca/news/trending/transgender-
orlando-airport-shadi-petosky-scanner-anomaly-1.3239208). Following media reports on
Petosky's experience, the TSA issued a statement that "TSA officers may no longer use the term
'anomaly'" (TSA 2017). However, no actual changes were made in the security scanning
procedure; instead, "anomaly" was replaced with the word "alarm" (Amir and Kotef 244).

adding up to a system of value judgment…some bodies are what they are and are good; others are not what they seem to be and are bad" (*UG* 76, 110).  Subjects are positioned on the grid by inhabiting one side of each category: either female or male, gay or straight, transgender or cisgender, non-white or white, able-bodied or disabled.  Although categories overlap, and a body can be positioned in several places on the grid at once, all positions are predetermined.  The grid of identification precedes the body and simply pins the subject as a point within each category (*Parables* 2).  This positioning of the subject is a useful way to understand the different sites and social locations one occupies but Massumi argues that it constrains the body's movements *between* points on the grid.  In his words, positionality gridlocks movement "by subtracting movement from the picture.  This catches the body in a cultural freeze frame" (3).  On the grid of identification there is no unknown or undetermined place: "There is 'displacement,' but no transformation.  It is as if the body simply leaps from one definition to the next" (3).

Somatic suspension is both an activation and effect of the identity grid.  Through the combination of technical and social apparatuses, analogue and digital, panoptic in-visibility and digital modulation, the body's flow is suspended between escape and total categorization.  For the trans traveller flagged by the security scanner, the body is held up, delayed, detained by systems of categorization that seek to securitize identity by

"securitizing gender"[26] on the grid. When the security scanner is unable to recognize gender, there is a concerted effort to locate, position, quantify, code and decode the body—an effort that activates the grid but also reveals its inherent instability.

The grid of identification takes as its referent point white-male-cisgender-heterosexual-able-bodiedness. All other positions are measured against this category. When the body cannot be verified against this prototype, it is both released from and suspended by the grid. But suspension is not the same thing as being stopped. Being stopped is being held between two points. The former assumes that the body was already moving toward one point or another and was simply interrupted. Differently, suspension occurs through the cluster and confusion of all points mixing and dispersing at once—a moment when there is more than an either/or option (cisgender or transgender), there is a possibility for and, and, and— woman and man and trans and straight and queer and cis—everything all at once. *It is not gridlock but grid overload.* Somatic suspension is painful because it reveals a potential passage out of the grid but forcibly holds the body between two superficial points, which I explain below.

Sara Ahmed writes about the "phenomenology of being stopped" as a technology of racism that renders one "out of place." Recounting her experience of being stopped at the border because of her Pakistani last name, she contends that the action of being stopped is

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[26] This term comes from Paisley Currah and Tara Mulqueen. They define "securitizing gender" as the process whereby gender is "operationalized" by TSA programs to manage the risk of and acquire information on trans bodies (19).

like becoming a stranger to oneself (141). The strange-self drags behind the body and one is always waiting for it to catch up or clear a checkpoint; the strangeness of being stopped slows the body down as it anticipates future stops (141). Here, I would like to add to Ahmed's experience of being stopped with my own experience of being *suspended* at the border also because of my Pakistani last name. I have been routinely pulled aside for additional screening, luggage checks and pat-downs. Like Ahmed, I am multi-racial— white and Pakistani. Although I pass for white daily, airport security personnel are keen to my Muslim last name. I am pulled aside—not stopped but suspended between wait and go. Unlike, Ahmed's characterization of being stopped, during moments of somatic suspension, the body, as I experience it, does not drag, it *accelerates*. Something has happened, I am *hurled* off course. I must be repositioned on the grid of identification before passing the threshold, but in the between time, while the grid is being calculated and sorted out, I am caught in a *no-body* zone that is at the same time a *could-be-a-body* zone. The identification has not been made; I *move* between categories. As Ahmed says, being detained at a security checkpoint is a stressful event, especially when it is caused by a failure of being (safely) located on the grid of identification. Being suspended is an outer body experience that is at the same time intensely embodied. The body is stressed with elevated cortisol. Suspension is a moment of intense affect; there is no stillness. Nothing has ceased, ended, or been cut off, as Ahmed characterizes of being stopped (139). On the contrary, when the body is suspended everything is doubled, multiplied, effectuated.

Somatic suspension is an affective state of control. The body is "absorbed in the encounter and we already understand, in the very fiber of our being, what is at stake, and where things might be tending toward. The feeling of the transitional encounter is not 'raw' feeling. It is imbued with an immediate understanding of what is under way, what might be coming—and what we are becoming" (Massumi *Politics of Affect* 94). This moment of "thinking-feeling," as Massumi calls it, does not belong to one subject (the traveller pulled aside) nor is it caused by an object (the body scanner), "it pertains more directly to the event, what passes in-between objects and subjects, than to the objects or subjects per se" (94). Body scanner, TSA agents, fellow travellers, CCTV cameras, facial recognition technology, metal detector wands, data, visibility, the gaze, modulation are all "co-implicated in the event, as immediate dimensions of the event" (95). All elements are "synchronously but asymmetrically" involved in the suspension of the body. Somatic suspension comes up between the middle of things while bringing them into a new relation. Which is to say, somatic suspension is "transindividual"—the event affects agent, traveller, travellers waiting in line. Although suspension targets one body and interrupts its movement from point A to point B, from checkpoint to flight gate—from one threshold to another—the interruption enfolds in a field of *differentially suspended* bodies. Multiple bodies are absorbed in the event of somatic suspension, each attuning to the encounter in a different way (95). The TSA agent is suspended, onlookers are suspended, the traveller next in line is suspended. Somatic suspension is a collective mechanism of control.

Suspension is an event when things could go any which way. Because an event unfolds on the fly, its outcome cannot be completely determined (Massumi *Politics of Affect* 96). Although certain bodies are suspended more frequently than others, the techniques used to determine passage or detention are situational in nature. For example, the TSA agent evaluates the affected body, gauging its expression of being affected—is the body nervous, sweating, twitching, shaking, avoiding eye contact? A nervous Muslim man pulled over at a security checkpoint is assessed differently than a distressed pregnant woman, unless, of course, she is Muslim—then they both occupy the position of "could- be-terrorist".[27] In either case, *affective response is measured against the grid of identification.* Since affects are unpredictable—we do not know what a body can do— then so too are the effects of controlling mechanisms. Somatic suspension makes bodies vulnerable and at the same time reveals the vulnerability of its own controlling mechanism. That is, the vulnerability of the identity grid and its inability to fix meaning—of gender, for example—leads to the opening of a site of resistance. There is a possibility for something unexpected to happen in the realm of being affected by norms that allows the body to "break with the mechanical patterns of repetition, deviating from, resignifying and sometimes quite emphatically breaking those citational chains of gender normativity, making room for new forms of gendered life" (Butler "Rethinking" 18). Somatic suspension exposes the cracks and fissures in identity grids—*you are identified*

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[27] In 2008, Home Land Security released a document stating that women wearing burqas and who appeared pregnant should be considered security threats. The premise was that women could be using pregnant prosthetics to conceal a bomb. The document targets Muslim women. (See Magnet and Mason 2014).

*as that which cannot quite be identified*. The failure to identify enacts a mode of control and at the same time it generates the potential to become otherwise.


## 2.7    Resistance

Concealment and hyper-visibility are vexed strategies of political resistance. Not only do they begin from the assumption that a body can choose to be either visible or invisible, but they are unable to address the affective dimensions of somatic control. Writing on the surveillance of trans bodies post-9/11, Toby Beauchamp examines the ways in which trans subjects are made to appear through medical monitoring on the one hand and disappear by passing as cisgender on the other hand. He contends that "Medical surveillance [of trans bodies] focuses first on individuals' legibility *as* transgender, and then, following medical intervention, on their ability to *conceal* any trans status of gender deviance" (357, emphasis original). The interplay between concealment and exposure links trans identity to a notion of secrecy: trans status becomes something that is (or should be) hidden but will be eventually discovered (359). It is in this context that trans travellers are associated with the figure of the terrorist-in-disguise. Both bodies are marked as "deceptive" and "treacherous" and subject to heightened forms of surveillance that make concealment or hyper-visibility as strategies of resistance undesirable or even unattainable (359). To avoid scrutiny, the "could-be-terrorist" body, whether trans or Muslim (or both) or a "Muslim-look-alike," must "go stealth" to blend in as a "Trusted

Traveller"[28] who is characterized as white, male, cisgender, heterosexual, English- speaking, able-bodied. Blending becomes a strategy of survival and safety.

However, Beauchamp reports that The National Transgender Advocacy Coalition (NTAC) recommends for trans travellers that they openly disclose their trans status to avoid being "caught" and perceived as an untrustworthy body with something to hide (in other words to avoid being mistaken as a terrorist). Beauchamp argues that NTAC's advice to reveal one's trans status as a strategic form of visibility "is couched in terms of distinguishing between the good, safe transgender traveler and the dangerous, deviant terrorist in…disguise" (362). That is, implicit in NTAC's statement is the desire to separate the "good" *white* trans travellers from "bad" *racialized* travellers. As Beauchamp argues, the suggestion for trans bodies to become strategically visible erases the ways in which "going stealth" may have never been possible.

The argument of who has access to invisibility or visibility runs deep in queer, feminist, and anti-racist theorizing on resistance strategies. Strategic visibility is seated in a framework of recognition politics that seek to reverse the relations of power that erase and invisiblize certain bodies. As an activist strategy of power reversal, visibility politics re-claims space and identity to effect social change. Strategic visibility is often expressed as a direct form of action that gets the attention of the public, government, and

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[28] "Trusted Traveller" is CATSA's term for "low-risk travellers," which they define as someone who has undergone "extensive background checks." Those who carry a biometric NEXUS pass are automatically considered trusted travellers.

media, and provides visual-based evidence of social injustice. The high visibility of a population of people or political issue that is achieved through public demonstration has the unique capacity to ignite new political alliances and mobilize large numbers of people who were previously forced to "go stealth." Increasing one's visibility then, is a critical aspect for many whose oppression and suffering are sidelined and blanketed by various forms of control. However, as Beauchamp asserts, visibility is a fraught strategy of resistance given that control also operates by rendering certain bodies hyper-visible. How can we think resistance otherwise? Are there potentials for new strategies of resistance to sexual surveillance?

An effective strategy of resistance must begin by conceiving of power as an assemblage of forces that shift and adapt with every localized change. Spatial arrangements of in-visibility, digital modulation, and somatic suspension are three overlapping mechanisms of control and capture. Each mechanism works by controlling movement; confinement, dispersion, and suspension. These techniques of control function in relation to one another in assemblages of surveillance. If control is an assemblage of forces, then this is equally true of resistance. Therefore, to imagine resistance we must also imagine it as an assemblage of strategies, ideas, forces, and affects.

In their book *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari refer to an assemblage as a "fragmentary whole" (16). Unlike a unity, the elements and pieces of an assemblage can be added or subtracted without destroying the entire assemblage. For example, the human can be defined as a unity. The body is made up of different organs that function

together to create a unified system—each organ relies on the other to function. A heart requires a body to beat, the brain requires the heart and lungs, and so on. None of these elements can be subtracted or reorganized without destroying the body. In this way, the body *precedes* its organs—the human body is the unity that brings the organs together to function in a specific and preconfigured way; the relation between elements is interior. On the other hand, an assemblage is a body without organs (BwO). Like a machine, an assemblage functions through an aggregation of elements. The constellation and clustering of elements generates and is generated by flows of *desire*—Deleuze and Guattari's term for a positive and productive material flow of force—that makes the assemblage function. For example, the human can also be defined as an assemblage. We are composed of numerous never-ending connections, interactions, organizations and disorganizations, such as genetics, anatomy, memories, actions, relations with other bodies. These relations do not precede the human but produce its capacities and actions; the relations between elements is therefore exterior. A body *with* organs is defined by the inextricable internal co-dependence of its elements; a body *without* organs is defined by indeterminate external relations between elements. Therefore, elements of the human (such as memories and relationships) can be rearranged or subtracted from a BwO without destroying the human assemblage as a whole.

"Assemblage" as a concept enables us to move away from the idea that things such as surveillance, resistance, and even concepts exist prior to their relations. From this view, a model of surveillance cannot be created ahead of its circumstance. Likewise, if

we envision a strategy of resistance and *then* apply it to a situation it is only capable of

resembling a form of resistance that already exists because it is formulated from

something that already happened.  But a strategy of resistance produced out of

circumstance—produced from the conditions that make it necessary—will emerge

something new.  Haggerty and Ericson create the concept of the "surveillant assemblage"

ahead of its circumstance rather than examining the specific relations between

technologies and bodies.  Instead of asking what *is* surveillance, like Haggerty and

Ericson do, or asking what *is* resistance, we need to ask what does surveillance *do*?

What is resistance capable of?  What forces compose and decompose assemblages of

surveillance and assemblages of resistance?  In what follows, I examine the relations

between in-visibility, digital modulation, and somatic suspension within the anti-Dakota

Access Pipeline movement at Standing Rock Sioux Reservation.  Uncovering the

overlapping and specific relations of heteropatriarchal settler colonialism and

surveillance, I propose a queer politics of imperceptibility as a new weapon of resistance.

**3**

**Imperceptibility: Toward a New Politics of Resistance**



Fig. 3: Police brutality at Standing Rock Sioux Reservation on Nov. 20, 2016.  Photo courtesy of Avery Leigh White, 2016.

On November 20th, 2016, three hundred people were injured and twenty-six hospitalized

after law enforcement officers fired a barrage of weapons at a group of unarmed activists

protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) near Standing Rock Sioux reservation in

North Dakota.  The Standing Rock Medic and Healer Council reported that injuries

included broken or fractured bones caused by projectiles, internal bleeding from rubber

bullets, and hypothermia as a result of being soaked by water cannons in below-freezing

temperatures ("11/21/2016").  Prior to that cold and violent November night,

unbeknownst to the public, the anti-DAPL (NoDAPL) protestors—who call themselves

water protectors—were subject to an extensive surveillance operation run by a private

security firm called TigerSwan (TigerSwan). TigerSwan was hired by the pipeline's

parent company Energy Transfer Partners and colluded with police in several States to

conduct surveillance on protestors and to securitize the pipeline construction site (Brown

et al.). Over a hundred internal documents leaked to *The Intercept* by a TigerSwan

contractor reveal that the security firm's intel contained false and exaggerated information

on protestors which law enforcement used to justify the attack, dubbed by water

protectors as the "Battle of Backwater Bridge."[29]

TigerSwan's surveillance operation, what they refer to as "aggressive intelligence

preparation of the battlefield," used "military-style counterterrorism measures" to track,

identify, and classify protestors (Brown et al.). This is perhaps not surprising

considering that TigerSwan originated as a private contractor for the US Military and

Department of Defense to fight the so-called war on terror and employ ex-military and

former special forces members as consultants and security agents. According to the

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[29] The assault against water protectors began when protectors attempted to move two burned-out
trucks that were left on the Backwater Bridge from an earlier conflict in October. Protectors were
concerned that the blockade prevented emergency response vehicles from reaching the
Reservation. Law enforcement characterized the incident as a "very aggressive" and forceful
"riot" in which protectors were attempting to "breach" the Bridge by lighting "dozens of fires"
(Hawkins). According to water protectors on the ground, however, the fires were built to keep
protectors warm. After the Battle, police set up concrete barriers on the bridge denying citizens
access to the public roadway. The Sheriff's Department reports that the Bridge was closed due to
concerns around its structural integrity (Hawkins).

leaked documents, TigerSwan's expansive security detail included aerial surveillance,

radio eavesdropping, monitoring social media accounts, and collecting identifying

information on individual protestors (Brown et al.).  The security firm kept track of

protesters by creating a database that included photographs, names, and license plate

numbers as well as a "persons of interest" list (Brown et al.).  The documents further

reveal that TigerSwan placed undercover agents in protest camps to exploit intergroup

conflict between Native and non-Native allies in a concerted effort to undermine the

NoDAPL movement (Porter 3).  As one document reads: "Exploitation of ongoing native

verses non-native rifts, and tribal rifts between peaceful and violent elements is critical in

our effort to delegitimize the anti-DAPL movement" (Brown et al.).  Notably, throughout

the internal reports, TigerSwan's Chief Security Officer, John Porter, cites sexual activity

as a primary source of conflict between protestors.  For instance, one report reads:

"Native American women have departed the camps and have returned to the reservation

to protect their children… due to the presence of… sexual deviance" (Porter 2-3).

Despite listing "sexual deviance" as a cause for concern, TigerSwan does not qualify

what "deviant" sexual activity entails, how to address it, or why it presents a security

concern for the pipeline company, only that it should be *exploited* in the media to

"delegitimize" the Indigenous-led protest.

  TigerSwan's reference to "deviant" sexuality within the NoDAPL movement is part

of a larger colonial discourse that constructs Native sexuality as a threat to settler society.

In her seminal book *Conquest,* Native Studies scholar Andrea Smith[30] argues that the

characterization of Indigenous sexuality as "savage" has been a powerful tool to justify

Native conquest and genocide.  Writing in a North American context, Smith explains that

not all Native societies were necessarily structured through heteropatriarchy.  Indeed, she

contends that non-heteronormative beliefs of sexuality, complex structures of kinship,

and multiple gender identities in Native societies posed a threat to European settlers

(178).  These non-heteronormative relationships made visible a different way of life not

structured through a gender binary system and thus undermined gender inequality

prevalent in European society.  To preserve gender hierarchy and social domination as

the seemingly natural order of civilized society, the colonizers deemed non-

heteronormative Native sexuality and non-hierarchical societal structures "savage" and in

need of discipline.  As such, Smith argues that instilling heteronormative gender values in

Native culture became a necessary process of colonization ("Not-seeing" 26).

Heteropatriarchy was enforced through gender normalizing policies, patriarchal religious

indoctrination in residential schools, and inflicting sexual violence on Native peoples,

including mass rapes during genocide (26).

Contemporary colonial heteropatriarchy continues through a structure of

recognition.  As Frantz Fanon contends in *Black Skin, White Masks,* when colonial rule is

no longer enforced by direct violence it is maintained through the production of

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[30] I discuss the controversy surrounding Andrea Smith's ancestry and her contributions to Native scholarship as they relate to my argument on identity and recognition on page 109, note 38.

"colonized subjects" who are defined by the colonial imaginary in ways that ensure its continued domination (Coulthard 16). Not surprisingly, then, within a structure of recognition, colonized subjects are defined in ways that reestablish historical narratives of Indigenous identity as "sexually savage," as I will demonstrate below. The imposition of a pre-given Indigenous identity reduces the potential for colonized subjects to redefine their experience. They are forced to "establish an indigenous presence in a non-indigenous world" (Mudrooroo qtd in Bignall "Dismantling the Face" 393). In the realm of recognition politics subjects must perform a pre-established identity to achieve State acknowledgment, which consequently limits the possibility of creating new configurations of Indigeneity and social organization between the colonized and colonizer (398). As Simone Bignall contends: "When everything must conform in advance to a regime of signification already given, then there is no room for creative divergence in the productive process" (399). However, she reminds that within any given discourse interruptions are possible, there are "possible 'passages' between regimes of signs, enabling movements of destratification or the mixing and translation of established regimes of signification" (400). This chapter aims to find those passages and sites of interruption to the regime of recognition.

I begin the chapter with a discussion of the surveillance at Standing Rock to situate my critique of recognition politics within a discourse of heteropatriarchal settler colonialism. I argue that contemporary surveillance functions through a discourse of recognition politics to exercise control over sexualized and colonized subjects. Despite

offering *quantitative* political gains for some minoritarian groups, when recognition politics is taken as a *primary* or *sole* mode of activism, I argue that it works *with* rather than against contemporary structures of colonial domination.  This claim is largely informed by Glen Coulthard's important text *Red Skin, White Masks*.  Coulthard argues that a politics of recognition, in its current neoliberal form, reproduces colonial, patriarchal, and racist configurations of power that mar the possibility for peaceful coexistence between Indigenous peoples and settler subjects (3).  Following Coulthard, this chapter commits to the argument that recognition politics, along with visibility-based activism, is a vexed political strategy because it operates within the pre-established limits of the State apparatus.[31]

In the first half of the chapter, I demonstrate how recognition politics serves to

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[31] While I will make a distinction between "rigid" and "supple" forms of recognition in the next chapter, here I argue against recognition politics as Charles Taylor defines it in his influential 1994 essay.  He writes:

> The demand for recognition…is given urgency by the supposed links between recognition and identity, where this latter term designates something like a person's understanding of who they are, of their fundamental defining characteristics as a human being.  The thesis is that our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the *mis*recognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves.  Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being. (25)

Against Taylor, I want to consider how sites and practices beyond recognition can be politically powerful rather than result in dehumanization.  Undoubtedly, there have been transformations and alterations to recognition politics since the publication of Taylor's article (which I will discuss later in the chapter); however, the definition he lays out continues to be in operation both within feminist scholarship and in political practices.  For a sustained critique of Taylor's essay and the limitations of recognition politics for Indigenous peoples see Coulthard, "Subjects of Empire" pp. 440-450.

reaffirm the authoritative status of the State by requiring minor subjects to conform to a recognizable and coherent identity. Further, I argue that a theory of recognition is premised on a subject/object binary that limits the capacity to envision modes of activism beyond a paradigm of recognition. Despite making these claims, I acknowledge that recognition politics structure the lives of minor subjects in important ways. However, I maintain that a commitment to recognition is dangerous in a society of increasing surveillance that exhorts recognition and identification in order to control sexualized and colonized subjects. I turn to the NoDAPL movement as a case study to ask: how does the State capitalize on recognition politics in ways that facilitate increasing sexual surveillance and control? And, how can we do activism in ways that subvert State colonial and patriarchal capture?

In the second half of the chapter, I propose a "queer politics of imperceptibility" as an alternative theoretical model to *think-feel-do* activism in ways that exceed the limits of recognition. I consider three different perspectives on imperceptibility: Elizabeth Grosz's "politics of imperceptibility," Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "becoming-imperceptible," and Braidotti's "ethics of becoming-imperceptible." Despite their notable differences, the three perspectives are often conflated in the small body of literature on feminism and imperceptibility.[32] As a reparative to this conflation, I flesh out the differences between the above authors' approaches to imperceptibility and, in the

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[32] See Nirta 2018; Minissale 2015; Blas 2014; Žukauskaite 2013; Simpkins 2012; Sharp 2009.

process develop a new framework of queer imperceptibility.  This framework departs from Grosz's politics of imperceptibility and folds in Braidotti's ethics with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming-imperceptible.  Lastly, I emphasis the necessity of an alliance between a theory of imperceptibility and a politics of location, which, as I will demonstrate, need not capitulate to a structure of identity based on subject/object, visible/invisible, master/slave, self/other dichotomies— so long as it remains immanent to a politics of becoming (Braidotti 2011).

## 3.1    Sexual Surveillance at Standing Rock

In her essay "Not-Seeing: State Surveillance, Settler Colonialism, and Gendered Violence," Andrea Smith argues that contemporary settler colonialism operates through ways of seeing and not-seeing whereby sexual violence within Native communities is made hyper-visible while colonial violence is obscured from view.  For example, Smith contends that media reports of gendered violence on Native reserves do not address the ways in which State policies, environmental racism, poverty, and colonization contribute to community violence and trauma (25-26).  Instead, Indigenous sexuality is represented as inherently deviant and the socio-material effects of settler colonialism are hidden from view.  Likewise, reports of sexual assaults on Native women by TigerSwan security, law enforcement officers, and DAPL workers were largely ignored in the media while an attempted assault by a Native man on a Native woman was sensationalized in several mainstream media sources including in *The Rolling Stone* and *The Huffington Post*.

What is more, *The Rolling Stone* criticizes water protectors for downplaying rape by

handling the incident through tribal mediation rather than police intervention.[33] As Smith

avers, obscuring from view positive and diverse representations of Indigenous sexuality

and highlighting inter-communal sexual violence instead, buttresses heteropatriarchal

colonialism as the natural order of modern civilization (27).  By the same token,

TigerSwan enacts surveillance strategies of in-visibility by spotlighting "sexual

deviance" while rendering invisible the colonial antecedents of the DAPL construction

and capitalist-State occupation of Native land.

However, unlike the panoptic surveillance of settlement that sought to *discipline*

*and regulate* Indigenous sexuality, TigerSwan's surveillance aims to represent and

perpetuate colonialist narratives of Indigenous sexuality as deviant to undermine the

NoDAPL movement and preempt future dissent.  Moreover, TigerSwan attempts to

reterritorialize the political potential of the NoDAPL movement by recoding water

protectors as terrorists.  For example, throughout their internal documents TigerSwan

refers to water protectors as "jihadi terrorists," and the movement as "an ideologically

driven insurgency with a strong religious component" that "generally followed the

jihadist insurgency model while active [and to] expect the individuals who fought for and

supported it to follow a post-insurgency model after its collapse" (Porter qtd in Brown

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[33] Although the story of Standing Rock in *The Rolling Stone* is written in support of the NoDAPL
movement, the author's choice of words and tone used to describe the incident intimates that
Native sovereignty and self-governance risk dismissing serious crimes (Elbein).

et al.).  Echoing Jasbir Puar, who contends that the terrorist body must first appear

"perversely sexualized in order to materialize as the terrorist in the first place" (*TA* 38), I

turn now to her analysis of homonationalism to examine how TigerSwan uses sexual

deviance to *authenticate* the NoDAPL movement as an act of terrorism.

In her book *Terrorist Assemblages,* Puar argues that the convergence of

homonormativity with nationalism, what she terms as "homonationalism," is an

assemblage of normativizing forces that produce a de-radicalized and de-politicized

American LGBT population.  The apparatus of homonationalism and its accompanying

rhetoric: "you are either with us or against us," intertwine racialized notions of sexuality

with the rhetoric of national belonging (38).  Puar describes homonationalism as a

process by which the "acceptance" and "tolerance" of LGBT people act as a "barometer"

to evaluate the sovereignty of a nation state and legitimate the exceptionalism of the U.S.

Empire (16).  She contends that within a homonationalist paradigm, the liberal inclusion

of gays and lesbians, and to a lesser extent bi, trans, and gender non-conforming people,

produce and regulate the sexual other as white and the racial other as straight (30).  In

Puar's words: "The narrative of progress for gay rights is built on the backs of racialized

others whose progress is yet to arrive" ("Homonationalism Gone Viral").  Different than

gay racism, homonationalism produces a certain kind of racism that is imbricated in the

homonormative fantasy of queer liberalism and national belonging.  One way that gays

and lesbians are folded into national belonging, she argues, is through the collective

vilification of the Muslim terrorist as both sexually perverse and repressed (*TA* 21).  For

example, Puar discusses the public's reaction to the photographs from Abu Ghraib that depict the sexual torture of Muslim men by American soldiers. Puar asks: why are these images especially "disgusting" to the American public and what makes them more (or even equally) deplorable than images of "conventional torture" practices? (80). Puar answers that the American public's reaction reveals the ways in which the racial other is constructed as always already straight *and* sexually repressed. The Abu Ghraib images emasculate and effeminize the Muslim-terrorist by turning him into a "fag." According to a homonationalist logic, becoming a "fag" is perceived as the ultimate form of shame for the Muslim man (43). Thus, the Muslim-terrorist is constructed by the west as simultaneously homophobic— and thus not as advanced (exceptional) as the west— and sexually repressed, deviant, and perversely homosexual— and thus not as free (exceptional) as the west.

The feminization of racialized male bodies is a colonial tactic of control that attempts to secure the *settler* exceptionalism of Western society. For example, Chris Finley contends that "queering" Native men's sexuality is instrumental to the colonization of Native land. She explains that sexual colonization is supported by U.S. laws that stipulate when a Native woman gives birth to a child who has a white father the child automatically becomes a white inheritor of the land (36). Historically, miscegenation has been used as a colonial tool to erase Indigeneity into whiteness and disappear Native peoples from the land. For this law to work as a settlement strategy, Finley points out that Native women must be conceived of as both heterosexual and

desiring of the white male colonizer (36).[34] The sexual availability of Native women to

colonists requires the erasure of Native men's sexual desirability. Therefore,

demonizing and "queering" Native men ensures their sexual unavailability to the

heterosexualized Native woman (36). Of course, another way in which the

(hetero)sexuality of Native men is erased is through genocide. Finley concludes that

representations of Native men's sexuality as "deviant" remain crucial to the elimination

of Native peoples.

Characterizing Native men's sexuality as deviant secures the post-colonial

imaginary through what could be called "settler exceptionalism." Settler exceptionalism

defines the way in which settler colonial attitudes toward gender and sexuality are

supplanted onto Native peoples not just through colonization and genocide, as Scott

Morgensen (2010) suggests with his concept of "settler homonationalism," but more

specifically, through the construction of Native *men* as sexually "deviant" and white

settlers as (sexually) exceptional. The focus on Native men's sexuality, I argue, enables

the State to proximate Indigenous peoples with the figure of the *Muslim terrorist*. For

example, TigerSwan makes a point to implicate Native men as "sexually deviant" in

their reports; recall the Statement: "Native American *women* have departed the camps

and have returned to the reservation to protect their children…" (Porter 3, emphasis

added). Here, Native women are not portrayed as non-deviant and heteronormative, but

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[34] The appropriation and romanticization of Matoaka's (Pocahontas) life story by Disney
serves as a prime example of how Native women are represented in settler society as
heterosexual and desiring of white men.

also in need of protection from Native men's volatile sexuality. Like the Muslim-terrorist then, Native men are presented as perverse in order to bifurcate the colonial State from sexually "backwards" nations. TigerSwan's use of the term "deviance" is significant. In addition to its colonial legacy, "deviance" pictures the Native man as non-heteronormative *and* savage which separates him from the "good gay citizen" who is figured as white, homonormative, and patriotic. Defining Native men as sexually deviant conjoins them with the figure of the sexually perverse *and* repressed Muslim terrorist who poses a threat to the sexual modernity of the nation State.[35] The sexual surveillance and representation of Native men as sexually deviant is *not* a mechanism of disciplinary power that seeks to instill heteronormative values to assimilate Indigenous peoples in the heteropatriarchal settler order. Instead, as I argue below, TigerSwan draws on the colonial narrative of sexual deviance to *modulate* Indigenous identity in ways that support the war on terror.

Thus far, I have argued that TigerSwan's surveillance reports on sexual deviance strategically align Indigenous water protectors with the Muslim-terrorist figure in an effort to authenticate the NoDAPL movement as an act of *terrorism*. I turn now to the media's reports on the leaked documents to examine how popular non-Native *activist* news outlets (DemocracyNow.org, Unicornriot.ninja, EcoWatch.com, and Aljazeera.com) unwittingly perpetuate settler colonial frameworks of Indigenous identity

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[35] By 'nation State' I am referring to both the material and immaterial aspects that make up the colonial imaginary of State territory.

by leaving the figure of the "jihadi terrorist" unquestioned.[36] Although these activist

media rightly condemn TigerSwan for conflating Indigenous protestors with terrorists,

they uncritically juxtapose Native peoples and Muslim "could-be-terrorists" in ways that

ignore the two groups' mutually contentious relationship to the settler colonial State.

The bracketing of Islamophobia from settler colonialism begs the following questions:

How are both identities constructed through settler colonialism and how does placing

them in opposition to one another ensure the normalization of the settler State?  In what

ways are Native identity and Indigenous politics assimilated into white liberalism and a

national discourse on terrorism through the contrast between "good" and "bad" racialized

bodies?  And, to echo Morgensen, "What might 'terrorists,' figured as foreign, have to do

with 'savages,' figured as domestic, when the State identifies objects of colonial or

imperial control?" (107).  Perhaps it is unfair to expect activist media to take on these

complex questions.  Still, presenting the jihadi figure as a stable and knowable identity

rather than one that is socially constructed and in political flux, warrants further

investigation into the ways in which "allied" independent media organizations

insidiously rope Indigenous peoples into a colonial framework of national belonging.

　　　　To elaborate, in an effort to extract water protectors from a jihadist identity, activist

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[36] For specific news articles see Chow; Barat; "Private Mercenary Firm"; "TigerSwan DAPL Intel".  My critique of their media reports on the NoDAPL movement does not intend to undermine the importance of alternative journalism at Standing Rock.  These media organizations also support water protectors and provide an outlet for them to share their experiences of police brutality with the public.

journalism on the leaked documents reproduce the colonial narrative of the "good

Indian." Drawing on Robert F. Berkhofer Jr. author of *The White Man's Indian,* Sandy

Marie Anglas Grande argues that cultural representations of Indigenous peoples vacillate

between "noble" and "ignoble savage" depending on the needs of the settler State (309).

For instance, the typification of the "ecologically noble savage," she claims, is deployed

by non-Native activists to mount a critique of the overconsumption and ecological

destruction of western society (313).  More specifically, she contends that

environmentalists deploy stereotypical images of Indigenous peoples as "eco-gurus," who

"possess great insights to nature's wisdom" because they are "less corrupted by the

practices and prejudices of civilization" (313).  Although this stereotype is arguably more

positive than the "sexually deviant Native terrorist," Grande maintains that an

oversimplified image of Indigenous peoples as "good Indians" who are immersed in

nature erases the dynamic and varied subjectivities of Indigenous peoples.[37]  Further, the

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[37] Dolleen Manning offers an important critique on the ways in which Native peoples are characterized as "noble savages" within western philosophy.  She argues that Deleuze and Guattari appropriate Anishinaabe philosophy and traditional knowledge and also link the notion of "becoming-animal" with "primitive societies" in ways that dehumanize the Indigenous subject (188).  In her words, "For Indigenous peoples, becoming-imperceptible and becoming-dispersed (aspects of becoming-animal) are by no means to be desired, since these processes are associated with colonial violence and its institutionalization….Becoming-animal negates both individual subjectivity and collective political agency" (188).  Deleuze and Guattari do tread dangerous territory, especially in their discussion of faciality where they give a romanticized account of a "primitive society" that exits prior to Christian colonialism, but "becoming-imperceptible," as I understand it, does not mean becoming invisible.  Becoming-imperceptible is a becoming *with* others that dissolves a destructive sense of individualism.  Whether this notion has been appropriated from Indigenous culture I cannot answer, but I would say that collective political agency is at the heart of their pragmatic philosophy, which I will attempt to demonstrate in the following chapters.

stereotype secures settler superiority by associating Indigeneity with primitive culture and savagery, which maintains the proper distance necessary between "Indians and whites" to establish white superiority and settler domination (312).

Similarly, activist media reports perpetuate the image of the "noble savage" by contrasting Indigenous peoples with Muslim "could-be-terrorists". This knee-jerk division cultivates an image of Indigenous peoples as *inherently* unthreatening and non-violent, who do not share *anything* in common with the "jihadi" figure thereby blanketing how the settler State categorizes both groups as a threat to national security (for an example, see Chow). Such representations leave the State's heteropatriarchal colonial domination intact by linking ascriptions of savagery to sexual deviance without questioning the imperialist construction of the Muslim-terrorist. Ultimately, the noble savage stereotype is perpetuated to pit domestic water protectors against foreign terrorists and present Indigenous peoples as good citizens who advocate for water protection *without threatening the settler colonial and homonationalist State*, its war against terror, and vilification of Muslim men. Lastly, the discursive separation of Indigenous peoples from a notion of terror masks the relationship Indigenous peoples have with terrorism, in that they too have been terrorized.

I want to restate that I am not attempting to engage in an essentialist argument on whether or not activist media, or TigerSwan for that matter, portray Indigenous identity correctly or not; rather, I aim to point to the ways in which these reports shift the

discussion of the NoDAPL movement from issues around water protection to a debate on Indigenous identity and how that identity should or should not be characterized. Speaking to this point, Chase Iron Eyes, the Lakota People's Law Project attorney and water protector, who is severely targeted by TigerSwan and at present faces several years in prison for his involvement in the pipeline resistance, is asked how he feels about being compared to jihadists during an interview with *The Intercept*. He responds by asking why water protectors are being compared to Muslim terrorists and not *white* supremacist terrorist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan. He continues that there is a clear effort on behalf of the media to create a divide between the "law-abiding, law upholding white citizens of North Dakota versus and against unruly and unlawful Native Americans," a racial dynamic, he explains, that was created by violating Native peoples *and* American citizen's constitutional rights ("Chase Iron Eyes"). He further States that through the marriage of corporate interests with the State, TigerSwan brought "a theatre of war" to Native land and American soil in which Indigenous water protectors are perceived as terrorists ("Chase Iron Eyes"). Tellingly, his response on the association between Muslim-terrorists and Indigenous water protectors focuses on the collusion between the corporation and government to create a "theatre of war," in which racialized activist groups are characterized as enemies of the State. He argues that TigerSwan's propaganda campaign to link water protectors with terrorists usurps a discussion of the ways in which such collusions put *everyone's* constitutional rights at risk.

To reiterate, my issue with the media reports on the leaked documents is threefold: first, the circulation and repetition of the narrative of "water protectors *as* jihadists" not only breathes life into this idea as it becomes repeated, retweeted, and shared on social media by activist media outlets, but also it plays into the hands of settler colonial efforts to assimilate Native peoples into a discourse of national security in which Natives are regarded as part of a national campaign to fight terrorism. Second, the media reports on TigerSwan's leaks simply leave "jihadi," as an identity, unquestioned along with the relationship between State racism, profiling practices, and settler colonialism. Finally, framing Indigenous identity as either the "ignoble" or "noble savage" detracts from the larger issue at hand, which is water security—an issue that disproportionately affects Native peoples in North America.

As Andrea Smith and others have argued, establishing a Native identity, either through status enrolment or cultural representation, continues to enact violence on Native peoples and communities by drawing boundaries around who qualifies as Native and who does not.[38] For this reason, the process of identification is deep-seated in colonial

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[38] Andrea Smith's Native status has been called into question on several occasions. Although I do not wish to rehash the debate here, it is important to note in the context of our current discussion on identity politics. Although Smith denies the allegations, a group of Indigenous women academics wrote an open letter accusing Smith of capitalizing on a false Indigenous identity to receive academic grants, faculty positions, and so on. Other Indigenous scholars respond that Smith's blood quantum and enrollment status should not be the determining factors of one's Native identity. Despite the fraught controversy surrounding Smith's ancestry, and as other Indigenous scholars affirm, her academic contributions to the field of Native feminist scholarship continue to hold value (see Womack, Craig. "Statement from Craig Womack," 4 July 2015. https://againstpoliticsofdisposability.wordpress.com. Accessed 10 October 2018).

frameworks of recognition that leave the State's authority unquestioned.  TigerSwan

seeks to undermine the NoDAPL movement by exploiting colonial narratives of sexual

deviance and present the movement as a threat to the Nation by making links between

water-protection and Islamic-terrorism.  At the same time, the media ignites identity

politics to "save" water protectors from being portrayed as a "terrorist" threat to the

settler colonial State.

What is at stake now that the pipeline has been reinstated by the Trump

Administration which is arguably the fulfilment of settler colonialism *par excellence*?

How do activist journalists who focus on the mischaracterization of water protectors as

jihadi terrorists detract attention away from the colonial State's ecoterrorism and the

global issue of water security?  The importance of TigerSwan's leaked documents and

activist media's social critique of them should not be underestimated—both provide

invaluable resources that can be used to the advantage of water protectors in the wake of

the Standing Rock protest and for future NoDAPL actions.  However, non-Native activist

allies need to be careful that they do not perpetuate colonial narratives of Indigenous

peoples in ways that uphold settler colonialism.

## 3.2    The Regime of Recognition

In his book *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition,* Glen

Coulthard challenges the prevailing argument that a politics of recognition can

adequately transform the oppressive colonial relationship between Indigenous peoples

and the State.  He argues that recognition in its current neoliberal form, rather than

providing sovereignty, reinstates the colonial, racist, and patriarchal State power that

Indigenous peoples seek to transcend.  Tracking several historical moments of both

successful and unsuccessful land claim settlements, economic development initiatives,

and self-government agreements, Coulthard contends that colonial rule has transitioned

from a "more-or-less unconcealed structure of domination to a mode of colonial

governmentality that works through the limited freedoms afforded by State recognition

and accommodation…" (15-16).  A politics of recognition conceals existing colonialism

through mechanisms of recognition that enact structural violence.

Advancing Frantz Fanon's argument on the violence of State recognition developed

in *The Wretched of the Earth*, Coulthard argues that colonial rule no longer operates

solely—or even predominately—through direct and physical forms of coercive violence.

Instead, he argues that contemporary colonial violence functions through a discourse of

recognition and reconciliation that link subjectivity to the notion of an "authentic"

identity.  The notion of an authentic identity, Andrea Smith avers, is one that can tell the

"truth" of itself, which, she asserts, requires one to be the object of another's discovery

("Queer Theory and Native Studies" 42).  Moreover, she contends that even though

Native peoples are asked to prove their authenticity to the State, they must always retain

a level of *inauthenticity* so that the settler colonial State remains superior (42).  In other

words, a politics of recognition requires that Indigenous people be recognizable to and

compatible with settler frameworks of Indigenous identity. This structure of recognition ensures that colonized subjects adopt the behaviours, thoughts, and desires of the colonial State (Coulthard 16). Rather than challenging the authority of the settler colonial State, recognition commits Indigenous people to practices and subject positions that ensure their continued colonization.

Despite taking great care to outline the many ways that recognition and reconciliation politics reproduce heteropatriarchal and settler colonial structures, Coulthard maintains that we need not dismiss a framework of recognition *altogether*. He argues that Indigenous theory and activism should "approach our engagements with the settler-State legal apparatus with a degree of critical self-reflection, skepticism, and caution that has to date been largely absent in our efforts" (179). To do this, he proposes a "resurgent politics of recognition" premised on the resurgence of traditional knowledge and the creation of new cultural practices that can address contemporary formations of colonial power (24). He identifies five theses that guide his call for a resurgent politics of recognition: recognizing the necessity of non-reactionary direct action, creating Indigenous economies that challenge settler colonial capitalism, giving attention to the urban dispossession of Indigenous peoples as well as those on reserves, addressing gender justice as an integral aspect of decolonization, and, lastly, imagining a politics beyond State recognition (165-179). Taking up Coulthard's last suggestion, I turn now to Elizabeth Grosz's "politics of imperceptibility," which she proposes as an alternative postcolonial feminist framework that goes beyond recognition.

In her 2002 essay, "A Politics of Imperceptibility," Grosz draws on Nietzsche's delineation of active and reactive force to formulate imperceptibility as a theory that privileges actions over identity, pragmatics over representation, inhuman over human, and chaos over discourse. She contends that at its heart, a politics of imperceptibility is an effort to "displace the centrality of will and consciousness" in favour of "inhuman forces, forces that are both living and non-living, macroscopic and microscopic, above and below the human" (470). She delineates the subject as a *multiplicity of force* that can never be fully controlled or named. These forces that compose the subject exist outside[39] the human and have their own intentionalities, agency, and affects. Thus, for Grosz, a politics of imperceptibility cannot help but go beyond all modes of intersubjective recognition because it is a politics that goes beyond the human. Ultimately, Grosz's theory of imperceptibility aims to investigate agency and freedom in ways that de-center the human.

Grosz's essay is written as a direct response to Drucilla Cornell and Sara Murphy's article "Anti-racism, Multiculturalism, and an Ethics of Identification." Using their essay as a springboard, she argues that feminist postcolonial theory unnecessarily weds itself to a paradigm of recognition. She urges feminists to leave behind identity and recognition politics and turn instead to a theory of the political that considers the role of *vital forces*

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[39] For Grosz, "the outside" is not a demarcated space; rather, it is that which is beyond comprehension and discourse, that which the subject can only access through imperceptible material interactions (*Becoming Undone* 176).

in the formation of the subject.  Like Coulthard, Grosz critiques the Hegelian

master/slave dialectic that structures recognition through the acknowledgement of a

socially dominant other.  She contends that a hierarchical mode of intersubjective

address constrains the autonomy of the subject; given that subjectivity depends on the

acknowledgment of an authoritative figure then this figure also has the power to

annihilate or de-form the subject through non-recognition.  Thus, Grosz states that

recognition is an opening up of oneself to the violence of recognition.[40]

Unlike Grosz, Cornell and Murphy argue that subjectivity is constituted through

social and institutional relationships and that freedom is therefore relational.  However,

like Grosz, they acknowledge that Hegel's dialectical model of recognition presents a

danger for minor subjects precisely for the same reasons that Grosz outlines.  What

Cornell and Murphy propose instead is an "ethics of identification" in which recognition

is decoupled from the notion of an authentic, fixed, and stable self.  Their main concern

is that the struggle for recognition is often considered as the struggle for a "pre-political"

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[40] Both Grosz and Coulthard narrow their critique of Hegelian recognition to the master/slave dialectic in *The Phenomenology of the Spirit*.  Coulthard reads Hegel through the lenses of Fanon and Marx to argue that rather than offering a model of freedom and liberation (through contradiction and resolution) Hegel's theory does not translate to contemporary colonial contexts because the master (State) does not need the "tools of the slave" to survive.  Thus, the slave is not liberated from the master's recognition.  Grosz rehearses a similar argument against recognition politics.  However, she seems to be less critical of Hegelian dialectics.  For example, she notes that Hegel supports her claim that the subject is not one who is recognized but one who acts and makes things in the world.  She writes: "this argument was even Hegel's way out of the impasse of the ruses of recognition…For Hegel, it is only the slave who develops an identity, eventually, without self-delusion, because it is only through labor, through making, that one also makes oneself" (*Becoming Undone* 218-9n9).

subject whose already constituted identity is at stake (Cornell and Murphy 421). They argue that a politics of recognition need not conform to a pre-given and fixed cultural identity (443). Instead, they assert that there is potential for minor cultures to create new and imaginative identities, a claim that strikes a chord with Coulthard's call for a resurgent politics of recognition.

Grosz's main issue with Cornell and Murphy is their commitment to frame identity politics within a structure of recognition. She asks of them: if minority subjects have the capacity to shape their own identifications beyond the recognition of a majority other "then why is recognition necessary and what does it confer?" and "why are identity and the struggle around identity the rallying cry for politics?" ("A Politics of Imperceptibility" 468). Confounded or not, Grosz does not directly engage with these questions in her essay. Instead, she concludes that a desire for recognition is "the emptiness of a solipsistic existence," and a "desperate dependence on the other for the stability of one's being" (468). However, these questions that she poses warrant further investigation within the context of anti-colonial politics and struggles (which she also does not address in her essay). Before I propose "going beyond" recognition, it is crucial to understand *why* recognition remains a stronghold for feminist postcolonial theory and practice. It is important to note that Grosz's primary issue is not with the *category* of the subject as that which operates *separate* and *distinct* from objects. Rather, her problem is with the conceptual mode of recognition because, according to her, it precludes entertaining a Nietzschean theory of force as that which forms the subject *instead*. What

I am suggesting is that Grosz, like Cornell and Murphy, is concerned with the *constitution* of the subject, rather than its *dissolution*, which, as we shall see in the following section of the chapter, is crucial to the concept of imperceptibility.

Although Grosz's paper set in motion my thinking on the potential of a *political practice* based on imperceptibility there are three theoretical points at which we depart, which I will develop throughout the chapter. First, whereas Grosz opposes *any form* of recognition as a viable framework for feminist and postcolonial theories of subjectivity, I suggest a non-oppositional theory of imperceptibility. Second, although I agree with Grosz that a Hegelian theory of recognition limits new ways of conceiving of political transformation, the *primary* problem with recognition, as I understand it, is not that subjectivity requires acknowledgment from an authoritative figure— although this is certainly a problem— but, that recognition reproduces a *subject/object distinction* again and again to theorize political autonomy. Last, my endeavour to formulate a politics of imperceptibility comes out of *necessity*. Which is to say, I do not wish to *apply* a theory of imperceptibility to *explain* activism and social transformation (or the subject). Instead, I use the concept imperceptibility as a tool to *create new concepts* (the line of pure resistance, queer imperceptibility, and the queer autonomous zone) and develop these concepts *in relation* to the events I consider. Thus, my articulation of imperceptibility is *inseparable* from the context in which it is discussed. This is not to say that a politics of imperceptibility cannot be considered more broadly, but it acknowledges that a concept changes from circumstance to circumstance. That is, a

concept (if it is to be useful) cannot come *a priori* to the event that effectuates its

necessity. *A concept cannot precede the conditions of its emergence* (Deleuze and

Guattari *WP* 15-17). In contrast, Grosz presents a politics of imperceptibility ahead of its

circumstance. In other words, she does not tell us what it can *do*. In an ironic twist, she

only tells us what imperceptibility *cannot* do, which is that it cannot be understood

through a paradigm of recognition. Alternatively, I aim to *situate* a politics of

imperceptibility in relation to the conditions of its production to highlight its *use* for

activism and politics. Despite my disagreements with Grosz, my response below is not

meant to be pedantic; I only seek to clarify our differences. My three contentions with

Grosz's essay are: first, the *either/or approach* taken; second is the *subject/object*

*distinction*, and, third is the *abstraction of a socially situated body from a theory of*

*imperceptibility.*

### *3.2.1 Either/or*

While Grosz's rendering of the subject as "the backdrop to a play of forces" offers a

significant rupture to the paradigm of recognition, she makes an unnecessary delineation

between Cornell and Murphy's *reformulation* of recognition politics and her theory of

Nietzschean force. Although she acknowledges that Cornell and Murphy *are* critical of

Hegel's master/slave dialectic she insists that their "project needs to be located within

thus framework," which enables her to argue for the necessity of an alternative theory

that considers the subject as "the multiplicity of active and reactive forces" ("A Politics

of Imperceptibility" 468). Unfortunately, her refusal to engage with Cornell and

Murphy's politics of recognition—*as they formulate it and situate it in the context of black cultural identity*—is, as I see it, a missed opportunity to present a more robust and perhaps more convincing argument for a politics of imperceptibility. Rather than building a bridge between postcolonial theories of recognition and imperceptibility, Grosz is determined to split them. The division she hopes to establish between herself and Cornell and Murphy not only isolatez a branch of feminism (which is arguably the very branch she intends to convince), but it is a division that does not necessarily exist.

For example, Cornell and Murphy agree with Grosz that recognition politics needs to displace the notion of an "authentic" identity. They argue that even though incipient identities must be conferred by the State, the State does not have to be the arbitrator of identity. For Cornell and Murphy, the "work of cultural politics" enables the subject to disengage from the notion of a pre-given identity, and in turn reconstitute more dignified images of minor culture that bolsters one's sense of self and agency in the world. Turning to Stuart Hall, they reason that a collective cultural identity enables a group of displaced peoples to share historical experiences and cultural codes that provide them with a "frame of reference and meaning beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history" (Hall qtd in Cornell and Murphy 439). What Cornell and Murphy advocate then, is a framework that displaces the notion of an authentic identity by questioning and *destabilizing the conditions* under which identification takes place.

Both Grosz's essay and Cornell and Murphy's essay are concerned with the constitution of the subject. For example, Grosz contends that the subject is *formed* through inhuman forces while Cornell and Murphy argue that the subject is constituted through relational modes of creativity. Is it possible to bridge Cornell and Murphy's "ethics of identification" with Grosz's theory of imperceptibility? Grosz tells us that she wants to examine "the alignment of forces that constitute that 'identity' and 'position,' that stratification that stabilizes itself as a place and an identity" ("A Politics of Imperceptibility" 471). Almost as a continuation of Grosz's examination, Cornell and Murphy want to propose a new model of recognition that goes against the stabilization of identity. To do this, they look to "the work of cultural politics" and how it builds creative cultural alliances through art, music, and literature, and enables subjects to create subversive modes of identification (436). These identifications, Cornell and Murphy suggest, challenge the notion of an authentic self. Is Cornell and Murphy's proposition for an "ethics of identification"—a subversive practice of creative engagement with modes of identification—so different from Grosz's polemic for a politics of imperceptibility? Do both essays not contend that subjectivity is *produced* through a "process of self-marking that *constitutes oneself* in the very model of that which oppresses and opposes the subject," as Grosz states when she describes the role of force (471)? What I am suggesting is that the "inhuman forces" that Grosz wants to focus on instead of recognition and identity politics operate *within* and *around* the "ethics of identification" that Cornell and Murphy propose. There is, I think, "an

alignment of forces" (Grosz 471) between art and politics and temporary creative modes of identification that can *both* contribute to a subversive mode of self-styling *and* decenter the subject. Said another way, is it not plausible that an "ethics of identification," in which minor cultures create new and imaginative identities, is an *actualization* of the virtual potential of what Grosz characterizes as the "ever-realigning relations of intensity" (469)? Although I appreciate Grosz's effort to introduce a new image of thought beyond the arguably exhausted topic of recognition politics, I also think that there is value in mapping the relations between new conceptual frameworks and earlier feminist thought. Put another way, might it prove more useful to build an *alliance* with feminist theories by reading imperceptibility into or alongside them—or, better yet, *between* them? Which is not to say that new concepts should be used to reflect on old ones, only that an alliance can activate their *becoming*.

Instead of foreclosing the potential for a politics *between* intersubjective address and what Grosz describes as inhuman force, I maintain that a politics of imperceptibility should open the door to recognition to develop a more expansive and inclusive *practice* of a politics of force.[41] In the context of Grosz's essay, this might entail asking: what imperceptible forces and relations emerge during the creative cultural work that Cornell

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[41] That said, I take heed with Grosz's assertion that it is important to deploy new and radical concepts rather than reformulating those that are invested in a certain philosophical lineage, such as recognition (463). Nevertheless, I have taken the risk of invoking the language of recognition and identification throughout the chapter in order to consider its limitations and possibilities *within* the framework of imperceptibility.

and Murphy discuss, and how do these relations affect the production of subjectivity?

Regrettably, rather than reading a theory of imperceptibility *with* Cornell and Murphy's

ethics of identification, Grosz tells us that "we have a theoretical choice: we either

ascribe to a theory of the subject that strives to have its identity affirmed through

relations… with other subjects… or we ascribe to a theory of the impersonal… the

opposite of identity politics, a politics of acts, not identities" ("A Politics of

Imperceptibility" 470). Is this either/or approach necessary?[42] Are feminist theories of

identity, like Cornell and Murphy's, that are *explicitly anti-essentialist* and mindful of the

hierarchies embedded within a model of recognition, *completely* useless? Could a

politics of recognition not also be imbued with imperceptible forces that "act through

subjects, objects, material and social worlds without distinction, producing ever-

realigning relations of intensity or force" (Grosz 469)?

### 3.2.2   *Subject/object distinction*

Grosz explicitly critiques a subject/object distinction at the outset, but then, nearing the

end of her paper, she delineates force as that which acts *on subjects* and exists "above

and below the human" ("A Politics of Imperceptibility" 470). This contradicts her

earlier statement that subjects *should not* be conceived of as a causality. To draw

attention to the existence of inhuman forces that operate *outside* the human, in this

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[42] Keith Ansell-Pearson also takes issue with Grosz's claim that feminist theory needs to make a conceptual choice between "humanist" and "anti-humanist" philosophies of the subject (See, "Deleuze and New Materialism").

instance, she divorces force from the subject rather than proposing the inseparability of the two. I think this is symptomatic of her attempt to proffer a politics of imperceptibility as a *reparative* to Cornell and Murphy who propose a theory of political *practice*. Which is to say that, in her essay, Grosz uses the concept of force as an *explanatory* tool. She introduces "imperceptibility" to *describe* and *determine* the subject without telling us how a theory of imperceptibility enriches the *lived experience* of subjects. The "politics" of Grosz's "politics of imperceptibility" are unclear. In all fairness to Grosz, her essay on imperceptibility is relatively short and should not be taken as representative of the vast amount of work on "forces" that she has done elsewhere. Nonetheless, I look at this essay in isolation given that it is often referenced apart from her other work in feminist engagements with a politics of imperceptibility. Ultimately, I argue that the political stakes of adopting Grosz's theory of imperceptibility is that it short circuits an understanding of the subject as a *multiplicity* of *elements*, which can include both inhuman force *and* intersubjective address.

### 3.2.3  *The abstraction of the socially situated body*

A theory of imperceptibility must engage with *a politics of location*, rather than avoid it, if it is to be taken seriously as a new concept for postcolonial feminism. Cornell and Murphy clearly argue that identification and recognition have *social and political* value for minoritarian subjects. The authors assert that while recognition has a hierarchical structure that harbours within it the risk of non-recognition, minority cultures who face

unbearable levels of political and symbolic violence often *must* draw on the

representational reserve of recognition and identity to sustain their dignity in dire

circumstances (Cornell and Murphy 440).  They explain: "exactly what dignity demands

in different contexts *cannot be theoretically determined in advance*, since it is linked

with the recognition of our freedom to shape an identity and to make ethical sense of

them" (441-2, emphasis added).  What Cornell and Murphy point to here is that

recognition politics undeniably structures the lived experiences of minor subjects and

cultures by denying or granting them access to economic resources, medical care, social

services, political and social representation, personal safety, and, as we saw earlier, water

security for Indigenous peoples.

While I am not suggesting that Grosz refutes the importance or existence of these

concerns, the problem, and it is a serious one for feminist theorists and philosophers who

attempt to challenge an image of thought based on representation and recognition, is that

she does not take care to *affirm* the value of recognition politics *as they are practiced* nor

does she reflect on how the two frameworks may converge in politically *and*

theoretically fruitful ways. In a strange move that runs contra to Grosz's philosophical

allegiance to Nietzsche, she formulates a politics of imperceptibility by *negating*

feminist recognition theories.  To be fair, her negation of recognition stems from a

necessary critique of the Hegelian dialectic, with which I agree.  However, her critique

of the master-slave dialectic *in response to Cornell and Murphy*, I think, misses the point

of postcolonial feminist engagements with Hegel (or recognition more generally) which

is, as Coulthard avers, to theorize subjectivity and recognition beyond relations of domination and inequality (*Red Skin* 29)—*precisely because postcolonial subjects are always already subjected to a violent regime of recognition.* Grosz's critique of recognition *through* Cornell and Murphy portrays the authors as simply refusing to acknowledge the oppressive dimension of seeking recognition from an authority figure. What Cornell and Murphy are attempting to salvage from Hegel is the potential for a mutually dignifying encounter over and above *the one that already structures the lives of colonized subjects.* Cornell and Murphy remain faithful to a politics of recognition, but only insofar as it is one of mutual dignity and respect between the colonized and State. Whether or not this is possible remains to be seen.

Even though Grosz argues that the subject and politics are the result of undetermined and unconstrained forces that "constitute an inhuman, sub-human field, a field of 'particles' or elements of force which are only *provisionally* or *temporarily* grouped together in the form of entities and actions" ("A Politics of Imperceptibility" 469, emphasis added), she puzzlingly presents recognition as a *predetermined* and *fixed* political strategy. Admittedly, a hierarchical model of recognition is limited in its potential to de-center the subject. Nonetheless, there is an effort from feminist and postcolonial theories to *reformulate* the dialectical model by privileging the affective dimensions of intersubjective address.

In *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition,* Kelly Oliver challenges the conventional boundaries of recognition by proposing a model of subjectivity based on a "practice of witnessing" that goes "beyond recognition." Oliver argues that a theory of recognition articulated through a dichotomy of self/other, or subject/object, alienates the self by dehumanizing those that are around us (by conceiving of them as others). Instead, she argues that subjectivity needs to be thought of as an interpersonal relationship based on mutual respect and love. For Oliver, witnessing *de-centers* "the self." Therefore, witnessing is not an attempt to recognize sameness or difference between self and other; instead, it acknowledges *degrees* of oppression that exist *between* subjects. Therefore, rather than bestowing subjectivity, identity, and agency onto another, witnessing requires acknowledging the *inarticulate* experience of oppression not by trying to comprehend it, but by responding to what is only unknowable through, what Oliver characterizes as, a *loving encounter* (217-19). She amends the Hegelian framework to privilege force and affect as that which constitutes the subject by defining this loving encounter not in terms of a subjective emotion but as an intensive energy and "social electricity" that cultivates subjectivity in our responsiveness to its force (196-7). Although Oliver stays within the limits of intersubjective address, she gestures toward an imperceptible force that aids in the constitution of this address.

In a different vein of thought, Coulthard provides a compelling argument for a politics of *resentment* instead of recognition. He argues that reconciliation belongs to a framework of recognition in which Indigenous peoples must behave and represent

themselves in ways that are deemed acceptable by the State.  He explains that at

reconciliatory events and ceremonies Indigenous peoples are expected to act grateful,

humble, and demonstrate a willingness to move past any anger, hurt, and resentment they

have for the settler State.  Individuals are expected to forgive (and forget) structural

violence by "overcoming" the legacy of colonial genocide (*Red Skin* 109).  The colonized

subject who refuses reconciliation is portrayed as angry, revengeful, and incapable of

forgiveness (109).  Instead of internalizing negative emotions in violent and self-

destructive ways, Coulthard entertains the idea that negative affects can be harnessed as a

political tool to effect change.  Combining Nietzsche's notion of active and reactive force

with Fanon's views on negative emotion, Coulthard contends: "In the context of

internalized colonialism, then, it would appear that the emergence of reactive emotions

like anger and resentment can indicate a breakdown of colonial subjection and thus open

up the possibility of developing alternative subjectivities and anticolonial practices"

(115).[43]  He proposes a politics of resentment as a point of rupture from the

internalization of colonization and positions anger as a powerful tool that can be used to

mobilize social and political transformation. Coulthard's politics of resentment via Fanon

signals an affective turn for a theory of recognition.  The *force* of anger provides a

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[43] Briefly, Fanon argues that internalized colonialism can turn into revengeful hate and violence. This, he suggests, can crystalize as a moment of decolonization and liberation from the colonists' stronghold.  Although Fanon considers the transformative potentials of negative emotions and violence, he does *not* advocate violence.  Indeed, he contends that violence and reactive emotions cannot sustain revolution alone.  Instead, he understands the emergence of these internalized emotions to be a productive moment in which the colonized subjects affirm themselves in a new direction.  See Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 1-62.

necessary rupture to the colonial constraints of recognition. It disrupts and unsettles the dialectical exchange by breaking from the anticipated (and enforced) identity of "the forgiving Indian." Therefore, a politics of resentment does not concede to a colonial imaginary of Indigenous peoples and politics.

What both Oliver and Coulthard demonstrate is that an either/or (recognition or affects/forces) approach to feminist and postcolonial politics is not necessary. Although the two authors lean toward a model of recognition, and I go in the other direction toward imperceptibility, it is important to emphasize that arguing for one feminist politics at the expense of another severely limits our capacity to engage with the complexity of not just the subject but of social transformation as well. Nonetheless, Grosz does not want to reimagine a politics of recognition, *even if* it considers affect and force. Instead, she claims that *any* theory structured through a model of recognition remains for feminism "fundamentally servile" ("A Politics of Imperceptibility" 471).

To address situated differences and oppression without falling into the trap of essentialist identity politics, we need a theory that works between feminist perspectives that are often placed at odds with one another. This is precisely Braidotti's project in the second edition of her book *Nomadic Subjects*. She argues for a feminist theory that destabilizes identity and the unitary subject. She also acknowledges the importance of establishing a coherent position from which to speak. In Braidotti's words:

The self being a sort of network of interrelated points, the question then becomes:

by what sort of interconnections, sidesteps, and lines of escape can one produce

feminist knowledge without fixing into a new normativity? This form of

consciousness combines features that are usually perceived as opposing, namely, to

have a sense of identity that rests not on fixity, but on contingency. The nomadic

consciousness combines coherence with mobility. It aims to rethink the unity of

the subject, without reference to humanistic beliefs, without dualistic oppositions,

instead linking body and mind in a new set of intensive and often transitive

transitions. (64)

The question at stake for my project then, and the one I will attempt to answer throughout

the remainder of the project is: how can we combine coherency with mobility and craft a

politics of imperceptibility that also acknowledges the politics of location? And

following this question, I ask: what would a nomadic politics look like in the context of

resistance to sexual surveillance? How would it take shape *in practice?* Braidotti warns

that practicing "nomadic feminism," is not easy or painless. Indeed, she argues that it

requires a creative openness to "zigzag" between intergenerational, transnational politics,

social positions, and theoretical perspectives, and to confront their contradictions (17).

The nomadic subject is not of the either/or ilk, she is *and, and, and.* Although I will

return to Braidotti's nomadic feminism later in the chapter, I introduce her perspective

now to draw attention to the ways in which a politics of imperceptibility can go beyond

the limitations of a master/slave dialectic and notion of authenticity to theorize the

subject without also having to *deny* the importance of recognition and identity in certain

political contexts. To sum up, the real crux of the problem with a politics of recognition is its fixation on the dualism of "subject" and "object," not only because it tends to reinforce a hierarchical model of intersubjectivity, but also because it limits the capacity for new patterns of thought to emerge in the space *between* things. Like the space between the embodied experience of colonized peoples *and* a theory of the imperceptible. In what follows, I will address the questions that Grosz leaves unanswered: how *does* a politics of imperceptibility facilitate the "realignment of forces?" How does a politics of imperceptibility benefit *colonized* peoples? How does it work? *What does it do?*

## 3.3   Becoming-imperceptible

> Becoming-imperceptible is the event for which there is no immediate representation, because it rests on the disappearance of the individuated self.
>
> -Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman*

I begin this section with the quote above to first illustrate the difficulty of the task at hand, which is to render the imperceptible—both as a concept and as it occurs as a practice—into a system of representation, and secondly to emphasize that becoming-imperceptible is not a theory of the subject or of subjectivity. The imperceptible is an event that can never be fully apprehended into a structure of knowledge. Therefore, the approach I take below is both necessarily rigorous *and* creative. Rigorous because

I unpack several of Deleuze and Guattari's, and Deleuze and Claire Parnet's, complex and shifting concepts, and creative because I bend and transform those concepts as the need arises. Although Deleuze and Guattari provide a robust toolbox of concepts, I weave together the events at Standing Rock and the notion of "becoming" to create a framework of imperceptibility that necessitates the inclusion of a new concept, which I formulate as the "line of pure resistance." I introduce the line of pure resistance as a line of sustainability for a politics of imperceptibility. As I demonstrate below, the line of pure resistance enables us to produce a feminist framework of imperceptibility to *think-feel-do* activism differently.

To begin, Deleuze and Guattari introduce the concept "becoming" as a movement *between* multiplicities. A multiplicity is a complex *entanglement* that does not reference any prior unity, nor does it have a center point of unification. A multiplicity originates from a twisting or swirling of elements that when folded together form varying degrees of relation.[44] Everything is a multiplicity, including ourselves. Elsewhere, Deleuze refers to a multiplicity as a structure, but it is not a structure made up of various binary points and positions.[45] A multiplicity is in constant flux, folding and unfolding in duration and time.[46] Importantly, a multiplicity is not a multiplicity *of* something. It has no given

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[44] Likewise, what defines an *element* (in a multiplicity) is not its intrinsic characteristics, but its dimensions, that is how it forms and acts in relation with other elements.

[45] See Deleuze, *DR* 183.

essence or prior identity; rather, it is *substantive* (Deleuze and Guattari *ATP* 8). Which is

to say, a multiplicity is not the same thing as the multiple of one. It is relational in nature

and heterogeneous in kind. As I gestured earlier, it is crucial to consider protest as a

multiplicity rather than as a duplication of one opposing ideology. Indeed, the nature of

a protest is to dissolve the notion of the *One*. Moreover, if a multiplicity is not reducible

to its composing elements, as Deleuze and Guattari assert (33), then neither is a protest

divisible to its independent elements, such as individual participants or a single action. If

a multiplicity is instead defined by its *variable* dimensions or "directions in motion" (21),

then it follows that a protest is also defined by its variations or *virtual potentials* and the

ways in which they actualize political change. Deleuze and Parnet elaborate:

> It is not the elements or the sets which define the multiplicity. What defines it is
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> the AND, as something which has its place between the elements or between
>
> sets…And, even if there are only two [elements] there is an AND between the two,
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> which is neither the one nor the other, nor the one which becomes the other, but
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> which constitutes the multiplicity. (34)

In other words, the ANDs are the variable dimensions, directions in motion, the virtual

dimensions of a multiplicity. When a multiplicity's ANDs (relations) change so does the

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[46] Deleuze draws on Henri Bergson's notion of duration to define a non-linear temporality that is
not spatially divided into past, present, and future.

multiplicity's capacity to act: "a multiplicity is continuously transforming itself into a string of other multiplicities" (Deleuze and Guattari *ATP* 249). The importance of the concept multiplicity is that it allows us to think beyond the One/many dyad and the dialectical oppositions that follow from it (Deleuze *DR* 182). A protest is not the many against the One; it is more nuanced. A protest which is reduced to a generalized logic of opposites (colonized versus the State) glosses over the specificities of a protest's conditions. The abstract binary of the many against the One curtails a protest's "concreteness." The concept of multiplicity enables us to consider protest as a dynamism of difference. In addition to identifying protest as a difference in *degree* we can alsoexplore its differences in *kind.* The former type of difference is concerned with question of measurement: What is the protest *about*? Who does it oppose? What happened? Whereas the latter asks unmeasurable questions: How does the protest work? When and where do its potentials actualize? What can a protest *do*?

There are then two types of multiplicities: those defined by differences in *degree* and those defined by differences in *kind*. This crucial distinction between multiplicities informs many of Deleuze and Guattari's concepts upon which I will draw in the remainder of this study. These concepts warrant further investigation in order to understand the concept of becoming-imperceptible and to show how becomings *move between* multiplicities as I suggested earlier. Deleuze and Guattari make the distinction as follows:

we distinguish between arborescent multiplicities and rhizomatic multiplicities. Between macro- and micromultiplicities. On the one hand, multiplicities that are extensive, divisible, and molar; unifiable, totalizable, organizable; conscious and preconscious— and on the other hand, libidinal, unconscious, molecular, intensive multiplicities composed of particles that do not divide without changing nature. (*ATP* 33)

The State is a Majority formation and is a molar apparatus— a quantitative multiplicity because its elements are distinct and perceptible; politicians, laws, population, currency, all of which can be *quantified*. A protest is minor with molecular movements that are qualitative in kind. It is constituted by the intensive difference between elements and their imperceptible relations, which cannot be counted or adequately identified. The relations between protestors, for instance, cannot be quantified. The primary difference between the two, is that a quantitative multiplicity is *discontinuous* and can be divided without effecting a change in its nature while a qualitative multiplicity is *continuous* and thus any change to its number of dimensions will necessarily affect its nature. A bag of marbles is a *quantitative* multiplicity: if you remove a few marbles it is still a bag of marbles. Temperature is a *qualitative* multiplicity: if the number of degrees changes so does its *feeling*. How does a distinction between quantitative and qualitative multiplicities apply to our current study of the NoDAPL movement? We can define TigerSwan as a quantitative multiplicity. Its surveillance operations, security agents, and military ideologies can be counted and measured. Any increase or decrease of its

elements, such as more or less agents, weapons, or land occupation, affects its *force* or *capacity* to act, but its nature, which is to exercise control over protestors, remains *constant* despite these quantitative changes.  On the other hand, protest is a qualitative multiplicity.  As new elements are folded in, or previous dimensions increase or decrease in number, such as alliances between Native and non-Native activists, peaceful demonstrations, or practices of community healing, the protest also changes in capacity.  But unlike TigerSwan, so too does its *nature* change.  Its "directions of motion" expand their distance; the protest folds in new elements, policy advocacy *and* environmental protection *and* honouring tradition *and* creating community *and* causing awareness *and* decolonization *and, and, and*. Whatever the change is, it is effectuated at the level of imperceptibility.  Which is to say that it cannot be *measured*.

Although I have mapped their differences, I want to underline that quantitative and qualitative multiplicities do *not* exist in dual opposition nor is one defined against the other.  This is of the utmost importance to understand, because to think of them in opposition "would be no better than the dualism between the One and the multiple" (Deleuze and Guattari *ATP* 34).  Both types of multiplicity coexist within the *same assemblage*.  They are corded together by their umbilical AND; TigerSwan AND the NoDAPL movement.  Quantitative AND qualitative multiplicities interpenetrate and condition one another.  For example, a protest has elements of surveillance and surveillance has elements of protest.  During a demonstration, protestors often practice intergroup surveillance to keep track of each for safety purposes; and, when surveillance

technology fails or glitches, it enacts a subversion of its own system. I will return to the notion of glitch as an act of protest in the next chapter. What is critical to grasp here is that the two types of multiplicity, quantitative and qualitative exist as two articulations of the same assemblage. The point that there are qualitative multiplicities within quantitative ones and vice versa will become particularly salient later in the chapter when I argue that a politics of imperceptibility must center on a politics of location. As I will argue, there is no opposition between these two political and theoretical endeavours, but only a difference in *kind*. The concept of multiplicity is significant because it gives us a tool that allows us to explore the relationship between things in the NoDAPL movement, such as TigerSwan and protest actions. At the same time, it enables us to explore the function of each as their own intensive singularity. I have explained how a becoming moves *between* (quantitative and qualitative multiplicities). Now I want to explore what a becoming is—or rather what it *does*.

It should come as no surprise that *becoming* is also a multiplicity. This is because becoming is not an imitation of something (the One) nor is it a transformation from this to that (the one to the many); becoming *is* the dynamism of change itself. It is a line of movement with *no end goal or state*. Because of this, becoming can be defined as a politics of *difference*. It moves molar formations that stagnate ways of thinking and being to an encounter with molecular intensities. Becomings are radicalized flows of

desire that generate multiplicities and new capacities to act.[47]  Becoming is a becoming-different not *from* something, but *with* and *between* things.  As such, becomings are *qualitative* in kind.  Deleuze and Guattari elaborate:

> A becoming is not a correspondence between relation.  But neither is it a resemblance, an imitation, or, at the limit, an identification… To become is not to progress or regress along a series…Becoming produces nothing other than itself…This is the point to clarify: that *a becoming lacks a subject distinct from itself…It concerns alliance.* (*ATP* 237-8, emphasis added)

In becomings then, there are no "subjects" that exist outside and distinct from "objects;" becomings throw off balance the subject/object dichotomy.  This point is crucial to understand the political potential that the concept of becoming offers.  It is also important to understand that practices of becomings are relational in that becoming is a process of change and movement *within* an assemblage.  Becoming describes how "discrete" elements of an assemblage change and how they deterritorialize in relation to other elements.  For example, the NoDAPL assemblage is made of the following "discrete" elements: protestors, land, direct-action, peaceful ceremony, community practice, colonial history, water, construction machinery, police dogs, rubber bullets,

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[47] Deleuze and Guattari define desire as a productive and positive force, unlike the psychoanalytic tradition that defines desire as lack.

TigerSwan, law enforcement, and the media, to name just a few of its elements.[48] When one of the elements becomes, it enters into the territory of another element changing its composition and bringing about a new *temporary* alliance— that is, a new multiplicity with a new function within the same assemblage. An example of this process might be illustrated in the becoming-water protector of protestors. These protesters are drawn into the territory of water-ceremony-land through affinity rather than organizational purpose. Becoming- water protector, therefore, is a deterritorialization of the protester in which the constituent elements of protest— *opposition to* the government, corporation, police— meet new properties of relation—*relation with* water, land, tradition. In this example, becoming- water protector does not mean that the protestor has become better or reached a higher moral ground— but that the protestor becoming-water protector has a different *orientation* within the NoDAPL assemblage, and this orientation confounds the distinction between "subject" and "object."

Every becoming, including water protector-becomings, creates a line of flight. A line of flight is the elusive and transformative potential of a becoming that evades reterritorialization. For example, in water protector-becomings new lines of connection are made *between* multiplicities (land—protest—water—bodies—tradition—) that, when in alliance, release new capacities for them to act and be acted upon. For example, when

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[48] Although I have defined these properties as "discrete," they should also be regarded as multiplicities. They are discrete in kind because they each exist as heterogeneous elements within an assemblage. An assemblage does not collapse the difference of its elements— which is to say that it is a unity that *is* reducible to its parts.

a protestor is deterritorialized a line of flight surfaces and radicalizes new capacities to act

that contributes not only to the becoming of the protestor but also to the becoming of the

NoDAPL movement. Becoming-water protector makes new tendrils within the NoDAPL

rhizome before reterritorialization occurs (the deterritorialized protester is

reterritorialized as a terrorist by TigerSwan, or noble savage and patriotic citizen by

activist media). Becoming, then, is a *generative intensity*, a block of energy of a

particular time and space that affects more new ways of be(com)ing.

It must be emphasized that becomings are multilayered overlapping intensities that

cannot and should not be parsed out from one another. All becomings exist on what

Deleuze and Guattari call, "a plane of immanence," which is a virtual plane with no

organizing structure or predetermined form. A plane of immanence is only "relations of

movement and rest, speed and slowness… molecules and particles of all kinds" (*ATP*

266). A plane of immanence is free from what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the

"gigantic memory" of the Majority, which can otherwise be understood as the

phallogocentric order of signification (293). Deleuze and Guattari argue that "white

man" is the "molar entity par excellence" (291). Therefore, to break from molarity (the

phallogocentric system of signification) requires first becoming-woman. Becoming-

woman does not refer to one *actually* becoming *a* woman. It is a movement *away from*

the rigid binary of man/woman. The concept is not about a material being but woman as

a figure that is minor to a patriarchal system.[49]  Deleuze and Guattari assert that Man (as

a figure of the Majority) is designated as the central point within the distribution of power

in all binary oppositions including, male/female, adult/child, white/non-white,

rational/animal.  To escape the confines, dangers, and violence of these hierarchal

dualisms one must break from molar perception and perceive differently.  Becoming-

woman then is a line of flight out of *all* structuring dualisms insofar as Man continues to

serve as "the principal term of opposition" around which the entire system is organized.

(292).  That is, Man not only serves as the privileged position within the gender binary,

he is a dualism-making machine that produces opposition and negation at every point.

Therefore, becoming-woman is a deterritorialization not only from the gender

binary system, but the *entire* system of signification given that Man is the central point to

which all other binaries are tied (Deleuze and Guattari *ATP* 293).  If becoming departs

from major dualisms than it must start with the departure from Man.  Hence, becoming-

woman is a mode of becoming-other to *the standardizing grids of gender and sexuality*.

Importantly, Deleuze and Guattari are not suggesting that women have *a priori* access to

becoming; there is no subject of becoming.  Women must also become-woman (277).

Man is the apparatus of capture and control, and becoming-woman is an affective

movement that passes through oppositions— becoming woman is the "no-man's land"

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[49] It should be noted, however, that feminist scholars including Braidotti have critiqued Deleuze
and Guattari's concept of becoming-woman for collapsing the differences between men and
women into a single subjectivity that enters into a becoming under the same circumstances.  As
Braidotti argues, this ignores the specific historical struggles of woman (*NS* 258).

(293), or, better still, the "No-(wo)man's lands" (Braidotti *NS* 47).  Becoming-woman

does not make a line *from* Man *to* woman; it takes a different direction altogether

rendering these starting points indiscernible (Deleuze and Guattari 298).  Again,

becoming-woman is a deterritorialization of representation, language, and molar

structures— what Deleuze and Guattari call "the law of arborescence"—that constrains

multiplicities to their quantitative state.

All becomings connect on a plane of immanence but they have different thresholds.

A threshold is what Deleuze and Guattari define as "a zone of proximity" between two

multiplicities.  It is a zone where the elements of different multiplicities pass through one

another.  This is a site of connection and interpenetration which could be conceived of as

the AND that changes a multiplicity's nature.  A threshold is a door, a potential for

transformation, and this potential is imperceptible because it has yet to be actualized into

our subjective awareness.  For example, peaceful protest is one threshold of becoming-

water protector.  In the event that a protestor enacts a peaceful demonstration she passes

through a threshold where *indeterminate* potentials are unleashed.  Nonetheless, because

becoming-water protector is situated within the context of the NoDAPL assemblage it

reaches a defined limit.  Despite passing a threshold, if the body becoming-water

protector is to remain *elemental* to the NoDAPL assemblage the body-in-becoming must

be reterritorialized within it.

Massumi contends that becomings have two types of thresholds:

> [A threshold is] a relative limit above which a thing ceases to be itself but gets a
>
> new lease on life in a different mode; and an absolute limit below which no thing
>
> can go but upon which all things tread.  A threshold leading across the synapses
>
> toward a new being, and a foundation of non-being. (*UG* 36)

Water protector-becomings then, reach a *relative* limit, but they do not abandon the

NoDAPL assemblage; they reterritorialize within it and present the assemblage within

something new—new affects and intensive energies.  For example, water protector-

becomings transform the NoDAPL movement from one characterized as a *protest* against

State-capitalism to a peaceful endeavour to *protect* clean water.  The second limit that

Massumi identifies is the "absolute limit." This limit is the point at which an assemblage

breaks down and ceases to exist as such.  Once a becoming passes its absolute threshold

it turns into pure chaos—in other words, *imperceptibility* (58).

*Becoming-imperceptible is the final act of all becomings.*  Which is not to say that

becomings exist on a teleological trajectory toward imperceptibility as a "goal." Recall

that becomings have no end goal or state, only that becoming-imperceptible is a

becoming that passes through the *final threshold* that all others encounter as their limit.

But what *is* the absolute limit or final threshold that becomings must pass through?

Deleuze and Guattari tell us that they must move out of *arborescent*[50] perception. They elaborate that in becomings-imperceptible:

> Perception will no longer reside in the relation between a subject and an object, but rather at the limit of that relation, in the period associated with the subject and object. Perception will confront its own limit; it will be in the midst of things throughout its own proximity, as the presence of one haecceity in another, the prehension of one by the other or the passage from one to the other: Look only at the movements. (*ATP* 282)

In other words, in becoming-imperceptible there is no distinction between subjects and objects, self and other, human and nonhuman. Becoming-imperceptible is the ultimate "evacuation of the self"—what Braidotti describes in the opening quote to this section as the "disappearance of the individuated self" (*The Posthuman* 137). The only thing that exists is virtual potential, multiplicities of difference— *ANDs* into infinity.

Deleuze and Guattari define becoming-imperceptible as a "zone of indiscernibility" and "impersonality" in which becoming is "becoming everybody/everything (*tout le monde*), to world (*faire monde*), to make a world (*faire un monde*)" (*ATP* 280). As an example of a becoming-imperceptible Deleuze and Guattari turn to the camouflage fish:

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[50] As noted in chapter one, the term "arborescent" is Deleuze and Guattari's counterpoint to the rhizome. Arborescence is a structure of thought that is tree-like, self-contained and closed. It is a linear land representational logic that correlates with molar systems of signification.

"This fish is crisscrossed by abstract lines that resemble nothing, that do not even follow its organic divisions but thus disorganized, disarticulated, it worlds with the lines of a rock, sand, and plants, becoming imperceptible" (280).  To be sure, the fish is not simply imitating its surroundings to disappear; it "conjugates" with other lines (sand, rocks, and so on) to make a world in which everything is a becoming: fish, rock, sand, plant.  What is becoming imperceptible in this example is not so much the fish but the *environment.* Fish, sand, rock, and plant disappear only insofar as their lines of demarcation dissolve into one another.  It is only by becoming *together* that they make a zone of indiscernibility.  Becoming-imperceptible is always a collective endeavour; the clandestine fish evades perceptive capture only insofar as it asignifies, disarticulates, and cuts through the molar lines of individuation.

On the NoDAPL wavelength, water protector-becomings are subject to reterritorialization, as I argued above.  But, be that as it may, they also engender a line of flight that effectuates a change to the NoDAPL assemblage.  Before I map this line, it is necessary to first define two additional lines that coexist and intermingle with a line of flight.  According to Deleuze and Guattari, the first line is a molar line that forms rigid segmentations in an assemblage by regulating flows of desire and power.  It does this by ordering, dividing, and creating predetermined social hierarchies.  That is, molar lines are arborescent machines that churn out binaries of social classes, races, sexes, man-woman, private-public and so on, to stabilize an assemblage and give it some consistency (*ATP* 128).

The second line is the molecular line of supple segmentations that form thresholds and constitute "blocs of becoming" within an assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari *ATP* 130). They are the cracks of an assemblage that operate as lines of deterritorialization. However, molecular lines of deterritorialization are compromised by their relative status to the molar line of reterritorialization. Take for example, water protector-becomings. TigerSwan is a molar line within the NoDAPL assemblage that reterritorializes water protector-becomings by *forcing* them into an *overcoded* regime of classification so that protestors become not water protectors but sexually deviant terrorists. Although *molecular* lines function as deterritorializations, they reterritorialize on the *molar* line. In some cases, they can make deeper grooves in rigid segmentations. As Deleuze and Guattari contend there is an *ambiguity* to the molecular line; it could go either way, "ready to tip to one side or the other" (205).

The third line is the line of flight that ruptures the cycle of territorialization. A line of flight is *virtual*; it passes molar and molecular thresholds "towards a destination which is unknown, not foreseeable, not pre-existent" (Deleuze and Parnet 125). A line of flight is an "absolute deterritorialization" (Deleuze and Guattari *ATP* 282). It is not bound by molar or molecular lines, nor is it produced by them. A line of flight does not *follow* molar or molecular lines, *it comes first* (204). It is primary because it is virtual—it effectuates the molar and molecular line. Which is to say, the line of flight "comes up through the middle" (293). Still, these three lines are not separable; they are immanent to one another. Deleuze and Guattari assert that they intertwine and *turn into one another*:

"It is not easy to sort them out. No one of them is transcendent; each is at work within the others. Immanence everywhere" (205). Accordingly, in water protector-becomings the line of flight that blasts apart molar segmentation is not easy to map.

Nonetheless, in terms of the NoDAPL movement a line of flight can be discerned on the threshold of peaceful protest. On November 2, 2016, a water ceremony performed at Standing Rock Sioux reservation emerged as a line of flight that not only transformed the NoDAPL assemblage but also traversed a line to becoming-imperceptible. For days, law enforcement and TigerSwan were stationed atop Turtle Hill (also referred to as Turtle Island), a sacred burial ground for the Sioux Tribe. The ceremony was intended as a peaceful prayer for the Sioux's ancestors whose unmarked graves were desecrated by law enforcement and TigerSwan's occupation of the sacred land. Water protectors built a makeshift bridge so that elders could cross the Cantapeta Creek which runs between the protectors' camp and Turtle Hill. However, law enforcement, acting on behalf of The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, who were considered the legal owners of the ancestral lands,[51] descended the Hill to arrest water protectors who attempted to cross the bridge. The water protectors complied and did not make further attempts to come ashore, but they stood their ground in the neutral waters of the creek. Unprovoked, law enforcement fired rubber bullets and tear gas at the unarmed activists *who formed a line* of solidarity,

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[51] The ancestral lands were accorded to the Sioux Tribe by the Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1868 but the Tribe ceded the land eleven years later under the threat of starvation. In 1980 the US Supreme Court declared the new treaty unjust and ordered the government to financially compensate the Tribe rather than return the land to them (Akhtar).

standing waist-deep, arm-in-arm in the freezing water. At the same time, the water

ceremony was underway on the banks of the Oceti Sakowin Camp. Eventually the

ceremony spilled into the creek itself as water protectors paddled in their canoes to join

those standing in the water as well as to ensure their safety and transport the injured back

to camp. The ceremony included singing, dancing, drum beating, repairing the bridge

that law enforcement eventually destroyed, canoeing in the creek, performing smoke

ceremonies on shore and in boats or rafts, and providing medical care for those who were

pepper sprayed or wounded from rubber bullets. All these activities were performed by

elders, children, adults, comprised of Native and non-Native protestors. *The ceremony*

*was a becoming-water of protest and a becoming-protest of water, a worlding of protest.*

Water, activist bodies, tear gas sprayed into the water, police dogs that drank from the

creek, prayers for clean water— all conjugated together. Like the camouflage fish, the

ceremony conjugated "with other lines, other pieces, [to] make a world that can overlay

the first one, like a transparency" (Deleuze and Guattari 280). The world that was made

was a clandestine strengthening of the NoDAPL movement.


## 3.4   A Line of Pure Resistance

Although the water ceremony at Cantapeta Creek was certainly visible to the State and

its agents, as was the increased energy and political momentum of water protectors

thereafter, there was another "line" that remained imperceptible. This is the line that I

identify as the "line of pure resistance."[52]  I define this line as the capacity *to world* at a moment's notice by effectuating a multiplicity of molecular lines into new becomings.  A line of pure resistance is not something that can be anticipated or predetermined.  As I formulate it, it is an event that occurs during a state of emergency, i.e. when law enforcement unexpectedly unleashes violence against water protectors during a peaceful water ceremony.  It is a line of becoming that doubles as a lifeline.  It emerges when a becoming is accelerated at a rate that is impossible to sustain, when becoming becomes a matter of life or death.  When life is bare life.[53] A line of pure resistance unfolds as a mechanism of defense and an act of sustainability to slow down a line of flight from turning into a line of destruction.

To be exact, the line of *flight* made during the water ceremony was *supported* by the line of *pure resistance*.  Protestors becoming-water protectors unexpectedly met the militarized police and their excessive force during what was intended to be a peaceful ceremony—with a smooth line of flight.  What prevented protestors from retaliating against the police with violence?  Or, more importantly, what stopped water protectors from retreating from the creek to avoid being a *target* of violence?  What stopped the

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[52] I use the term "pure" to indicate the line's virtual quality, which I discuss below.  This is in accordance with Deleuze's terminology (i.e. "pure difference," "pure affects," "pure immanence").  I want to be clear that I do not mean "pure" as in "uncontaminated," nor am I referring to settler colonial usages of the term "pure blood."

[53] Bare life is a term from Giorgio Agamben.  The term refers to a body that is outside the law or denied basic human rights; a "life exposed to death" (Agamben 88).

ceremony's line of flight from being reterritorialized by the molar force of law enforcement? *The line of pure resistance*. In what follows, I develop the concept of the "line of pure resistance" as an addition to Deleuze and Guattari's repertoire of becoming. The line of pure resistance, as I will demonstrate below, is a line effectuated by the *turning* of a line of flight into, what Deleuze and Guattari call, a line of destruction.

First, it is worth reviewing how the molar and molecular lines function in an assemblage. The "molar line" is rigid and composed of predetermined social stratifications and segments. Not unlike an established life path, movement on the molar line follows a pre-given course: family-school-job-family-retirement (Deleuze and Parnet 124). The molar line is constructed by binary machines, Universal Man, dualisms. Thus, it reterritorializes. The "molecular line" is also segmentary but supple. This line is made up of fluxes and thresholds that change the rhythm of movement across the segments of the molar line (126). The molecular line is the line of becomings and of deterritorialization. Not always but sometimes there is a third line between the molecular and molar lines. This is the "line of flight" that "carries us away" across rigid segments and across the thresholds of the molecular line (126). The line of flight has a destination unknown, undetermined, imperceptible. It is creative potential and absolute deterritorialization. All three of these lines are entangled. There is, however, another trio of *entangled* lines that Deleuze and Guattari do not identify: the line of flight, destruction, and *resistance*. The line of destruction is not part of an assemblage proper but is instead that which seeks to destroy it but as we shall see the three lines—flight, destruction,

resistance—have a different function from the molar and molecular in the becoming of an assemblage.

Deleuze and Guattari define the line of destruction as a line of flight that has broken free from the limits imposed by molar forms of segmentarity but fails to connect with the conditions necessary for creative production (Patton 292). In the absence of making this connection, a line of flight turns instead into a line of abolition. Deleuze and Guattari turn to the drug addict as an example. They explain that while drugs may be the agent of becoming-imperceptible since they enable molecular modes of perception, the flight line of drugs—euphoria, altered consciousness, shifting patterns of thought, the overflow of emotion, that some drugs facilitate— is constantly reterritorialized in the most rigid fashion: in addiction, drug deals, withdrawal, the slow decay of the body (*ATP* 284). These inescapable molar segmentations *suspend* the becoming that drugs create and thereby turn a line of flight into a line of destruction. In other words, drugs are not sustainable. Worse still, a drug addict may follow a line of flight—by chasing a high, for example— into a black hole of death. For Deleuze and Guattari, a "black hole" is where lines of flight coil and collapse into each other: a bad trip, paranoia, unsustainable hallucinations, delusions, death (285). Black holes can annihilate becomings and destroy the line of flight. As Deleuze and Parnet explicate:

it is the supple lines themselves which produce or encounter their own dangers, a threshold crossed too quickly, an intensity become dangerous because it could not

be tolerated.  You have not taken enough precautions.  This is the 'black hole'

phenomenon: a supple line rushes into a black hole from which it will not be able

to extricate itself. (138)

However, Deleuze and Guattari also assert that it is possible for a line to find its

way out of a black hole.  But the line that reemerges will be even more rigid and harsh.

This molar line will work passionately and feverishly to create more rigid segmentations

(*ATP* 138).  For the drug user, the line of destruction that reemerges is the line of

addiction, repeating destruction over and over again.  Nonetheless, for Deleuze and

Guattari, drugs are not *a priori* bad.  They can change "the general conditions of space

and time perception so that nonusers can succeed in passing through the holes in the

world and following the lines of flight at the very place where means other than drugs

become necessary" (286).  Indeed, works of art, music, and poems that were made on a

line of destruction can wrest free for others creative lines that are not destruction; we

could call this the becoming-drug of art: "music is a drug." To clarify, a line of flight

risks turning into a line of destruction when facing the black hole of drug abuse.  The line

of destruction, however, does not *become* a line of pure resistance.  The line of pure

resistance, as I propose it, plays an intervening role between the turning of the two.

What is the *line of pure resistance* for the drug addict?  It could be many things: detox,

support, love, connecting with other lines of flight beyond the drug assemblage.

At first, it would appear that the line of resistance would belong to the molecular line of potential and becomings and destruction to the molar line of reterritorialization, but it is more complicated. This is because the line of destruction, as we have seen, is *also* a line of flight, but it is one that has taken "the path of greatest regression" (Deleuze and Guattari *ATP* 205). It is a line of flight that has taken a *wrong turn* and is stuck reconstructing rigid segments. A line of destruction emerges when two lines of flight meet, and one blocks the other. Deleuze and Guattari aver: "it is quite possible that one group or individual's line of flight may not work to the benefit of another group or individual; it may on the contrary block it, plug it, throw it even deeper into rigid segmentarity" (205). For example, the water ceremony was a line of flight that encountered the black hole of law enforcement and in turn, threatened the destruction of the ceremony. Deleuze and Parnet ask the question: How can we outmaneuver a line of flight turning into a line of destruction? (143). One answer is with the line of pure resistance. This line is the imperceptible fourth line born out of the *friction* of the flight line turning into a line of destruction.

The line of resistance is "pure" because it is virtual. Claire Colebrook describes the virtual as tendencies of "unpursued paths and potentialities that are not actualized" and offer for us a micropolitics of forces that "we can transform…into a truly new future" (*Understanding* xxx). However, the virtual is not something we can perceive. It is only something we can *intuit*. Nevertheless, the virtual is still active; it is not something waiting to be actualized for us to perceive; becomings are virtual. The virtual

is a political potential that exceeds actual ideologies and systems of knowledge that we

have produced thus far.  The concept of the virtual acknowledges that there are

imperceptible dimensions to the process of *thinking-feeling-doing* that exist beyond the

subject, such as the imperceptible relations between a body and its environment.  The

question that nags at us is how do we actualize virtual power we cannot perceive?

Echoing Deleuze, Colebrook asks: "can thinking grasp the forces or differences that

precede and produced it? …This would consider the ways in which our image of the

'human' is formed from events that lie outside human decision" (xxxix).  Indeed, how

do we glimpse virtual potential that has yet to be actualized?

Intuiting the virtual is not as paradoxical as it first may seem.  *The virtual is as real*

*as the actual.*  They are two sides of the same coin; they fold into one another to create

all possible realities.  The actual in the here and now relays back to the virtual.  The

common example given to describe this relationship is a memory.  A memory is not an

actual object, but it is real.  Memory, although virtual, contains within it images of actual

objects.  Complicating the relationship further, a memory can be actualized into form.

For instance, an artist paints a memory and renders the memory into an actual object.

However, the painting (actual) relates back to the memory (virtual): the artist paints the

sky indigo blue and, in the process, alters the memory image of a grey sky (virtual).  In

this way, the actual never breaks from the virtual.  Another example is dream analysis.

The image of a dream changes and shifts as it is actualized into language.  When

recalling a dream, the analysand may invent or add bits and pieces of information to give

the dream meaning—and in doing so, actualizes the virtual. Yet, there is still a sense of something forgotten, an element of a dream missed and that something remains virtual. This is all to say that the actual does not *represent* the virtual. Virtual and actual, memory and painting, dream and interpretation flatten together.

The line of pure resistance is not representational, nor can it be determined in advance. *You cannot plan for a line of pure resistance.* It is both generated by and generative of affective forces. The line of pure resistance resonates with Foucault's delineation of power and resistance. Foucault affirms that, "Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (*HS* 95). Power and resistance, like the virtual and actual, are also two sides of the same coin. Indeed, power and resistance are *both virtual and actual at the same time.* Continuing further, Foucault contends that, "[resistances] are irregular in fashion: the points, knots, or focuses … spread over time and space at varying densities, at times mobilizing groups or individuals in a definitive way, *inflaming certain points of the body*, certain moments in life, certain types of behavior" (96, emphasis added). In the same fashion, a line of pure resistance *inflame*s the body and the body inflamed *also* affects and inflames the line. In this way, a line of pure resistance does not have a demarcated beginning or end, nor is there a linear story to explain its emergence. We can only explore its conditions and the potentials that were actualized. Accepting this proposition requires that we forego the representational question that is

stuck asking: what *is* a line of pure resistance, so that we can ask what is at stake: what can a line of pure resistance *do*?

Resistance lines inflame the supple molecular lines to sustain a becoming that has happened too-soon and too-forcefully for the assemblage to endure.  In the instance of the protestors becoming-water protectors the thin line between flight and destruction— was encountered – between peaceful protest and violence.  Suspended in the freezing cold, shaking in the creek waters, bleeding and bruised from rubber bullets, eyes burning from pepper spray, anger-fear-frustration-despair resonating and pulsating through the bodies, and yet the ceremony endured.  The protestor becoming-water protector persisted.  The line of pure resistance *transformed* these painful lines of destruction into lines of determination—this is not to say that water protectors were not determined prior to the ceremony but that the line of pure resistance which emerged *affirmed* and *strengthened* the molecular line of determination.  Water protectors had to world[54] at a moment's notice to sustain the cold, violence, and fear and transform pain into positive affect.  The line of pure resistance was a worlding of water with protest and protest with

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[54] I use the word "world" as a verb in accordance with Deleuze and Guattari's assertation that becoming-imperceptible is a "Becoming everybody/everything (tout le monde) is *to world* (faire monde), *to make a world* (faire un monde)" (*ATP* 280, emphasis added).  They further explain "becoming-everybody/everything, making the world a becoming, is to world, to make a world or worlds, in other words, to find one's proximities and zones of indiscernibility" (280).  Following Deleuze and Guattari, I use the term "worlding" to signal a creative, productive, and collective force that connects bodies (human and non-human), and in the process decenters the notion of an individual subjectivity.

water. In this worlding a *zone* of resistance was actualized at Cantapeta Creek—a zone that slowed down the ceremony's line of flight from hurling into violent or passive destruction.

However, a line of pure resistance can have a violent characteristic. In some contexts, violence is the only (life)line left to avoid being hurled toward death, dehumanization, or total destruction. A violent line of resistance is a line of desperation. But it turns desperation into a *weapon of sustainability* against that which is attempting to destroy it. Nonetheless, as Fanon argues, violence is not sustainable as a revolutionary force (*The Wretched of the Earth* 51-52). What follows from a line of violence is doomed to spiral into life-denying negation. Not unlike the drug user's addiction that "locks the subject up in a black hole of inner fragmentation" (Braidotti "How to Endure Intensity" 194), violence forecloses thresholds to becoming. It must be emphasized that regardless of its characteristic, a line of pure resistance is always *affirmative* because it engenders the potential to *act* in the face of total de-stratification (becoming-imperceptible) or re-segmentation (destruction). A line of pure resistance wrests the body free from the hold of somatic suspension.

A line of pure resistance sustains a becoming by widening molecular lines and, in doing so, creates a zone that temporarily stabilizes a becoming's line of flight. For example, the line of pure resistance at the ceremony widened the molecular lines of resilience, strength, perseverance, and determination, and this widening stabilized the becomings of prayer, community, and peaceful demonstration. Furthermore, the line of

pure resistance at the creek was felt before it was actualized.  Water protector Angie

Spencer shares in an interview with The Young Turks, the physical and psychological

warfare against women-identified water protectors: "our true power comes through

peaceful prayer and water ceremony…We have no choice but to [act] on a higher

vibration" ("Female Water Protectors Brutalized").  A vibration that was generated and

sustained by the line of pure resistance.  A vibration that reverberated beyond Standing

Rock.  Just a few days after the water ceremony, or what the media simply called "a

clash between protestors and police," international support for the movement increased

and November 15th, 2016 was declared #NoDAPL National Day of Action.  The Day of

Action resulted in two-hundred and fifty actions of solidarity across forty-two States in

the U.S.; water protectors and allies participated in marches, sit-ins, rallies, social

awareness campaigns on social media, performance art demonstrations, smoke, fire, and

water ceremonies all of which serve to strengthen the molecular lines of the NoDAPL

assemblage and engender new becomings within the movement.

It should be noted that the line of pure resistance is different from Deleuze and

Guattari's concept of the "refrain." The refrain is the reintroduction of arborescent

territory, the repetition of molar images and signs that enables an assemblage to hold

itself together.  Although a line of pure resistance also holds an assemblage together it is

not arborescent, it is a *rhizomatic* intensity.  It zigzags between *molecular lines*

effectuating their expansion.  Recall Deleuze and Guattari's contention that molecular

lines are ambiguous in that they could tip over to reterritorialization or stay

deterritorialized as a line of flight.  The line of pure resistance expands molecular lines making them a little less ambiguous, giving them more weight, to tip the scales in favour of (new) lines of flight.  A line of pure resistance is a becoming's resistance to stratification and resegementation in the face of abolition.  How the line of resistance will be actualized cannot be determined in advance.  No one can know how to stop a line of flight before it meets destruction.  Pure resistance happens in the moment.  It is a short intense line with a fleeting potential to act.  It occurs between a becoming and a black hole.  All of this may seem a bit abstract, but there are three political points to be made: 1) *the line of pure resistance is a sustainable line that enables bodies-in-becoming to endure the threat of falling into a black hole or turning into a line of destruction*; 2) *the line of pure resistance worlds, which is to say that it is relational; 3) the line of pure resistance can be actualized as a zone of autonomy and escape.*

Deleuze and Guattari turn to the camouflage fish to exemplify becoming-imperceptible as noted above.  I turn now to the *hagfish* to explicate the line of pure resistance.  The hagfish secretes coils of slime when it is threatened.  The coils unfold, expand, and thread together as they combine with cold seawater, creating a strong slimy mass capable of clogging the gills of a nearby predator.  The porosity and density of the slime is determined by a heterogeneous network, made up of mucin, silk-like threads, and protein, whose size depend on how big the hagfish's glands swell as it senses a predator in its environment (Lim et al. 702). The slime defence mechanism is so effective in warding off predators that the fish often continues feeding on its prey while under attack.

What does the sliming activity of the hagfish tell us about the line of pure resistance?

Like the slime of a hagfish, the line of pure resistance is produced in combination with

the affordances of its environment.  For example, just as the hagfish conjugates with the

seawater to release slime and to slow down its line of flight from becoming a line of

destruction—that is becoming-another fish's prey—a protest assemblage conjugates with

its environment to produce a line of pure resistance that slows down its becoming-violent

or becoming-defeated.  Like the gill-clogging slime that releases from the fish enabling it

to escape a predator, a line of pure resistance drags down the line of flight before it is

swallowed by a black hole.  The line of pure resistance, like the fish's slime, is a

mechanism of escape that serves to sustain the assemblage's *affirmative* becoming.  The

slime is not a metaphor: it *is* the hagfish's line of pure resistance.

As the example of the hagfish illustrates, the line of pure resistance is secondary; it

is produced out of circumstance—from the confrontation between a black hole and a

becoming.  My hypothesis is that a line of pure resistance can be produced when the line

of flight is turning toward a line of destruction.  This hypothesis breaks from Deleuze

and Guattari's claim that "There is no doubt that an assemblage never contains a causal

infrastructure" (*ATP* 283).  They aver that the line of flight is formed in connection with

"general causalities of another nature, but it is in no way explained by them" (283).

While a line of pure resistance's causal relationship cannot be determined in advance it *is*

effectuated by (be)coming proximate to a black hole of death and destruction.  However,

just as Foucault states of the relation between resistance and power, this does not mean

that the line of pure resistance "is in the end always passive, doomed to perpetual defeat"

(Foucault *HS* 96). It is a virtual, active, and affirmative line that does not connect to a

plane of organization.[55] Only when the line of pure resistance has been actualized, as

with the NoDAPL Day of Action (or in the case of the Hagfish's slime, as a bulletproof

vest for the US Military[56]), that the line is reterritorialized and stratified into a molar

plane of organization, signification, and segmentation. Most importantly, a line of pure

resistance is not a resistance against a becoming nor is it a reterritorialization. *It is a*

*virtual resistance[57] to a becoming's complete annihilation. It resists a black hole by*

*creating the potential for new zones of autonomy.*

## 3.5    Queer Imperceptibility and The Politics of Location

In this section, I wish to bring the threads of the chapter together by *queering* a politics of

imperceptibility. Earlier, I discussed Grosz's approach to imperceptibility and my

departure from her theoretical trajectory. Briefly, where Grosz proposes a politics of

imperceptibility as a feminist theoretical model to consider the role of inhuman force in

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[55] In the next chapter, I discuss the plane of organization at length and explore how a line of pure resistance—or more exactly how an assemblage that has a line of pure resistance—has the potential to "mutate" black holes and lines of destruction.

[56] The US Military is attempting to replicate the Hagfish's slime to create ballistic armour for the Navy, which is a process that scientists call "biomimicry"—which we can conceive of as a black hole of the hagfish's becoming.

[57] Although the hagfish's slime is not virtual *as such* it nonetheless involves virtual and imperceptible forces insofar as it requires an indeterminate conjugation with the environment to materialize.

the subject's *constitution*, I propose a politics that turns away from questions regarding

subject-formation to consider instead the relation between things, both human and

nonhuman, perceptible and imperceptible, and how they affect a *body's autonomy* and

*political mobility*. This approach to politics seeks to bring into focus the interrelatedness

of becoming and how it affirms a body's potential to act in the world. What interests me

is not how the subject is *constituted*, but what relations enable one to *decenter* the subject

in a political practice—that is, how does one become-imperceptible. What capacities do

different bodies have to act in the world, but also to become-*of* and *as*-the world? In

short, how does one *world*?

Necessarily, these questions require conceiving of the subject as "embedded and

embodied" (Braidotti 2011). After all, how else would we be able to explore what a body

can do? Moreover, if, as Deleuze explains, the body is a composition of relations that are

inseparable from affects and "what a body can do corresponds to the nature and limits of

its capacity to be affected" (*Expressionism in Philosophy* 218), then finding out what a

body can do requires first finding out its *specific* and *situated* relations and the affective

capacities therein. Which is another way of asking: what is the starting point of a

becoming? (Braidotti 2011); how does subjectivity materialize through affective

assemblages? (Puar 2012); what are the politics of location? (Rich 1984); what are the

patterns of interference and intensity that make a body? (Massumi 2002*)*; what are your

lines, thresholds, and black holes? (Deleuze and Parnet 1987); from what position do

you speak? (Crenshaw 1991). That is, where are you situated? A queer politics of

imperceptibility considers these questions of location together not to ask how the subject is formed but to ask: for *whom* is a politics of imperceptibility*?*

Earlier, I outlined my three points of departure from Grosz's essay. To recap, they are: her distinction between subject/object, the abstraction of the socially situated body, and her either/or approach. In this section, I would like to offer three different lines that *queer* a politics of imperceptibility. They are: 1) detaching from subject/object; 2) a politics of location; and, 3) a movement of thought premised on *and, and, and*. These breaks from Grosz are not meant to be corrective or prescriptive, nor should they be thought of as oppositional, lest we fall into a black hole of either/or. Finally, although I have attempted to signal each below, all three of these breaks necessarily overlap.

### 3.5.1   *Detaching from the subject/object distinction*

A queer approach to imperceptibility does not presume that "we," as feminists, come to a theory and political practice of imperceptibility from the same starting point. The term queer indicates plurality, a multiplicity of locations, non-specificity and at the same time it holds a tangential relationship to sexuality and the sexual subject.[58] Borrowing from Puar, queer can be understood as "an affective conglomeration that recognizes other

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[58] I use the word tangential to draw attention to the ways in which "queer" has become a popular (and an academically fashionable) term to signify *any* sort of deviation from a norm. "Queering" is commonly used to signify a reparative reading of a topic to include gay or lesbian identity, but often this is done without troubling the stability of those categories. In contrast, I define "queer" as a relation *between* things—a movement— that zigzags between the virtual imperceptibility of sexuality (which I discussed in chapter one) and the actual event of sex and desire.

contingencies of belonging (melding, fusing, viscosity, bouncing) that might not fall so easily into … identity politics" (*TA* 211).  Queer is also a becoming; it is a continuous movement that does not get stuck on one meaning, identity, or subject position.  "Queer" changes from context to context.  Thus, to queer a theory of imperceptibility is not only a matter of questioning its framework or making it different, but to enter it into a becoming, to see what other potentials it can activate.  If we agree that "there is no entity, no identity, no queer subject or subject to queer" (211), then it follows that a queer politics of imperceptibility is highly suspect of a theory that revolves around a static and stable subject.  Although, Grosz asserts that the subject is always in motion and transformation because it is composed of imperceptible forces, she does not discuss the varying and complex relations that different subjects have with forces.  She implies that all subjects begin from the same starting point and thus have the same relation and *access* to thinking of themselves and others as imperceptible.[59]

A queer approach to imperceptibility acknowledges that while there is no such thing as a unitary subject, identity, or entity, one's relation to imperceptibility, force, and

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[59] For example, Grosz claims that "Instead of a politics of recognition, in which subjugated groups and minorities strive for a validated and affirmed place in public life, feminist and postcolonial politics should, I believe, now consider the affirmation of a politics of imperceptibility, leaving its traces and effects everywhere, but never being able to be identified with a person or an organization" ("A Politics of Imperceptibility" 471). Again, the problem I have with this line of reasoning is that there needs to be a politics of location *if* imperceptibility is to be *practiced as a politics.*  If a politics of imperceptibility can never be identified with a person or organization, how does it begin?  How do we locate and acknowledge it?  How do we foster the intensive potentials of becomings for political change?

inhuman action depends on the body's material relations, social situations, and lived

realities. Thus, when Grosz asks, "Can we reconceive politics without identity…And if

so, why do we still need the residual concept of recognition?" ("A Politics of

Imperceptibility" 468), a queer politics of imperceptibility replies: "Who is *we*?" (Rich

231). Queering imperceptibility intervenes in the middle of the no-subject/static-subject

binary by centering location *without* re-centering the subject. This challenging task

requires attuning to differences in *kind*. That is, *queer* imperceptibility highlights the

subject as a composite of different intensive patterns, starting points, thresholds,

intersectional positions, and cyborg crossings, but does not hold the subject fixed to these

points or understand them to be *central* to political transformation. Thus, "we" can

detach from "the subject," as it is understood in its *molar* form without risking the erasure

of embodied experiences and material relations. In addition, centering a politics of

location in a theory of imperceptibility holds us as feminist theorists accountable to the

parameters we set around ideas related to ourselves and others by asking *who benefits* and

*who is excluded* from a framework of knowledge and to what *degree*. All this is to say

that a queer approach to imperceptibility combines the *subjectless* process of becoming

with an acknowledgement that becomings must start from somewhere (Braidotti 2011).

### 3.5.2   *A politics of location*

This queer approach to imperceptibility, that takes both location and becoming into

account, is indebted to Braidotti's nomadic feminist philosophy. Braidotti crafts an

intricate and careful figuring of the subject as one who is embedded in both molar and molecular segmentations with the capacity to cross molar thresholds.  In her words: "Politically, nomadic thought is the expression of a nonunitary vision of the subject, defined by motion in a complex manner that is densely material.  It invites us to rethink the structures and boundaries of the self by tackling the deeper conceptual roots of issues of identity" (*NT* 3).  She insists that a nomadic subject is not a theory of individualism nor does it subscribe to identity politics; she explains the latter as an "ego-indexed habit of fixing and capitalizing one's selfhood" (4).  Rather, the nomadic subject is a process of subjectivity that is multilayered, socially mediated, and emerges in relation with others (4).  Which is to say that the nomadic subject is both socially situated and transitory and circulates within and without the Majority (49).

Braidotti draws on Adrienne Rich's theory of a politics of location to argue that the body-in-becoming must start from somewhere specific, and thus a theory of becoming must account for the body's "grounded and accountable location" while at the same time acknowledging that "the process of becoming is a time bomb placed at the very heart of the social and symbolic system that has welded together … subjectivity" (*NT* 31). A politics of location is a tool that enables us to map the coordinates and locate the ticking time bomb of intensive social energy that is waiting to explode into a multiplicity of becomings.  Nomadic feminism uses these coordinates to navigate and chart different social locations in order to understand different flows of becoming.  However, as Braidotti makes clear, mapping the nomadic subject is not an easy endeavour.

Not only is the subject non-unitary by nature, it is continuously being split and modulated by advanced capitalism, surveillance, and systems of control. As Braidotti explains, advanced capitalism places the subject in contradictory positions, forcing one to inhabit several irreconcilable positions at once, whether that is to "get ahead in the game" or just to sustain a life. Thus, nomadic theory acknowledges the inherent contradictions of the subject and of our *thinking* about the subject.

Likewise, queer imperceptibility is not opposed to contradiction. It is *necessarily* a framework with shortcomings because it not a *totalizing* theory. In accordance with Deleuze and Parnet, "There is no general prescription. We have done with all globalizing concepts…What is interesting about [molecular] concepts… is that they only have value in their variables, and in the maximum of variables which they allow. We are not for concepts as big as hollow teeth, THE law, THE master, THE rebel" (144). A queer politics of imperceptibility is a conceptual model that has theoretical blind spots but welcomes these blind spots as its virtual potentialities—as potential lines of pure resistance that support new ways of thinking. In developing this model, I have attempted to imagine the political potentials of activism in ways that are *useful* and *creative* rather than exhaustive or punctilious. The latter exercise would limit the project's lines of flight. Previously I departed from Deleuze and Guattari's conceptual apparatus not as a critique but to investigate *further* how becoming-imperceptible happens and does not happen in the NoDAPL movement. I suggested that there is a line of pure resistance that carves out an intermediary zone between a line of flight and its connection to a line of

becoming-imperceptible.  Thus, another line of resistance that can be figured is *a politics of location* as a line that sustains the politics of imperceptibility.

### 3.5.3    And, and, and

Accordingly, the second way in which I *queer* imperceptibility is to acknowledge the productive tension between feminist epistemic frames of recognition and a philosophy of the imperceptible.  Puar grapples with a similar tension.  She considers the relationship between intersectional feminism and assemblage theory.  Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality maintains that subjects occupy multiple identity categories, but oppression needs to be considered at the site of their intersection.  Puar contends that feminist theories of subjectivity are bifurcated along two lines: the first is intersectionality, which takes the subject as its primary object of analysis, and the second is assemblage theory that decenters the subject by emphasizing its tenuous movement and changing configuration.  Contrasting Crenshaw's framework of intersectionality with feminist posthuman perspectives that align with a Deleuzian philosophy, she argues that feminist theory should not choose one over the other given that both conceive of identity not as an essence but an event.  Drawing on Crenshaw's analogy of intersectionality as a crash at a four way stop, she concludes that: "Identity is an encounter, an event, an accident, in fact.  Identities are multi-causal, multidirectional, liminal; traces aren't always self-evident" ("I would rather be a cyborg" 59).  Hence,

Puar finds value in both approaches to the subject and argues for a new "roadmap" that enables feminism to chart the intertwining and intermingling ways in which intersectionality and assemblage theory overlap. For Puar, this means combining a theory of signification with a theory interested in the subject's materialization (57).

In a different but related vein, Braidotti argues that minor subjects may "first need to go through a phase of 'identity politics'—of claiming a fixed location" before entering into a becoming; every becoming requires a starting point (*NT* 42). Highlighting this certitude, Braidotti's nomadic feminism seeks to *locate* the differences in starting positions to "mark different qualitative levels of relation" (42). Thus, nomadic philosophy understands that no two becomings (-woman, -water protector, etc.) are the same; they vary greatly depending on the place from which one starts (42). Therefore, a politics of location is crucial for nomadic feminism. It enables us to consider the complicated and complex differences between subjects. To be clear, these acts of identification, for both Braidotti's nomadic feminism and for a queer politics of imperceptibility, are *not* investments in essentialized notions of identity, but tools and weapons that help stage the non-unitary subject in the political arena.

Taking pause, I want to quickly trouble the tendency in feminist scholarship to place Grosz's essay on imperceptibility alongside Braidotti's 2006 essay, "The Ethics of Becoming-Imperceptible." Problematically, the two essays are lumped together as an example of a singular feminist theory of imperceptibility. Yet, Grosz and Braidotti's

perspectives are quite different.  As I have argued, a universal subject, albeit one that is composed of movement and forces, appears in Grosz's essay.  On the other hand, Braidotti explicitly places an emphasis on the varying relations between subjects and their environments and how those differences impact the sustainability (and possibility) of becoming-imperceptible, which is evidenced in her claim that: "[t]o find out about thresholds, we must experiment, which means always, necessarily, relationally or *in encounters with others* " and " What bodies are capable of doing or not, is biologically, physically, psychically, historically, sexually and emotionally *specific*, that is partial" (137, 140, emphasis added). A politics of location, thus, answers "the subject-in-becoming's "all-important question… '*What's the point?*'" (149, emphasis original). Indeed, a queer politics of imperceptibility also aims to answer this question by handling a theory of becoming-imperceptible with care.  Like Braidotti's nomadic philosophy of the subject and her ethics of imperceptibility, I also seek to create a project of *accountability* to those subjects often missing or lost in the fold of philosophy and critical theory.

Without the resistant line of a politics of location a theory of imperceptibility risks becoming a line of destruction; that is, falling into the black hole of universalisms, generalizations, or even esoterica.  As Deleuze and Guattari so rightly point out:

Every undertaking of destratification… [for example, creating a new concept] must therefore observe concrete rules of extreme caution: a too-sudden destratification may be suicidal, or turn cancerous.  In other words, it will sometimes end in chaos,

the void and destruction, and sometimes lock us back into the strata, which become

more rigid still, losing their degrees of diversity, differentiation, and mobility.

(*ATP* 503)

What I am suggesting is that a politics of location is the line of caution that asks: What is

at stake when a theory of imperceptibility asks minor subjects to become unrecognizable

and work toward a future that does not envision them?  This question gets to the heart of

the ethical and philosophical dilemma of my project: how can one become-imperceptible

if they were never perceptible to begin with?  This predicament is particularly poignant

for Indigenous peoples and water protectors whose dehumanization, displacement, and

dispossession remains largely invisible and unrecognized by majority culture.  As

Braidotti emphasizes, a subject cannot give up what they never had nor, can they dispose

of what they never controlled to begin with (*NT* 42).  Thus, reclaiming and rebuilding

Indigenous identity that has been erased, appropriated and violently caricaturized through

colonial structures is a critical component for many Indigenous movements, as I will

illustrate in the next section.  Celebrating an Indigenous identity by becoming *more*

perceptible and visible is for many, a necessary practice of healing and medicine needed

to sustain a life.  A politics that brashly turns its back on identity and recognition without

considering these complexities is, it would seem to me, another form of rigid

segmentation.  Thus, I argue that a nomadic *flirtation* with identity is a necessary line of

pure resistance in some circumstances.  It is an act of endurance, a period of rest and

stasis before one can follow a line of flight.  In this way, identity need not be held in

opposition to imperceptibility so long as identity is conceived of as a *contingent* process,

a temporary line of resistance, a rest-stop on the highway of becoming. In this

configuration, identity is a tenuous self-styling (Braidotti *NS* 65). Queer imperceptibility

embraces the political potentials of moving between the *contradictory coordinates* of

identity and imperceptibility.

The subject of queer imperceptibility that will appear in the remainder of this

project, is a combination of Braidotti's nomadic subject and Foucault's notion of

"subjectivication." Explicated by Deleuze, Foucault's notion of subjectivation is "a

mode of existence [that] cannot be confused with a subject, unless it is to dismiss the

latter from all interiority and even from all identity…It is an intensive mode and not a

personal subject" (Deleuze qtd in Kaufman 235).[60] My use of "location," "identity," and

"subjectivity" reference the activation of the body's styles and intensities that are

produced in affective relations. In this way, the subject henceforth is "like a change of

atmosphere, a kind of event, an electric or magnetic field… an ensemble of intensities"

(Deleuze qtd in Kaufman 236).[61] Identity and recognition politics, as I encounter them

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[60] In the next chapter, I discuss Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "subjectification," which, different from "subjectivication" is a as molar process of *subjection* that works *against* becomings. In Andrew Murphie's articulation *subjectification* "implies a thoroughly stratified or captured position. One's subjectivity is aligned with the Major—one's flows [are] contained within its antiproductive manoeuvring. The second, *subjectivication*, implies subjective operations which, although operating within social machines, use the processes of these social machines to form lines of escape from them" (1315, emphasis added).

[61] This quote comes from Deleuze's characterization of Foucault. He states that Foucault is not so much a person as he is an ensemble of intensities (Kaufman 236).

here, can be figured as intensities within an assemblage rather than acts of obedience to molar signification. This is the distinction I wish to make between the colonial project of recognition I critiqued earlier. Namely, that we can conceive of recognition as a strategic and affective rendering of resistance, rather than as a structure of acknowledgment.

What does all this mean for our study of contemporary sexual surveillance? Foucault contends that *discipline* works on *individuals* within a field of visuality through mechanisms of identification and Deleuze argues that *control* creates *dividuals* within relations of modulation through a process of territorialization. However, recall that Deleuze makes it clear that control societies have *not* replaced disciplinary ones. In this regard, queer imperceptibility is a tool flexible *enough* to be used on both registers: discipline and control; in-visibility and modulation; recognition and imperceptibility; molar and minor. As I illustrated previously, it is possible to consider becomings as they are specifically located. Within a framework of queer imperceptibility, we can examine TigerSwan's sexual surveillance within the NoDAPL movement, water-protector becomings, lines of flight, and affective zones of pure resistance. For example, Two-Spirit Nation at Standing Rock created a zone of resistance in the face of the black hole of heteropatriarchal settler colonialism (Fig 2.1).[62] Two-Spirit Nation made a zone based

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[62] The term "Two-Spirit" is multivalent. It was created in the 1990s to challenge the pejorative anthropological term *Berdashe* that was used by settlers to describe queer-Native sexuality. The term Two-Spirit also seeks to challenge internalized heterosexist and homophobic views within Indigenous communities by emphasizing the importance of spiritual and tribal roles related to gender differences (Driskill 72-3).

on affinity over identity that focused on acts rather than recognition. That is, although increased queer visibility in the NoDAPL movement, and in Indigenous culture more broadly, was an important goal for Two-Spirit Nation, their *primary action* was to become a leading force in the movement by providing spiritual guidance, healthcare, and safe space. Two-Spirit Nation also had a strong presence on the frontlines. Two-Spirit Nation thus laboured to sustain the movement's lines of flight by building a zone of proximity and resistance for queer-Native water protectors and allies. Two-Spirit Nation is a line of pure resistance insofar as it generates an affective force that sustains political momentum. As Two-Spirit Nation demonstrates, recognition politics, including the fight for land recognition within the NoDAPL movement, does not have to be subtracted from a theory of imperceptibility. Instead, a politics of recognition may operate *in relation* to the movement's becomings and water protector-becomings.



Fig. 4: Two-Spirit Nation at Oceti Sakowin Camp, Standing Rock. Photo courtesy of Avery Leigh White, 2016

## 3.6    The Body-in-Becoming

A politics of imperceptibility cannot be consciously activated.  There are imperceptible becomings already underway within political movements.  The point of a politics based on imperceptibility is not to refute the critical role of recognition and identity, as they manifest in subjects' lives, but to broaden their molecular cracks.  It is a voyage through the middle of a politics of location and a politics of imperceptibility that follows Deleuze and Guattari assertion that we must start from somewhere:

> Starting from the forms one has, the subject one is, the organs one has, or the functions one fulfills, becoming is to extract particles between which one establishes the relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness that are closest to what one is becoming, and through which one becomes…This principle of proximity or approximation is entirely particular and reintroduces no apology whatsoever. It indicates as rigorously as possible a zone of proximity…Becoming is to emit particles that take on certain relations of movement and rest because they enter a particular zone of proximity. (*ATP* 272-3)

Queer imperceptibility is a sort of long-distance vision that values not yet seen relations and affects rather than magnifying near-sighted dichotomies and negations.  Said another way, it is neither an *overcoded* politics nor complete destratification.  *A queer politics of imperceptibility is the flow between a politics of location and becoming-imperceptible.*  It is not about building a framework to think of the subject in terms of force, but rather *activating* imperceptible zones we *already* cross through.  *If* recognition is folded into a

politics of queer imperceptibility it is only done so to recognize "the constructive roles played by complex affective encounters" and how they "set limits to the kinds of transformation a body can be made to endure during the course of its encounters" (Bignall "Dismantling the Face" 408). Ultimately, the model of imperceptibility takes the "subject" as a multiplicity of flows, intensities, and affects that has different lines, thresholds, and relations.

A *queer* politics of imperceptibility locates resistance in the body-in-becoming. The political subject is a field of affective intensities that conjugate to form a loosely definable but temporarily locatable subject (Braidotti "The Ethics" 136). Another way of formulating a "subjectless subjectivity," as Paul Bains puts it, is as an autopoietic self, which is an autonomous self-producing entity. The notion of the subject as an autopoietic event signals the capacity for subjects to affirm themselves in relation to other self-affirming entities in the world. It should be immediately understood that this view of subjectivity runs counter to Hegelian dialectics in which the subject is formed through the acknowledgement of the other. What needs to be made clear is that "affirming oneself," in this context, is not a conscious process nor is it one of individuation. It is an *imperceptible-becoming.* The body always begins in the thick of things. The body-becoming is the line of pure resistance that effectuates an autonomous zone. As Massumi tells us: "The body-in-becoming does not simply react to a set of constraints. Instead, it develops a new sensitivity to them, one subtle enough to convert them into opportunities— and to translate the body into *an autonomous zone* effectively enveloping degrees of freedom" (*UG* 102, emphasis added).

In the next chapter, I introduce the concept of the *queer autonomous zone*. This zone is a zone of affective relations that *diagrams* new potentials for resistance that "envelop degrees of freedom" within the sexual surveillance assemblage. To diagram these potentials, I expand on the concepts I have introduced thus far and delve deeper into the underlying forces that govern sexual surveillance. I locate the *face* as a primary site of subjection that advances the practices, techniques, and technologies of sexual surveillance that I have been discussing thus far. As we shall see, this face is not one that is physical but one that is produced by an *abstract machine*. In locating the face as a primary force of somatic control, I once again link surveillance and recognition as twin forces that suspend the body's movement either physically or affectively from crossing a threshold toward becoming-imperceptible. In other words, I claim that the face operates as a line of destruction to restrict the body-in-becoming from forging affective relations. In many ways, the following chapter "zooms out" to look at the machinic operations of control in the production of surveillance to "zoom in" on the abstract and yet specific ways that sites of resistance cultivate to "dismantle the face."

# 4

## Dismantling the Face: Diagramming a Queer Politics of Imperceptibility

Thus far I have argued that during moments of *somatic suspension*—when the body is caught between flows of escape and the grid of identification, between a becoming and a black hole—*a line of pure resistance* emerges to sustain a body's becoming. The line of pure resistance is a virtual event that resists a becoming's complete annihilation. It emerges when a line of flight risks turning into a line of destruction. The line of pure resistance affirms and amplifies the body-in-becoming,[63] and in doing so generates zones of autonomy that resist the black hole of sexual surveillance. I now want to explore these "zones of autonomy" and investigate the ways in which they contribute to a queer politics of imperceptibility. To this end, I identify two different types of zones created by the line of pure resistance; one is actual and the other is virtual.[64] The *actual* zone is locatable in space and time in which activisms take place, whereas the *virtual* zone is composed of

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[63] I define the body-in-becoming as a field of intensities that is constantly in motion and that resists the imposition of a static unitary subject.

[64] The virtual and actual are not mutually exclusive; the division I invoke between them should be understood as superficial. As Deleuze and Claire Parnet explain, the virtual and actual operate as a circuit, constantly feeding back into one another to produce the real (148). Nonetheless, I make the distinction here to locate the differences between the two types of zones I map: actual zones of autonomy and the virtual queer autonomous zone. For clarity sake, I will refer to the actual zone of autonomy as a "concrete assemblage of resistance." To provide a brief example, I consider the Two-Spirit Camp discussed in the previous chapter as an *actual* zone of autonomy— or a "concrete assemblage of resistance" given that it is an actual tangible event located in a time and space.

intensities and relations of affect. The latter does not occupy a physical space, rather it

is a *plane of potentials* from which new activisms are actualized. I call this virtual zone

the "queer autonomous zone."

The queer autonomous zone is an *abstract machine*.[65] It functions to zone and

rezone the sexual surveillance assemblage to generate new potentials of resistance. As

we began to see in chapter two, the "abstract machine" is a *diagram* that maps relations

of force within a given assemblage (Deleuze *F* 27). For example, we saw that in

disciplinary spaces such as the prison, panopticism diagrams the relation between

elements and mechanisms, such as the relation between light and architectural design, to

produce relations of power that actualize within the prison as spatial arrangements of

surveillance and control. The prison is an assemblage comprised of heterogenous

elements and panopticism is the abstract machine that establishes the relations between

those elements. Likewise, I present the queer autonomous zone as an abstract machine

that organizes forces within an assemblage, but it does so not to produce mechanisms of

control but *relations of resistance*. I understand these "forces" not as exterior elements

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[65] It should be noted that I make a slight departure from Deleuze and Guattari who characterize the abstract machine not as virtual but as an "actual yet not effectuated" (*ATP* 511). For them, abstract machines are "nonconcrete actuals" rather than virtual intensities because they are effectuated from relations that already exist *within* an assemblage. As we shall see, abstract machines are encased in the strata of the assemblage that they diagram; for example, I will argue that the queer autonomous zone is encased within the assemblage or assemblages of resistance (144). However, in my view, an abstract machine diagrams both perceptible *and* imperceptible (or virtual) forces. An abstract machine composes relations within an assemblage *and at the same time,* I suggest that it produces lines of flight that *go beyond* the assemblage. For this reason, I characterize the abstract machine as a virtual.

that act on or constitute subjects but as the *affective relations between* subjects, bodies, events, and environments.

In *A Thousand Plateaus,* Deleuze and Guattari define two types of abstract machines, those that *overcode* and those that *mutate*. Overcoding machines diagram control and mutating machines diagram resistance (511). Although they perform different functions, both machines operate simultaneously as two dimensions of the same machinic assemblage: the mutating machine transforms flows of power by opening the assemblage up to *new becomings* and the overcoding machine *blocks lines of flight* by closing the assemblage down (145, 223). Despite their shared presence within a single assemblage, one machine may take precedence over the other giving the assemblage either its supple or rigid form, molecular or molar intensity, positive or negative function. For example, Deleuze and Guattari explain that the concrete assemblage of the State apparatus is governed by an overcoding machine that they call "faciality" (175). They argue that faciality governs and organizes relations of control through the production of the face.

As we shall see, the face is not a given nor is it a neutral extension of the body, but a social construction that locates the subject within a social and political hierarchy.

*The face overcodes the body with identity to block its lines of flight.*[66] Although not

explicitly named as such, throughout this project I have already discussed several

instances produced by the faciality machine including the colonial heteropatriarchal

violence at Standing Rock, somatic suspension at the airport, flows of digital modulation

within the control society, the development of biometric surveillance based on

prototypical whiteness, as well as disciplinary modes of surveillance such as the spatial

arrangements of in-visibility—all of which necessitate the production of a recognizable

and controllable face. At its core, faciality can be defined as an overcoded politics of

recognition based on subject/object. If the face diagrams relations of control within the

State apparatus, then Deleuze and Guattari insist that resistance to the State requires

"dismantling the face."

    This chapter posits the queer autonomous zone as a mutating abstract machine

capable of dismantling the face. I suggest that when it comes to theorizing sexual

surveillance, an investigation of the politics of the face both complicates and strengthens

our understanding of resistance by allowing us to discern more completely the political

stakes of *thinking-feeling-doing* resistance beyond a politics of recognition—which is to

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[66] Deleuze and Guattari make a clear distinction between the head and face. They explain that the head is part of the body whereas the face *overcodes* the body within an identity. The face is interpreted or "read" for an expression. For this reason, they assert that the faciality machine deterritorializes the head onto a face (*ATP 175*). Succinctly, Deleuze and Guattari write: "The head, even the human head, is not necessarily a face. The face is produced only when the head ceases to be a part of the body, when it ceases to be coded by the body, when it ceases to have a multidimensional, polyvocal corporeal code—when the body, head included, has been decoded and has to be *overcoded* by something we shall call the Face" (170, emphasis original).

say, beyond a politics of *the face.* In short, what is at stake for a queer politics of

imperceptibility is not surveillance *of* the face but rather "surveillance *by* the face"

(Deleuze and Guattari *ATP* 115, emphasis added). I begin the chapter by outlining

Deleuze and Guattari's concept of faciality further in order to examine the ways in which

the face diagrams oppressive regimes of capture and control. I argue that the face

*overcodes* the dynamic fluxes and forces of sexuality with identity in ways that thwart the

material relations of becoming. Next, I discuss Deleuze and Guattari's call to dismantle

the face. I contend that dismantling the face involves the politics of location, which I

locate as a necessary ethical intervention in the process of "defacialization." In the

following section, I consider Simone Bignall's essay "Dismantling the Face: Pluralism

and the Politics of Recognition," to explore the tensions and potential passageways

between postcolonial recognition politics and a politics of imperceptibility when it comes

to dismantling the face. I will show that postcolonial practices of recognition and

approaches to cultural identification are equally capable of disrupting the politics of the

face. However, I caution against using the *language* of recognition to elucidate these

transformative potentials. Attempting to build a more fluid vocabulary, one that is

congruent with a queer politics of imperceptibility, I introduce the queer autonomous

zone as a "wave of sensory vibrations" and "weave of affective textures." More of a

creative exploration than a definitive proposition, I suggest that the queer autonomous

zone cultivates a *structure of feeling* that cuts across the strata of sexual surveillance to

diagram potentials for new collective becomings. My goal in this chapter is to ascertain

faciality as *the* underlying system of sexual surveillance and advance the queer

autonomous zone as a diagrammatic force capable of producing the activist tools

necessary to engage with and intensify a queer politics of imperceptibility.

## 4.1 Faciality

A horror story, the face is a horror story.

-Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*

Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "faciality" is commonly read as a critique of

Emmanuel Levinas' ethical face-to-face relation.[67] Whereas Levinas understands the face

as the fulcrum for ethics, Deleuze and Guattari argue that "the face is a politics" (*ATP*

181). For both, the face is not merely a body part that refers to an individual visage but a

force with a *function.* Levinas claims that the face constitutes an ethical encounter with

the Other, while Deleuze and Guattari delineate the face as an "ordering device" that

subtends identity formation. Unlike Levinas who claims that the face-to-face encounter

precedes and conditions the possibility for discourse,[68] Deleuze and Guattari maintain

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[67] See Mary Bunch's essay, "Posthuman Ethics and the Becoming-Animal of Emmanuel Levinas."

[68] For Levinas the face is a "living presence" beyond representability (*Totality* 50-51). He writes that the face is a *precognitive* articulation of "extreme exposure, defencelessness, vulnerability itself … the face before me summons me, calls me, begs for me, as if the invisible death that must be faced by the Other, pure otherness, separated in some way, from any whole, were my business" ("Ethics" 83). The face of the Other is encountered *prior* to any signification and cannot be reduced to countenance (97). The "exposed face" of the Other refers to the face's "nakedness" or "nudity" that demands us to recognize the embodied mortal vulnerability of not just the Other but also of humanity. Crucially, as Judith Butler clarifies, this demand, for Levinas, is *pre-discursive* (*Precarious Life* 138).

that the face is effectuated by a "regime of signs" which in turn organize social and

political relations. In the first case, the face is the face of humanity that demands an

ethical response to the Other.[69] In the second case, the face is "naturally inhuman, a

monstrous hood" produced by the abstract machine of faciality (190). Faciality is a

concept that considers the centrality of the face in the organization of power.

The abstract machine of faciality is *machinic* because it is not random. As Deleuze

and Guattari state, "continuities, emissions, and combinations, and conjunctions do not

occur in just any fashion" (*ATP* 71). This is because faciality is *enveloped* by the

concrete assemblage of the State, which carries out functions of its own. As we will see,

faciality mixes the State's strata to create new stratifications. Strata are the "layers" and

"belts" of meaning that imprison intensities into a system of representation and

redundancy (40). Faciality is an abstract machine encased within the State apparatus and

the State apparatus is an assemblage that functions to produce a social hierarchy of faces.

Deleuze and Guattari argue that the face is produced through a mixture of signifiers

and subjectifications. For example, the celebrity face, the teacher's face, the despotic

face, the authoritative face, the face of your neighbour are *symbols* of fame, of

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[69] According to Levinas, the face compels us to recognize the other as exterior rather than a reflection of the self. In Butler's reading this disjuncture between the Other's face—its unknowability—and our recognition of its exteriority is the site of the ethical encounter (*Precarious Life* 144-7).

inspiration, of power, of salvation, of betrayal, of compassion. Still, beyond the wall of signifiers we search for deeper meaning, looking for the dark hidden regions of the face, gazing into the empty holes of its eyes. It is there, in the empty hole, that our own subjectivity begins to form—or rather, it is there that we "get snapped up by black holes" (*ATP* 183). Deleuze and Guattari identify this mixture between signifiers and conscious and unconscious identification as the "white wall/black hole" machine: white walls of signifiers and black holes of subjectivity. As I will discuss below, signs and subjection to the sign work together as two cogs in a wheel to constitute the face as *identity*.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, the white wall/black hole machine that produces the face operates at the nexus of two sign regimes: the "signifying regime" and "postsignifying regime." A "sign regime" is a semiotic system that formalizes unformed content and expression as an ordered system of meaning (*ATP* 148). Deleuze and Guattari explain that although sign regimes are concerned with linguistic forms of expression within an assemblage, they are not *based* on language; rather, the opposite is true: language is based on the pre-linguistic expressions (of matter) within an assemblage (148). To understand how the face is socially produced as well as its role in the organization of power, including within systems of surveillance and recognition, it is important to examine how each sign regime operates. In what follows, I outline the "signifying regime" and "postsignifying regime" separately before discussing their interpenetration, which Deleuze and Guattari argue engenders the face.

What establishes one sign regime from another is the way in which it orders signs and performs deterritorializations (*ATP* 112). In the case of the *signifying regime*, signs are hierarchically organized around a despotic centre, such as the despotic centre of a King (115). Deleuze and Guattari define this as a *circular* regime in which "every sign refers to another sign, and only to another sign, ad infinitum" (112). The sign never refers to a signified entity; there are only *chains of signifiers* that proliferate outward spiralling an infinite network of signs. For example, when the despotic King speaks, only those in his inner circle are privy to his word. Those on the outer circles—the knights, servants, and peasants—only hear interpretations of what was said. Spiralling outward, the King's word becomes less clear as it is interpreted on each outer ring of the circular regime (Adkins 85). Despite the movement of the sign (the King's word), its meaning always relays back to the same despotic centre. Deleuze and Guattari name this circular aspect of the signifying regime "signifiance." They contend that the perpetual referral of one sign to another sign triggers *relative deterritorializations*. The sign—the King's word—is deterritorialized from one ring and reterritorialized on another. The periphery of the circular regime is ever-expanding, with new rings of meaning and new interpretations constantly being added, but they always refer back to the despotic centre of power (114). For example, (Male)—female—trans—non-binary—gender fluid—and so forth are linked together in a hierarchy of privilege that mushrooms from Molar

Man.[70] Although the chain continues to grow, each sign signifies its distance from the

centre. This biunivocal relation,[71] where one sign as defined as a derivative of the other

produces a chain of signifiers, which form an infinite network of signs, such that the sign

never refers to a signified (body) but only to Molar Man (112).

Anything that attempts to escape the concentric radiation of the despotic centre is

vilified (Adkins 86). Deleuze and Guattari explain this aspect of the regime as a

"scapegoat." The scapegoat represents "the inverted figure of the king"—the tortured

slave whose becomings-molecular and lines of flight escape the despotic centre (*ATP*

116). The tortured slave does not identify with the King nor does he absorb the King's

power. Deleuze and Guattari explain that the molecular-becomings of the tortured

slave/scapegoat unleash *absolute deterritorializations "*that the signifying regime cannot

tolerate…the regime must block a line of this kind or define it in an entirely negative

fashion precisely because it exceeds the degree of deterritorialization of the signifying

sign, however high it may be" (116). In other words, the scapegoat's line of flight breaks

through the chain of signifiance, posing a threat to the entire regime. In turn, the

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[70] The order of signs may change depending on the circumstance, however the centre of signifiance, (Male) in this example remains dominant. Another way of expressing this relationship is as follows: (Male-white-cisgender-able-bodied-heterosexual-middle class-English speaking-property owner)—all other identities.

[71] "Biunivocal" is a mathematical term that designates "a type of relation that exclusively links two terms to one another, and where one of the two dominates depending upon the circumstances, point of origin or purpose in establishing the polar relation" (Welsh 10n5). Biunivocity defines a relation in which terms or statements share the same meaning that privileges the dominant term or statement.

despotic King demonizes the scapegoat and its becomings, assigning a negative value to its line of flight (116). The scapegoat is cast out of the regime through expulsion and the line of flight is "cursed" (116).

In the *postsignifying regime*, however, the expelled line of flight gains s positive value. Deleuze and Guattari clarify:

> What happens in the second regime, by comparison with the signifying regime as we have already defined it? In the first place, *a sign or packet of signs detaches from the irradiating circular network* and sets to work on its own account, starts running a straight line, as though swept into a narrow, open passage. Already the signifying system drew a line of flight or deterritorialization exceeding the specific index of its deterritorialized signs, but the system gave that line a negative value and sent the scapegoat fleeing down it. Here, it seems that the line received a positive sign as though it were effectively occupied and followed by a people who find it in their reason for being or destiny. (*ATP* 121, emphasis original)

To provide a concrete example, Deleuze and Guattari relate the postsignifying regime to the exodus of the Jews from Egypt. Slaves escape the despotic signifying regime of the Pharaoh by drawing a line of flight into the desert. The line of flight is given positive value not only because it facilitates an escape from the despotic King but also because a people is constituted on it (121). I will return to this point in the following paragraph.

First, it is important to note a second characteristic of the postsignifying regime, which is

that it marks a *turning away* from despotic power. As such, Deleuze and Guattari

characterize this regime as a "double turning away," which they define as a moment of

"betrayal" (123). Whereas the signifying regime is one of endless paranoia and deception—

the people are deceived by endless interpretation of the King's word, and the King is

paranoid of molecular-becomings that break his chain of command, the postsignifying

regime is characterized by passion and betrayal (125).

In the postsignifying regime, betrayal becomes a "point of subjectification."

Whereas the signifying regime is concerned with *circular uniformity*, the postsignifying

regime is defined as a *linear proceeding* (Deleuze and Guattari *ATP* 129). Returning to

the above example of the Jews' exodus from Egypt, the first point of subjectification on

this proceeding is the exodus itself. When the Jews exit the desert and their wanderings

in the wilderness come to an end,[72] a new proceeding begins, segmenting their line of

flight. Deleuze and Guattari explain that each proceeding carries out one after another,

creating multiple points of segmentation, which become multiple points of

*subjectification* (129). The subject is constituted by, or rather subjected to, the

culmination of these various points. To illustrate, Deleuze and Guattari write: "The

history of the Jews is punctuated by catastrophes after each of which there were just

---

[72] The Jews' "wanderings" in the desert are defined by Deleuze and Guattari as an entry into the nomadic "counter-signifying regime." All sign regimes mix however; therefore, the counter-signifying regime also includes elements of the signifying and postsignifying regime to varying degrees (*ATP* 122).

enough survivors to start a new proceeding.  In the course of a proceeding, while there is

linear movement the plural is often used, whereas there is a return to the Singular as soon

as there is a pause or stoppage marking the end of one movement before another begins"

(128).  These moments of pause or stoppage are the points of subjectification.  The

Jewish subject *as such* is defined by tracing the linear proceedings that make up its

broken line—i.e. the exodus from Egypt, exile from Rome, expulsion from Spain, the

Holocaust in Eastern Europe, fleeing Iran.  The stop and start between each line are the

points in which singular subjectivities are constituted.

Although Deleuze and Guattari associate the two sign regimes with specific

historical events to illustrate how each function, they assert that sign regimes are not

linear and should not be considered as successive evolutionary moments (*ATP* 171).

Indeed, signifiance and subjectification clearly operate in similar fashion today.  For

example, as we saw in the previous chapter, water protector-becomings unleash lines of

flight that escape State surveillance.  Quoting Deleuze and Guattari once again, these are

absolute deterritorializations "that the signifying regime cannot tolerate…the regime

must block a line of this kind or define it in an entirely negative fashion precisely because

it exceeds the degree of deterritorialization of the signifying sign" (116).  Water

protector-becomings pose a threat to the colonial system of signifiance.  They unlink

from the proper chain of its command by refusing to absorb the face of a "violent

protestor" and "savage Indian." The water protectors' peaceful demonstration breaks the

colonial chain of signifiers, creating an absolute deterritorialization of State power that

allows a line of flight to escape. In response, the State demonizes water protectors as "jihadi terrorists" and characterizes the demonstration as hostile, assigning a negative value to their line of flight. The water protectors' efforts are met with scorn and their line of flight is "cursed."

However, as we saw above, the expelled line of flight gains a positive value. The line facilitates an escape from colonial violence, allowing water protectors to turn their back on its repressive regime. Rather than responding to militarized police violence with violence, the water protectors followed a different line in another direction, turning away from the State that had already turned its back on Indigenous peoples and land treaties. After the water ceremony ended, a new proceeding began: a peaceful demonstration happened elsewhere (e.g. the #NoDAPL National Day of Action) establishing a new point of subjectification. A water protector *subjectivity*[73] is *subjected* to the culmination of these various points so that an understanding of the self *as* a water protector is punctuated by a series of events tethered to the colonial State.

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[73] Here, I am referring to a process of identification, which should not be confused with "water protector-becomings" that I outlined in the previous chapter. Becomings are non-linear movements away from identification. Water protector becomings, for example, dismantle (a protestor) identity by establishing collective relations with other bodies (human and non-human) within the immediate environment. Whereas understanding the self *as a* water protector is a process of identification with a series of events. As such it is a process of *faciality* in which the self is tied to the dominant discourse on water security. Which is not to say, however, the identification with water protection is negative, as I will discuss later in the chapter; collective and mobile identifications may act as an affirmation to the subject's becoming.

Deleuze and Guattari contend that anything can become a point of subjectification if it has the following three traits: "the double turning away, betrayal, and existence under reprieve" (*ATP* 129).  For example, they aver that food becomes a point of subjectification for the anorexic: "For anorexics, food plays this role (anorexics do not confront death but save themselves by betraying food, which is equally a traitor since it is suspected of containing larvae, worms, and microbes)" (129).  Anorexics save themselves *as anorexics* by tracing a line of flight away from routine meals.  They betray food, for example, by expelling it or avoiding it to sustain their existence *as an anorexic*. The food on the other hand does not so much betray the anorexic, as the colonial State betrays Indigenous water protectors, but rather the anorexic *suspects* a betrayal *in* the food.  Food is *given* a face from which the anorexic turns away.  At the same time, the facialized food repels the anorexic, constituting the double turning away.  In this way, food is a point of subjectification in which an anorexic subjectivity takes shape.  To reiterate, the signifying regime of signifiance is concerned with circular uniformity and mapping degrees of *sameness*, whereas the postsignifying regime of subjectification is defined as a linear system that creates *individuated* points of subjectivity, for both individuals and groups.

Deleuze and Guattari maintain that each point of subjectification determines in the subject (or group) a "mental reality," or a mindset (e.g. one understands themselves as *destined* to protect water) (*ATP 129*).  However, because the linear proceeding of subjectification is tied to the State—with each event or point of subjectification produced by a betrayal, double turning away, and existence under reprieve—the mental reality that

forms is always already connected with the "dominant reality" of the State (e.g. one is only a water protector insofar as water needs protection from the State) (129). Thus, for Deleuze and Guattari the subject is always doubled; she is both the subject of enunciation ("me," the speaking subject) and the subject of the statement (the "I") who is "bound to statements in conformity with a dominant reality" even if she opposes it (129). Through this doubling, the speaking subject is *normalized* by the power of the spoken statement. The State apparatus forces the subject to interpret her own feelings, sensations, thoughts, and actions so that "The subject of enunciation recoils into the subject of the statement, to the point that the subject of the statement resupplies subject of enunciation for another proceeding" (128). In other words, the subject's mental reality "recoils" into the dominant reality of the State and becomes indistinguishable. Deleuze and Guattari warn that the mixture of the two semiotics, signifiance and subjectification—the first guided by interpretation and the second by passional identification—effect this dangerous normalization of power. Poignantly, they write:

> There is always an appeal to a dominant reality that functions from within...
> There is no longer even a need for a transcendent center of power; power is
> instead immanent and melds with the "real," operating through normalization.
> A strange invention: as if in one form the doubled subject were the *cause* of the
> statement of which, in its other form, it itself is a part. This is the paradox of the
> legislator-subject replacing the signifying despot: the more you obey the
> statements of the dominant reality, the more in command you are as subject of

enunciation in mental reality, for in the end you are only obeying yourself! You

are the one in command, in your capacity as a rational being. A new form of

slavery is invented, namely, being slave to oneself, or to pure "reason," the

Cogito. Is there anything more passional than pure reason? Is there a

colder, more extreme, more self-interested passion than the Cogito? (130,

emphasis original)

Illustrating the enslavement to Cogito, Deleuze and Guattari refer to the

relationship between the psychoanalyst and the analysand:

The psychoanalyst presents him- or herself as an ideal point of subjectification that

brings the patient to abandon old, so-called neurotic, points. The patient is partially

a subject of enunciation in all he or she says to the psychoanalyst, and under the

artificial mental conditions of the session: the patient is therefore called the

"analysand." But in everything else the patient says or does, he or she is a subject

of the statement, eternally psychoanalyzed, going from one linear proceeding to

another, perhaps even changing analysts, growing increasingly submissive to the

normalization of a dominant reality. In this sense, psychoanalysis, with its mixed

semiotic, fully participates in a line of subjectification. The psychoanalyst does not

even have to speak anymore, the analysand assumes the burden of interpretation; as

for the psychoanalyzed patient, the more he or she thinks about "his" or "her" next

session, or the preceding one, in segments, the better a subject he or she is. (*ATP*

130)

In its linear proceeding, with one session taking place after another, psychoanalysis, Deleuze and Guattari argue, normalizes for both the psychoanalyst and analysand the *fusion* of a mental reality with the dominant reality of the State (131). Crispin Sartwell articulates this fusion as the moment "When the world and the self are collapsed into the order of the sign as a condition of possible experience, the political power that is exercised through the sign, and which inheres in the character of the sign, is simultaneously activated and concealed; it is activated by its concealment" (45). In other words, the passional line of subjectification, such as an affective attachment to the events at Standing Rock, produce within the individual a sense of destiny and identity that conceals the normalization of power exercised on the body through the inscription of the sign: water protector *becomings* are replaced by a water protector *face*. This is *precisely* how the State thwarts material becomings: it forces us to interpret and represent our affective relations so that experiences and expressions in the world are *reduced* to symbols and metaphors. Faciality lodges lines of flight in the strata of the State to block becomings and normalize attachments to identity.

Thus far we have seen that the semiotic of signifiance establishes power by ordering signs around a despotic centre of power, and the semiotic of subjectification *subjects* individuals to power by determining multiple points of identification in relation to signification. *The face*, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is produced by the

*interpenetration* of signifiance and subjectification, the *recoiling* of a mental reality into a

dominant one, and the *mixture* of the signifying regime and the postsignifying regime's

primary characteristics: deception and betrayal respectively. The question of concern for

Deleuze and Guattari is: what triggered these fusions? What *effectuated* the faciality

machine? They aver that the face came into full bloom during the time of "Christ and the

historical development of White Man" (*ATP* 182). In their words, "Our semiotic of

modern White Men, the semiotic of capitalism, has attained this state of mixture in which

signifiance and subjectification effectively interpenetrate. Thus, it is in this semiotic that

faciality, or the white wall/black hole system, assumes its full scope" (182). Deleuze and

Guattari make an important distinction between the "white wall/black hole system" and

the "faciality machine." Both are abstract machines; however, the white wall/black hole

system is *produced by the mixture* of signifiance and subjectification whereas faciality is

the machine that *performs the mixture*. As Deleuze and Guattari contend, "the faciality

machine is not an annex to the signifier and the subject; rather, it is subjacent (*connexe*)

to them and is their condition of possibility" (180, emphasis original). Accordingly, the

white wall/black hole system is an abstract machine that operates *within* the faciality

machine. The former performs facializations and the latter mixes and remixes sign

regimes. For Deleuze and Guattari, Jesus Christ interpenetrates and mixes the signifying

and postsignifying regimes because he is both God and man, King and slave, despot and

scapegoat, authoritative face and cursed becoming. His face is worshipped, produced

and reproduced, but he is also betrayed, turned away, cast out on a passional line of

departure. Christianity thus brings together the paranoid and passional, deception and betrayal, signifiers and subjects, interpretations and emotions, conscious and unconscious identifications. The distinction between the white wall/black hole machine and the faciality machine is important because it tells us that faciality (an overcoded politics of recognition) *organizes power* whereas the white wall/black hole machine (identity) *normalizes power*, which I demonstrate in the next section. Ultimately, Deleuze and Guattari argue that concrete faces are determined by a *combination* of White Man's power and the subject's eagerness or acquiescence to absorb *or* reject that power (182).

In the "semiotic of modern White Men, the semiotic of capitalism," the State apparatus administers chains of signifiers that determine status, wealth, health, notoriety, and so forth which individuals *internalize* as their face. The face of a professor, a lawyer, a doctor, the homeless, a bartender all signify a different social status that is determined by their proximity (or distance) from the ideal Face. Regardless of how "divergent" a given face is from the face of White Man, it still signifies and circulates his power. For this reason, Deleuze and Guattari state that "Faces are not basically individual: they define zones of frequency or probability, delimit a field that neutralizes in advance any expression or connections unnameable to the appropriate significations" (*ATP* 168). Every face relates to another face and any non-conformity is integrated through "backward waves" of sameness (178).

In our semiotic of advanced capitalism, with Molar Man standing erect at the center, power continues to spiral outward, just as it did for the King in the signifying regime. But now, rather than expelling lines of flight, faciality acts as a strange attractor[74] point sucking becomings in so that lines of flight turn into destruction, recoiling around White Man. Deleuze and Guattari explain:

> What accomplishes this is the screen with holes, the white wall/black hole, the abstract machine producing faciality…A concerted effort is made to do away with the body and corporeal coordinates through which the multidimensional or polyvocal semiotics operated. Bodies are disciplined, corporeality dismantled, becomings-animal hounded out, deterritorialization pushed to a new threshold. (*ATP* 170, 181)

In other words, control in our current semiotic operates by thwarting the material relations of the body and its becomings in service of maintaining the power of Molar Man. To unearth how corporeality is dismantled and bodies disciplined, I want to now turn to the machinic operations of faciality, not in a metaphorical sense but truly. Faciality is an operating system that runs a binary program: the white wall/black hole

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[74] The Merriam Webster dictionary defines the "strange attractor" as follows: "*mathematics*: the state of a mathematically chaotic system toward which the system trends: the attractor of a mathematically chaotic system. Unlike the randomness generated by a system with many variables, chaos has its own pattern, a peculiar kind of order. This pattern is known whimsically as a *strange attractor*, because the chaotic system seems to be strangely attracted to an ideal behavior" See https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/strange attractor.

machine.  The white wall/black hole machine functions through two specific

algorithms that combine social, political, and material forces to ensure that: "You will

be pinned to the white wall and stuffed in the black hole" (181).

## 4.2      The White Wall/Black Hole Machine

> The inhuman in human beings: that is what the face is from the start.
>
> -Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*

Deleuze and Guattari define the white wall/black hole machine as a central computing

device that functions through two specific commands: "selecting facial units" and

"making choices" (*ATP* 177).  Given the authors' careful wording of each function, I

have decided to quote them at length.  Deleuze and Guattari explain the two functions of

the white wall/black hole machine as follows:

> Under the first aspect [selecting facial units], the black hole acts as a central
>
> computer, the third eye that moves across the wall or the white screen serving as
>
> general surface of reference.  Regardless of the content one gives it, the machine
>
> constitutes a facial unit, an elementary face in biunivocal relation with another: it is
>
> a man *or* a woman, a rich person or a poor one, an adult or a child, a leader or a
>
> subject, "an x *or* a y." The movement of the black hole across the screen, the
>
> trajectory of the third eye over the surface of reference, constitutes so many
>
> dichotomies or arborescences, like four-eye machines made of elementary faces

linked together two by two.  The face of a teacher and a student, father and son, worker and boss…concrete individualized faces are produced and transformed on the basis of these units, these combinations of units—like the face of a rich child in which a military calling is already discernible, that West Point chin.  You don't so much have a face as slide into one.

Under the second aspect [making choices], the abstract machine of faciality assumes a role of selective response, or choice: given a concrete face, the machine judges whether it passes or not, whether it goes or not, on the basis of the elementary facial units.  This time, the binary relation is of the "yes-no" type.  The empty eye or black hole absorbs or rejects, like a half-doddering despot who can still give a signal of acquiescence or refusal.  The face of a given teacher is contorted by tics and bathed in an anxiety that makes it "no go"…At every moment, the machine rejects faces that do not conform, or seem suspicious.  But only at a given level of choice.  For it is necessary to produce successive divergence-types of deviance for everything that eludes biunivocal relationships, and to establish binary relations between what is accepted on first choice and what is only tolerated on second, third choice, etc.  The white wall is always expanding, and the black hole functions repeatedly. (177, emphasis original)

Anything can be given a face.  The machine does not limit itself to the body.  For example, you might say that the stack of ungraded student essays is staring at me, this is

not because the essays resemble a face, "but because it is taken up in the white wall/black hole process, because it connects to the abstract machine of facialization" (175). Below, I illustrate how the white wall/black hole machine programs student essays with a face. To make this point, I use Deleuze and Guattari's language and italicize my additions:

The first function: Selecting units or elements:

> The black hole *[of the grading rubric]* acts as a central computer, the third eye that moves across *[the white paper]* serving as general surface of reference. Regardless of what *[is written]*, the machine constitutes an elementary *[grade]*, an elementary *[grade]* in biunivocal relation with another: it is *[an A or B; B or C; C or D]*, "an x or a y." The movement of the black hole across *[the white paper,]* the trajectory of the third eye over the surface of reference, constitutes so many dichotomies or arborescences, like four-eye machines made of elementary *[grades]* linked together two by two. The *[grade of good grammar and the grade of bad grammar, the grade of original analysis and the grade of undeveloped analysis, the grade of creative writing and the grade of repetitive word choice]* … concrete individualized *[grades]* are produced and transformed on the basis of these units, these combinations of units—like the *[essay with good grammar and original analysis]* in which *[an A grade]* is already discernible, that [*clear thesis statement.]* You don't so much have a *[grade]* as slide into one.

The second function: Making choices:

the abstract machine of faciality assumes a role of selective response, or choice: given a concrete *[grade],* the machine judges whether it passes or not, whether it goes or not, on the basis of the elementary *[grade]* units.  This time, the binary relation is of the "yes-no" type *[Does the given grade fit the essay: yes-no?].* The empty eye or black hole absorbs or rejects, like a half-doddering despot who can still give a signal of acquiescence or refusal.  The face of a given *[essay]* is contorted by *[bad formatting]* and bathed in *[spelling errors]* that makes it "no go."  At every moment, the machine rejects *[essay grades]* that do not conform or seem suspicious.  But only at a given level of choice.  For it is necessary to produce successive divergence-types of deviance for everything that eludes biunivocal relationships, and to establish binary relations between what is accepted on first choice and what is only tolerated on second, third choice, etc. *[the essay needs revision, but revision is a grade conforming to another choice: fail, incomplete, revise, resubmit]*.  The white wall is always expanding, and the black hole functions repeatedly.

Everything is all there: black holes, white walls, and the two functions: the unit selector and the yes-no deviance detector—the essay grading *machine.*

More severely, faciality is a machine of racial and colonial domination.  It creates identity categories and hierarchical binaries in which subjects are slotted in accordance with the State.  In order for the white wall/black hole system to perform its

two functions—selecting units and making choices—there needs to be a grid of identification *already set in place*. Facial units must be lined up ready for selection and the yes-no barometer must be calibrated in advance to a standardized face. White Man serves as the general reference point for the State. So that "yes-no" choices are made based on binary and biunivocal categories to decide whose face conforms with the image of the State and whose face poses a threat: *Is this the face of the nation? Are the facial units selected those of a trusted citizen, or are they units that belong to the face of a terrorist?* If a face does pass, which is to say, if the composing units are recognized by the State as those that belong to the face of the nation, then the subject is afforded rights and representation, and given social and political mobility. If a face is not acknowledged, if the units do not pass and a "no" choice is made, then the subject's rights are denied.

Regardless of the outcome, a face never escapes the purview of the State because every face is *made* in its image, either for or against it, but always in its benefit. For example, in chapter three I argued that the State characterizes Native men's sexuality as deviant to secure the post-colonial imaginary. As TigerSwan's surveillance at Standing Rock demonstrates, Indigenous men were *facialized* as sexually "savage" and violent in order to proximate them with the face of terror. In this colonial process of facialization, Native women were also given a face that benefited the State. This face was produced as heteronormative and one that needed White Man's "protection." Facialization is a process of colonization that integrates difference through backward waves of *assimilation.*

In terms of biometric sexual surveillance, it should come as no surprise that faciality governs this assemblage as well. For example, in chapter two, I discussed the ways in which biometric surveillance and its failures operate through a racist and cissexist cultural logic that not only tracks but also regulates the capacity of a body's movement in surveilled space. As Shoshana Magnet and Simone Browne both demonstrate, biometric technologies work by establishing degrees of *sameness* to White-Man as the universal face-prototype who is also defined here as cisgender and able-bodied. Face recognition technology or fingerprint and body scans, for example, determine whether a body passes, whether it moves through space uninterrupted or is somatically suspended, based on its ability to conform to a point already plotted on the grid of identification. If a body cannot be identified by the biometric machine, then subjective choices must be made; the white wall/black hole machine persists as an authority figure that *facializes* the body through additional scrutiny. For example, the TSA agent picks up where the machine left off to determine the security threat status of the traveller—a yes-no choice is made. The privileging of Molar Man in the design and development of biometric technologies, what Browne refers to as the logic of "prototypical whiteness" (110), is diagrammed by the white wall/black hole machine. Faces that are "unrecognized" do *not* escape surveillance but are conversely captured and given the face of "biometric failure"—a "divergence-type" on the white wall of signification; *"You don't so much have a face as slide into one"* (Deleuze and Guattari *ATP* 177).

Because everyone is always already given a face within the white wall/black hole system, the demand for recognition or to be "seen" does not *necessarily* threaten the State apparatus and the semiotic of White Man's advanced capitalism. As Deleuze and Guattari explain, the white wall/black hole machine is able to discern that,

> It's not a man and it's not a woman, so it must be a trans-vestite [sic]: The binary relation is between the "no" of the first category and the "yes" of the following category, which under certain conditions may just as easily mark a tolerance as an indication of an enemy to be mowed down at all costs. At any rate, you've been recognized, the abstract machine has you inscribed in its overall grid… *the computation of normalities*. (*ATP* 177, 178, emphasis added)

Everyone is folded in. Everyone is seen. Everyone is always already given a face. "*The white wall is always expanding, and the black hole functions repeatedly*" (Deleuze and Guattari 177). What poses a threat to faciality then, is collective becomings and lines of flight that move toward imperceptibility. Imperceptible-becomings cannot be captured by the state, and in this sense they *glitch* the faciality machine. As we shall see in the next chapter, these glitches need not be intentional or overt; the slightest incoherence, crack, or slippage in the chain of signifiance reveals the potential for escape.

Returning to Deleuze and Guattari, they write: "The face is not a universal. It is not even that of the white man; it is White Man himself, with his broad white cheeks and the black hole of his eyes. The face is Christ…Jesus Christ superstar: he invented the

facialization of the entire body and spread it everywhere" (*ATP* 176). The grid of identification determines "divergence-types" based on their degrees of distance to White Man as the universal face. Fittingly, Deleuze and Guattari claim that the first divergences to be mapped in the State apparatus are always racial: "If the face is in fact Christ, in other words, your average ordinary White Man, then the first deviances, the first divergence-types, are racial" (178). Moreover, they argue that:

> European racism as the white man's claim has never operated by exclusion, or by the designation of someone as Other…Racism operates by the determination of degrees of deviance in relation to the White-Man face, which endeavors to integrate nonconforming traits into increasingly eccentric and backward waves…From the viewpoint of racism, there is no exterior, there are no people on the outside. There are only people who should be like us and whose crime it is not to be… Racism never detects the particles of the other; it propagates waves of sameness. (178)

By indicating that racism does not operate through "Othering"—there is no Other in the white wall/black hole system—Deleuze and Guattari claim once again that power is organized by calculating degrees of sameness *rather than* establishing differences from Molar Man. For this reason, Sam Okoth Opondo asserts that "faciality [is] a non-dialectical theory of racism" (250). That is, in the white wall/black hole system, difference is not regarded as "Other"; instead, it is taken up by the machine "as a proper object of colonization" and racism is "only a matter of closing the distance" (Winet 34).

Writing in the same anthology as Opondo, Claire Colebrook explains that the problem

with racism is not that it discriminates but that it doesn't discriminate *enough* ("Face

Race" 36). Said another way, racism is not a system based on exclusion but *inclusion*

(Saldanha "Mixed-Blood" 19). The White Face of Molar Man eclipses difference.

Nonetheless, difference *itself* cannot be totally captured. As Deleuze tells us in

*Difference and Repetition*, difference is a force that is always in the process of acting and

reacting and therefore becoming otherwise (28). Deleuze and Guattari further attest that

every *body* is a singularity of difference—a multiplicity—composed of unique expressive

intensities. It is only when an expression, such as skin colour, is continuously

reterritorialized on the social stratum in recurring ways that a homogenous "race" begins

to form (Saldanha "Mixed-Blood" 10). With this in mind, Arun Saldanha proposes that

the category of race is best thought of as an assemblage; "a fuzzy collection of biological,

social, and political problems, an obscure attractor actualised in varying degrees" (10).

Racism does not operate through individual prejudice or ideological discrimination but

through *material formations* of domination. Bodies are defined in their relation to other

bodies and to social forces such as capitalism, climate change, food security, and

globalization. Saldanha posits that *racial identification* occurs when *positive*

reterritorializations on the strata affirm a multiplicity's "homeostasis" and "stability"

(10). *Racism* then, is established through *negative* reterritorializations. What Saldanha

wants to underline is that racism does not occur through difference and opposition.

Rather, as Deleuze and Guattari state above, racism institutes "backward waves of

sameness." Saldanha avers that because racism happens through a series of reterritorializations, it is an inherently unstable operation ("Assemblage" 196). Continuing this reasoning elsewhere, he explains:

> Race is built upon fully contingent territorialisations of power and desire which could be disassembled and differently reassembled. That race is immanent to the machinics of bodies and flows does not mean it is automatic, any more than that it is autonomous in relation to, for example, capital or sexual difference. The immanence of race does suggest, however, that an end to racism is an always already incipient reality. ("Mixed-Blood" 8)

Following Saldanha, Simone Bignall asserts that "race can also be *positively* seductive; it can draw disparate bodies together in joyful acts of association and communal identification. Race is therefore not negative, but rather is simply one way of shaping desire through apprehending and interpreting others in order to shape the form of an alliance" ("Dismantling White-Man" 89). As I argued in the previous chapter, identification may be a necessary point of resistance when facing a line of destruction. From this viewpoint, a sense of cultural or racial identification does not necessarily suspend a becoming; instead, it may enable an individual to rest and take refuge in a shared sense of belonging while striving to dismantle the face.

Faciality, as I have attempted to illustrate thus far, extends to situations beyond those that directly involve a concrete face. The body can be given a face, as can a

political party, the classroom is facialized with its white boards of meaning and black

holes of student grades in which a student subjectivity begins to form.  Faciality diagrams

a politics of recognition that pins a fixed identity onto the subject; it occurs at the moment

of somatic suspension at the airport when a black hole of identification forms on the

white screen of the body scanner, and during the police brutality at Standing Rock when

the black hole of surveillance facialized water protectors as jihadi terrorists, sucking in

"souls and subjects" (Deleuze and Guattari *ATP* 180). The expanse of faciality is far

reaching; faciality has its hand in—or rather face on—the grid of identification, a rigid

politics of recognition, State racism, biometric failure, and sexual surveillance.  Faciality

is not an individual or "natural" process: it is *machinic*.  The white wall/black hole

system *programs* binaries and binunivocalizations to consolidate difference as

"divergence." This occurs not through confrontation but through continuous consultation

with the grid of identification—*does the face fit?  Yes-no?*  The faciality machine is

composed *of mobile relations*—always expanding its white wall of signification.  The

ability of the grid to mutate, adapt, and relate is what constitutes both its machinic

operation *and* its insidious domination.  Alterations to the grid and glitches to the

machine, therefore, require a stealth and spontaneous imposition of resistance from

*within*.

## 4.3    Dismantling the Face

> Yes, the face has a great future, but only if it is destroyed, dismantled…If the face is a politics, dismantling the face is also a politics involving real becomings, an entire becoming-clandestine.

> -Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*

Deleuze and Guattari's call to "dismantle the face" is a fierce polemic against the individualizing forces of power that keep each of us enamoured with our faces. Rather than postulating a universal theory of resistance, they argue that to confront the face of Molar Man, we must first interrogate the "microfascisms" harboured in our own faces. That means to resist the organization of power—to deterritorialize from the strata of sexual surveillance—"we" must shake ourselves out of the inhabitancy of the faces "we" have come to call our own. This requires a self-critical and self-reflexive analysis of the power of one's own face and the sites of privilege we occupy (or not) on the grid of identification. Dismantling the face is not a generalized theory of resistance because it begins by *locating* the face in its embedded and embodied context. As Deleuze and Guattari affirm: "Only across the wall of the signifier can you run lines of asignifiance that void all memory, all return, all possible signification and interpretation…Only on your face and at the bottom of your black hole and upon your white wall will you be able to set faciality traits free like birds…" (*ATP* 189). Just as the face is produced from somewhere specific so too must its disassembly. Every person will have a different starting point to battle the face, which will generate different tools to dismantle the

Master's Face.  In this section, I suggest that dismantling the face is a process of

becoming that both begins from and becomes with *the politics of location.*

However, Peta Hinton warns that a politics of location risks inadvertently

reterritorializing subjectivity within a rigid structure of identification.  In her response to

Donna Haraway's essay "Situated Knowledges," she contends that although a politics of

location acknowledges the speaking subject as embodied, partial, and embedded within

a social context (to dislodge essentialist categories of identity and the notion of an

objective view from nowhere), it simultaneously "reinstalls" a Cartesian notion of

subjectivity (105).  In her words, a politics of location "demands a self-presence of that

speaking subject and its identity—the same claim for self-presence which informs the

rational subject's capacity to stand back from the world in order to take measure of it"

(105).  Although contemporary feminist theory on the politics of location has long since

addressed Hinton's concerns on "second-wave" feminist scholarship, which she states

does "not take savvy theoretical intervention to re-mark the complexity of identity"

(110),[75] I believe her apprehension on the politics of location foregrounds an important

point when it comes to dismantling the face, which is: how does one dismantle identity if

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[75] For example, Mariana Ortega defends identity politics by reframing it as a "coalition politics," which acknowledges the self as multiple, transformative, "becoming," "belonging," and "being-with" others (163).  A coalition politics, she affirms, understands that identity is never fixed but is always in an active process of becoming based on one's intersecting social locations and relations with others (163).  Taking a phenomenological approach to identity, Ortega redefines identity politics as an "intermeshed" and "multiplicitious" experience of "being-in-worlds" and "being- between-worlds" (169).  Considering the complexity of identity, she concludes that there can never be an exhaustive account of what identity and identity politics are supposed to look like (169).

one is asked to speak from an identity? How do you "Find your black holes and white

walls, know them, know your faces" so that "you will be able to dismantle them"?

(Deleuze and Guattari *ATP* 188). Does knowing all your faces and locating yourself in

the social strata reinstall the notion of an all-knowing and knowable subject as Hinton

avers? How do you "detach" from or "destroy" the sites of privilege you inhabit on the

grid of identification?

To answer these questions, I begin with Deleuze and Guattari's basis that to

dismantle the face we must begin with locating our deepest and darkest entanglements

with the machinic operations of the State. Borrowing Foucault's words, we might say

that dismantling the face entails "tracking down of all varieties of fascism, from the

enormous ones that surround and crush us to the petty ones that constitute the tyrannical

bitterness of our everyday lives" (Preface xiv). Dismantling the face means locating "the

fascisms in us all, in our heads and everyday behaviour, the fascism that causes us to love

power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us" (xiii). Deleuze and

Guattari elaborate: "Facialization operates not by resemblance but by an order of

reasons" and "It is a much more unconscious and machinic operation that draws the

entire body across the holey surface, and in which the role of the face is not as a model or

image, but as an overcoding of all of the decoded parts" (*ATP* 170). Dismantling the

face, it would seem, obliges us to locate the *overcoded* parts of the unconscious to set its

potentials free. While I do not go into detail on the ways in which Deleuze and Guattari

overhaul the concept of "the unconscious" from its conventional psychoanalytic

trappings, I want to briefly outline my use of the term here.

Following, Deleuze and Guattari, I understand the unconscious not as a Freudian

theatre of symbols and representations or as "a repository of submerged feelings and

images" (Massumi *UG* 82), but as a creative force. Deleuze and Guattari delineate the

unconscious as "material rather than ideological…real rather than symbolic…machinic

rather than structural—an unconscious, finally, that is molecular, microphysical, and

micrological rather than molar or gregarious; production rather than expressive" (*AO*

120). The unconscious is not a part of the natural organism; rather, it is a *machinic*

*process* connected to the social and political strata. In this sense, the unconscious is

inseparable from the human and non-human "machinic assemblages" that produce it

(Guattari 156). The unconscious, as the *machinic* unconscious, may be overcoded but

always has positive potential. It is inherently creative rather than repressive; it is a

"molecular pack" of intensities or "packs of multiplicities" and these packs have an

infinite number of non-representational potentials. The unconscious then constitutes a

force that extends beyond the "self" (Semetsky et al. 70). It connects with social and

political forces and is a *productive* machine that is both social and desiring (*AO* 127). If

the unconscious is a creative force of multiple packs of intensities, and a machinic force

inseparable from machinic assemblages that extend beyond the self as suggested, what

does "locating" your deepest and darkest entanglements with the State mean? How do

you break apart the chains of signifiers that work to capture the productive forces of the

unconscious? How do you wrest a mental reality free from its enslavement to the dominant reality? How do you identify your microfascisms and overcoded parts? "Identifying" the overcoded mechanisms of the unconscious may in fact, not be possible at all—all one may be able to do is *sense* the fascisms lodged in the mind that constantly work to segment the soul. What I am suggesting is that Deleuze and Guattari's notion of dismantling the face challenges one to embark on a sort of "unguided exploration" of the machinic unconscious—an exploration guided only by *sensation*.

However, Deleuze and Guattari warn that there are real risks involved in the process of dismantling the face. Confronting your face "from the bottom of your black hole," wading through the uncharted territories of the mind to find what microfascisms lurk there, may be a process too intense and too forceful for a body to endure. The body could spiral out of a becoming and be cast into a faceless oblivion or be caught in an even more rigid strata of segmentation. For example, Deleuze and Guattari caution that:

> Every undertaking of destratification (for example, going beyond the organism, plunging into a becoming) must therefore observe concrete rules of extreme caution: a too-sudden destratification may be suicidal, or turn cancerous. In other words, it will sometimes end in chaos, the void and destruction, and sometimes lock us back into the strata, which become more rigid still, losing their degrees of diversity, differentiation, and mobility. (*ATP* 503)

Deleuze and Guattari's last assertion, that one may construct a face more rigid than the one that existed before, speaks to Hinton's concern with regards to the risks involved with a politics of location: that one may confirm rather than displace an essentialist politics of identification.

A failed attempt to dismantle the face and the emergence of a more rigid face in its place that "locks us back into the strata" is a mental reality, mindset, or a sense of identity composed of the very microfascisms one originally set out to dismantle. In this scenario, the mind becomes part of the "supermind"—individual microfascisms turn into the collective macrofascisms of the State, effecting a "mind-meld" in which a mental reality recoils even deeper into the dominant reality of the State (Massumi *UG* 4). This newly rooted face sees only itself; pontificating about the world—or how the world ought to be *according to one's own "dismantled" face.* Yet, the face is not dismantled at all. It has been rebuilt and overcoded once more. This face is more dangerous than the last; it is the face of the profit, preacher, guru, self-proclaimed empath, Narcissus—the always knowing, ever shifting chameleon face, that cannot hear difference but only Echo. This face *disguises* itself as a faceless becoming that traverses molecular lines, turning rigid segments into supple ones, water into wine. This disguised face substitutes the macropolitics of Molar Man with a whole micropolitics of *Molecular Man*. Deleuze and Guattari describe this disguised face as one that:

deterritorializes, massifies, but only in order to knot and annul the mass

movements and movements of deterritorialization, to invent all kinds of marginal

reterritorializations even worse than the others... and acts instead as viruses

adapting to the most varied situations, sinking voids in molecular perceptions and

semiotics. Interactions without resonance. Instead of the great paranoid fear, we

are trapped in a thousand little monomanias, self-evident truths, and clarities that

gush from every black hole and no longer form a system, but are only rumble and

buzz, blinding lights giving any and everybody the mission of self-appointed

judge, dispenser of justice, policeman, neighborhood SS man. We have overcome

fear, we have sailed from the shores of security, only to enter a system that is no

less concentricized, no less organized: the system of petty insecurities that leads

everyone to their own black hole in which to turn dangerous, possessing a clarity

on their situation, role, and mission even more disturbing than the certitudes of

the first line. (*ATP* 228)

Dismantling the face then, traverses a fine line between breaking apart an identity and

building a new one based on self-evident Truths. These truths take hold in the mind as a

sense of authenticity, corrupting a becoming from the inside out.

To avoid the perils of dismantling the face and to stabilize a becoming, Rosi

Braidotti asserts that becomings mandate an "intensive ethics," which she defines as "the

shared capacity of humans to feel empathy for, develop affinity with and hence enter in

relation with other forces, entities, beings, waves of intensity" ("The Ethics" 140). An intensive ethics, she argues, "requires dosage, rhythms, styles of repetition and coordination or resonance" to sustain the subject as they cross the threshold to becoming-imperceptible and meet their limit (140). Dismantling the face is an arduous becoming and a painful process that requires letting go of one's attachments to identity and therefore necessitates an ethics that reworks negative encounters with absolute thresholds of identity into positive becomings (140). In her discussion of Haraway, Hinton ultimately affirms that feminist inquiry is produced through material entanglements and that it is these entanglements with the world that enable us to call upon identity as a politically valuable tool *without* getting trapped in essentialism. Similarly, dismantling the face requires a shared acceptance of the face as an assemblage of social, political, and material entanglements. Understanding the face as an assemblage underscores its malleability and enables us to call upon the politics of location as an "intensive ethics" that is capable of dismantling the face.

The goal for the queer politics of imperceptibility that I propose is not to know all your faces by locating yourself *within* an identity, but to locate instead the social and political *relations* that materialize that identity *and one's attachment therein*. In my view, it is only by focusing on the *relation between things*, that the face reveals itself both as a subjugating force *and* as a potential tool of resistance. Dismantling the face with an ethics of the politics of location does not proffer the notion of *absolute* facelessness nor is

it a strategy of concealment. Dismantling the face with a politics of location reinvents and reveals new and affirmative uses for the face.

Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari acknowledge that we cannot simply rid ourselves of a face *nor should we simply disregard its political use* (*ATP* 189). In their words: "The white wall of the signifier, the black hole of subjectivity, and the faciality machine are impasses, the measure of our submissions and subjections, we are born into them, and it is there we must stand battle. Not in the sense of a necessary stage, but in the sense of a tool for which a new use must be invented" (189). This last assertion is particularly important for a queer politics of imperceptibility. Because our mental reality is deeply entwined with a dominant one, and the politics of recognition is an inescapable aspect of the lives of minoritarian subjects, absolute facelessness—a condition where a politically recognizable subjectivity, a social status, or agency is absent—is, therefore, *not* the objective of a queer politics of imperceptibility. For Deleuze and Guattari, dismantling the face is *not* a step toward total obscurity; rather, it is a non-directional movement of *becoming* that creates new potentials and new tools of resistance that imagine the face afresh (189). Hence, to dethrone the regnant Face from its self-appointed seat of power, we must craft new and unexpected faces that are divested from identity. These faces are "*subjectless* subjectivities" (Bains 2002) —agentic bodies that move through the world without the drag of the face.

If dismantling the face is to affect political change, Deleuze and Guattari argue that

it must be considered as an action that returns us to molar organization so that we can

inject and mutate the rigidity of the overcoding machine with new potentials.  They write,

"molecular escapes and movements would be nothing if they did not return to the molar

organizations to reshuffle their segments, their binary distributions of sexes, classes, and

parties" (*ATP* 216-7).  That is, dismantling the face only weakens the molar forces of the

State *if* the affects and intensities freed from the face return to the mechanisms of power

and sites of control to create *actual* change.  Massumi states that the goal of dismantling

the face is to release "a bundle of potential affects" (*UG* 152n36), and a queer politics of

imperceptibility, as I present it, aims to *actualize these affects* as *bundles of dynamite* that

are ready to ignite.  Before lighting the fuse however, we must consider the critical

question posed by Deleuze and Parnet:

> Even if we had the power to blow [the molar line] up, could we succeed in doing so
>
> without destroying ourselves, since it so much a part of the conditions of life,
>
> including our organism and our very reason?  The prudence with which we must
>
> manipulate that line, the precautions we must take to soften it, suspend it, divert it,
>
> to undermine it, testify to a long labour which is not merely aimed against the State
>
> and the power that be, but directly at ourselves. (138)

How do we ensure that we do not implode our becomings along with Molar Man?  How

does one dismantle the face without passing their (unmarked) limits?  How does one

destroy binary machines and escape devices of power in which one is born without also

at the same time conditioning one's complete annihilation? How does one get to

"know" all of one's faces without slipping back into a molar framework of

identification, interpretation, and overcoding practices? What is the virus that infects the

system without deleting itself in the process of crashing the machine? What is the card

trick that reshuffles power? How do you invent *new* subjectivities from the shambles of

a dismantled face? How do you style a subjectless subjectivity? How do you remain

accountable to a politics of location while at the same time dismantling the face? What

manipulates molar forces with care and precaution? *The line of pure resistance.*

## 4.4     Dismantling the Face and the Line of Pure Resistance

The line of pure resistance, as I outlined in the previous chapter, is an unplanned event

that arises to sustain a multiplicity in its becoming. This occurs by *worlding*—which

means that the line of pure resistance involves the conjugation and convergence of new

relations. Bodies conjugate with their surrounding environment to make connections

with other bodies, both human and non-human, which, I suggest, breaks up the

microfascisms of the face and the macrofascisms of the State. For example, the line of

pure resistance that emerged during the water ceremony at Cantapeta Creek enabled

Indigenous water protectors to endure and divert the violence imposed on them by the

faciality machine. They dismantled the "violent-protestor" face that was enforced on

them by the colonial State and at the same time *resisted constructing another face in its*

*place*. By conjugating with the intensities of water, plants, animals, prayer, and tradition, the water protectors created the conditions for a new subjectivity to emerge, a subjectivity *free from a face*. Water protector-becomings move away from the face towards becoming a *subjectless* subjectivity. This is activated not by a double turning away from the State but through the forging of *affective relations* with others during the water ceremony. It is in this way that the imperceptible relations generated by the line of pure resistance serve to undermine the face *with care.*

I am suggesting that the *line of pure resistance* emerges as an intensive ethics to ensure that dismantling the face happens in "dosages" and at a pace that the body-in-becoming can endure (Braidotti "The Ethics" 140). Might it be possible to think of the line of pure resistance as the *virtual dimension* of a politics of location? Just as a politics of location tethers a subject to her embedded and embodied social location, the line of pure resistance safeguards the body from falling into total faceless abstraction by tethering it to its social environment through affective relations. As Braidotti argues throughout her oeuvre, the subject and her becomings do not exist in isolation; and, as Deleuze and Guattari demonstrate, the body is always already a multiplicity composed of numerous relations. The line of pure resistance is a concept that illustrates the conjugation between subjects, bodies and their particular social location.

As I have previously mentioned, there is no way to plan for a line of pure resistance. Everything depends on the circumstances of the bodies involved and the

forces they confront. As Braidotti clearly contends, an intensive ethics—the pace one takes, the dosages one requires when entering into a becoming—will depend on what a body is capable of doing ("The Ethics"140). There is thus no one way to predetermine what thresholds *a* body will cross, what dismantling the face will *actually* entail, what it will move toward, what black holes it will face—and what lines of pure resistance will emerge. Nonetheless, as I demonstrated in chapter three in my discussion of the water ceremony at Cantapeta Creek, there *are* ways to "locate" the line of pure resistance, thresholds, and becomings. Furthermore, as Braidotti argues, locating such lines is essential for an ethics of becoming-imperceptible. She explains,

> "I can't take it anymore" is an ethical statement, not the assertion of defeat. It is the lyrical lament of a subject-in-process who is shot through with waves of intensity, like a set of fulgurations that illuminate his self-awareness, tearing open fields of self-knowledge in the encounter of and configuration with others. Learning to recognize thresholds, borders or limits is thus crucial to the work of the understanding and to the process of becoming. (140)

During the water ceremony there were water-protectors who could not take the police brutality anymore, who could not hold the line in the freezing water, who had to step back and concede— who had to mark a *threshold* that for one reason or another could not be crossed. But, as Braidotti points out, this did not mean an assertion of defeat. "I can't take it anymore" is a line of pure resistance that safeguarded some water protectors from

passing their absolute threshold and falling into a black hole. I am arguing that when it comes to dismantling the face, a line of pure resistance also emerges to disentangle the subject from negative points of subjectification and entangle her instead with the energies and affects that sustain her becoming. In sum, the line of pure resistance, as I theorize it, protects the body-in-becoming from slipping into abject facelessness[76] and "annihilate itself in a black hole" (Deleuze and Guattari *ATP* 134). Recognizing the *limits* of dismantling the face intensifies one's ability to discern and avoid the point at which one is dismantled into irreparable pieces.

The politics of location, an intensive ethics, and the line of pure resistance all demonstrate that resistance is a process of deterritorializations and reterritorializations. In the context of this project, I have introduced the queer politics of imperceptibility as a theoretical framework that *deterritorializes* the face, recognition, and identity from a rigid framework of recognition and *reterritorializes* their positive intensities toward a politics of imperceptibility. My primary concern has been: *How can we subvert sexual surveillance by introducing new and unexpected subjectivities that are only tangentially attached to a face?* Richard Rushton entitles his 2002 essay on faciality with a similar question: "What can a face do?". The answer, in my view, is entirely up to us. We can keep constructing and deploying faces to institute rigid structures of identity and

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[76] An example of abject facelessness is the drug addict who in taking mind altering drugs transforms her perception in ways that dismantle the face—however, as an addict she becomes a "scapegoat," the inverse of the ideal subject, the one without a face, not because she has escaped but because she is stuck in a black hole of bodily decay. Or, she is otherwise cast out of society and her line of defacialization is cursed.

recognition or we can disrupt and dismantle them to transform the overcoded politics of the State. As we have seen, the notion of dismantling the face does not stipulate a specific type of activism nor does it offer a definitive solution of how to escape sexual surveillance. Dismantling the face is a conceptual tool that enables us to reimagine the relationship between resistance and the State as a process of embodied relations and collective material becomings that exist beyond identification. The politics of location has shown that such a reimagining necessarily will be practiced and theorized in alternative and perhaps conflicting ways. However, different ways of dismantling the face do not signal conceptual deficiencies nor pragmatic short-comings; neither do they indicate political rifts—*different approaches only serve to populate the conceptual toolbox of resistance.*

In what follows, I examine dismantling the face in the context of postcolonial recognition politics. Although a queer politics of imperceptibility ultimately seeks to develop a way of *thinking-feeling-doing* resistance beyond frames of recognition, I have also stated that it does so by building alliances between feminist perspectives and locating the possible passages toward becoming-imperceptible that *already exist* within supple feminist frameworks and practices of recognition. Indeed, as I discuss next, Simone Bignall offers an entry point to consider postcolonial recognition politics that are unfettered by the face.

## 4.5    Opacity and Affect in Postcolonial Recognition Politics

Writing in the context of Australian settler colonialism, Simone Bignall traces the activist

efforts of the Ngarrindjeri Nation indigenous to Southeastern Australia and examines the

ways in which postcolonial practices of recognition dismantle the face.  She demonstrates

how participants engage in pluralist expressions of cultural belonging in ways that

divorce the notion of authenticity from cultural identity.  Postcolonial subjects come

together through complex assemblages of colonialism which, she contends, incite

collective strategies of recognition whereby the "self" is understood as multiple,

relational, and fluid ("Dismantling the Face" 404).  Within this paradigm, Bignall argues

that the postcolonial subject "deconstructs the established power of the face" and

reterritorializes identity to forge new styles of cultural belonging and political

engagement (401).  Deconstructing the face, she asserts, involves the location of

contradictions within representational systems of power and the search for points of

instability within regulatory frameworks that cleave together the notion of authenticity

and identity (401).  More explicitly, she stresses that one must look for points of

ambiguity within their own identifications, expose them, and push the boundaries of

those "moments of uncertainty" to collapse so that rooted attachments to identity can be

weeded out (401).  For Bignall, it is in these moments of uncertainty that the faciality

machine becomes "(partially) transparent," and brings into focus the ways in which the

State grinds together identity, recognition, and representation (401).  Once cognizant of

the inner workings of the colonial Face, she contends that participants are able to

transform their understanding of cultural identification in ways that furnish a pluralist approach to recognition.

The resulting rapprochement between dismantling the face and postcolonial recognition politics, according to Bignall, culminates in "processes of becoming-minor" ("Dismantling the Face" 403), which she proposes constitute a "virtual alternative" to conventional paradigms of State recognition predicated on the acknowledgment of a fixed identity (404).  Becoming-minor, she claims, is achieved by paying close attention to one's affective relations and creative engagements with others.  Such attention enables individuals to recognize their cultural and experiential differences while at the same time striving toward "affirmative acts of shared recognition" (403).  Participants' open-ended relations with one another and their willingness to experiment with new forms of cultural identity transform rigid structures of reconciliation and effect instead a "new regime of political negotiation" (407).  For Bignall, dismantling the face is figured as the creation of an *alternative mode of existence*—a transformed identity—one that destabilizes the colonial production of the Indigenous face while triggering the becoming of reconciliation.

Bignall conveys defacialization as a process of relative reterritorializations, where the face is dismantled and then reconstructed in ways amenable to Ngarrindjeri Nation's traditions and beliefs.  Thus she argues that postcolonial recognition politics is not sullied by defacialization.  Indeed, she asserts that Deleuze and Guattari's rejection of the

"politics of the face" (the politics of recognition) align with Ngarrindjeri-State

engagements ("Dismantling the Face" 406).  For example, she discusses the ways in

which postcolonial subjects often withhold information from the State as an *affirmative*

*act* of becoming: "Ngarrindjeri now often refuse to divulge cultural knowledge, having

learned from [previous encounters with colonial violence] how detrimental and damaging

the sharing of knowledge can be when it is received unwilling by closed ears and

reluctant minds" (406).  Here, Bignall notes an important and often missed aspect of

dismantling the face, which is that it necessarily requires a level of *opacity*.  Thus far I

have posited dismantling the face as a becoming that *exposes* micro and macrofascisms,

*reveals* thresholds and limits, and *illuminates* the relations between bodies.  Now, I would

like to consider how dismantling the face can be achieved through *opacity*, which defines

an act that *protects*, *preserves*, and *keeps sacred* an individual's or group's faciality traits

(aspects of identity) that may or may not be known to the individual or group.

In *Poetics of Relation,* Édouard Glissant introduces opacity as an encounter with

the Other that resists imperialist and colonial frameworks of recognition that hinge on

making the subject Transparent to the state.  He argues that formal structures of

recognition, much like eugenics, measure the subject against state ideals to make

comparisons, judgments, and establish the grounds by which she will be made or unmade

in the eyes of the law (190).  The subject is recognized through a *reductive framework of*

*transparency*.  Elaborating, Glissant maintains that Western frameworks of recognition

proceed as follows: "In order to understand and thus accept you, I have to measure your

solidity with the ideal scale providing me with grounds to make comparisons and,

perhaps, judgments. I have to reduce" (190). A politics of recognition values

transparency and reduces differences among others. Against this, Glissant argues that

we must "clamor for the right to opacity for everyone" (190). Importantly, the *right* to

opacity is not a call to become opaque *per se*. It is not a call to go unseen or become

invisible. Indeed, he is careful to warn against falling into *individual* obscurity, which he

argues, turns difference into "apartheid" (201). Opacity is an ethical relation, that I

suggest signals dismantling the face.

Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome, Glissant writes,

"Rhizomatic thought is the principle behind what I call the Poetics of Relation, in which

each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other" (11). At first

glance, Glissant's demarcation between self and Other would appear to go against

Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic philosophy of becoming and their call to dismantle the

face. As we have seen, a rhizome is an assemblage of multiplicities—concepts, humans,

animals, things, the cosmos— that extend through horizontal relations and lines of flight,

bringing things together and creating becomings. The rhizome emphasizes random

movement over structure, instability over fixity, networks over centralized points,

relation over root. Significantly, Glissant notes, however, that: "The notion of the

rhizome maintains…the idea of rootedness but challenges that of a totalitarian root" (11).

Unlike the upward root that takes "all upon itself and killing all around it"—defined by

Deleuze and Guattari as Molar Man and arborescent thought— the rhizome is "an

enmeshed root system, a network spreading either in the ground or in the air, with no

predatory rootstock taking over permanently" (Glissant 11).  Just as Deleuze and

Guattari warn of dismantling the face, Glissant contends that "uprooting can work

toward identity" (18).  That is, he suggests that when uprooting is experienced as forced

exile, one may imagine or long for an identity that was never there before or search for a

new one (18).  Uprooting, like dismantling the face, is dangerous if the rootedness of the

rhizome (i.e. the politics of location are not taken into careful consideration.  Moreover,

Glissant writes: "the image of the rhizome, prompt[s] the knowledge that identity is no

longer completely within the root but also in Relation" (18).  Put another way, while

Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome focuses on horizontal movement; it does

so not by uprooting but by leaving the root *positively* opaque.  For Glissant then,

"opacity" signals a rhizomatic and ethical encounter with others that does not attempt to

root or uproot them but acknowledges their opacity thus keeping their *particularity* in

place.

Importantly, Glissant contends that the Other is opaque to itself.  There is no

transparent *unity* of the self.  He writes, "it does not disturb me to accept that there are

places where my identity is obscure to me, and the fact that it amazes me does not mean I

relinquish it" (192).  Understanding the self as opaque acknowledges the potential of

one's becoming.  It confirms that one's relation with others—human and non-human—

happens on both perceptible and imperceptible wavelengths.  Opacity thus affirms the

potential of moving toward a *subjectless* subjectivity.  And, "the right to opacity for

everyone" foregrounds the becoming of *and with* all others.[77] I turn to Glissant to argue

that opacity, in terms of the Ngarrindjeri's refusal to share knowledge, is an affirmative

practice of dismantling the face. Opacity is not an unwillingness to detach from identity

nor is it an oppositional strategy that conceals, masks, or hides the face. The distinction

I am making between opacity and concealment is that the former affirms and values

*unknown differences* whereas the latter aims to hide what is *already known* (to oneself).

Another way to consider the value of opacity and the refusal to divulge cultural

knowledge is to view it in the context of a "refrain." As I noted in chapter three, Deleuze

and Guattari define the concept "refrain" as that which holds an assemblage together: "A

territorial or territorialized component [that] may set about budding, producing" (*ATP*

325). Offering a more complex definition Deleuze and Guattari write:

> the refrain is a prism, a crystal of space-time. It acts upon that which surrounds it,
>
> sound or light, extracting from it various vibrations, or decompositions, projections,
>
> or transformations. The refrain also has a catalytic function: not only to increase
>
> the speed of the exchanges and reactions in that which surrounds it, but also to

---

[77] Glissant writes: "I am able to conceive of the opacity of the other for me, without reproach for my opacity for him. To feel in solidarity with him or to build with him or to like what he does, it is not necessary for me to grasp him. It is not necessary to try to become the other (to become other) nor to "make" him in my image. These projects of transmutation—without metempsychosis—have resulted from the worst pretensions and the greatest of magnanimities on the part of the West" (193).

assure indirect interactions between elements devoid of so-called natural

affinity, and thereby to form organized masses. (348)

Here, Deleuze and Guattari tell us that a refrain involves an act of "bringing something

along" from the territory from which one is deterritorializing. In the context of the

present study, the refrain is a face that is brought along during a becoming as a way to

retain familiarity, humanity and a sense of subjectivity—it is an act of preservation. In

this sense, when the Ngarrindjeri refuse to share their cultural knowledge with the State,

they preserve their culture and humanity. In doing so, they *leave the territory of the*

*face.* What I am suggesting is that blocking the possibility for colonial appropriation by

refusing to divulge cultural knowledge is a radical act of defacialization.

As I have suggested above, dismantling the face is a dangerous process that risks

spiraling the individual into abject facelessness and abolition. As I hope to show in the

following chapter, one way to dismantle the face and become-imperceptible is to *glitch*

systems of signification and subjectification. As Warren Smith et al. argue "staying

incomprehensible and anonymous are all strategies which quietly refuse, which say 'I

would prefer not to' to a world which demands so much. In this way, practices of

imperceptibility might be understood as the pursuit of space from the endless demand to

say who you are" (68). The pursuit to carve out and cultivate zones of reprieve from the

State's incessant demand to know, identify, and classify to control, is to engineer a site of

resistance *within* a rigid politics of recognition. Becoming-opaque, becoming-

imperceptible is a disruption from within the semiotic of White Man's advanced

capitalism.  Refusing to divulge (what is both known and unknown) reterritorializes

recognition politics onto a more positive plane.  This act of resistance draws a line of

flight toward "the cosmic forces" of new becomings, which as Bignall asserts in her

essay, is far more important to postcolonial subjects than is establishing a new structure

of recognition.

## 4.6    The Material Relations of Affect and the Politics of Location

> For affect is not a personal feeling.  Nor is it a characteristic; it is the effectuation
> of a power of the pack that throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel.
>
> -Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*

Bignall characterizes the participants of recognition politics as multiplicities who

continuously transform as they come into relation with other multiplicities.  She argues

that the dynamic movement between multiplicities resists the rigid frame of hierarchical

State recognition, which, in turn, surges new political potentials to rethink recognition as

an *affirming* practice that *intensifies* the individual and group's *capacity to act*

("Dismantling the White-Man" 86).  Echoing Deleuze and Guattari, she explains that a

multiplicity is not defined by its composing elements, nor are assemblages of

multiplicities understood through a center of unification; rather, a multiplicity is defined

by its "number of dimensions" (86).  A multiplicity is defined by its degrees of potential

to act, and the number of dimensions or potentials to act that a multiplicity enjoys is

determined by its affective connections with others (86).  Therefore, a pluralist

postcolonial politics of recognition, according to Bignall, aspires to intensify affective

relations therein as the primary means to multiply participants' potentials to act.

Participants disrupt cultural uniformity by acknowledging each other's *difference* rather

than emphasizing shared characteristics.  Bignall concludes that an emphasis on

difference *and* relationality within recognition creates "complex and diffuse engagements

with the State," which shift the terms of recognition politics in ways that align with

Ngarrindjeri traditions of agreement-making ("Dismantling the Face" 406).

Hence, Bignall views recognition politics as a positive process which increases

postcolonial subjects' *potentia*.  The concept of potentia signals the impersonal and

affirmative forces between subjects.  In Braidotti's formulation, potentia is "the positivity

of the intensive subject—its joyful affirmation…the capacity to express his/her

freedom…the preindividual or impersonal power; the affirmation of multiplicity and not

of one-sidedness and the interconnection with an 'outside' which is of cosmic dimension

and infinite" ("The Ethics" 134).  In short, potentia is "the desire to become" (157).  By

spotlighting the potentia of participants' intersubjective relations, Bignall validates that

the process of dismantling the face, within recognition politics, does not spiral the

individual into a dark abyss of absolute facelessness or dehumanization, nor does

defacialization incur the loss of one's intensive social relations and political

interconnections.  Bignall's retooling of recognition aligns with Braidotti's contention

that dismantling the face takes "the alternative, nomadic path [that] also moves toward

discovering and experimenting with many possible other faces one might be capable of

inhabiting" (*NT* 48). In other words, a pluralist politics of recognition aims to produce a

*plurality of faces* that render a single subjectivity *opaque.*

By foregrounding the role of affect in the process of defacialization, Bignall

illustrates that disrupting the social production of the face does not require the negation of

others. Dismantling the face is an affective and relational *event* that heralds the potential

to create a *multiplicity of emergent subjectivities that collectively expand the dimensions*

*of political resistance*. Experimenting with "many more faces" is not a colonization of

the faces of others; these faces are faces that are yet to come. In this sense, Bignall's

framework of postcolonial recognition politics gestures toward a politics of

imperceptibility. As I previously argued alongside Braidotti, a *nomadic flirtation* with

recognition and identity do not short circuit the potential for becomings. Indeed, Bignall

builds an *alliance* between recognition and imperceptibility by celebrating the becomings

that operate within postcolonial practices of cultural belonging.

Nevertheless, I want to gently trouble Bignall's characterization of dismantling the

face as that which happens by way of "careful observation," "interpretation," and

"deconstruction" ("Dismantling the Face" 403). If dismantling the face is a process of

"becoming-minor," as she states, then how might practices of "interpretation" and

"deconstruction" (of the self or the State) work *against* a politics of dismantling the face?

Asked another way: does the practice of deconstruction and interpretation run *counter* to dismantling the semiotic systems of signifiance and subjectification that a process of defacialization entails?  In my view, interpretation and deconstruction are *overcoding practices* that, although they may trouble chains of signifiance, never break from the concentric power of Molar Man.  Although my disagreement with Bignall on the use of deconstruction and interpretation may be a simple case of preferred semantics, I call attention to these terms not as a punctilious critique, but to illustrate the difficulty, and perhaps impossibility, of articulating the process and potentials of dismantling the face *within* the frame of recognition.  To be clear, I am not suggesting that defacialization does not happen within recognition politics.  What I want to illustrate is the ease with which the concept of becoming may be easily swept up in the language of recognition.  For example, Bignall defines dismantling the face as "carefully observed processes of collective agreement about the preferred nature and good conduct of social engagements" and in "finding agreement concerning…the creation of provisional rules of (non-imperial) association" ("Dismantling the Face" 408).  While these aspects of decolonization are important and desirable within the context of State recognition, it appears to me that they remain heavily tied to the production of a face.  As stated above, Bignall does acknowledge "possible passages" and "thresholds" between sign regimes that deterritorialize "relations of domination in the signifying field" ("Dismantling the White-Man" 77).  The limitations of the language of recognition politics, however, make it abundantly clear that the affective relations and thresholds between subjects, to which

Bignall wishes to point, can be easily made to disappear. Is it possible to engage with a politics of recognition and at the same time discuss the imperceptible forces that are already at work within this politics? Can we make the discourse of recognition politics *more abstract* while at the same time working toward *concrete* political change?

Departing from Bignall, I want to explore the *subterranean* affective relations that exist between bodies—or rather, I want to propose a queer politics of imperceptibility that goes beyond the limitations of (the language of) recognition. Deleuze and Guattari's provocation that you dismantle the face by "knowing all of your black holes" is not a call to interpret and deconstruct the system of signifiance and subjectification that landed you there. Instead, I suggest that knowing all of your black holes requires a *sensory exploration* of the politics of your location. The politics of location (which I have argued is integral to a queer politics of imperceptibility) must take a posthumanist feminist approach to "plug the tracings [of identity] back into the map [of becoming], connect the roots or trees back up with a rhizome" (Deleuze and Guattari *ATP* 14). That is, a politics of location must be viewed (and practiced) as a rhizomatic sensory and material process that contributes to the development of new abstract machines. To counter the abstract machine of faciality, we must invent new abstract machines of resistance. An abstract machine of resistance battles faciality and its overcoding forces by forging imperceptible networks of human and non-human bodies. It operates to *reprogram* resistance from acts of opposition that demand recognition to acts of relation that emerge the political potentials of becoming a subjectless subjectivity. Put simply, the queer politics of

imperceptibility I propose understands the politics of location as *machinic*, as that which asserts the importance of difference while also moving toward becoming everything and everyone. On the concept of machinic, Braidotti writes:

> The machinic for Deleuze is yet another figuration that expresses the non-unitary, radically materialist and dynamic structure of subjectivity. It expresses the subject's capacity for multiple, non-linear and outward-bound inter-connections with a number of external forces and others…It is about multiple alliances, symbiotic connections and fusions…What the "machinic" element is expressing is the directness, I would say the literal-ness of the relations between forces, agents, sites and locations of subjectivity. This is supposed to challenge the dominant paradigm of linguistic mediation, with the twin forces of representation and interpretation which have dominated our images of what it means to be a subject. Signals replace signs, expression replaces representation and codes replace interpretation. The machinic expresses the impersonal, or intra-personal intensive resonances between the multiple levels of inter-connections that make living beings tick. ("Affirming")

A queer politics of imperceptibility employs the machinic operations of the politics of location to resist faciality and the somatic suspension of sexual surveillance. It turns to the politics of location to uncage our shared potential for becoming-imperceptible and to "set faciality traits free like birds" (Deleuze and Guattari *ATP* 189).

How does this happen?  How are faciality traits (aspects of identity) freed from

somatic suspension and carried away toward becomings-imperceptible?  I propose that

this happens through the intensification of *zoe*, which Braidotti defines as "a nonhuman

yet affirmative life-force"[78] ("The Politics" 203).  An encounter with or a politics

centered on *zoe*[79] marks a shift away from anthropocentric perspectives of social

transformation to emphasize the (non-negotiable importance of) material relations

between the earth, environment, humans, animals, other sentient beings and nonsentient

things and their "mutual interdependence of material, biocultural, and symbolic forces in

the making of social and political practices" (204).  In other words, the politics of

location frees faciality traits by acknowledging not only the subject's social situation but

also its material location.  Throughout the project, I have argued that a queer politics of

imperceptibility moves away from the notion of a conceptually coherent and materially

bounded human *being* toward a posthuman subject who is always and only ever

*becoming*.  This movement is the movement of *zoe*.  The concept of the line of pure

resistance also necessarily relies on *zoe* as *the* force of resistance.  *Zoe* is the vital force

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[78] Braidotti makes a distinction between her understanding of *zoe* and Agamben's position on
bios/ *zoe,* where the former is considered bare life.  She writes that *zoe* "becomes for Agamben
the ever-receding horizon of an alterity which has to be included as necessarily excluded in order
to sustain the framing of the subject in the first place.  This introduces finitude as a constitutive
element within the framework of subjectivity, which also fuels an effective political economy of
loss and melancholia at the heart of subjectivity" ("The Politics" 211).  Differently, Braidotti
defines *zoe* as an affirmative generative force that conditions the positivity of life and death.

[79] Braidotti introduces the notion of "*zoe*politics" as an amendment to "biopolitics." *Zoe*politics
extends Foucault's notion of "bio"-political governmentality to all forms of Life and not just the
human (*The Posthuman* 111).

that enters bodies into becomings. For example, *zoe* was the conjugating force at Cantapeta Creek that brought together water protector-becomings, environmental-becomings, animal-becomings, and spiritual-becomings, increasing the potentia of each.

An emphasis on material experimentation over resignification allows us to consider the asubjective energies involved in dismantling the face. It compels us to consider the "causation" of systemic oppression in terms of the interlocking forces of complex phenomena (Coole and Frost 7). From this posthuman materialist perspective, human agency as such can be unearthed from its neoliberal rootedness in individualism and understood instead as the emergence of a "complex, pluralistic, relatively open process" of interactions between human and non-human matter (Coole and Frost 7). In the introduction to their anthology *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics,* Diane Coole and Samantha Frost advocate that:

> It is in choreographies of becoming that we find cosmic forces assembling and disintegrating to forge more or less enduring patterns that may provisionally exhibit internally coherent, efficacious organization: objects forming and emerging within relational fields, bodies composing their natural environment in ways that are corporeally meaningful to them, and subjectivities being constituted as open series of capacities or potencies that emerge hazardously and ambiguously within a multitude of organic and social processes. In this monolithic but multiple tiered

ontology, there is no definitive break between sentient and nonsentient entities or

between material and spiritual phenomena. (10)

A materialist perspective is essential when it comes to conceptualizing a queer politics of

imperceptibility. Attention to the *materiality* of becomings—the ways in which the

subject is embedded in and radically immanent with the unfolding of the universe—

enables us to focus on the embodied and situated relations of the subject in ways that

avoid overcoding a politics of location with identity politics. A *zoe*-centric feminist

approach to a politics of imperceptibility understands difference as interconnectedness.

It recognizes differences between subjects as well as difference *itself*—the productive

force of the cosmos of which *we* are *all* a part, and that we should all consider when

*thinking-feeling-doing* resistance.

## 4.7    Probe-heads

In the last few paragraphs of "Plateau 7-Year Zero: Faciality" in *A Thousand Plateaus,*

Deleuze and Guattari offer the seductive and somewhat unsatisfactory concept of the

"probe-head." Probe-heads, they tell us, are "guidance devices" capable of breaking

through the strata, tearing down the walls of signifiance, and "pour out of the holes of

subjectivity, fell trees in favor of veritable rhizomes…forming strange new becomings,

new polyvocalities" (190-91). Probe-heads, according to Deleuze and Guattari,

dismantle the face—although how they do so is not quite clear. Characteristically,

Deleuze and Guattari do not provide a straight-forward definition of the probe-head; even though it seems that probe-heads, whatever they might be, are a key aspect of becoming-imperceptible because, as we are told, they unlock us from the repressive regime of Molar Man (191). For Bignall, the probe-head is a "destructive-creative process" that tears through a rigid structure of recognition to forge new affective relations with "neighbouring bodies" ("Dismantling the White-Face" 85, 86). She contends that probe-heads are launched via participants' open-ended affective relations with one another and their willingness to experiment with new forms of cultural belonging. For Bignall, participants actively cultivate and "send out" probe-heads by paying close attention to "moments of uncertainty" when it comes to identification, which, in turn, reveals to them their sites of subjection ("Dismantling the Face" 407).

Similarly, Patricia MacCormack contends that probe-heads are created when subjects use the "traits of the face to forge connections, to differentiate or extend rather than affirm meaning (and consequently to differentiate and extend subject potentials and positions)" (138). Discussing the sites of resistance activated in queer performance art, MacCormack argues that probe-heads do not emerge from forcible insertions into the strata but by a willingness to use one's facial traits to invent new sites of connection (138). Probe-heads therefore are something that emphasize haptic connections between bodies. Simon O'Sullivan also links the probe-head to art, stating that "in the realm of art […] we can identify a key modality of probe-heads: that they are somehow oriented against the present time" ("Pragmatics" 313). For O'Sullivan, probe-heads signal a

reinvention of "our own faces, or rather our own heads—probe-heads—which themselves will be the platforms for other, perhaps even stranger modes of organization and subsequent deterritorialization" (312). However, O'Sullivan also submits that a probe-head can be anything that sets one on the course of becoming; "It will depend on the specifics of time and place, on the particular materials at hand—and on the concrete practices of individuals (313). Elsewhere, he concludes that "Probe-heads are in this sense a move into chaos ("From Stuttering" 254). Like O'Sullivan, I think that probe-heads are conjugating "devices" that rupture the constraints of the face by opening the door for a future yet to come.

In my view, a probe-head is therefore best thought of as a *portal-head.* It is a *social-material energy* that facilitates the *crisscrossing of bodies*, human and non-human, into each other's dimensions decentering the sense of a unitary subjectivity. While probe-heads may signal a future yet to come, I also want to suggest that they operate in the here and now. They exist *between* bodies, not beyond them. I posit probe-heads as actual forces of resistance that move horizontally, pulling in asignifying intensities to diagram new strategies of resistance. Probe-heads are not immaterial forces that push bodies outward and upward into the abyss. Deleuze and Guattari state that the goal of a probe-head is to "become clandestine, make rhizome everywhere" (*ATP* 191). In this sense, a probe-head makes *material* connections, conjugates with bodies, and increases potentia. Nevertheless, probe-heads should not be romanticized. Deleuze and Guattari tell us quite clearly that they are produced when "the faciality machine *forces* [the

body's] flows into signifiances and subjectifications, into knots of arborescence and holes of abolition; sometimes, to the extent that it performs a veritable 'defacialization'" (190, emphasis added). Probe-heads rip through the faciality machine, but, nevertheless, they emerge from a state of emergency, when a becoming faces a black hole. Thus it would seem that probe-heads cannot be controlled or predetermined. Probe-heads have a *virtual* quality that "steer the flows down lines of positive deterritorialization or creative flight" (190). I suggest that probe-heads emerge from the slippages, cracks, and fissures within the State apparatus, opening passageways for escape, which is not an escape *out* of the State, but an escape crafted from *within*. Probe-heads, as we shall see in the following chapter, are *glitches* that emerge during moments of somatic suspension.

I will attempt to argue that chasing or following a probe-head, once it has emerged, involves following dissymmetrical lines of flight—one line cuts through striated space to "reveal" the faciality machine and thus "transform identity" (Bignall "Dismantling the Face" 403), and the other line voyages the smooth space of the *virtual* taking the body "beyond" a static sense of "self." In sum, dismantling the face means confronting "the established power of the face [and] reterritorializing alternative structures of meaning" as Bignall suggests (401), but it also means taking part in *asignifying* practices that "delink" (Braidotti *NT* 48), rather than deconstruct, the face from the white wall/black hole machine. Said another way, if dismantling the face requires identifying the roots that plant identity and tracing the structures of signifiance, it is only to connect those roots back up with rhizomes and plug tracings back into the map to diagram offshoots from the

face. In what follows, I suggest that the queer autonomous zone is a mutating abstract machine capable of diagramming those offshoots.

## 4.8 The Queer Autonomous Zone: An Abstract Machine for a Queer Politics of Imperceptibility

To conclude the chapter, I present the concept of the "queer autonomous zone" as a mutating abstract machine that diagrams resistance within the concrete assemblage of sexual surveillance. As I define it, the queer autonomous zone operates on two registers: first, it produces the potential for new activisms to take place within the surveillance assemblage, opening the assemblage up to new becomings. Second, it orchestrates a shift in *thinking-feeling-doing* resistance from a politics of recognition to imperceptibility.

Recall that Deleuze and Guattari argue that an assemblage effectuates every abstract machine. For example, faciality is effectuated by the interpenetration of sign regimes within the concrete assemblage of the State apparatus. I suggest that assemblages of resistance effectuate the queer autonomous zone. While faciality manufactures the white wall/black hole machine to create binary and biunivocal relations that *produce* the face, I posit the queer autonomous zone as a diagrammatic force that gives an assemblage a structure of feeling to create unstructured affective relations that dismantle the face.

The queer autonomous zone, as an *abstract* machine, can only be defined

abstractly.  Attempting to describe an abstract machine is not only impossible (given that

I understand it as virtual), but to do so would only serve to *overcode* its potentials and

block its lines of flight.  Consequently, I define the concept of the queer autonomous

zone not by what it *is* but by what it can *do*.  What the queer autonomous zone can do is

diagram potentials of resistance.  Deleuze and Guattari explain the diagrammatic

function of an abstract machine as follows:

> Defined diagrammatically… an abstract machine is neither an infrastructure that
>
> is determining in the last instance nor a transcendental Ideal that is determining in
>
> the supreme instance.  Rather it plays a piloting role.  The diagrammatic or
>
> abstract machine does not function to represent, even something real, but rather
>
> constructs a real that is yet to come, a new type of reality. (*ATP* 142)

Just *how* the queer autonomous zone diagrams resistance will be highly dependent on the

situation that effectuates it given that it is the relations within an assemblage that

determine its piloting role.  Moreover, defining how the machine functions ahead of its

circumstance would result in a limited and constrained understanding of its potentials.

The operations of the queer autonomous zone will unfold more clearly in the following

chapter in my discussion of glitch art. Be that as it may, I want to introduce the queer

autonomous zone and its importance for a queer politics of imperceptibility here by

defining its mutating function and how that function counters faciality.

Adding to the difficulty of the task at hand is that the concept of the mutating

abstract machine appears throughout *A Thousand Plateaus* in varied and complex ways.

Deleuze and Guattari often turn to art, music, or literature as conceptual entry points. For

example, they reference Virginia Woolf's 1931 novel, *The Waves* (as well as the ocean's

waves) to characterize the abstract machine. They write: "Waves are vibrations, shifting

borderlines inscribed on the plane of consistency as so many abstractions. The abstract

machine of the waves" (252). Here, Deleuze and Guattari refer to the novel's structure as

an abstract machine. The novel is written as a series of interludes and episodes that

alternate between third person narration of a coastal seascape that details the activity of

the waves throughout the course of a day and first-person soliloquies spoken by the

novel's six characters. There is a seventh character who does not speak but who we hear

about by way of the other characters in the novel. Deleuze and Guattari define each

character as a multiplicity with the seventh silent character being the "ultimate

multiplicity that envelops the greatest number of dimensions" as he is discussed by all the

other characters (252). When reading the novel, it is not always easy to discern which

character is speaking given that Woolf does not offer narrative interventions (e.g. "said

Jinny"); but each character has recognizable traits (such as Jinny's emphasis on the body)

that enable the reader to determine the speaker's identity. A common interpretation of

the novel is that the characters (or multiplicities) compose a single plane of consciousness

and each character represents one facet of the same mind. Indeed, the characters flow

into one another as each soliloquy is prefaced by an interlude that diagrams a different

intensity of the waves. As David Bradshaw writes in his introduction to the 2015 reprint, "The function of these interludes, Woolf explained in her diary, was to create 'a background—the sea; insensitive nature'" (Woolf xii). The sea draws a plane of consistency across the novel; the background of the sea is not so much insensitive nature as it is *intensive* nature in that it brings all the multiplicities together by diagramming their intensities. For example, during a rare occasion in the book, when all the characters are together speaking as "we," Woolf writes:

> *the moment of ravenous identity is over…the circle in our blood, broken so often, so sharply, for we are so different, closes in a ring. Something is made…this common feeling…we are not slaves bound to suffer incessantly unrecorded petty blows on our bent backs. We are not sheep either, following a master. We are creators. We too have made something that will join the innumerable congregations of past time. We too…stride not into chaos, but into a world that our own force can subjugate and make part of the illumined and everlasting road.* (83, 84, 85)

Deleuze and Guattari contend that each character in the novel "crosses over into others," marking the edge of a multiplicity of which they are all a part: "Each [character] advances like a wave, but on the plane of consistency they are a single abstract Wave whose vibration propagates following a line of flight or deterritorialization traversing the entire plane" (*ATP* 252). Each soliloquy marks the cutting edge of the other so that they

compose a single plane of consistency. Life in the novel emerges as a series of events

marked only by varying degrees of intensity: there is no plot, only becomings; "chapters"

are unnumbered, leaving Life[80] as it is—a rhizome composed only of plateaus.[81] The

waves narrated throughout the novel are an abstract machine that diagram relations of

intensity between characters, opening their multiplicity to new becomings. In its written

form, *The Waves* is also an abstract machine that mutates the conventional novel structure

rendering it as a rhizome.

In a more literal figuration, the actual waves of the ocean are also an abstract

machine; they diagram the assemblage of the sea. Waves collect and mix the things of

the sea and tide together new relations. Deleuze and Guattari maintain that the mutating

abstract machine is not a physical container; "it has no form of its own (much less

substance)" (*ATP* 141). It serves only to conjoin flows of intensity through rhythms of

speeds and slowness. The abstract machine does not distinguish between matter and

meaning, substance and form, content and expression; everything smooths out on a plane

of consistency (510-11). The term "consistency" does not refer to coherence or

cohesion, rather it signals the *materiality* of intensities—their density and viscosity—that

---

[80] I capitalize Life to indicate life in its impersonal sense—what Deleuze refers to as immanence.
He writes, "We will say of pure immanence that it is A LIFE, and nothing else. It is not
immanence to life, but the immanent that is in nothing is itself a life...*a life*, no longer dependent
on a Being or submitted to an Act" (*PI* 27, emphasis original).

[81] Deleuze and Guattari define a plateau as a "continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities
whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end" (*ATP* 2).
I will discuss plateaus in the next chapter—which I understand to be itself a plateau.

is, their *consistency.* Following Deleuze and Guattari's claim, waves also transfer

energy from one point to another by way of oscillation independent of a container of

transportation. Waves diagram the ocean as a single indivisible flow—a plane of

vibration composed only of pulsations. Indeed, as Woolf illustrates: *"[The waves]*

*drew in and out with the energy, the muscularity of an engine which sweeps its force*

*out and in again"* (63). Waves carry quanta and matter which, on the plane of

consistency, conjugate and forge potentials for new oceanic relations. The vibrations

of the wave-machine extract contents from the ocean and carry them away in their

wake, creating continuums of intensity that engender new vibrations and new relations.

For example, the abstract machine of waves engenders the potential for new

interactions among mammals, fish, plants, ships, swimmers, fish netting, oil, plastic.

Nonetheless, it is the concrete assemblage of the ocean that determines "which

variables will enter into constant relations or obey obligatory rules and which will

serve instead as a fluid matter for variation" (*ATP* 100). For example, mammal-

becomings, fish-becomings, plant-becomings, ship-becomings, swimmer-becomings

are reterritorialized by the ocean's relations, defining them as either rigid or supple

segmentations, molar or molecular lines, predator or prey, determining whether they

are washed up on shore or carried out to sea, contaminated or purified, and whether

they sink or swim.

The abstract machine catches "a bundle of potential affects" (Massumi *UG* 152n36)

and fans them across its fluid plane, sending the relation between elements to their

furthest threshold: *"I threw my bunch into the spreading wave. I said, 'Consume me,*

*carry me to the furthest limit'"* (Woolf 121). As I indicated earlier, resistance is a

process of reterritorialization as much as it is deterritorialization; potentials riding on the

plane of consistency reterritorialize on the strata where they are assigned a form with a

function: *"The wave has broken; the bunch is withered"* (121). Waves steer the ocean's

deterritorializations and the ocean reterritorializes the potentials of the waves. The ocean

determines how elements riding on the wave will settle on the seabed; will things come

together to grow as arborescent kelp forests or plant themselves rhizomatically as beds of

seagrass? Or, will potential relations be left on the surf to catch another wave, another

abstract machine: *"The wave paused, and then drew out again, sighing like a sleeper*

*whose breath comes and goes unconsciously"* (Woolf 2). The assemblage of the

ocean— *not* the wave— determines what form potentials will take and the course of their

direction.

The mutating abstract machine, such as the ocean's waves, creates becomings and

lines of flight, whereas the *overcoding* machine of faciality, forms black holes and lines

of destruction. The two machines draw different planes: the mutating machine draws *a*

*plane of consistency* which, as we just saw, is a plane of undefined flows and intensities.

In contrast, the overcoding machine establishes *a plane of organization* to produce and

reproduce rigid lines of segmentarity. But it is the concrete assemblage (of the ocean or

of the State respectively) that realizes the abstract machine. The overcoding machine and

the mutating machine are equally diagrammatic; waves diagram the ocean just as faciality

diagrams the State. As we will see next, the queer autonomous zone diagrams a new

politics of resistance. It creates the potential for new modes of activism within the surveillance assemblage. Unlike the abstract machine of faciality that *overcodes* and *organizes* strata, as a mutating machine, the queer autonomous zone is only concerned with *flows of desire* and *destratified intensities*.

For Deleuze and Guattari, "desire" is a productive, positive, and vital force that enhances the capacity of a body to act. Desire is always productive: "there are no internal drives in desire, only assemblages. Desire is always assembled; it is what the assemblage determines it to be" (*ATP* 229). In other words, desire is not the desire for an object nor can it be understood in an abstract sense; desire, Deleuze argues, must always be understood in its particular context. Desire is a flow that moves within a specific "milieu" or "landscape" (Deleuze *A to Z*). For example, the desire to protect water is not a desire for water protection in the abstract—One desires to protect water within the context of the environment, health, as a life-giving resource, in the context of tradition and so forth: "I never desire some thing all by itself…there is no desire that does not flow within an assemblage…to desire is to construct an assemblage…when anyone says…I desire this or that, that means that he/she is in the process of constructing an assemblage…desire is nothing else" (*A to Z*). The desire to protect water contributes to the construction of the NoDAPL assemblage, it constructs all of its aggregates: the aggregate of the water ceremony, of community, of the choices made; and the relations built and sustained.

However, desire is not a personal force. As Colebrook explains, "Deleuze set himself the task of thinking desire positively: not desire that someone has for something she wants or lacks; but a desire that is just a productive and creative energy, a desire of flux, force and difference, a revolutionary desire that we need to think in ways that will disrupt common sense and everyday life" (*Understanding Deleuze* xv). Colebrook articulates profound implications to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of desire. She identifies its potential to phenomenally shift our fundamental orientation to our sense of identity, our way of thinking and being in the world. She continues:

> Through this concept of desire, Deleuze and Guattari presented a challenge to the relation between theory and life. How might we think differently in order to avoid the notion that "we" have a fixed identity or being that we then engage with through ideas? Would it be possible to think without assuming some pre-given (or transcendent) model? If we accept that life is desire—a flow of forces that produces relations—then we can no longer rely on a single relation or being to provide a foundation for thinking. We can no longer think of humanity, language or culture as the ground of life, *for human life and thinking would be one flow of desire among others*. (xvi-xvii, emphasis added)

Returning to the example of water protection, the protection of water may be something "that one may want," but desire precedes the want. Desire is the productive energy that attracts elements together to create an assemblage in which the articulation of "I want" is

just *one flow of desire among others*, one element of the desiring-machine. This

perspective on desire allows us to consider the connective tissues and functions that come

before desire is assigned a purpose. It underscores, as Colebrook puts it, that "Desire is a

process of increasing expansion, connection and creation" (xxii). Desire does not

originate from the self; it is a becoming engendered by relations between multiplicities.

What is the role of desire when it comes to formulating the queer autonomous

zone? If desire constructs an assemblage—or, as Massumi argues, *is* an assemblage that

brings together elements through waves of attraction and particles of desire (*UG* 82)—

and it is the concrete assemblage that effectuates the abstract machine, then the site of

mutation necessarily begins not with the abstract machine but from *relations of desire.*

*Resistance to sexual surveillance begins from creative social energy, which is the*

*relations of desire that exist within the sexual surveillance assemblage.* Revolutionary

forces are created by relations of desire which the overcoding machine cannot anticipate

or perceive.

The question, as Deleuze asks, is: "what is the nature of relations between elements

in order for there to be desire, for these elements to become desirable?" (*A to Z*). Where

does desire flow in an assemblage? How can we open passageways for desire to flow

while also destroying its roadblocks? As I have demonstrated, the line of pure resistance

is a concept that enables us to map these passages, roadblocks, and as well, the nature of

relations between elements that create desire. As we saw in the previous chapter, the line

of pure resistance detects subterranean and imperceptible-becomings to map the flows of desire that produce resistance during an event in which a body faces a black hole of destruction. Indeed, the line of pure resistance is itself a flow of desire. It produces and sustains becomings by creating multiple relations in its immediate environment. The line of pure resistance is produced through and productive of desire. Conceptually, the line of pure resistance enables us to locate roadblocks and passages, and the queer autonomous zone functions to *clear* the blockages. The faciality machine, as we saw above, gridlocks the material relations of becoming by giving those relations names, places, and faces. The queer autonomous zone *draws* new lines and pathways for desire to flow. If, as Deleuze and Guattari contend, "it is always by rhizome that desire moves and produces" (*ATP* 14), then the task at hand, the task of the queer autonomous zone is, quite simply, to make rhizomes.

# 5

## Plateau: The Queer Autonomous Zone in Action

> In Deleuze and Guattari, a plateau is reached when circumstances combine to bring an activity to a pitch of intensity that is not automatically dissipated in a climax. The heightening of energies is sustained long enough to leave a kind of afterimage of its dynamism that can be reactivated or injected into other activities, creating a fabric of intensive states between which any number of connecting routes could exist.
>
> -Brian Massumi, Foreword, *A Thousand Plateaus*

In this concluding chapter, I call upon the concepts and arguments I have presented thus far to posit glitch art as an example of the queer autonomous zone in operation. Briefly, glitch art is defined as the practice of manipulating data files to produce unexpected digital images or sounds. I will return to glitch art below when I discuss its potentials to dismantle the face. I divide the chapter into several "plateaus" to probe deeper into the *intensities* of the queer autonomous zone as I see them unfolding during the glitch art event. As Massumi indicates above, for Deleuze and Guattari, plateaus are "continuous regions of intensities" that curtail any sense of cohesion and do not "allow themselves to build toward a climax" (*ATP* 158). In like manner, the plateaus that follow here are provocations, probes, and wavelengths that aim to bring the project to a sort of "pitch of intensity" without dissipation. While each section below connects with the other, my goal here is not to build an argument; rather, I seek to generate a momentum and intensity. If the queer autonomous zone, as a mutating abstract machine, functions to

make rhizomes, then it follows that it should be explored rhizomatically. Equal parts

hypothesis, creative exploration, art exhibition, and manifesto, the chapter aims to

develop a coalescence of ideas that assemble the concepts of somatic suspension,

imperceptibility, dismantling the face, and glitch art in unexpected ways.

I present glitch art as an "afterimage" of the project that aims to "reactivate" the

concepts that I have presented thus far. I want to stress that my focus on glitch art should

not be taken to mean that I understand it as the only or superior form of resistance

diagrammed by the queer autonomous zone. The queer autonomous zone, like a

plateau,[82] diagrams resistance by "creating a fabric of intensive states between which any

number of connecting routes could exist" (Massumi Foreword x). Glitch art is but one

route amongst many possibilities. My decision to focus on glitch is based on its growing

prevalence as an art medium as well as the rise of recent scholarship in this field.[83]

Moreover, as I will show, glitch can be harnessed as a mode of "self"-styling that

foregrounds the potential for a non-unitary subjectless subjectivity which, as I have

argued, is a crucial element for a queer politics of imperceptibility. To refresh, in the first

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[82] For Deleuze and Guattari, "each abstract machine can be considered a 'plateau' of variation that places variables of content and expression in continuity." (*ATP* 511). In this sense, the queer autonomous zone is a plateau that converges intensities and affective textures to create a plane of consistency of moving parts with different trajectories. See Massumi's forward to *ATP* for a definition of plateau as a convergence of disparate trajectories (iv).

[83] See Shabbar 2018; Braidotti and Hlavajova 2018; Fournier 2018; Cubitt 2017; Pasek 2017; Wolfgang et al. 2017; Haber 2016; Brooks 2015; Sundén 2015; Marenko 2015; Parkhill and Rodgers 2011; Menkman 2011. The emerging field of glitch studies (not always named as such) is multidisciplinary, including crossovers with hacktivism, tactical media, wearable technologies, virus and viral theory, Afrofuturism, and posthumanism more broadly.

chapter, following Deleuze and Guattari, I introduced sexuality as a *flux*—a movement

and impersonal flow of a multiplicity.  In the second chapter, I argued that sexual

surveillance blocks and *suspends* this movement by plotting bodies on the *grid of*

*identification*.  In the third chapter, I suggested that instead of a politics of recognition,

based on defining subject/object relations, resistance to sexual surveillance ought to be

considered in terms of movements of *imperceptibility* and *desubjectification.*  There, I

also introduced *the line of pure resistance* as a concept that allows us to trace the

embedded and embodied human and non-human relations that emerge during *becomings-*

*imperceptible*.  In the last chapter, I identified *faciality* as the machinic operation that

diagrams surveillance and controls sexuality by giving it a *face.*  To counter faciality, I

proposed the *queer autonomous zone* as a mutating force that creates relations of

resistance within the surveillance assemblage.  Here, my goal is to conclude the project

by demonstrating that a queer politics of imperceptibility is *already* underway.  To flesh

out this conclusion, I explore Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "possible worlds" and

delineate how it reveals a move toward non-unitary subjectivities and collective

becomings.  I underpin this movement by discussing the effects and affects of glitches

and glitch art with a presentation of my art project *Queer-Alt-Delete*, which will bring us

to view the queer autonomous zone in action.

## 5.1   Plateau: What is Glitch?

Glitches are rogue algorithms, unforeseen conjugations that interrupt the human/machine

separation.  They disrupt the body's habitual movements and jerk it into a new situation.

For example, when a computer crashes, a screen freezes, or a sound is stuck on repeat,

the user is forced into action: stop, restart, reboot, or retreat.  Annoyance and agitation

well up in the body; hands clench, eyes roll, heart-rate increases, perspiration forms at the

brow as an exasperated sigh escapes from the user's lips.  Glitches are haptic.[84]  They

create an embodied response and felt experience that involuntarily contracts the distance

between user and computer, animating a hiccup between the interface of self and

machine.  Glitches may occur because of a system malfunction or they may be provoked

by misuse of the system.  However, they often seem to appear without justification.

Does the computer need an update?  Is there a virus?  Is the system overloaded,

*overcoded?*  Regardless of the root cause of a glitch, it produces an intimate relation of

frustration in which both user and computer need time to cool down.  *A glitch is a high*

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[84] Laura U. Marks, drawing from Deleuze, defines haptic as follows: "the use of the sense of touch, isolated from its narrative functions, to create a cinematic space" (8).  Although both Deleuze and Marks are writing in the context of film/video, I argue that haptic space manifests during the relational "viewing" and creating of glitch images, which I discuss further below.  For example, when it comes to the hapticity of glitches, Marks asks: "When your computer jitters and crashes, do you not bleed too?  Does the aborted connection remind you of your tenuous hold on this world?  When your computer sprouts a rash of warnings and mindless confirmation messages on its face, do you similarly grow hot and bothered?  I know I do." (191).

*intensity situation that corrupts the plane of organization*.[85]  The sheer affectivity that

glitch produces signals its potential for serious disruption.

A more positive experience of glitch than I have just described was given by artist

and writer Legacy Russell in 2012.  Russell coined the phrase "glitch feminism" and

defines glitch as a "digital orgasm, where the machine takes a sigh, a shudder, and with a

jerk, spasms" ("Digital Dualism").  For Russell, glitch serves as a source of feminist

pleasure that activates a new politics.  Glitch feminism, she writes:

> embraces the causality of "error," and turns the gloomy implication of *glitch* on its
>
> ear by acknowledging that an error in a social system that has already been
>
> disturbed by economic, racial, social, sexual, and cultural stratification and the
>
> imperialist wrecking-ball of globalization—processes that continue to enact
>
> violence on all bodies—may not, in fact, be an *error* at all, but rather a much-
>
> needed erratum. This glitch is a correction to the "machine," and, in turn, a positive
>
> departure. ("Digital Dualism," emphasis original)

Placing this argument within the context of cybersex and online pornography, Russell

situates glitch in the "realm of foreplay, whether it be 'play' with oneself, or with a

virtualized *other*, imagined, or waiting just on the other side of the proverbial screen"

("Digital Dualism, emphasis original).  The glitch, she reasons, is a "happy accident" that

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[85] To reiterate, the plane of organization organizes relations between signs and subjects, forms and
functions; it performs the function of stratification (*ATP* 269).  As we saw in the previous chapter,
faciality operates on and creates a plane of organization to *overcode* the body with a face.

reworks the regulatory and routine experience of sex and sexuality by prompting a sudden awareness that we can and ought to "choose-our-own-adventure" when getting intimate with technology and when navigating the "hegemony of a structured system" ("Digital Dualism"). The sensuous and tantalizing portrait she paints of glitch as a "third-party" in a much-needed ménage à trois with technology, sharply contrasts the characterization of "error" in consumer culture as a miserable lag that occurs as a result of operating on last year's technology or the drudgery of a slow internet speed while trying to navigate capitalism's highspeed highway. Like Russell, I also posit glitch as an affirmative tool that reveals and widens the cracks in an already corrupt system.

A glitch meddles with the process of computational stratification. It unravels algorithmic functions, chains of code and extracts them from their plane of organization. Bits of data "spin off the strata, scrambling forms by dint of speed or slowness, breaking down functions" (Deleuze and Guattari *ATP* 270). Although Deleuze and Guattari, to the best of my knowledge, do not discuss computer glitches, I insert their words here to gesture toward the ways in which a glitch not only corrupts a plane of organization but also performs a destratification whereby elements and bits of data are only distinguished from one another by their varying "speeds" and by the micro-assemblages they enter into (255). The glitch introduces algorithmic uncertainty, creates chaos within a system, and unleashes new and unexpected connections with no seeming rhyme or reason. The glitch event threatens control by jamming its overcoding mechanisms.

The etymology of the word "glitch" comes from the Yiddish word *glitsh* "to slip," "slither" or "slide and glide"— a glitch makes something slippery or throws things off balance (Sundén 6).  I suggest that computational glitches have the capacity to slide the body out of a moment of *somatic suspension*[86] by exposing the instability of identity, the corruptibility of the face, and the *inherent* fallibility of the overcoding machine.  If, as Deleuze argues, first, that disciplinary mechanisms of control are susceptible to "the passive dangers of entropy" and second, that "the active dangers of sabotage" *and* societies of control are jammed by "piracy" and "the introduction of viruses" ("Postscript" 6),[87]  then I suggest that glitch is a weapon that can be used to counter both dangers.  A glitch jams the white wall/black hole machine, and sabotages faciality, not only by exposing the inner workings of the system but also by offering itself up as a tool of resistance, as we shall see.

Glitch has an important relationship to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of possible worlds because glitch is intimately connected to facilitating the opening of new possibilities.  Glitch gives way to possibility: something alien may flash on the screen before it crashes or a frame freezes, forcing a new thought or contemplation.

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[86] In chapter two, I define somatic suspension as the occasion when the body's movement is suspended, either physically or affectively, from crossing a *threshold.*  Somatic suspension is a technique of control that exists within the surveillance assemblage along with spatial arrangements of in-visibility and digital modulation (for my discussion on somatic suspension see p. 84).

[87] For my overview of Deleuze's arguments on the relation between disciplinary societies and societies of control see p. 43-50.

According to Simon O'Sullivan, "glitches—or breaks in the typical—are a kind of reverse technology in that they offer an escape from the manipulation performed by those other affective assemblages that increasingly operate in a parallel logic to art" ("From Stuttering" 251).  Seeing the proliferation and circulation of mass media images as an exercise of affective control, O'Sullivan argues that glitching dominant images of the world not only breaks a world but makes one: "[glitches are the] betrayal of one world and the affirmation of a world-yet-to-come" (251).  Glitches reveal possible worlds that trouble the veracity of the subject/object division (249).

For Deleuze and Guattari the term "possible" has a specific meaning.  It is in opposition to the real and differentiated from the virtual.[88] As Ronald Bogue notes in his extensive genealogy of Deleuze's treatment of the possible, there are two definitions of the possible for Deleuze (277).  First, following Henri Bergson, Deleuze rejects the possible as that which conditions the real.  The possible, Deleuze argues, "is opposed to the real," where on the other hand the virtual "possesses a full reality by itself" (*DR* 211).  As well, the possible is only realized by an actual event.  For example, after we trip and fall, we may reflect on the situation and play out other possible scenarios that could have happened: it could have been worse; if I was more careful, this would not have happened, I should have taken the other path, and so forth.  None of these possibilities existed as

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[88] On p. 151, I define the relation between the virtual and actual as follows: the virtual is not something we can perceive.  It is only something we can *intuit*.  Nevertheless, the virtual is still active; it is not something waiting to be actualized for us to perceive; becomings are virtual.  The virtual is a political potential that exceeds actual ideologies and systems of knowledge that we have produced thus far.

such (as a way to avoid the fall) until the event took place, and yet tripping and falling

itself unfolds as *one of the many* possibilities that could have happened, thus rendering it

as an actual event that is *part* of the real. As Bogue explains, the problem that Deleuze

has with this conceptualization of the possible is that "since every possible is not realized,

the actual event is merely a limitation or filtering of possibilities, on possibility passing

into existence while the others are discarded" (277).

The problem with this definition of the possible, for Deleuze is that it suggests that

reality is simply created by adding existence to an already perceived possibility. Against

this, he argues that the real *precedes* and conditions what is possible (Bogue 276). The

possible is *not* real but it exists. Which is to say that possibilities are *realized*. Virtuals,

on the other hand, are *actualized*. But a possibility, once it is realized can be

"potentialized" so that it feeds into the virtual and becomes a reality. For example,

tripping and following is a realized possibility that unleashes the potential for new events

to take place (a sprained ankle, a missed appointment, a connection with a stranger who

has lent a helping hand). The difference between the virtual and possible is that the

possible is comprised only of *resemblance* whereas the virtual is composed of pure

*difference* (Bogue 212).

The first definition of the possible, that it operates within the realm of resemblance,

limitation, and representation, may appear to have a negative value. However, Deleuze

gives the possible a second definition, which is more positive in that the possible

expresses *a world yet to come.* Deleuze and Guattari write: "This possible world is not real, or not yet, but it exists nonetheless: it is an expressed that exists only in its expression…. And this possible world also has a specific reality in itself, as possible" (*WP* 17). These two different definitions of the possible given by Deleuze affirm that there are both rhizomatic possibilities and arborescent possibilities. The rhizomatic realm *positively* effects that which exists but is not yet real. In other words, its gives potential to possible worlds imagined. Importantly, Deleuze and Guattari identify the *probe-head* as that which "opens a rhizomatic realm of possibility effecting the potentialization of the possible, as opposed to arborescent possibility which marks a closure, an impotence" (*ATP* 191). Indeed, in this quote, Deleuze and Guattari give us the closest definition of the probe-head function: *it effects the potentialization of the possible.* Hence, a probe-head not only leads to dismantling the face but also creates the possibility for new faces to emerge.

Bogue maintains that for Deleuze and Guattari, the "invention of possible worlds proceeds through embodiment, by way of an experimentation on the sensations that traverse bodies, such that the virtual, which is immanent with those sensations is given a new material form" (286). *The probe-head then, can be figured as an embodied experience and sensation that gives the virtual a new material form.* This accords with my claim in the previous chapter that probe-heads are *portal-heads* that facilitate the crisscrossing of bodies, human and non-human, into each other's dimensions, unleashing virtual intensities and entering the subject into new states of becoming. There, I also

suggested that probe-heads are *glitches* that emerge during moments of *somatic suspension*.[89] Following this, I claim here that glitches, as probe-heads, slide the body out of somatic suspension by revealing and potentializing the possibility of a different world.

## 5.2 Plateau: Sliding out of Somatic Suspension

Although Deleuze and Guattari indicate that the probe-head potentializes possible worlds, they also assert that probe-heads emerge when the abstract machine of faciality "forces flows of signifiance and subjectification, into knots of arborescence and holes of abolition" (*ATP* 190). As such, I hypothesize that a probe-head emerges *during* somatic suspension, when the body is caught between a threshold and the grid of identification, when flows of becoming are forced into black holes of abolition. Somatic suspension, if it produces a probe-head, as I suggest, can then be seen as a technique of surveillance that inadvertently and intimately reveals the cracks and fissures of the system. Somatic suspension reveals new possibilities of resistance. I would like to now propose that somatic suspension and the emergence of a probe-head therein *glitches* the grid of identification and "opens a rhizomatic realm of possibility" (Deleuze and Guattari 190).

Somatic suspension both is and is not a glitch. For example, when somatic suspension is the result of a biometric failure it is *not* a glitch. As Shoshana Magnet and

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[89] See p. 241

Simone Browne demonstrate, failure is *encoded* into biometric technology. Failure here

is *not* a spontaneous event. As we saw previously, security scanners in airports that

reinforce the gender binary (when a TSA agent determines a traveller's gender by

choosing either a blue button for male or a pink button for female) are *designed* to fail to

recognize certain bodies (Magnet 30). Yet, it is possible in this moment that somatic

suspension *may* reveal the inevitable failure of identification, exposing the instability of

the grid of identification and causing the face to slip. Said another way, during somatic

suspension the body has the potential to momentarily glimpse "the ruin of representation"

(Olkowski 1999).[90] What I am suggesting is that somatic suspension is a technique of

surveillance that could go both ways, it may create arborescent possibilities or rhizomatic

ones. Although somatic suspension may incur negative effects and affects for the body

suspended, the chain of signifiance is nonetheless momentarily broken, the body is hurled

off course, and a line of flight escapes reterritorialization.

Glitch art, as I will show, can capitalize on this failure by exploiting and exposing

the weakness of technology. At the same time, glitch art acknowledges the

inseparability between human and machine and the possible worlds that exist between

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[90] Briefly, the ruin of representation, according to Dorothea Olkowski, distorts homogenic world views and glimpses possibilities of new worlds beyond hierarchies, binaries, and rigid stratification. She contends that this "ruin" is produced through creative means. For example, she writes, "distorting tendencies (distorting in relation to the rigid hierarchies of representation) have always been present in selected works of art and, to some extent, even in the work of representational artists, as the crack or the catastrophe that emerges in the midst of representation" (25).

them. We shall traverse closer to one possible world in the next two plateaus: Glitch

Art and *Queer-Alt- Delete*.

## 5.3 Plateau: Glitch Art

Glitch art is defined as the practice of manipulating media in ways that produce

unexpected images or sounds. This may include data manipulation, corrupting

algorithmic code, mashing together different programming languages, or using hardware

in unintended ways to introduce an element of error into the art making process. The

resulting artwork varies greatly depending on the file's format and the technique used.

Moreover, it is usually the case that the creator cannot predetermine the "look" of a

glitched image.[91]

Glitch art produces technical errors to betray form in favour of generating

"atypical expressions," which have the power to effectuate change and reveal difference

and potential. In Deleuze and Guattari's words, "atypical expression constitutes a cutting

edge of deterritorialization of language…it causes language to tend toward the limit of its

elements, forms, or notions, toward a near side or a beyond of language" (*ATP* 99). An

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[91] That said, there are several glitch artists who make glitch images and sounds using photo editing software, which allows the creator to carefully curate an aesthetics. There are also online "glitch generators," which do not require any actual data bending or code corruption on behalf of the user. My analysis of glitch art does not extend to these practices given that they privilege technique and form over expression and experience.

atypical expression pushes form and elements to their absolute limit.[92] In Massumi's

articulation:

> The atypical expression pulls language into a direct contact with its own futurity.
> It forcibly twists it into glints of forms, hints of contents, as-yet-functionless
> functions which, however 'unmotivated' or 'arbitrary,' *could be.* The atypical
> expression puts the screws on the system of language in a way that forces its actual
> operation to overlap with its zone of potential.… Language has been made to
> coincide, 'on the near side or beyond' of its conventional usage, with its own
> intensity. (*A Shock to Thought* xxii-iii, emphasis original)

Paraphrasing Guattari, Massumi further continues that "the atypical expression is a

'nucleus of expression' that may evade capture long enough to continue its autonomous

formations as a 'node' of self-creative or 'autopoietic' subjectification" (xxviii). I

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[92] Relevant to understanding "atypicality" is Deleuze and Guattari's delineation between
"content" and "expression." They define content and expression as the formalizations of
unformed intensities and potentials. When an assemblage is stratified by an overcoding machine,
intensities and potentials are articulated on the strata as content and expression. Deleuze and
Guattari explain this "double articulation" of intensities and potentials as follows:

> It is on the strata that the double articulation appears that formalizes traits of expression
> and traits of content, each in its own right, turning matters into physically or semiotically
> formed substances and functions into forms of expression or content. Expression then
> constitutes indexes, icons, or symbols that enter regimes or semiotic systems. Content
> then constitutes bodies, things, or objects that enter physical systems, organisms, and
> organizations …. All of this culminates in a language stratum that installs an abstract
> machine on the level of expression and takes the abstraction of content even further.
> (*ATP* 142-3)

The queer autonomous zone is a mutating abstract machine that deterritorializes expression and
entangles it with new intensities, conditioning the potential described by Massumi, for
"atypicalities [to] slip out of signification's sleeves" (Massumi *A Shock to Thought* xxvii).

suggest that glitch art is an atypical expression. It pulls the language of code into an uncertain futurity, forcibly twisting it into arbitrary states in which an image *could be.* Glitch art bends and contorts the language of code taking its expression to the absolute limit. Glitch art experiments with nodes of indeterminacy and encourages the *autopoiesis of error*[93] to contort algorithmic rules and occasion the spontaneous eruption of the unknown. As is often the case with art forms, glitch art invokes an embodied and sensory relationship with its creator. However, glitch art engages the artist with a *canvas of code* and a *paintbrush of data* in which the intent is not to make something appear on the surface, but to *erase* bytes of information and make things *disappear* from the surface. Or, the code may be doubled, pushed to its limit, to create a sensor(y) *overload* within the processing machine.

In his 1987 lecture, "What is the Creative Act?" Deleuze contends that "The work of art is not an instrument of communication; the work of art has nothing to do with communication. The work of art does not contain the least bit of information." It would seem then, that glitch art subverts communication. It scrambles information, breaks information, and renders communication *opaque*. However, glitch introduces a new mode of "communication." It does not dispense information, but it *signals* the very failure of informatic communication. Glitch art can be defined as a "minor literature" (O'Sullivan 250). Deleuze and Guattari define minor literature as an experimentation

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[93] By "autopoiesis of error" I mean to signal the capacity of a computer glitch or error to reproduce and maintain itself.

with the form of language. It is created when a writer encounters the forces and

intensities of the world that exist outside of order-words[94] and the relations of power that

govern them (O'Sullivan 249). Experiments with writing rupture language by producing

*asignifying* potentials (e.g., Virginia Woolf's novel *The Waves,* that I discussed in the

previous chapter). Deleuze and Parnet affirm: "To write is to become but has nothing to

do with becoming a writer" (43). Deleuze and Guattari continue, "The writer uses

words, but by creating a syntax that makes them pass into sensation that makes the

standard language stammer, tremble, cry, or even sing: this is the style, the 'tone,' the

language of sensations, or the foreign language within language that summons forth a

people to come" (*WP* 176).

Glitch art similarly makes a computational language stammer by corrupting chains

of signifiers and deterritorializing the binary language of its "words" and "syntax"—i.e.

its code and computation. As O'Sullivan argues, glitch engenders sensations and

vibrations by composing a new language that *passes between human and machine*

("From Stuttering" 249). In the same way, I suggest that glitch *art* puts the body into

motion by creating stammers, trips, slips, and malfunctions to the plane of organization.

Glitch art opens the language of programming onto unexpected intensities so that the

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[94] For Deleuze and Guattari, "order-words" are speech acts that fall in line with the dominant
statement or reality of the State: "order-words mark stoppages or organized, stratified
compositions" (*ATP* 108). On language, more generally, they write: "Language is made not to be
believed but to be obeyed, and to compel obedience" (7). In *ATP,* see Plateau "November 20,
1923: Postulates of Linguistics" for their compressive discussion of order-words.

creator is no longer a subject of the statement[95] whose reality is confined within a dominant one. The creator-subject is cyborg. Glitch art, to borrow from Haraway, is an "ironic dream of a common language for [minor subjects] in the integrated circuit" (149) of the surveillance machine. Glitch art, functioning in the same way that Deleuze and Guattari delineate minor literature, "make[s] sequences vibrate, to open the world onto unexpected intensities—in short, [makes] an asignifying intensive utilization of language…there is no longer a subject…Rather, there is a circuit of states that forms a mutual becoming, in the heart of a necessarily multiple or collective assemblage" (*K* 22). This integrated circuit is the becoming penetrable of *seemingly* impenetrable code and the becoming of the penetrable body as positively opaque.

Glitch is a language beyond representation, recognition, and identity. In "Glitch Studies Manifesto," artist and curator Rosa Menkman affirms that, "Once the glitch is understood as an alternative way of representation or a new language, its tipping point has passed and the essence of its glitch-being is vanished. The glitch is no longer an art of rejection, but a shape or appearance that is recognized as a novel form (of art)" (341). Glitches are not about negation and opposition; instead, they are an affirmation of what is yet to come. As a mode of resistance, glitches deterritorialize code from a stratum of binary functions, glitching the field of in-visibility and destroying the calculated flow of digital modulation. While glitch art, and the conjugation between machine and human,

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[95] The subject of the statement is subjected to the dominant reality of the State through a process of normalization. "The subject of the statement is that which (or who) gets normalized" (Adkins 90).

may be considered an individual and isolated activity with little social effect or collective

purpose, I argue that it is not the computational error *per se* that promulgates a line of

flight—"non-responsive" technologies alone do not radicalize a politics of resistance.

The potentials for resistance are much subtler: a glitch is a *subterranean force* that sets

the body off on a new course of action.

### 5.4 Plateau: *Queer-Alt-Delete*: "Passing from One World to Another"



Fig. 5: "Glitch 1," *Queer-Alt-Delete*, Andie Shabbar, 2017.

*Queer-Alt-Delete* is a series of "self"-portrait images that engage with computational

chaos to glitch the face. In computer sciences, "computational chaos" is defined as an

event where two algorithms in close proximity suddenly disperse after travelling together

for a given interval of time. The dispersion creates an "explosive amplification" of

numerical errors (Yao 109). Likewise, *Queer-Alt-Delete* plays with error to enact a

sudden dispersion from the rigid segmentation of identity heralded by the face. The

project interlaces algorithmic uncertainty with subjectivity to experiment with the

possibility of creating an explosive amplification of new potentials for a subjectless
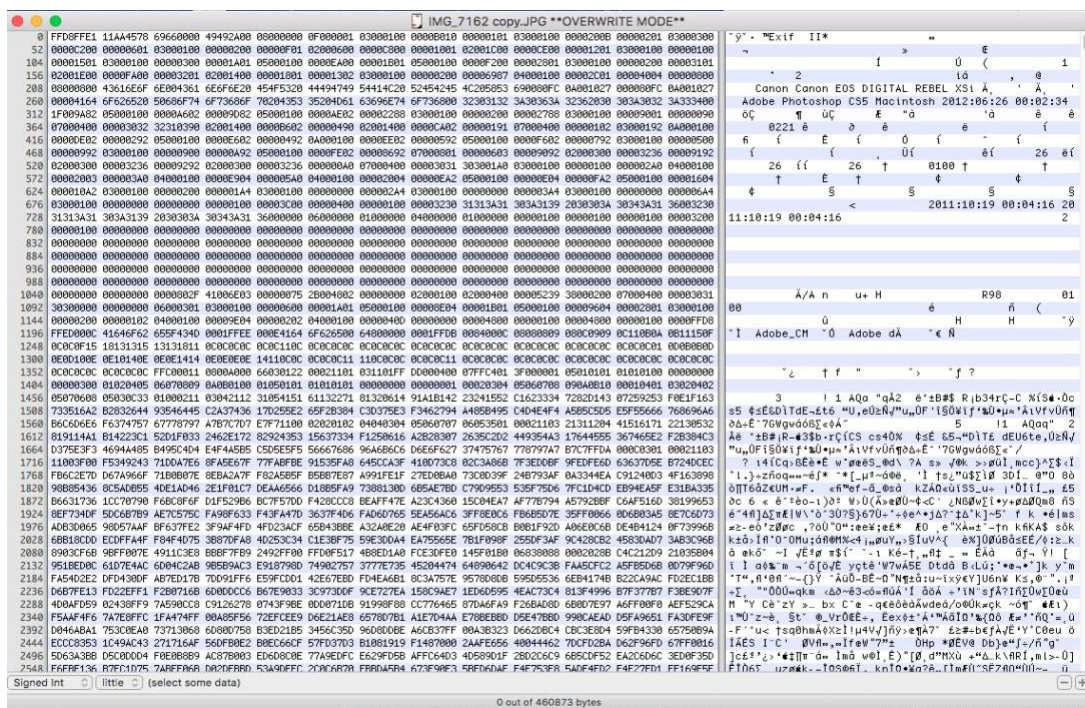
subjectivity (Shabbar 197).



Fig. 6: Screenshot of the hexadecimal data file of the image shown in Fig. 5.

To produce the images, I glitch the data file of each photograph. I convert the

image into a text file first, which enables me to access the file's binary or hexadecimal

code to perform random deletions of data (Fig. 6). I also use another technique which involves accessing the ascii code (a code that uses every button on the keyboard) (Fig. 7). This technique makes it possible to write words into the code, copy and paste poems, and even mash together different data from separate image files. Binary, hexadecimal, and ascii are distinct kinds of code but they all signify the same image file; ironically (or not), their relationship is often described as a "sliding scale of redundancy."[96]

*Queer-Alt-Delete* may be conceptualized as an actual tool of resistance to surveillance, given its ability to produce biometrically unidentifiable images of the face. However, I am wary of framing the glitched images as a sort of mask[97] that can be used on social media sites to obscure one's identity, for example. In my figuration, glitch does not attempt to conceal, hide, or mask the face. Rather, glitched images intend to

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[96] Recall that for Deleuze and Guattari, "the face itself is redundancy. It is itself in redundancy with the redundancies of signifiance or frequency and those of resonance or subjectivity. The face constructs the wall that the signifier needs in order to bound off of; it constitutes the wall of the signifier, the frame or screen" (*ATP* 168).

[97] This is not to say, however, that a mask does not have political value. Indeed, wearing a mask during a protest or as part of a public demonstration is a central tool for collective anonymity. A mask in this sense is a force capable of overriding individualism and of spotlighting a movement's volume, texture, and de-subjectivizing intensity. The mask has been crucial for activist groups including Pussy Riot, the Guerrilla Girls, Occupy Wall Street, and the Zapatistas, to name just a few. Nonetheless, the mask does *not* dismantle the face. Its function, here, is entirely different: the mask safeguards against the destruction of a *possible world* expressed by the protestors' face. For example, the balaclava protects an individual's identity from being recorded and recognized by the State, and thus preserves the face's expression of a possible world of collective social transformation. On the other hand, a mask may be used to *enhance* the power of the State, as is the case for riot police who wear their foreboding masks to shield The Fac*e*, to appropriate facelessness as a way to secure Molar Man firmly on his throne. In an effort to stave off the faciality machine and dethrone The Face, I turn away from the notion of the mask to emphasize glitch, not as an object, but as a practice of producing the intensities of resistance.

defacialize the face: break the face, dismantle the code, delete its signifiers. If glitch escapes the face it does so "To flee, but in fleeing to seek a weapon" (Deleuze and Parnet 136). In other words, rather than running from the face, it turns it into a weapon. Glitch is a double-edged sword that flays the illusion that the face is naturally human and at the same time cuts a new edge of deterritorialization.



Fig. 7: Screenshot of a portion of the glitched ascii code of the image shown in Fig. 8.

Despite the monstrous inhumanity of the face, or perhaps because of it, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that it is during an encounter with the face that a possible world begins to emerge. They explain:

Suddenly a frightened face looms up that looks at something out of the field. The other person appears here as *neither subject nor objec*t but as something that is very different: a *possible world,* the possibility of a frightening world. This possible world is not real, or not yet, but it exists nonetheless: it is an expressed that exists only in its expression-the face, or an equivalent of the face. To begin with, the other person is this existence of a possible world. And this possible world also has a specific reality in itself, as possible: when the expressing speaks and says, "I am frightened," even if its words are untruthful, this is enough for a reality to be given to the possible as such. (*WP* 17)

If the expression on another person's face—terror, to use Deleuze and Guattari's example—reveals to me a possible world that is not yet real but exists all the same, what possibilities are unleashed when the face is *glitched*? What reality is given to the face that expresses atypically? What possible worlds unfold then?

Bogue clarifies that for Deleuze and Guattari, "The Other as expression of a possible world holds the potential for liberating one from the constrains of common sense reality…rather than reinscribing one within them" (275). I suggest that the glitched-face liberates the subject from the constraints of identity—or at least the representation of one, enabling the invention of unfamiliar faces—faces that integrate the body and code, faces that are human and nonhuman, fresh faces that potentialize unforeseen and unexpected possible worlds. As I argued earlier, dismantling the face is not a concept that advocates

facelessness; it is a call to invent new polyvocalities, collective faces, and non-unitary

subjectivities—faces that are not negatively *in*human but positively *posthuman*.[98]

Dismantling the face, sending out a probe-head, potentializing possibilities are all

pathways of resistance that invoke becomings-imperceptible—they world to make a

world; they conjugate with others to potentialize affirmative possibilities.

My project *Queer-Alt-Delete* consists of glitched images which evidence Deleuze

and Guattari's proposal that:

> The concept of the Other Person as expression of a possible world in a perceptual
>
> field leads us to consider the components of this field for itself in a new way. No
>
> longer being either subject of the [perceptual] field or object in the field, the other
>
> person will become the condition under which not only subject and object are

---

[98] In *The Posthuman,* Braidotti makes a distinction between the inhuman and posthuman. She argues that the inhuman in the last century, has come to signal "the alienating and commodifying effect of advance capitalism on the human"(108). She writes:

> The inhuman is not what it used to be. The relationship between the human and the technological other, as well as the affects involved in it, including desire, cruelty and pain, change radically with the contemporary technologies of advanced capitalism. For one thing, the technological construct now mingles with the flesh in unprecedented degrees of intrusiveness…Moreover, the nature of the human-technological interaction has shifted towards a blurring of the boundaries between the genders, the races and the species…The technological other today—a mere assemblage of circuitry and feedback loops—functions in the realm of an egalitarian blurring of differences, if not downright indeterminacy. (109)

In my understanding, the "inhuman" is that which is *inhumane*—the inhuman(e) forces of humanity. For example, returning to Deleuze and Guattari, they define the inhuman in relation to the face: "The inhuman in human beings: that is what the face is from the start … The face, what a horror…natural inhuman, a monstrous hood" (171,190). The posthuman subject, on the other hand, is not inhuman *per se*; the posthuman subject is human *and* non-human. Unlike "inhuman," "posthuman" signals an affirming movement toward a subjectless subjectivity.

redistributed but also figure and ground, margins and centre, moving object and reference point, transitive, and substantial, length and depth. The Other Person is always perceived as an other, but in its concept it is the condition of all perception, for others as for ourselves. It is the condition for our *passing from one world to another*. (*WP* 18, emphasis added)

As the title of this plateau designates, *Queer-Alt-Delete* is a creative imagining of passing from one world to another. It attempts to turn the subject/object split and the perception of a natural demarcation between the self and others on its head. Glitch portraits alter our relationship with others by glitching the image of the self. Deleuze and Guattari write, "the other appears as the expression of a possible. The other is a possible world as it exists in a face that expresses it and takes shape in a language that gives it a reality. In this sense [the other person] is a concept with three inseparable components: possible world, existing face, and real language or speech" (17). Although the three components—the face, possible world, and language—remain distinct from each other in the concept of the other person, Deleuze and Guattari contend that something passes from one to the other, something that is undecidable between them" (19-20). What passes between them is a vital potential to refigure the relation between these components. How is this done? How do we organize our relations with the face, language, and possibilities anew? What passes from one to the other? What passes between signifiance and subjectification, between the white wall and black hole to create affirmative possibilities of becoming otherwise? As I have already state above, for Deleuze and Guattari that is

the probe-head.  The probe-head passes between the face, possibilities, and language to
unravel new and unimaginable images of a (decentered) self.



Fig. 8: "Glitch 2," Queer-Alt-Delete, Andie Shabbar, 2018.

Glitch art effectuates the mutating abstract machine of the queer autonomous zone
by creating rhizomes between language, sensation, the face, and creativity.  It reveals
new passageways for becoming-imperceptible, freeing desire and stimulating its flow
toward escape.  It sustains the possible world by not *collapsing* language, sensation, and
the face into one another but by coalescing their intensities.  In my imagining, glitch art is
a cascading flow of dissonance between expression, the possible, signifiance and

subjectification.  It is but one way to dismantle the face that does not part ways from

signification or subjectification or another person; instead, it invigorates a crisscrossing

movement *between* them.  Glitch art traverses the virtual and actual and in doing so,

potentializes the possible—that is, it moves between the potential of becoming and an act

of resistance, and as such glitch potentializes the possibility for new subjectivities, faces

yet to come.  Just as dismantling the face locates the points of instability within our own

identifications, glitch portraits allow for the *sensing of* opaque possible worlds.

As an atypical expression, glitch portraits deterritorialize facial traits.  Like Deleuze

and Guattari write of probe-heads, I argue that glitch portraits move us closer to freeing

faciality traits so that:

> Each freed faciality trait forms a rhizome with a freed trait of [art].  This is not a
>
> collection of part-objects but a living block, a connecting of stems by which the
>
> traits of a face enter a real multiplicity or diagram with a trait of [an artwork] that is
>
> thereby effectively produced, created, according to quanta of absolute, positive
>
> deterritorialization—not evoked or recalled according to systems of
>
> reterritorialization. (*ATP* 190)

The glitched face refuses representation, rebuffs interpretation in order to form rhizomes

of intensity that render the face opaque.  At the same time, the opacity of the face

expresses the possibility of a self, a world, a life without the constraints of the face.
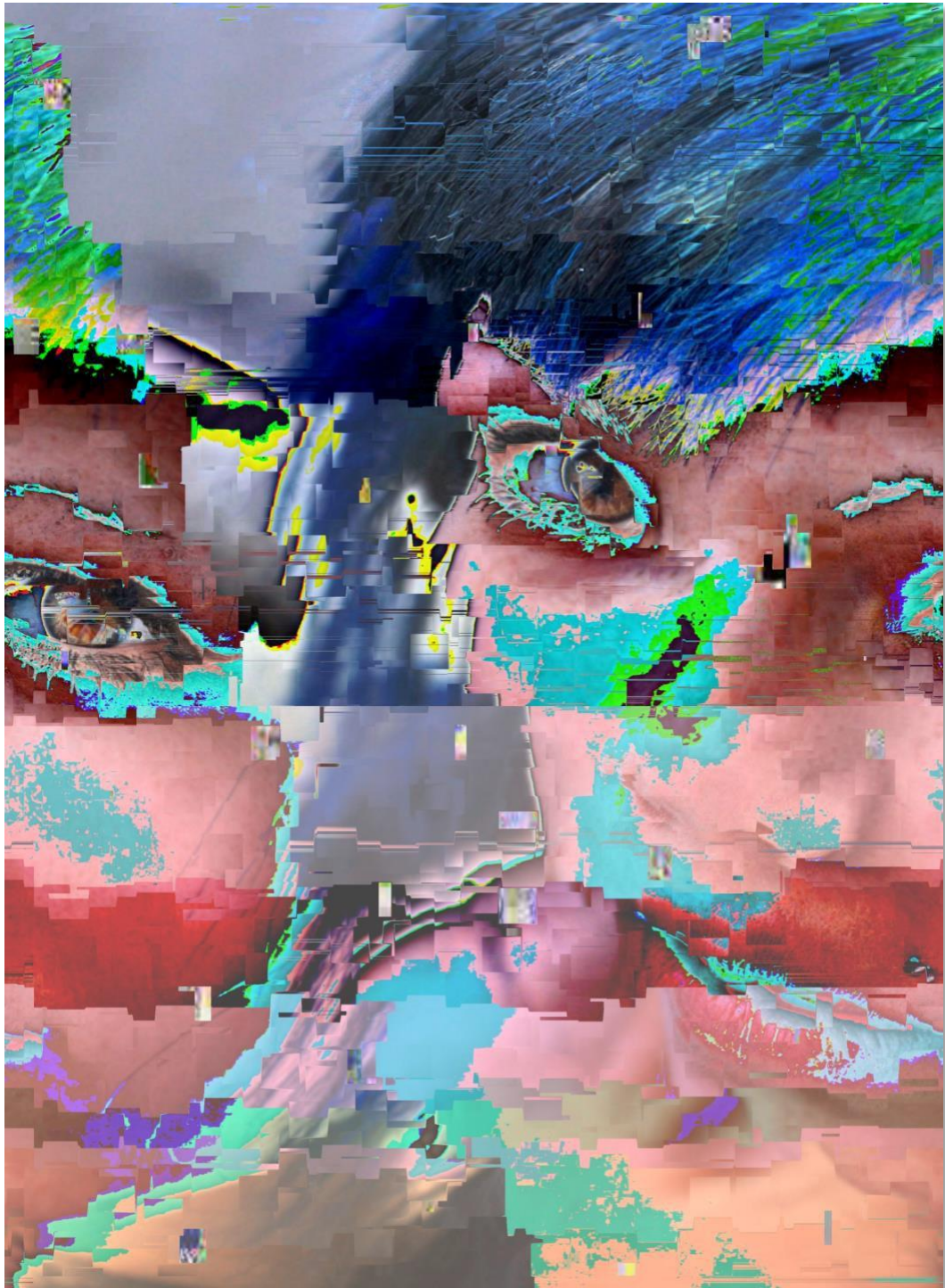
Fig. 9: "Glitch 3," *Queer-Alt-Delete*, Andie Shabbar, 2018

To summarize, glitch art engages in a creative process of transformation that is not wholly enacted through human intentionality. Fusing together the unknown and unpredictable, my project, *Queer-Alt-Delete*, dissolves divisions between human and machine, self and object, opacity and resistance, potential and possible, art and language, perceptibility and imperceptibility. It hacks into the faciality machine and deletes its code to reveal the chaotic material of unscripted "faces."



Fig. 10: "Glitch 4," *Queer-Alt-Delete*, Andie Shabbar, 2017.

As an act of resistance, *Queer-Alt-Delete* glitches the face to interrupt the continual overcoding and monitoring of the body. The project "experiments with different modes of constituting subjectivity and different ways of inhabiting our corporeality"

(Braidotti "The Ethics" 134). An act of infiltration and subversion, *Queer-Alt-Delete* works with algorithms of control, not only to confuse digital surveillance technology, such as facial recognition, but also to experiment with new ways of becoming-imperceptible to faciality's control. *Queer-Alt-Delete* is a project that brings to the fore what faciality aims to obscure: that faces are always unstable and open to disruption.

## 5.5 Plateau: From "Control-Alt-Delete" to *Queer-Alt-Delete*: Escaping control

To escape from a frozen system, to exit a program, or to reboot the machine, we use the keyboard command "control-alt-delete." We issue the command with agitation. We want to interrupt the undesirable interruption imposed on us by the machine. Pressing down on the control button, we are desperate to wrest free from the moment of suspension and to get things working again. Likewise, Queer-*Alt-Delete* is an art project that aims to escape from the somatic suspension imposed on the body by binary order, corrupt rules, and faulty regulations. Unlike its keyboard referent "Control-Alt-Delete," *Queer-Alt-Delete* escapes suspension not by engendering "control" but by corrupting its (over)coding machine. *Queer-Alt-Delete* imagines an *alternative* relationship between glitch and the body, user and computer, code and sexuality, data and surveillance. No longer operating as a coherent command that the system recognizes, *Queer-Alt-Delete* is a desire to slip out of somatic suspension, become-imperceptible, and generate a positive mutating abstract machine. *Queer-Alt-Delete* works *with*, rather than against, system malfunctions, identity errors, and unrecognizability; it acts as a line of pure resistance

that marshals error as a form of productive uncertainty (Shabbar 198). *Queer-Alt-Delete*

deterritorializes the function of "control" by deleting rather than rebooting identity.

"Queer" becomes the operative force that gets things moving again.



Fig. 11: "Glitch 5," *Queer-Alt-Delete*, Andie Shabbar 2017.

If, as Deleuze and Guattari write, "A plateau is always in the middle, not at the

beginning or the end" and "[it] designate[s] something very special: a continuous, self-

vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a

culmination point or external end" (*ATP* 21-2), then the queer autonomous zone does not

end here nor is it just beginning. It is a mutating abstract machine composed of affective

textures, planes of intensity, and plateaus of intensive states that are continuously

diagramming waves of resistance. All that is left is to *sense* the changing of the tide

already underway

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