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Volume 28: Affect

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Affect

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Created in a moment of political enthusiasm, this leaning spiral was designed to be twice the height of the Empire State Building in New York and to have alternately rotating central sections. Space is ordered into fragmented compartments that are formally related to each other as in a mathematic equation. Tatlin was the founder of Constructivism, a Russian art movement that grew out of artistic experiments with abstraction but later turned to more utilitarian concerns. He advocated the idea of the

'artist engineer' and saw the primary role of Constructivism as fulfilling social needs. Tatlin also created a series of hanging relief constructions using a variety of materials such as wood, metal, glass and wire and employing exclusively geometric forms. This masterpiece, a symbol of Constructivist ideals combining the disciplines of sculpture and architecture, was never constructed. The piece illustrated is a modern replica of the original model.
☛ Gabo, Lipchitz, Malevich, Popova, Rodchenko, Sheeler

Editors' Note

The 2018-19 Editorial Collective is pleased to present the 28th volume of *disClosure: A Journal of Social Theory*. Our inspiration for this odd bundle of pages is rooted in the aesthetic of the self-printed zine. While we regret that we couldn't sneak into Miller Hall in the middle of the night to guerrilla-copy the entire issue on a late-80s black-and-white Xerox, we are proud to say that each page of this volume was assembled entirely by hand. Every page is bordered or backgrounded by collages: these are pages that peel and flake, assembled from bits and pieces cut up and rearranged – not dissimilar, we believe, from how "knowledge" itself is made. The articles were printed off a wheezing home office Canon, cut on a crooked paper cutter, positioned and re-positioned on desks and bedroom floors, glued and taped, and (often, indeed, under the cover of night) finally scanned into the openly available and infinitely replicable digital artifact you find here.

In pursuing our vision of the scholarly zine, we have been galvanized by the work of Kara Keeling, who in *Queer Times, Black Futures* (2019) lays out what she calls a "politics of opacity." If we want the future to look different than the present, she says, we must disrupt the perpetuation of stable, predictable, and expected futures by becoming *unrecognizable*. This means proceeding with an indifference to dominant modes of signification and articulating alternate conceptions of the world that may be incomprehensible to common sense ways of doing things. In this volume of *disClosure*, we want to put this politics into action, and make our own intervention into what an "academic journal," and scholarship more broadly, can look like.

We mean this literally. Scholarship today, more often than not, is framed by the strict square of the PDF viewer and the standard template of the "knowledge product." We wish to offer a *re-framing*. We believe that a creative impulse lies at the root of all scholarship – a creative impulse too often dulled and denied in the interest of sober, self-censored, scientific products. In surrounding the words of these authors with color and the kilter of the hand, we hope to foreground and to highlight this drive that foments our knowledge, and aspires to such ideals as beauty and truth. As a scaffold, then, these slanting columns are meant to confound the standard square. This is knowledge production let loose: scholarship askew.

With this slim volume, we join forces with countless other publications in prying open the seals of academic publishing, continuing the collective push that will eventually tip scholarship into unrecognizability, and therefore into a more open and inclusive future. Into what might an unabashedly creative scholarship begin to bloom? On what might "knowledge" come to rest?

The articles and interviews contained herein aim precisely at these questions of possibility -- the forces that let it fly, and those that reign it in. "Affect" is a slippery concept, and the diverse pieces assembled in this volume explore the range of modalities through which it can be thought: from the extraordinary contained within the banal to the lingering residues of historical trauma; from the mood of global discourse to the sensations of streaming TV; from the atmospheres rooted into place to the fleeting experiences of the street; from intimate relations to the anti-colonial potentials of poetry; from the body itself to the collectives we comprise.

From all this, taking this collection as a whole, we begin to suspect that knowledge itself is perhaps little more than a quivering potentiality: a feeling. And rather than pump it out to ship in ready-made boxes, fitted into reusable frames, faster than we could ever consume, we will slow it down, open it up, seize it by the ears, and not be afraid to call it what it has always been: a creative act, a work of art.

Acknowledgements

Every year, a group of graduate students submits itself to the daunting and unfamiliar process of putting together an academic journal, from CFP to peer review to design to publication. We certainly could not have pulled it off without considerable help.

We'd first like to thank University of Kentucky professors Arnold Farr (Philosophy), Dierdra Reber (Hispanic Studies), Anna Secor (Geography, now at Durham University), Sharon Yam (Writing, Rhetoric, and Digital Studies), and Charlie Zhang (Gender and Women's Studies), who designed and led the Social Theory Seminar on Affect in the Spring of 2018. The present volume sprang from that course, and we would not be here without their expertise and vision. In sharing their knowledge and prodding us to think about affect in a critical, intersectional, and interdisciplinary manner, they laid the groundwork that made this journal possible.

We were blessed to be able to spend time with three distinguished scholars who were invited to the University of Kentucky for the Committee on Social Theory's Spring Lecture Series, Drs. Deborah Gould, Brian Massumi, and Shannon Sullivan. In addition, we also had the distinct pleasure of conversing with the Fall of 2018 Social Theory Distinguished Speaker, Dr. Ann Stoler. We are thankful to all four of these scholars for so generously sharing their time and expertise as they sat with us for lengthy interviews, and for their enlightening and enlivening inputs to the present issue. Their interviews show why affect studies is indispensable for understanding our contemporary world.

We also want to extend a special thank you to Dr. Michael Samers, who provided invaluable guidance as the editorial collective's faculty advisor. He offered crucial advice throughout the entire process, especially as we fielded submissions and navigated the peer review process for the first time.

SUMMERTIME IN AMERICA

2018-19 Editorial Collective

Ruwen Chang is a PhD Candidate in the department of Gender and Women's Studies at the University of Kentucky. Her research interests include biopower, posthumanism, reproductive justice, and transnational feminism. Ruwen's dissertation project examines the interaction between the legibility of personhood and stratified reproduction in contemporary China by investigating three cases: *suzhi* 素质 (quality), *zuo yuezi* 坐月子 (postpartum bedrest), and *guanggun* 光棍 (involuntary bachelorhood). Currently, she is preparing to defend her dissertation proposal and to start her year-long fieldwork in China.

Erin Clancy completed her MA in Human Geography at the University of Kentucky and has since continued on to her PhD at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her current research interests lie at the intersections of affect, health, the body, and feminist psychoanalytic theory.

Robby Hardesty is a PhD student in Geography at the University of Kentucky. He studies antebellum economic crises in the context of US settler colonialism.

Alina Hechler is a PhD Candidate in Gender and Women's Studies at the University of Kentucky. She is interested in anti-gender campaigns and how they intersect with populist, nationalist, and anti-immigration discourses.

Matthew John is a PhD student in Geography at the University of Kentucky.

J.D. Saperstein is a PhD Candidate in Geography at the University of Kentucky interested in the relationships between science, technology and society. J.D. is researching the socio-spatial implications of big data and digital agriculture in the United States.

Ian Spangler is a failed musician, aspiring playwright, and current PhD student in Geography at the University of Kentucky. His research has explored the uneven forms of value capture introduced by platform urbanism and how the emerging proptech sector transforms and restructures the practice of transacting real estate in the US context. More recently, he has become interested in the spatial politics of sweat data. He is a morning person, but only at night, and greatly despises fluorescent lighting.

Trump's ince...

Wilbur Ross; l...

Pitt; security-services

and billionaire David K...

If you're Jewish, there was a...
too, the century-old Palm Beach Country
Club, "the top primarily Jewish club in the
country—nothing else even comes close," says
a member. Other members have included Wall
Street legend Henry Kaufman; New England
Patriots owner Robert Kraft; private-equity-
firm chieftain Henry Kravis; Seagram scion
Charles Bronfman . . . and, infamously, Bernie
Madoff, who found many of his victims there.

This was the genteel and closed world of
private clubs in Palm Beach prior to the ar-
rival of Donald Trump. Ironically, because of
their tight restrictions and penchant for keep-
ing people out, they

million lawsuit against the town of Palm
Beach.'" (In fact he would sue the town for
$50 million.)

The B&T is frequented by heirs of
old-line American industrial families with
household names," says book publisher

RAGE

BECOMES

HER
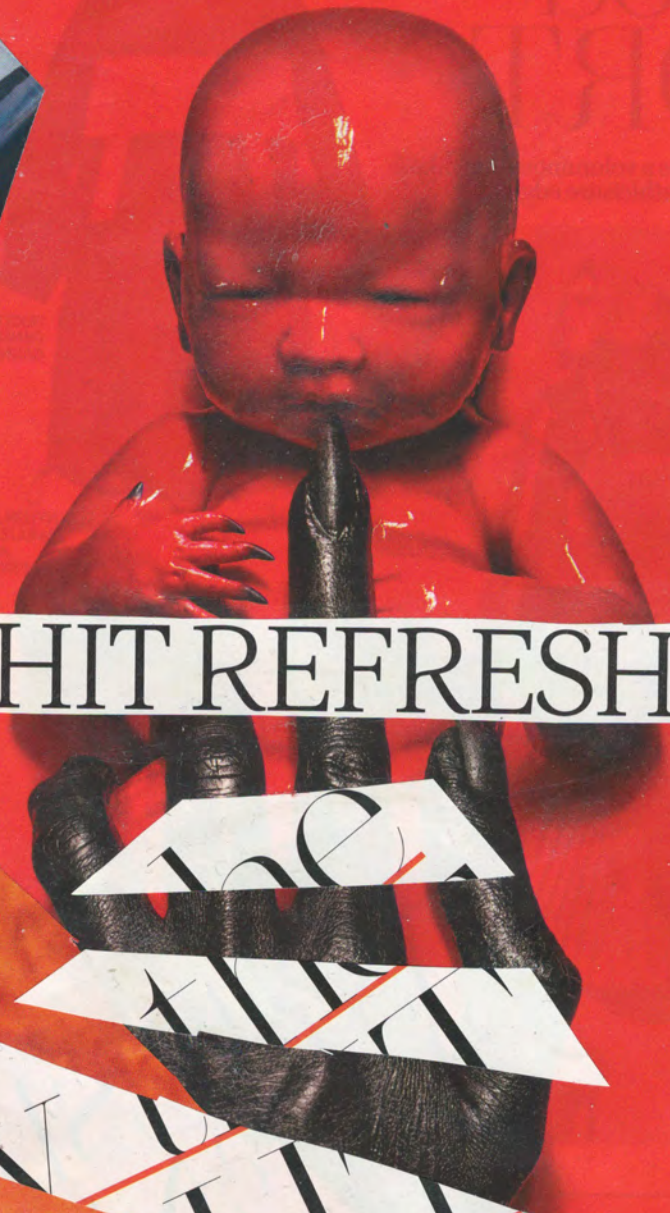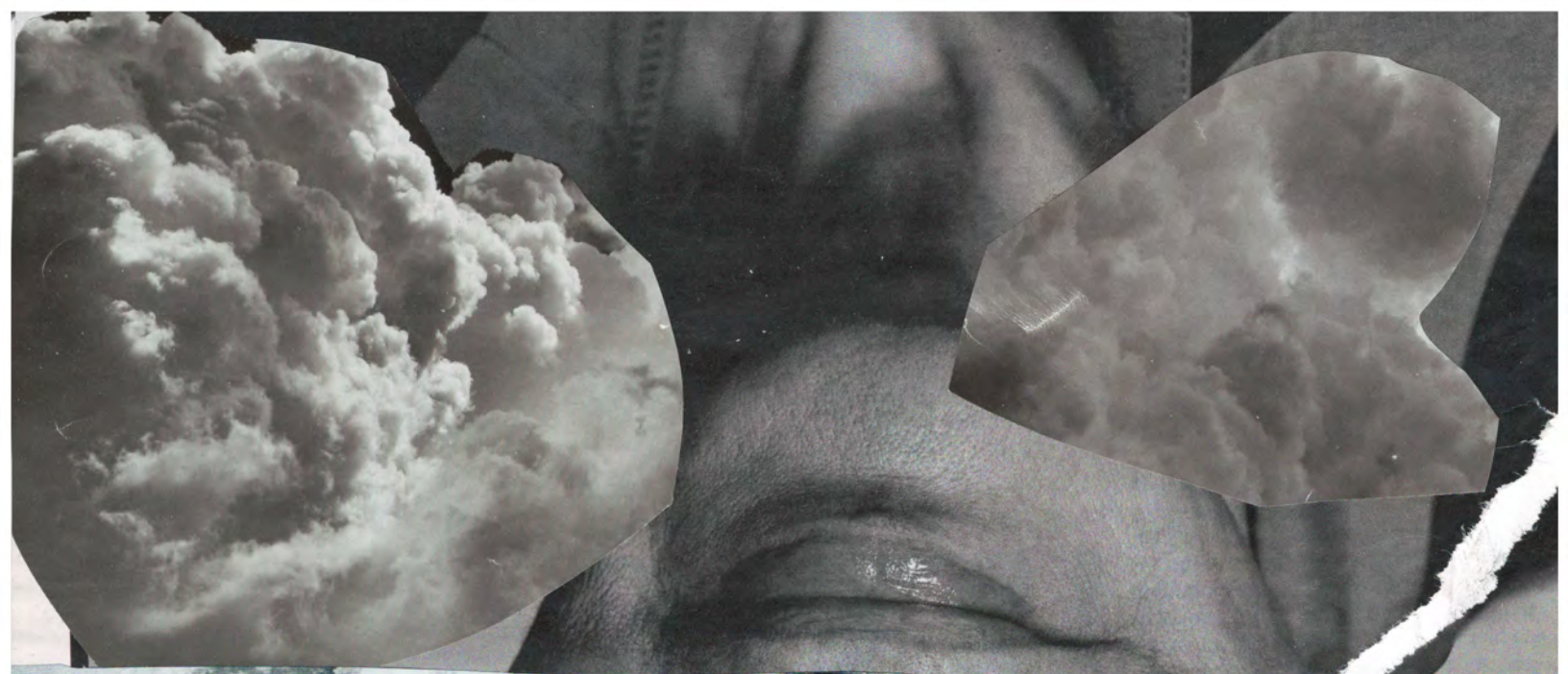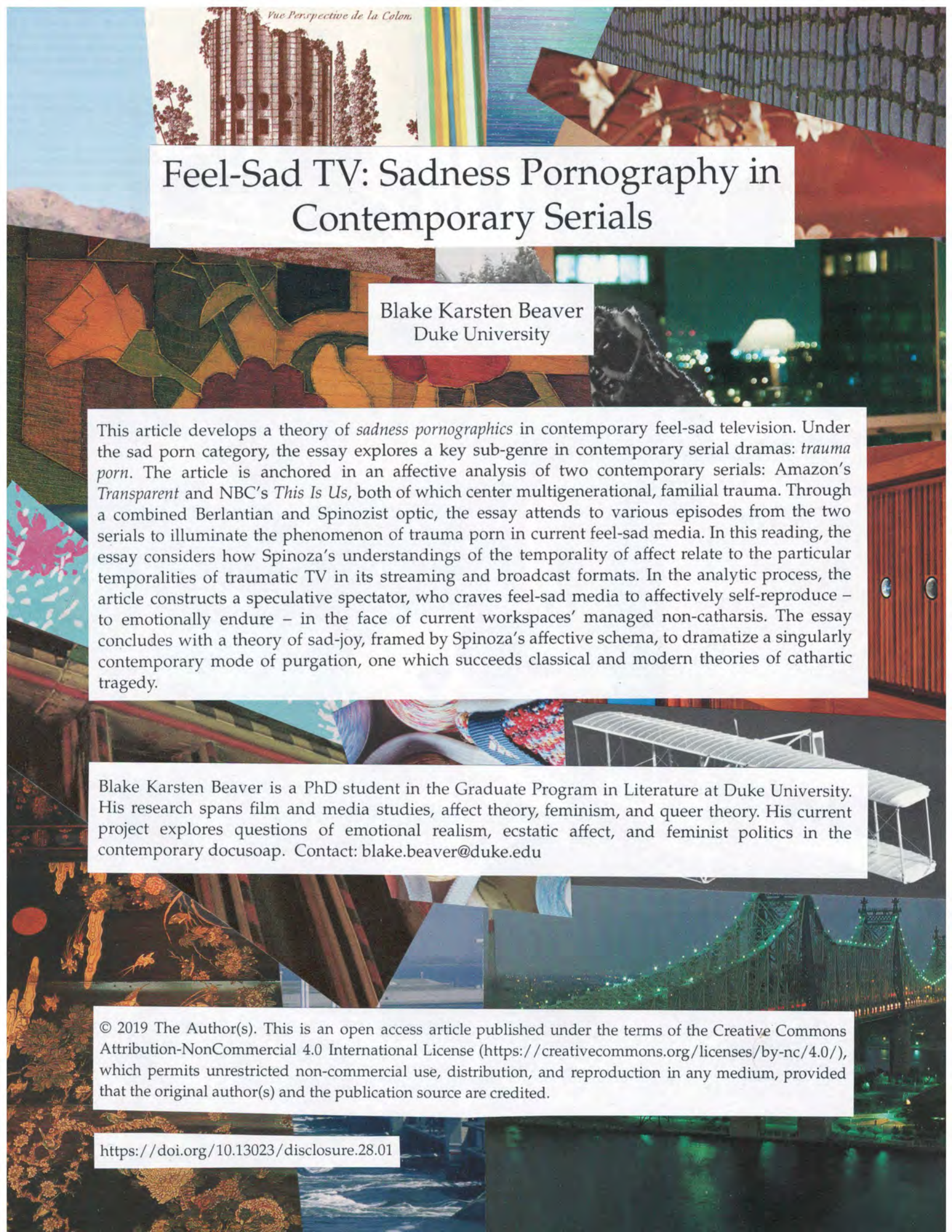
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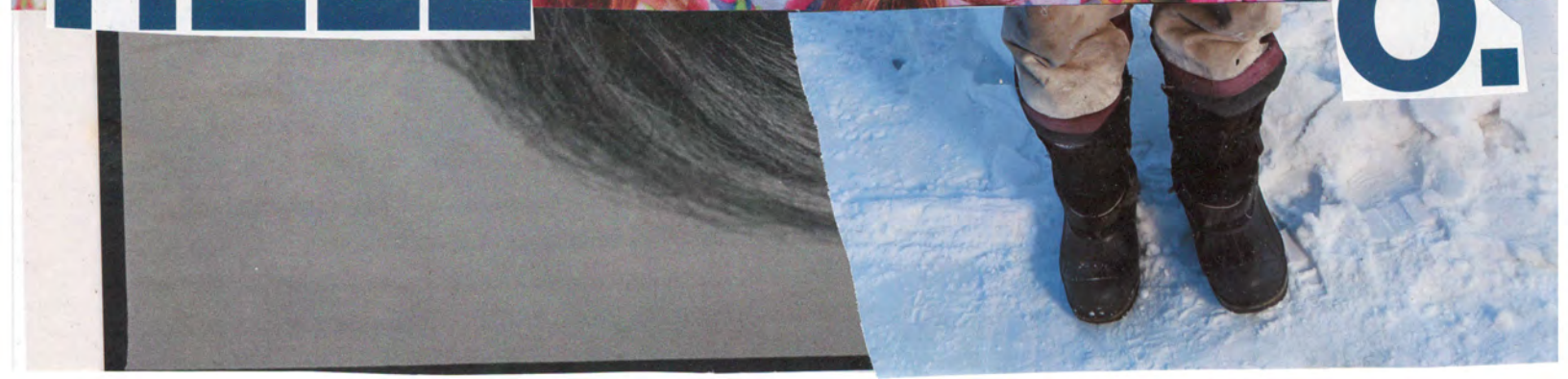
Feel-Sad TV: Sadness Pornography in Contemporary Serials

Blake Karsten Beaver
Duke University

This article develops a theory of *sadness pornographics* in contemporary feel-sad television. Under the sad porn category, the essay explores a key sub-genre in contemporary serial dramas: *trauma porn*. The article is anchored in an affective analysis of two contemporary serials: Amazon's *Transparent* and NBC's *This Is Us*, both of which center multigenerational, familial trauma. Through a combined Berlantian and Spinozist optic, the essay attends to various episodes from the two serials to illuminate the phenomenon of trauma porn in current feel-sad media. In this reading, the essay considers how Spinoza's understandings of the temporality of affect relate to the particular temporalities of traumatic TV in its streaming and broadcast formats. In the analytic process, the article constructs a speculative spectator, who craves feel-sad media to affectively self-reproduce – to emotionally endure – in the face of current workspaces' managed non-catharsis. The essay concludes with a theory of sad-joy, framed by Spinoza's affective schema, to dramatize a singularly contemporary mode of purgation, one which succeeds classical and modern theories of cathartic tragedy.

Blake Karsten Beaver is a PhD student in the Graduate Program in Literature at Duke University. His research spans film and media studies, affect theory, feminism, and queer theory. His current project explores questions of emotional realism, ecstatic affect, and feminist politics in the contemporary docusoap. Contact: blake.beaver@duke.edu

This article's founding observation states that sadness pornography constitutes a vital genre of contemporary media production and consumption. Urban Dictionary user Brendogfox describes sad porn as media "that exists for the sole purpose of making people feel deep sadness. Usually there is no sexual theme, yet like regular porn, some people seem to get off on it" (2016). Sad porn constellates a network of exemplary sub-genres, each of which are defined and circumscribed by sorrowful affects. Prominent examples include disability, inspiration, and as we will observe most closely, trauma porn.

The pornography in sad porn designates an ironic tone. *Oxford English Dictionary* defines pornography as "the explicit description or exhibition of sexual subjects or activity in literature, painting, films, etc., in a manner intended to stimulate erotic rather than aesthetic feelings." Although sad porn does not necessarily represent the *sexual*, it does require from the spectator an erotic attachment to unhappy, depressive, solemn, and/or mournful viewing affects. I describe these attachments as *erotic* because they mediate a relation of passion and amorousness (rather than one of genital and other erogenous pleasures) in/to the emotional labors of televisual consumption.[1] In this way, the metaphoric nature of pornography in "sad porn" *figures* a desirous drive for sad media similar to traditional pornography's erotic force, while maintaining the full sincerity of sadness. Said another way, the descriptor sad *porn* may be tongue-in-cheek, but the actual emotional turbulences of its viewership – *sad* porn – represent genuine sorrow. Sadness pornography as a genre marks an erotic attachment to feelings of sadness when viewing contemporary television.

In imagining sadness pornography as a *genre*, I think with Lauren Berlant's revaluation of the term. With Berlant, I argue for sad porn as an overarching "aesthetic structure" across

televisual mediation that creates "affective expectations" of joyful sadness (2008, 4). As we will see in a discussion of representative serials' relation to the contemporary emotive spectator, the sad porn genre "brackets structural and historical antagonism" by providing spaces of affective intensity closely interlinked with the saturated yet administered affects of contemporary labor, affects upon which businesses capitalize at the same time as they prohibit a threshold of cathartic intensity, whether in the corporate workspace, the retail store, or sites of gig-economic production. The sad porn genre generates viewers' desirous attachments to feeling powerful through feeling disempowered. Moreover, sad porn manages moods of political powerlessness in the governed non-catharsis of contemporary labor environments.

In heavily invoking the concept of genre, I aim to do justice to sad porn's moving-image genealogy. Regarding the sad-pornographic serial's *televisual* lineage, we should look to Michael Z. Newman and Elana Levine (2012), who trace the contemporary primetime serial drama, perhaps the most lauded mode of television programming in the convergent era, back to its primary serial-narrative predecessor: the daytime soap opera. For Newman and Levine, soap operas' vanguard approach to "long-form, novelistic storytelling" is both co-opted and erased in legitimating discourses that inform the cinematization of contemporary, high-culture television. Moreover, for Newman and Levine, the legitimation of current serials at the expense of soap operas' denigration poses anti-feminist and anti-feminine consequences (82). One strategy for distancing serial dramas from their soap operatic precursors is to manage seriality's temporality. As soap operas are historically associated with non-endings, narrative gaps, and the modes of feminine fantasy that the "forbidden gap" and illicit non-ending entail,[2]

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[1] Thus, I distinguish between the sexual and the erotic, here, based on the latter's associations with passion and love.

[2] For a discussion of the relationship between soaps' narrative form and feminine political aesthetics, see Martha Nochimson (1992), *No End to Her: Soap Opera*

primetime serials impose endings "to keep that seriality and its associations with feminized excess from overrunning the narrative" (92). Newman and Levine's generalization, however, may not prove so simple. Exemplary primetime and streaming serial dramas in the current moment nurture the feminized and affectively charged never-ending-ness of soaps in what we will observe as their multi-generationally traumatic and temporally layered narratives. In the case of *Transparent* and *This Is Us*, the "forbidden gap" of trauma sustains seriality and the political-narrative potential such seriality awards.

As part of a *filmic* lineage, sadness pornography's soap operatic roots reach back even further to a cinematic forebearer: the melodramatic "weepie." Linda Williams (1991) predicts sadness pornography and sad-joy in her articulation of the affiliation between pornography and melodrama as interpenetrating, excessive, gross, and sensational genres. In Williams's argument, the relationship between pornography and melodrama is complex. Pornography and melodrama share an excessive and sensational status in their imaging of gratuitous sex and emotion; in their treatment of "the spectacle of a body caught in the grip of intense sensation or emotion"; and in their emphasis on forms of ecstasy and the ecstatic body, primarily a feminine body "beside herself" in pleasure or overwhelming sadness (4). For Williams and myself, what appears to be most gratuitous in porn, melodrama, and sad porn, by extension, is the mimetic relationship of the viewer to representations of ecstatic affect. The sad-pornographic spectator, like her melodramatic and pornographic predecessors, mirrors the rapturous body onscreen. Furthermore, for Williams, melodrama functions as a meta-genre encompassing the unique forms of excess and grossness at play in pornography and weepies. This aligns with my insight that sadness pornography operates as a

and the Female Subject, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, in particular 35-6.

parallel meta-genre, one that integrates sub-genres like disability, inspiration, and trauma porn in its pleasurably sad representational and spectatorial strategies. As a "problem-solving cultural form," what I would term *melo-porn* or *porno-drama* in Williams's analysis alerts us to the unique social and political-economic complications that sadness pornography aims to disentangle: namely, a situation of affectively suffused yet non-cathartic labor in the workspace. This emotional labor in the workplace then implicates scenes of spectatorial emotion management in pornographic weeping at home or on mobile devices, with each viewing situation mediated by various televisual and/or digital representations and technologies.

Under the sad porn meta-genre, I wish to explore a key sub-structure of aesthetic expectation. In television, across broadcast and digital channels, sadness pornography emerges in serial dramas, particularly centered around the (ab)normal family, through what I and others call *trauma porn*. I anchor this article in an affective analysis of two contemporary serials, Amazon's *Transparent* and NBC's *This Is Us*, both of which represent multigenerational, familial trauma. I read various episodes from the two serials to illuminate the phenomenon of trauma porn in current feel-sad TV. In this reading, I consider how Benedict de Spinoza's understandings of the temporality of affect relate to the particular temporalities of traumatic TV, both in its streaming and broadcast formats. In this analytic process, I construct a speculative spectator, who embodies the emotional dialectic of contemporary capital, torn between *cathartic* (sad-pornographic, purgative, unmanaged) and *non-cathartic* (capitalized, administered, supervised) affects. Finally, I conclude with a theory of sad-joy, framed by Spinoza's affective schema, as a contemporary revision of Aristotle's catharsis and Hume's tragedy. By sad-joy, I suggest a dialectical vacillation of the mind in which the ambivalent tension of feeling sadness economizes joy. Sad-joy expresses a paradigmatic affect in recent mediation, one

which greases the emotional survival of the contemporary laborer *as* televisual spectator.

The relationship between sadness and trauma, and consequently sad porn and trauma porn, appears convoluted and deserves close consideration. In my analysis, trauma porn is necessarily a sub-genre of the *mediatic meta-genre* sadness porn, and we could think of the broader relationship between trauma and sadness similarly. Thus, I imagine sadness as an overarchingly *bad* affective genre, a meta-ugly feeling (following Sianne Ngai), that forms an affective-aesthetic umbrella under which variously unhappy and grieving emotions fall. If trauma articulates states of intense psychic upset caused by equally intense emotional wounding, then trauma's constitutive upset (and the interrelated grief and unhappiness associated with such injury) could be thought of as categorically circumscribed by sadness as an *affective meta-genre*.

Turning to the issue of contemporary TV's traumatic narrativity, I look toward current television programs such as Netflix's *Orange Is the New Black* (*OITNB*) for context, a series that has received backlash for what many critics call its traumatic pornographics. One headline reads, "*Orange Is the New Black* Is Trauma Porn Written for White People." In said article, Ashleigh Shackelford voices grief about the "exploitation and voyeurism" of black pain "on a platter for the world to gawk at and consume" (2016). Critics link *OITNB*'s trauma porn to the spectacle of black death in police murders and associated historical atrocities. Shackleford continues, "Sociohistorically, we have seen white people aroused and grotesquely infatuated with the violence and exploitation of our bodies, pain and agency." On the violent murder of *OITNB* character Poussey, who is strangled to death by a prison guard, Shamira Ibrahim (2016) writes, "Her lifeless body [was] left on the cafeteria floor for what seems like days, in scenes clearly drawing from the painful tragedies of Eric Garner and Michael Brown." These criticisms provide necessary context for imagining how the viewer's enjoyment of trauma porn is linked to histories of racialized, sexualized, and gendered violence. These criticisms also speak to the legacies of transgenerational trauma in black and queer communities.[3] Thus, in my reading of sad-pornographic TV, I suggest that multigenerational trauma accounts for numerous identity formations and identity histories.

Amazon's *Transparent* exemplifies trauma pornography in a queer-trans modality. The serial focuses on the Pfefferman family in contemporary Los Angeles as children Sarah, Josh, and Ali, and ex-wife Shelley, live in the wake of their father and ex-husband Maura's coming out as a transgender woman. The initial trauma of coming out constellates a network of sub-traumas. In season one, episode four ("Moppa"), we learn that Josh's college-age babysitter Rita sexually abused him while sustaining an exploitative age-differential relationship for several years (Fitzerman-Blue et al., 2014). In season one, episode eight ("Best New Girl"), we observe Ali's abandonment by her parents at thirteen years of age, when they

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[3] For examples of scholarship concerning black transgenerational trauma, see Anderson J. Franklin, Nancy Boyd-Franklin, and Shalonda Kelly (2009), "Racism and Invisibility: Race-Related Stress, Emotional Abuse and Psychological Trauma for People of Color," *Journal of Emotional Abuse* 6(2-3): 9-30; Gilda Graff (2017), "The Intergenerational Trauma of Slavery and its Aftereffects: The Question of Reparations," *The Journal of Psychohistory* 44(4): 256-268; Jennifer L. Griffiths (2009), *Traumatic Possessions: The Body and Memory in African American Women's Writing and Performance*, Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press; Janice P. Gump (2010), "Reality Matters: The Shadow of Trauma on African American Subjectivity," *Psychoanalytic Psychology* 27(1): 42-54; and Gabriele Schwab (2010), *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma*, New York: Columbia University Press. For a seminal example of queer transgenerational trauma, see Ann Cvetkovich's writings on the gendered-sexualized traumas of butch-femme cultures and cycles of incest: Cvetkovich (2003), *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

allow Ali to cancel her Bat Mitzvah against her best interest, ending in a troubling set of scenes in which Ali hitchhikes to the beach only to be sexually propositioned by an older man (Bedard and Soloway, 2014). In season two, episode three ("New World Coming"), we view an erotic fantasy in which Sarah partakes, featuring Sarah masturbating to flashbacks of her high school disciplinarian (Soloway and Heller, 2015). Finally, in season three, episode eight ("If I Were a Bell"), we see twelve-year-old Maura dressing up as a girl and consequently shamed by her grandfather; in the same episode, we realize the psychic fallout of twelve-year-old Shelley after she is sexually abused by her music teacher (Our Lady J and Arnold, 2016).

Beyond a content analysis, I want to think through the unique modes of streaming television as they facilitate forms of multitemporal trauma and screen-intimacy. In Ali's trauma ("Best New Girl"), the majority of the episode features the past. Toward the end of the episode, young Ali dances with an older man she meets at the beach against a background of tango music, intercut with shots of Maura similarly dancing at a camp for cross-dressing women. Both events occur in 1994. Ali and the older man begin to wrestle as Maura and her dancing partner get physically more turbulent and intimate. Then, when Ali's traumatic event is coming to a head, we observe present-day Ali overlooking her younger self, making eye contact with the preying older man. We then cut to younger Ali approaching the pair, grabbing the man by the shoulder as the camera tracks to a shot of adult Ali and the man kissing, with younger Ali, behind the man, continuing to tug at his overalls.

In an almost inverse narrative device, toward the end of "New World Coming," we view Ali's older sister Sarah gazing depressively out the window of her new apartment (Sarah's separation from her husband, caused by her cheating with, marrying, and then divorcing her college girlfriend, has ousted Sarah from the family home). The camera cuts to a reverse shot, in

which we see Sarah's high school disciplinarian "Mr. Irons" at the other end of the apartment; another cut presents Sarah matching Mr. Irons's eye contact. The following reverse shot images Mr. Irons in the hallways of Sarah's high school. Similar to the episode with Ali, changes in lighting technique and color correction perform most of the work of designating another historical period. The scene then continues to intercut between the high school and Sarah's apartment, featuring teenage Sarah walking down the high school's hallways toward the disciplinarian's office; next a subjective shot that pans across the placard on Mr. Irons's door. The shots get tighter as Sarah and Mr. Irons converge at her apartment table, finally including the two in the same medium close-up. Sarah bends over the table to be spanked, while a subsequent over-the-shoulder shot represents her younger self at the far end of the apartment overseeing the scene. Reminding us of Williams's feminine body in melo-pornographic or porno-dramatic ecstasy, the sound of the paddle hitting Mr. Irons's hand gets progressively louder and quicker as Sarah reaches climax.

I identify in these two examples a complex of sexual-traumatic temporalities: 1994 and the present; high school and now; confused generationalities of primary characters; and self-gazes and self-pleasures in the contemporary and past. What is unique about platforms like Amazon are their streaming formats and "binge-watching" conducts, engendering something more akin to five-hour films (comprised of ten thirty-minute "episodes") than the discrete episodic format of broadcast TV. Furthermore, the streaming format can allow a more intimate contact between viewer and screen, often watched on laptops, mobile phones, and tablets rather than on the traditional television set and its contemporary smart capabilities. I suggest that these multigenerational, traumatic temporalities are a characteristic feature of feel-sad TV and televisual sad-joy, in which present-day characters and their proxy viewers can only process sexual hang-ups and erotic

frustrations through an inter- and intra-generational sexual gaze and an intimate screen-contact. Through a presentist temporality of streaming ("I can watch it all now! The season is *all now!*") and vulnerable screen-connection, *Transparent* moves toward a unique force of sad-joy, in which the character and viewer's increase of power in the present relies on a presentism of past trauma.

Transparent's multigenerational trauma speaks to the non-eternal temporality of Spinoza's passions and the intensity of the imagination as the mind regards a past or future thing as present. For Spinoza, an affect is stronger if we imagine its cause as present and, vice versa, an affect regarding a past or future cause is weaker than a presentist affect. By imagining a past trauma as present, *Transparent*'s characters and consequently the viewer are affected more intensely. In *Transparent*, the streaming affect of cathartic joy and increase in power in the present relies on an imagination of traumatic sadness as past *and* present.

To account for the viewer's sad-pornographic relation to the multi-generationally traumatic text, I risk a speculative spectator based on the contemporary emotional laborer. Arlie Hochschild's seminal study of flight attendants and debt collectors in *The Managed Heart* (2012) proves the thoroughgoing permeation of emotional labor in the corporate workspace, whether normatively affectively positive (the flight attendant) or normatively affectively negative (the debt collector). Though her study focuses on middle-to-upper-middle-class corporate laborers, we could glean from the increasingly service-based economy a trend toward swelling affective labor in variable workspaces. I think here of professional functions from fast food servers to Uber drivers, whose "smiles" surely mimic the pivotal example of Hochschild's beaming stewardess. For example, take notice of Uber's rating and tips systems, which measure drivers' conversational capacity. Furthermore, note how Uber employs a gradient of expressive faces

from fuming to overjoyed to gauge (and mirror) customers' (dis)satisfaction with their service. While Hochschild's flight attendant and contemporary gig workers are pressured into and authorized an at-times jarring smile, I wager that they are never, under supervision, encouraged to grin or laugh in manic or ecstatic affect at customers and superiors. Thus, in my speculation, and I argue in accordance with Hochschild and other affect theorists' interpretations, the affective laborer is barred from a level of emotional intensity that I name catharsis. By this, I mean to communicate that, in normatively affectively positive professional functions (positions unlike Hochschild's debt collector), the laborer is prevented a level of both good- and bad-affective intensity: cackling hysterically, screaming in anger at customers and managers, crying in situations of client or administrative harm, and so on. In this way, I suggest that we conceive of the space of contemporary affective labor as one of *emotional saturation without cathartic intensity*.

A more recent example of such non-cathartic intensity emerges in Berlant's comments concerning the exhaustive destruction of contemporary Western service labor. For Berlant, the combination of waning social security and extending life expectancies entails a situation of slow death, "the physical wearing out of a population in a way that points to its deterioration as a defining condition of its experience and historical existence" (2011, 95). Most simply, people live longer, have fewer societal guarantees to cap the length of their labor, and thus work longer and die slower. It is Berlant's insight regarding the affective conditions of slow death that speaks to the contemporary emotive spectator in my analysis. To counteract the condition of slow death, of working longer and dying slower, workers partake in moments of "interruptive agency" – what Berlant variously calls "self-suspension," "counter-dissipation," "self-abeyance," and "floating sideways" – in

behaviors such as overeating.[4] With Berlant, I imagine sad-pornographic catharsis as an analogous mode of emotional self-interruption, a counter-agency – sideways and non-sovereign – in which the emotive spectator achieves a threshold of affective intensity fenced at work. In feeling sad-joy, the emotive spectator suspends herself in an antagonistically emotional overindulgence beside *and* against the under-authorization of emotion in the workspace. It is no coincidence that the contemporary rhetoric around excessive spectatorship – particularly in the form of binge watching – accords with the very example of interruptive, lateral agency Berlant describes: overeating.

Having established the emotive spectator of sad porn, I look to NBC's *This Is Us*, which returns us to multigenerational trauma and the political-economics of its affective spectatorship. *This Is Us* follows the Pearson family (adopted African-American son Randall; biological twins Kate and Kevin; and parents Rebecca and Jack) across multiple temporal blocs: the many stages of the children's upbringing, the ebbs and flows of Rebecca and Jack's past marriage, and the contemporary events of Randall, Kate, and Kevin's adulthood. In season two, episode seventeen ("This Big, Amazing, Beautiful Life"), we follow the rollercoaster of Randall and wife Beth's foster child Deja, as Deja and her struggling, young mother (Shauna) endure poverty. However, instead of Deja's plotline, I focus on the very beginning of the episode, which features four interlocking traumas, all births: Shauna's birth of Deja; Rebecca's birth of twins Kate and Kevin; Beth's birth of Randall's and Beth's first daughter Tess; and the birth of Randall, whose father leaves him at a fire station (that same day

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[4] Berlant also terms this "self-medication through self-interruption" (2011, 115-6). Overeating, as opposed to over-drinking, over-smoking, over-injecting, and over-insulating, exemplifies slow death in that "food is one of the few spaces of controllable, reliable pleasure people have," and "food is necessary to existence, part of the care of the self, the reproduction of life" (Berlant 2011, 115).

adopted by Jack and Rebecca, who lose their third child in their triplets' delivery) (Oyegun and Asher, 2018). I suggest that, by framing Deja's multi-generationally traumatic plotline – racialized poverty experienced across generations – within four birthing traumas, the writer and director provide the emotive spectator with sad-pornographic generic cues. The viewer can then attach to these cues in passionate endurance from the episode's outset.

In *This Is Us*, which is aired and consumed in a broadcast format, the presentist joy of a past-and-present traumatic sadness features a different presentist temporality: the weeklong craving for a new episode and the consumption of that episode as wholly now, discrete from other episodes in the season/serial. Where *Transparent* requires a weekend binge, *This Is Us* necessitates another temporality of non-labor: the weekday night. In the broadcast and streaming cases, feel-sad TV programs nurture a distinct modality of laboring passionate affect and increase in power, either in the weekend splurge or the weeknight reprieve. Necessarily, these scenes of tragic-cathartic viewership materialize outside such affectively inundated yet non-purgative work environments.

The episodic catharsis of *This Is Us*, a temporality of the *only now, each time this week*, pairs with the form of the births' representation: the temporal ubiquity and simultaneity of the interlocking, traumatic deliveries. In the case of both the viewing temporality and the birthing temporality, episodic trauma-joy formulates as an *all now, only at this time*, with week-long gaps separating discrete episodes and discrete historical periods demarcating the divided eras of the births. The streaming format's "all now, all at once" matches *Transparent*'s traumatic erotics of past and present, and the broadcast TV format's "only now, each time this week" dovetails with *This Is Us*'s traumatic simultaneity.

As a cold medium "high in participation or completion by the audience" and high in empathy, television facilitates unique forms of personal vulnerability in which an opposing

professional non-catharsis can be superseded through affective intensity in the home (McLuhan 1994, 23, 30).[5] Writing on TV melodrama and postmodern consumer culture, Lynne Joyrich (1992) argues that "television draws all of us, women and men, into a shared bond of consumer overpresence and powerless spectatorship as melodrama becomes the preferred form for TV, the postmodern medium *par excellence*" (228-9). While Joyrich writes in the pre-streaming era and is concerned with the postmodernization of melodrama (and the melodramatization of postmodernity), I continue to value the convergence of "consumer overpresence" and "powerless spectatorship" in Joyrich's argument, especially as that convergence pertains to melodrama and melodrama's generic sprawl across soap operas and serials. Continuing my reading of *Transparent* and *This Is Us*, the consumer overpresence to which Joyrich refers corresponds to Spinoza's understanding of the increased intensity of affect under the presentness of the affecting thing (in this case, multigenerational trauma in contemporary TV melodrama). Furthermore, the powerless spectatorship in Joyrich's formulation corresponds to the feelings of social helplessness that Berlant articulates in *The Female Complaint*, wherein the feminine subject experiences a juxta-positionality or asideness to politics with consequent feelings of political-affective incapacity (2008, 3). Spectatorial powerlessness also invokes Spinoza's understanding of sadness as a fundamental loss of power, striving, action, and virtue. In this vein, I suggest that this particular junction of overpresence and powerlessness also characterizes trauma porn's generic-aesthetic structures of affective

expectation. Furthermore, following Joyrich, I wager that there is a gendered distribution in the emotion management of erotic attachments to feel-sad media: an affective labor often taken in the home; "marked" by feminized passivity, domesticity, and susceptibility; and a feminine labor impossible in masculinist spaces of managed non-catharsis.

I propose that the commonplace fascination with traumatic, familial situations on TV engenders unique feel-sad formats and sad-joys that rely on a distinctive relationship between the private and the professional. In my notion of the contemporary emotive spectator, the professional public has managed catharsis out of the workplace and delegated purgation completely to the domestic/mobile televisual space. The exhaustion caused by labor's inhibited catharsis leads to an excitation and desire for traumatic media in the home in which the tele-viewer can achieve an emotive threshold barred at work. The viewer expresses joy in watching televisual families process their own complexly temporal traumas, an intensity of joyful passionate imagination in the present that necessitates the past-and-presentness of trauma in the televisual now.

I call the particular affective dialectic at play in sad-pornographic consumption *sad-joy*. I define sad-joy as a dialectical vacillation of the mind in which the ambivalent tension of feeling sadness economizes joy. Spinoza defines "vacillation of mind" in the demonstration of proposition seventeen of the third part of the *Ethics*. The proposition states that, if a thing that causes us joy is similar to a thing that causes us sadness, we will have something akin to a love-hate relationship with that thing. For Spinoza, this irresolution between love and hate, joy and sadness, defines the vacillation of mind as such. Following Spinoza (1996), in my articulation, sad-joy, as a mental irresolution, exemplifies an affective dialectic in which *joyfulness* – a "passion by which [one] passes to a greater perfection" and a virtuous increase in power and striving for self-preservation – emerges as the *net distribution of sadness* – the passage to a lesser perfection (77).

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[5] Marshall McLuhan (1994), *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 23, 30. McLuhan's brief aside about a paradigmatic affect in the electrical age, boredom, is also relevant here. The cool corporate non-catharsis I explore in this article is less a genre of anxiety than a genre of boredom, a tedious feeling of affective non-intensity. See McLuhan (1994, 26).

I categorize sad-joy in classical and modern theories of tragic catharsis but with a contemporary historical bent. In this way, I expand cathartic theory by understanding sad-joy's dialectic as a catharsis of the contemporary, one specific to the surveillances of contemporary capital, in which labor is expected to emotionally (re)produce at the same time as catharsis is *managed out*. For Aristotle, catharsis was intimately related to the "purgation of emotions" facilitated by tragic drama and tragic action's unique modes of pity and fear (1997, 10). Following Aristotle's classic tragic theory, I wager that sad-joy is constitutively connected to contemporary formats of feel-sad media, in particular trauma porn's singular modes of fear (traumatic terror) and pity (sympathy *for* trauma), an effect of said sub-genre's equally distinctive purgation (a joy economized through sadness). Furthermore, sad-joy as a contemporary catharsis emerges in the tragic experiential genres of the contemporary workplace and its flows of surveilled non-catharsis.

Sad-joy resonates with David Hume's theory of tragedy, in which he points almost exactly toward sad-joy in the "unaccountable pleasure which the spectators of a well-written tragedy receive from sorrow, terror, anxiety, and other passions that are in themselves disagreeable and uneasy" (1993, 126). In Hume's account, *pleasure is directly related to affliction.*[6] Furthermore, Hume's sad-joy counterpart is an express response to unbearable structures of non-catharsis and flat feeling, whether "the languid, listless state of indolence into which it falls upon the removal of all passion and occupation," or "the insipid languor which arises from perfect tranquility and repose" (126). In my account, the managed non-catharsis of the workspace corresponds to

Hume's agonizing boredom, listlessness, indolence, and languor. Finally, Hume's model moves us closer to sad-joy's dialectic. Writing on the affectivity of oratory, Hume's rhetoric emphasizes overpowering, effacement, conversion, redirection, and seizing (129). Hume's diction moves us into the language of sad-joy's affective dialectic. In feel-sad media's paradigmatic affect of sad-joy, the overpowering of sadness by joy emerges in an overcoming of sorrow by an erotically joyful attachment to sad televisual objects.

As I have developed throughout this article, the stakes of sad-joy are the affective endurance of the subject under contemporary capital. In this way, the consequence of sad-joy corresponds to the significance of Spinoza's *striving*, an analogue for late capitalist survival. Due to the fact that each thing strives to persevere in its being, striving constitutes each thing's essence, and perseverance in striving endows the individual with virtue, Spinoza awards desire and striving an ethical content. Following Spinoza, we could afford the contemporary emotive spectator's striving an ethical value, as she pursues her own affective endurance in the face of supervised non-catharsis. However, the emotive spectator's striving is not unlimited; Spinoza stresses the fact that external causes will inevitably overpower the force of one's perseverance and striving. Following the limited nature of desire for Spinoza and its surpassing by external causes, I wager that the contemporary laborer who affectively self-reproduces will always respond to and be overcome by the managed non-catharsis of contemporary capital, the external cause of which necessitates the laborer's very affective survival *for* the reproduction of capital. The employee can only endure through abiding by an administered level of emotional non-intensity.

Sad-joy is a dialectical ambivalence that emerges from the contemporary condition of corporate coldness. The tele-viewer craves feel-sad media to feel sad-joy, undergoing a vacillation of mind whose dialectical push and pull will end in a net joyfulness. The

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[6] "[Spectators] are pleased in proportion as they are afflicted, and never are so happy as when they employ tears, sobs, and cries, to give vent to their sorrow, and relieve their heart, swoln with the tenderest sympathy and compassion" (Hume 1993, 126).

consequences of sad-joy are twofold: first, in Spinoza's terms, an increase in power via a double decrease in power: the affective debilitation of contemporary capital which leads to feel-sad media's own affective (dis)empowerment; and second, the affective perseverance against *and* for the reproduction of capital.

In summary, sadness pornography mediates a unique tragedy of the contemporary, or a unique mode of the contemporary tragic, in which people "get off" on overwhelmingly sorrowful yet cathartic media. As a *mediatic meta-genre*, sad porn constellates a number of distinct sub-genres, such as disability, inspiration, and trauma porn. An *affective meta-genre*, sadness circumscribes pitiful, depressive, and traumatic emotions as an overarching "aesthetic structure of affective expectation," following Berlant. As a contemporary aesthetic category, sad porn succeeds a lineage of televisual and cinematic precursors, appearing at the convergence of the soap opera and the pornographic weepie.

In my analysis, I stress one sub-genre of sadness pornography, trauma porn, and its manifestations in serials such as *Orange Is the New Black*, *Transparent*, and *This Is Us*. Accounting for numerous identitarian positions and identity histories, trauma porn spectacularizes the contemporary abnormal family and its legacies of black, queer, and trans multigenerational trauma. In *Transparent*, multigenerational trauma emerges in inter- and intra-generational sexual longings and gazes, a transgenerationally traumatic erotics that match the streaming format's past-and-present temporality, what I call the "all now, all at once." In *This Is Us*, four interlocking births, which frame a tale of transgenerational black poverty, emerge an aesthetics of traumatic simultaneity that mirror broadcast television's temporality of "only now, each time this week."

Following affective scholars like Hochschild and Berlant, my analysis wagers a speculative emotive spectator, who embodies the particular friction between emotional labor (in the workspace) and emotion management (at home or on the go). Experiencing variable labor environments that are affectively inundated while administratively non-cathartic, the contemporary emotional laborer *as* TV spectator craves feel-sad media to reach a threshold of affective intensity fenced at work. The sad-pornographic viewer engages feel-sad media in moments of "interruptive agency," modes of sideways and non-sovereign actancy, partaking in an oppositional emotional over-extravagance: a "self-medication" in which binge watching mimics self-abeyant behaviors like overeating. Occupying television's larger structures of participation and empathy, sad-pornographic viewership is characterized by a distinctive juncture between overpresence (such as Spinoza's intensified affect under the presentness of the affecting thing) and powerlessness (like Berlant's understanding of the juxtapositionality or asideness of the feminine subject to the political).

Finally, sad porn generates a unique affect, sad-joy, which I define as a wavering of the mind, or a mental oscillation. In sad-joy, overwhelming sorrow economizes ecstatic joy. As a contemporary form of affective purgation, sad-joy revises classic and modern theories of the cathartic by pointing us toward the current dialectic between experiences of tragedy in the home/on the go – through sad pornographic media – and professional non-tragedies – in non-cathartic work atmospheres. In this way, the stakes of sadness pornography regard the contemporary laborer *as* televisual spectator's affective endurance. Sad porn lubricates the current emotional worker's survival, but maybe, even probably, momentarily.

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Feminist Friendship as an Affective Engagement through the Arts: A Decolonial and Posthuman Becoming-with Rebeca Lane's *Alma Mestiza*

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This paper considers friendship as an affective terrain of feminist alliance among subjects that belong to territories with a colonial record responding to the colonial/modern gender system (Lugones 2007) through the arts. Friendship is here conceptualized as an engagement of feminist solidarity unfolding within theoretical and practical models of change and resistance against the logics of cultural imperialism (Lugones and Spelman 1983). Turning friendship into a polyphonic feminist reaction, this work is conducted by acknowledging the need to foster dialogues where different authorial voices and feminist positionalities meet, reflect, and speak. The paper settles the encounter between its authors in conversation with Guatemalan feminist rapper Rebeca Lane and her song "Alma Mestiza" ("Mestiza Soul," 2016), which triggers both a critical examination of decolonial artistic practices with a feminist commitment, and a situated response of auto-phenomenographic poetry (Lykke 2018). In this light, the present paper is born out of the authors' will to pose their friendship as an affective commitment to formulate critical and artistic accounts of a feminist nature displaying a decolonial awareness, while incorporating a posthuman approach becoming-with artistic material (Straube 2014).

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Introduction

This paper considers friendship as an affective terrain of feminist alliance among subjects that belong to territories with a history of colonization able to respond to the colonial/modern gender system (Lugones 2007) through the arts. To this endeavor, friendship is here conceived as an engagement of feminist solidarity that unfolds within theoretical and practical models of change and resistance against the logics of cultural imperialism (Lugones and Spelman 1983). Turning friendship into a polyphonic relationship of feminist reaction, this work is conducted by acknowledging the need to incorporate a dialogue where different authorial voices and feminist positionalities meet, reflect, and respond. The paper settles the friendly encounter between its authors in conversation with Guatemalan feminist rapper Rebeca Lane and her song "Alma Mestiza" ("Mestiza Soul," 2016).

Examining authors' friendship throughout their feminist co-inhabitation, positionalities, and respective ethnic backgrounds (Mexico and Spain), this paper seeks to discern in their alliance a differential affective relationality capable of fostering artistic responses to contemporary forms of racism and neo-colonial exploitation. As part of their feminist militancy, the music of Rebeca Lane becomes the meeting point in which to mutually reflect about the colonial record of their ethnicities, and to further articulate artistic dialogues implementing a feminist and a decolonial awareness. Thus, "Alma Mestiza" triggers in this essay both a critical examination of decolonial artistic practices with a feminist commitment, and a situated encounter of auto-phenomenographic poetry (Lykke 2018) with Lane's song. In this light, the present paper is born out of the authors' will to pose their friendship as an affective terrain on which to formulate critical and artistically situated accounts becoming-with feminist artistic material (Straube 2014).

To this task, the paper is divided into four sections. The first section conceptualizes the authors' friendship and feminist positionalities as an affective engagement informed by their respective backgrounds. The second section introduces Rebeca Lane's music activism in line with the elucidation of contemporary feminist decolonial practices through the arts. The third section establishes the possibility of fostering an encounter between decolonial and posthuman theoretical patterns in the elaboration of our artistic approach. The fourth section finally provides a situated dialogue with Lane's piece in the shape of an embodied auto-ethnographic poetry. Overall, this paper aims to frame the authors' friendship as a feminist alliance in which the colonial records of their ethnicities are further complicated via their affective identification and artistic conversation with Rebeca Lane's music. In this sense, our account enacts the feminist potential of considering the personal and the arts as joint realms in the production of analyses and critiques of the colonial/modern gender system.

1. Friendship as a feminist engagement: positioning authorial voices

In mid-July 2017, the authors of this paper were sent an email confirming our acceptance as students of a transnational master's degree in Women's and Gender Studies across Europe. For two years, we had the chance to experience a feminist training and co-inhabitation in the company of feminist allies from all over the world. The city of Oviedo (Asturias, in Northern Spain) was our first destination, and from September 2017 to July 2018, we became friends and flat-mates in, as we would call it, *casa feminista* (the feminist house, see Figure 1). For all of us Oviedo was a new city, and English or Spanish was not our mother-tongue. Coming from different ethnic, linguistic, social-class, academic, and feminist backgrounds, the meetings at *casa feminista* greatly helped us to shift our theoretical training towards a friendly engagement of feminist participation. Weekly dinners, endless debates, feminist marches, sharing of readings, movie sessions, evening walks, occasional trips, and the exciting calmness of a shared routine turned our co-inhabitation into a friendly space of feminist kinship (see Figure 2). By July 2018, some of us either graduated from the master's, or left to our second home institution in another European

country. As of July 2019, the authors of this paper are able to discern an academic and personal continuum made possible thanks to a feminist engagement of friendship and alliance primarily knitted in *casa feminista*.

Bound to depart from the program, the authors felt the need to academically and artistically portray a part of our feminist co-inhabitation. This simultaneously displays the conflictive nature of our particular yet interrelated backgrounds, which have constantly confronted in dialogue our positionalities with our former and present experiences as subjects committed to feminism. As a place of human and non-human co-existence, *casa feminista* is not only a house but rather a communitarian space where objects, food, sounds, and non-human living companions have differently coincided in the evolving of our friendship. For this reason, the authors want to consider friendship as a fruitful affective engagement to pose systematic analyses and critiques incorporating a feminist awareness. This awareness is here informed by María C. Lugones and Elizabeth V. Spelman's (1983) conceptualization of feminist friendship as a relationship facilitating the development of theories aiming to change and resist the logics of cultural imperialism (576, 579).

Jointly emphasizing the need for white/Anglo feminists to make room for women of color, both authors thread a quasi–manifesto providing a few guidelines to talk and to be talked about (Lugones and Spelman 1983, 578–581). In these, Lugones and Spelman remarkably touch upon the importance of articulating situated accounts in feminist academia that acknowledge as many women's standpoints as possible, while also pointing out a sort of hermeneutics reminding white/Anglo feminists what Adrienne Rich (1984) would later define as "politics of location," that is, the ethical duty for white/Anglo feminists to recognize themselves as "outsiders" when addressing the experiences of non-white women (Lugones and Spelman 1983, 577). Lugones and Spelman (1983) inform the "fragile psychic state" (575) women of color suffer because of the silencing invisibilization exercised by white/Anglo feminism. In Lugones and Spelman's view, such an exclusion leads women of *raza* – as they coin to refer to women of color – into an alienation

that unspeaks in-between ethnic, linguistic, and social-class backgrounds.

In unspeaking, feminists of *raza* are caught in the constant accommodation of their accents, knowledges, and behavior under the lens of mainstream feminism (Lugones and Spelman 1983, 573–576). Out of their alliance to raise awareness about the dominating character displayed by white/Anglo feminism, Lugones and Spelman (1983) consider friendship among white/Anglo and feminists of *raza* as the "only sensical motivation" in the fostering of a non-imperialist feminism (576). This motivation induces white feminists into a self-fragilization state that critically reflects the asymmetry permeating their friendship with women of *raza*, and that renders their imperialist modes of behavior vulnerable. In so doing, white feminists could learn "to become unintrusive, unimportant, patient to the point of tears," while having their world of experience "disrupted [...] criticized and scrutinized from the point of view of those who have been harmed by it" (Lugones and Spelman 1983, 580). As a result, white feminists might be able to see women of color in their own communities, to understand their cultural texts, and eventually to desacralize white epistemological authority and their "ready-made theories" that tighten the experiences of women of color (Lugones and Spelman 1983, 581).

Paola comes from Mexico and Miguel from Spain, countries with tense and unresolved colonial records. In the provisional attempt to approach these from our respective feminist positionalities and shared intimacy, we felt prompted to find in the memories of our friendly living in *casa feminista* a differential affective relationality responding to contemporary forms of racism and neo-colonial exploitation. Out of these memories, music is fundamental. Day and night, *casa feminista* played the songs of Javiera Mena, Rebeca Lane, Gata Cattana, Princess Nokia, Francisco El Hombre, Mala Rodríguez, Ray BLK, Calle 13, Young Fathers, Lady Gaga, (Me Llamo) Sebastián, Alex Anwandter, Natalia Lafourcade, Café Tacvba, or Jorge Drexler. From this inspiring playlist, Rebeca Lane's music became a point of encounter in our feminist crises and debates. Paola, as a Mexican feminist allied with

women's indigenous vindications, found in Lane's rhymes triggering instances of decolonial feminism through the arts.[1] Miguel, as a Spanish feminist belonging to a country that continues to dismiss its imperialistic legacy, saw in Lane's music an artistic means to actively rethink his colonizing background.

Emplaced in the safety of *casa feminista*, but also within the Spanish escalation of far right-wing populism, Rebeca Lane's activism provided us with some support in our respective feminist interventions, and the socio-political scenarios where they are inscribed. A case in point was the recent Spanish denial, both by the monarchy and the caretaker socialist government (2018–2019), to offer any kind of apology to Mexico for the Spanish colonization on its territories.[2] As it will be examined in the following section, European colonization was not an isolated historical event. Instead, it was a dehumanizing system of Western negation of indigenous peoples and cultures enacting a gendered modus operandi that has pervaded through time, and that keeps nurturing the exploitation of human and natural resources in territories with a history of colonization. This denial has coincided with the rise of far right-wing mobilization in Spain, as seen in a shameful Francoist revival, the glorification of the Spanish imperial past,[3] the targeting of feminisms,[4] and the entrance of an extreme

right-wing political party to Congress for the first time in democracy after the fall of the dictatorship.[5] These few glimpses, together with the difficulties of forming a stable government, inform the urgency of tackling right-wing populism from an intersectional feminist militancy contesting the Spanish dismissal of its colonization, while rendering visible the experiences of colonized women.

Regaining Lugones and Spelman's formulation, we want to acknowledge in this paper the potential of conceiving our friendship as an affective terrain of feminist alliance in response to the current socio-political scenario via a critical and artistic approach to Lane's song "Alma Mestiza." To this task, we simultaneously address the naïve pretension to briefly address our feminist commitment, artistic inspirations, and vital experiences over the last two years. These have undoubtedly made us aware of the systematic asymmetry investing the affective relationality of our friendship, but also of the power of the arts in posing this awareness in constant dialogue. Throughout this process, Lane's discography becomes a sonic material that displays her own agency and feminist positionality, as well as a musical memory of our co-existence in *casa feminista*. The present paper reunites our memories, critical knowledge, and artistic skills in the articulation of a theoretical and practical response of change and resistance to the colonial/modern gender system (Lugones and Spelman 1983; Lugones 2007) through our friendly engagement with "Alma Mestiza." As a whole, our response attempts to fully frame our friendship as a reflective space of feminist participation, and as a means to position our voices together in conversation with the artistic activism of Rebeca Lane.

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[1] Henceforth, by decolonial feminism we refer to the theoretical framework developed in U.S. academia, particularly by María Lugones (2007). We differentiate this school of thought from the *des-colonial* (translated as well as decolonial) practices and theoretical approaches of Latin American feminisms. The latter focus on the situated lived experiences of *latina* women, as for instance the feminist activism of Rebeca Lane in the hip-hop scene.

[2] For more information about this event, see: <https://elpais.com/elpais/2019/03/26/inenglish/1553587549_240799.html>.

[3] An example would be the social and institutional opposition to exhume the remains of former dictator Francisco Franco from the public basilica of *El Valle de los Caídos* (The Valley of the Fallen) in Madrid. For more information about this event, see: <https://elpais.com/elpais/2019/06/04/inenglish/1559644855_670635.html>.

[4] A recent instance would be the inspection by the far right-wing political party VOX of feminist

organizations working with gender violence, migration, and LGBTIQ rights. This is part of a right-wing campaign of hate speech, institutional framing, and public shaming of feminisms in the country. For more information about this event, see: <https://elpais.com/elpais/2019/02/22/inenglish/1550852190_868783.html>.

[5] For more information about this event, see: <https://elpais.com/elpais/2019/11/10/inenglish/1573407794_574125.html>.

2. Contemporary moves of decolonial feminism through the arts

Rebeca Lane is a Guatemalan sociologist and feminist rapper. As a sociologist, she has explored the political contexts of urban tribes and new youth identities, particularly hip-hop cultures. Her musical interests led her to different art projects displaying her feminist activism in the overall visibilization of Central American women's struggles and contributions to the hip-hop scene. Her style and political stance has opened a gap in a world dominated by men and co-opted by a cultural industry with a specific commercial agenda that Lane has openly criticized. In an interview with a digital magazine, Lane stated: "I did not come here to please them or to repeat the phrases that we supposedly have to say... politically, I am not going to swallow things in order to receive a prize" (Vichez 2016).[6] Rebeca Lane is part of an emerging generation of Latin American female rappers who touch upon common problems that women and girls face in the region, such as abortion criminalization, lack of sex education, deficient healthcare, sexual and domestic violence, femicides, human trafficking, and a deep-rooted *machismo* founded on the structural inequalities of patriarchy.

Hip-hop in Guatemala, as in her origins in the popular neighborhoods of New York and Los Angeles, has become a political platform to express the griefs caused by the long-lasting aftermaths of the civil war held between 1960-1996, as well as the resistances that have emerged to deal with the wounds left by enforced disappearances, political incarceration, ethnic cleansing, and genocides caused by the resulting Guatemalan dictatorships (Lane 2012).[7]

Indeed, Rebeca Lane decided to fuse her poetic vein with rap rhythms as a homage to her aunt Rebeca Eunice Vargas, who was a poet and a *guerrillera* (guerrilla) disappeared in 1981 at the hands of Guatemalan militaries during the civil war (Rigby 2015).[8] In an interview with *The Guardian*, Lane stated that hip-hop is a healing tool for younger generations that have learned to survive in violent contexts: "It gives young people ways of organizing beyond armed conflict, beyond military or gang violence" (Rigby 2015). In this manner, hip-hop speaks to the power relations that underlie cultural practices, while also becoming a cultural space in which political action occurs and further impacts its audience's subjectivities.

As informed by Lane's career, feminist criticism through art is an invitation to challenge traditional representations of women in order to configure new social and cultural significances. Feminism brings into the Latin American hip-hop scene the opportunity to give an account of women's standpoints. Women's testimonies have the potential to situate particular women's efforts and struggles within common structures of gendered oppressions, which in Latin American countries display a record of colonization following the logics of the "colonial/modern gender system" (Lugones 2007). As decolonial feminist philosopher María C. Lugones has theorized, race and gender were the marks of civilization settled and reproduced by the Eurocentered modern coloniality. Therefore, the dichotomy man/woman and its compulsory heterosexuality, along with its racial hierarchization, became a long-standing pattern of power that has shaped the bodies and subjectivities of the colonized ever since the

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[6] Translation by Paola Mendoza Téllez Girón.

[7] Guatemala was the scene of four decades of internal armed conflict that ended up with more than 200,000 deaths. About 83% of the victims were Mayan indigenous who suffered a series of systematic tortures as a plan from the army to end their ethnicity and take possession of their lands. Within this context, dictatorships have been the central political feature of colonial domination and imperial interests controlled by the ruling sectors and the Army. The civil war ended in 1996 with the Agreement of Lasting Peace between the Government and the *Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca* (URNG)

in 1996 (see *Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico (Guatemala) [Commission for Historical Clarification]*, 1998).

[8] Since the 1970s, the insurgent movement incorporated the Mayan people that had not been present in the first stage of the conflict. In this manner, Mayan people expanded the social base of the guerrillas, which provided greater support from the civilian population. As a result, from 1981 onwards the Army started an offensive against civil society, unloading disproportionate counterinsurgency actions (See *Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico (Guatemala) [Commission for Historical Clarification]*, 1998).

colonial expansion (Lugones 2007), and one that is further replicated in the current exploitation of human and natural resources in places with this history of colonization. Especially for women of color, the enactment of their own accounts is crucial in the constellation of intersectional feminisms, avoiding thus the homogenization of women's needs and interventions under the agenda of white feminism (Lugones and Spelman 1983), and the overall commodification of women's bodies in patriarchal societies.

In this guise, feminist hip-hop subverts women's objectification as depicted by masculinized lyrics that construct violent meanings and practices while invisibilizing women's agencies and lives. By portraying their own imaginaries through music, feminist rappers make room for more women into the hip-hop scene, thus contributing to the empowerment, collaboration, and education among poor girls and women (Rigby 2015). Rebeca Lane's discography (2014–present) revolves around identity, culture, feminism, and anarchism, speaking up against the racialized, gendered, and capitalist hierarchies imposed since the European colonial expansion to the Americas and the Caribbean. Particularly, the production of the album *Poesía Venenosa* (*Poisonous Poetry*, 2015) took the rapper into an identity process in which she re-appropriates her indigenous roots without dismissing the internalization of Western values and education, which inform her (self-)racism and privileges (Vichez 2016). Later, in the poetry, the music, and the aesthetics of the album *Alma Mestiza* (*Mestiza Soul*, 2016) she deals with the conflicts and possible encounters of indigenous, *ladina*, and *mestiza* identities. Politically identified as *mestiza*, Lane defines herself as "ethnically diverse," advancing a notion of a *mestizaje* that accepts and negotiates cultural contradictions (Vichez 2016).[9]

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[9] In Guatemala, *ladina/o* identity refers to non-indigenous people. Within a caste model that reproduces the colonial racialized matrix of domination, *ladina/o* identity implies exclusion, exploitation, and dispossession of indigenous Mayan peoples, which are the majority of the population. *Mestiza/o* identity, understood as a cultural-biological mixture shared by a collectivity after colonization processes in Latin America, is used by Lane as a

By proposing the decolonization of knowledges and of the self, Lane challenges the colonial impositions that continue to deny the languages, identities, and even the sounds of the colonized. In line with these ideas, Lane's music merges the African American and Caribbean diaspora roots of hip-hop with Guatemalan Caribbean rhythms and cumbia. According to Chilean artist and researcher Julia Antivilo (2015), Latin American artists revaluate popular world ritualization in the recovering of traditional arts and ancestral cosmovision, a move that enables them to elaborate their identity out of colonial chains. From a decolonial feminist perspective, deeply embedded in Lane's pieces, non-hegemonic local productions through the arts tend to dismantle the idea of the North American and Eurocentric masculine objective truth, whose universal scope has long concealed colonized knowledges, memories, and subjectivities (Mignolo 2012; Maldonado-Torres 2007, 2011). This universal thinking, inherent to the installation of colonial modernity and displaying racializing and gendering hierarchies, is thus challenged by local critical initiatives. As a result, protest art provides remarkable instances of local mobilization against colonial patterns of cultural representation, and thus of colonial power, performed by gendered and racialized subjects in territories with a colonial record.

Lane's song "Alma Mestiza" (2016) explicitly acknowledges the contradictions in rendering visible the colonial oppressions of her indigenous roots and gender identity under the colonial/modern gender system (Lugones 2007). Artistic representations and performances that resist the erasure of indigeneity and of any difference destabilize the hegemonic gender system, easing the right to self-representation in decolonizing processes. In Lane's political stance through music, her *mestiza* identity navigates the contradictions that arise when women belonging to colonized territories visibilize their indigenous backgrounds. Accordingly, and as informed by Lugones' theorization, Rebeca Lane's music contests the colonial/modern gender system, while articulating an identity

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political stance to recognize the indigenous roots of national identity and the fusion of cultures that must be (re-)signified.

repertoire seeking an artistic and political liberation. In the musical elaboration of her situated decolonial critique, Lane poses her body as a locus from which to react against the colonial lens that has distorted her indigenous roots, (self-)perception, and acknowledgment.

In the words of Antivilo (2015), the body "is a reduction modeled by the patriarchal vision" (7). For this reason, approaching the body as a physical terrain for the reworking of colonial imprinting becomes fundamental in feminist performance through the arts. In so doing, decolonial feminist artists can envision alternative identifications with their gender, and face the structural power dynamics that lie over their racialized and gendered corpo-realities (Young 1997; Grosz 1997). In a similar fashion, Latin American communitarian feminism recognizes the body as a primal territory against the material and symbolic impressions left by neo-colonial power relations. Considering therefore the colonized body as a battleground for feminist reaction, the corporeal realm simultaneously becomes a place for epistemological creation, life alternatives, and identities relating to community, history, and nature (Paredes 2010; Valadez 2014).

Instead of building upon complex theoretical corpora, only accessible to certain intellectual audiences and political forums, Lane communicates and connects with people via her direct engagement with the body. This is approached from her own embodied impulse, and it is capable of reaching a local and transnational audience with the aim of raising awareness about neo-colonial oppressions shared by numerous territories with a common colonial record (Vichez 2016). In this regard, the artist asserts: "I can't write anything if it doesn't happen to me through the body, through my experience" (Sierra 2016).[10] Departing from these premises, both in the visuals and in the poetics of "Alma Mestiza" the singer performs a (re-)appropriation of the colonized subjectivity, body, and memory through the reconfiguration of her own identity. In this vein, she responds against the perpetuation of the colonial/modern gender system through time, while rendering herself as a woman from a territory experiencing

local struggles among women and indigenous communities. Lane's bodily-political space of artistic enunciation thus subverts the "disembodied and unlocated neutrality and objectivity of the ego-politics of knowledge" (Grosfoguel 2011, 98) inflicted by Eurocentric thinking that delinks the racial, ethnic, gendered, and sexual epistemic location of colonized subjects.

The re-appropriation of the *mestiza* identity leads the rapper to reinforce elements of ancestral cosmovision in the aesthetics of *Alma Mestiza* as a purposeful decolonial strategy. The healing powers of natural elements, the cleansing rituals, and the portrayal of myths and traditional clothes become then symbols of resistance against neo-colonial powers, and also the tools for the reconfiguration of her identity (see Figures 3 and 4). This can be interpreted in the lyrics of the song "Alma Mestiza": "Mother-Nature / Tenderly sutures / The rupture of my body / Once I freed myself from / My tough armor. Because it does not mature / A wound that is not healed / A mind without madness / A heart without ties. To flow is to destroy and to construct again / A house without walls / And to lose the fear to die" (Lane 2016).[11] Evoking the colonial wounds that she still embodies in the re-elaboration of her *mestiza* identity, Lane revalidates Guatemalan ancestral knowledges and spiritual practices that have been systematically disregarded over time in the interest of colonial dispossession.

Throughout "Alma Mestiza" (2016), the artist conceives the body from a cosmos-centric view, discerning in her materiality a space of inhabitability. In so doing, Lane moves away from androcentric abstractions of the (female) body to further articulate the collective-body, the body-territory, and the spiritual-body, all of which are imagined as an identity assemblage. In this vein, Lane has shared with a Chilean magazine that she cannot refer just to the material body because "what happens to us as women, what happens to the peoples in resistance, what happens to the native peoples, the Afro-descendant peoples, what happens to the communities historically excluded from social welfare, happens to me too" (Viancos

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[10] Translation by Paola Mendoza Téllez Girón.

[11] Translation by Miguel Ángel Blanco Martínez.

2019).[12] Likewise, Judith Butler (2019), talking about emotions at the body's limit, has pointed out that the clamor of the marginalized "is the living reminder that it is at the level of the body that political suffering takes place and it is through embodied action that the disfranchised make themselves known as existing." Altogether, Lane's musical reactions and Butler's reminder pinpoint the erasure and the exploitation of the colonized bodies and territories of the colonial/modern gender system. As theorized by Frantz Fanon (2009), these have been pushed out to the "zone of non-being" (42), a zone of racial oppression and exclusion where they struggle to be heard and to be noticed (Grosfoguel 2011).

3. Setting the terrain to become-with feminist artistic material

The unfolding of a differential affectivity informed by the memories of our feminist friendship through the arts, and triggered by Rebeca Lane's music, will be performed by combining Rebeca Lane's decolonial feminism with recent feminist research on posthuman engagement with artistic material (Straube 2014), and embodied auto-ethnographic poetry (Lykke 2018).[13] Throughout our living together, the authors of this paper have discussed if posthuman theory could meet a theoretical encounter with decolonial feminism. As the colonial/modern gender system reveals, dehumanization was inherent to colonization. Hence, to remain human, or to theoretically question this category, has been a privileged stance held by an intellectual elite, which usually belongs to countries with an epistemic colonialist agenda. Furthermore, the emphasis of feminist academia to re-evaluate the relationship

of the human with the non-human in affect, animal, animacy, or posthuman theories (Ahmed 2004; Haraway 2008; Chen 2012; Braidotti 2013) has been differently approached within feminist academic circuits. Anti-colonial and decolonial feminisms, as for instance the efforts developed by indigenous peoples, have considered the engagement with the non-human as foundational, while being long researched by Western academia and its "ready-made" theories.

However, there have also been academic attempts to foster possible encounters among decolonial and posthuman theories incorporating a feminist awareness.[14] In light of these contributions, and as a result of our diverse formation during our master's program, we would like to address "Alma Mestiza" by enacting a posthuman approach of critical engagement with the arts. Such an approach is greatly inspired by Wibke Straube's research on trans-cinema (2014), and Nina Lykke's auto-phenomenographic poetry rooted in lesbian widowhood (2018). By incorporating their personal needs and struggles as queer feminist researchers against the systematic conjectures that oppress them, Straube and Lykke turn the posthuman nature of their inquiries into affective healing frameworks. These are potentially useful for others suffering from the dynamics of compulsory heterosexuality (Rich 1980), and thus, for others belonging to the gendered human realm and its de-privileging dynamics of the neo-colonial exploitation of human and non-human resources. In order to provide an artistic embodied response to "Alma Mestiza," Straube and Lykke offer the theory and the methodology to come near to Lane's work without absorbing her own artistic approach under ours. Furthermore, the implementation of their

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[12] Translation by Paola Mendoza Téllez Girón.

[13] The notion of the posthuman has been widely theorized in the last decades. For this reason, there is a great number of different authors and approaches addressing this concept. In this paper, posthuman refers to our feminist and affective engagement in *casa feminista* as one informed by a human and non-human co-existence, playing music a vital role. For a quick temporal overview of academic posthuman research, see: <https://literariness.org/2018/07/25/posthumanist-criticism/>.

[14] Two recent instances would be Schaeffer, Felicity (2018), "Spirit Matters: Gloria Anzaldúa's Cosmic Becoming across Human/Nonhuman Borderlands," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 43(4): 1005–29, and Kaiser, Birgit M. and Kathrin Thiele (Eds.) (2018), "The Ends of Being Human: Returning (to) the Question," *philoSOPHIA* 8. This last one includes contributions by Denise Ferreira da Silva, Vicki Kirby, Max Hantel, William Paris, and Bracha L. Ettinger.

models better relates to the European background of Miguel, and to his non-heterosexual identity and affects. What will be later developed is a situated posthuman account through the arts responding to the colonial/modern gender system as inspired by Rebeca Lane within the affective engagement of our friendship, our different ethnicities, and reflective tools.

Becoming-with audio-visual material

Wibke Straube is a queer feminist scholar whose research focuses on the environmental humanities, transgender, and visual studies. In 2014, and as part of their PhD dissertation on trans-cinema, they proposed a critical framework of embodied engagement with audio-visual material rooted in feminist, posthuman, visual, affect, and queer theories. The author develops an audio-visual terminology and methodology surpassing the binary and occularcentric logics that have predominated in the relationship between films and spectators, as well as feminist visual theorization exclusively displaying psychoanalytic analyses (Mulvey 1975). As a matter of fact, Straube dismantles the ableist implications of the spectator figure, suggesting instead the notion of "the entrant-body": "The entrant becomes a permeable body, multi-sensorial rather than optical, touched and interpellated by music, other bodies and objects while touching upon different futures" (Straube 2014, 64). Out of the entrant-body, Straube widens the "haptic body" initially proposed by Laura Marks (2000), while contributing to a branch of feminist theorists dealing with the body and its affects in visual material (Sobchack 2004; Barker 2009).

These authors characterize the body as a locus affected by audio-visual material, thus fostering alternative identifications with it that rework gendered, vertical, and dichotomous relationships between the two. As the affective turn has been differently conceived by a number of authors since the early 2000s (Massumi 2002; Sedgwick 2003; Ahmed 2004), Straube acknowledges the blurring boundary between affect and emotion. In Straube's research, affect is hence defined as "an emotional (…) as well as

physical response to representation," ultimately enabling "an emotional 'becoming-with' between film and entrant" (Straube 2014, 54). Such a "becoming-with" stresses the mutual engagement among artistic material and the entrant-body at an affective level, consequently leading to embodied identifications that are necessarily situated. In being situated, and by enacting a feminist awareness, the encounters of body-entrants with audio-visual material specifically relate to the systemic intersection of oppressions. In Straube's study, audio-visual engagements navigate the liberating moments experienced by trans characters through dance, music, or dreams, which inform their need to differently identify with their environments. Straube terms these instants as "exit scapes," which also become for the entrant-bodies an opportunity to move away from their oppressions and to re-imagine better futurities.

Embodied engagements with audio-visual material not only facilitate feminist analyses of patriarchal oppressions through the arts, but also the possibility of articulating responses to them from our affected, and hence political, bodies. In Straube's dissertation, sound becomes a means to temporarily fade from hurting states, physically and psychically. When the body is then permeated by the touch of music, Straube highlights the activation of an "embodied listening," a concept retrieved from Gascia Ouzounian's research on the topic (2006). Also placing the body at the core of artistic encounters, Ouzounian implements Donna Haraway's idea of situated knowledges in the interaction with sonic material. By the end of the 1980s, feminist scholar Donna Haraway delineated her critique toward scientific rationality as a disembodied universal vision (Haraway 1988, 582) in the debate of Western feminist epistemologies. She considered the body and its senses as agents rather than resources, setting the ground for the development of situated knowledges and partial objectivities (Haraway 1988, 583). By incorporating Haraway's proposal, Ouzounian argues that "[i]n reviving the corporeal with respect to sonic experience, we cross the boundary from the impartial to the very personal, reclaiming that marginalized space as a space of significance" (Ouzounian 2006, 71).

Following the premises of Straube, Ouzounian, and Haraway within the scope of this paper, we discern a non-intrusive encounter with Rebeca Lane's song. Out of this, the entrant-body, its senses, and feelings are socio-politically affected by Lane via her lyrics. This encounter better elucidates the feminist potential of holding a conversation among different subjects and positionalities, which through music become-with without subsuming their respective languages, bodies, and critiques under one another. As previously discussed, the authors conceived this paper as an affective alliance among peoples with conflicting backgrounds that have found in friendship a relationship of mutual reflection and support. For us music is a healing tool to think about and to care for the other, as experienced in our co-inhabitation and listening to Lane's music. In the case at hand, we decided to render our becoming-with Lane's music through a poetic piece that ethically relates to our positionality and personal experiences, together with Lane's as depicted in "Alma Mestiza." Continuing with the feminist, affective, and posthuman input of our approach, the enactment of an embodied auto-ethnographic poetry, as displayed by Nina Lykke (2018), proves to be helpful in the artistic depiction of our becoming-with Rebeca's song.

An auto-phenomenographic methodology

Nina Lykke is a queer feminist scholar whose later work has focused on queer love, death, and mourning. Rooted in her experiences as a lesbian widow, Lykke has recently published a posthuman account of queer mourning merging a critical and a poetic approach. She develops the concept of "auto-phenomenography" (2018), a situated methodology of queer mourning and resistance through the arts. After the death of her life-long lesbian companion, Lykke underwent a prolonged mourning that had to face both the mandates of ableism and the medical stigma derived from compulsory heterosexuality (Rich 1980). Feeling diagnosed because of her queerness and willful mourning, Lykke finds in poetry a relieving tool to not overcome her mourning, but to frame it as an artistic medium of queer resistance. The author provides a

"method of inquiry" (110) shaped as a "situated argument" in the fostering of a new ethics of intimate relations and of difference (122). She relies on a model deeply influenced by theories of affect, philosophies of immanence, and feminist neovitalist materialism (110), as well as by Donna Haraway's decentering of companionship as strictly human (116). In the elaboration of her situated argument, "bodily relations and affective intensities are given central attention" (109).

Lykke conceives of the bodies of the becoming-widow (herself) and becoming-corpse (her partner) as terrains on which to formulate an artistic response of queer mourning and resistance. Accordingly, she poses her body as the carrier of affective relations which, after the death of her wife, nurture a posthuman poetry among the two. In this process, Lykke's embodied memories lead to an ethics of affective difference through the arts that delineates a relational affectivity which is ethically asymmetrical: "There is no hierarchy of pain and suffering […] the relationship between the positions involved is asymmetrical and existentially different, and for ethical reasons they should not be collapsed into one another" (Lykke 2018, 118). Such a differential affectivity deserves special attention for the purposes of this paper. Lykke maintains that the artistic tracing of her queer mourning shall begin from her differential affectivity as a becoming-widow. For this reason, Lykke witnesses the trauma of losing her companion to death, that is, *in conjunction with* but not *as* her partner. The shaping of her asymmetrical affective engagement with her wife is then primarily informed by the memories of their companionship once the latter has entered into the posthuman realm of death.

This remembrance, in which the body and its affectivities are centrally placed, configures in Lykke's poetry what she terms a "compassionate companionship" (Lykke 2018, 109). Lykke situates her mourning as a vital condition to produce a posthuman account against hetero-normative dynamics of family and diagnosis. Since both display an ableist attitude invisibilizing queer mourning for its non-heterosexual fulfillment, Lykke fosters a compassionate companionship in which there is

a shared striving of *being-with* as well as *being-for* the other (117). This is possible thanks to empathetic instances of quotidian sympathy, or what Lykke reworks in philosopher Ralph R. Acampora's lexicon (2006) as "symphysis": an "embodied rethinking of the notion of sympathy, stressing […] that the subject, in a material, corpo-affective sense, is affected and co-experiences the ways in which hir significant others are bodily affected" (Lykke 2018, 116). As a result, Lykke's auto-phenomenography revisits daily life as a (becoming-)widow to portray the shared yet differently experienced everyday episodes of her wife's disease. The focus on a differential corpo-affective everyday thus enables, in Lykke's mourning, a psychic identification with her partner after death, placing embodied remembrance as central to posthuman co-inhabitation.

Extracting from Lykke's work an attention to mourning, the body, the everyday, sympathy, asymmetrical affective relationality, and to the memories of former co-inhabitation, we want to develop in this paper an embodied, auto-ethnographic, and poetic becoming-with "Alma Mestiza" from our friendly engagement and alliance, and without forcing Lane's performance, or our own positionalities, into the theoretical models detailed above. By incorporating Lykke's writing method, we can better capture our differential affectivity in engaging with Lane's song, as well as with the backgrounds that asymmetrically invest our feminist politics. These, as the Spanish denial of its colonization reveals, encapsulate the negation of indigenous peoples and cultures, and the neo-colonial practices currently fostering the exploitation of human and natural resources in countries with a history of colonization. As stressed beforehand, the Spanish negation of its colonization invisibilizes the gendered violences suffered by colonized women and the killing of countless lives under the name of conquest and religious conversion. Hence, mourning, both for colonized peoples and for Spanish society, has been strategically prevented. On the one hand, mourning has been a forbidden practice entrapping colonized peoples into social and institutional oblivion. On the other, mourning has been systematically dismissed by and within countries with a colonizing agenda – past and present – therefore passing the muting of colonial killing onto current and upcoming generations.

In this paper, we would like to challenge this rationale by providing a situated account that opposes the colonial/modern gender system through the arts, and simultaneously addresses a decolonial artistic move enacting a feminist commitment. The reflection of our differential yet joint becoming-with "Alma Mestiza" will thus necessarily navigate our memories, former co-inhabitation, daily experiences, and the state of our friendship as particularly affecting our bodies. As Lugones and Spelman advise, we will see Rebeca's, Paola's, and Miguel's feminist politics within their own communities and cultural texts in the progressive demystification of colonizing, universal formulas of knowledge production. As a concluding note for this section, it is our will not only to facilitate a theoretical encounter among decolonial and posthuman feminist patterns, but also to discern within it the training and co-existence we have differently experienced throughout the last two years. During this time, our daily lives have been touched by the power of music, especially that which incorporates feminist claims. By positioning our authorial voices in this paper, we acknowledge Rebeca Lane's contribution to the learning and unlearning of our feminist ethics and praxis. We want to encourage anyone reading these words to seek in friendship a relationship of mutual growth, support, and alliance in the counteraction of patriarchal confinement nurturing the logics of racism and neo-colonial exploitations.

4. A posthuman artistic response to the colonial/modern gender system

Prologue

It has been almost a year since this paper started as a reflective exercise to portray our fruitful conversations in *casa feminista* within the context of our conflicting backgrounds, feminist training, and posthuman co-existence. The intention to become-with "Alma Mestiza" by enacting an auto-phenomenographic effort came up thanks to Paola's encouragement to Miguel

to render his poems as situated accounts in his academic research. We believe that creative writing is a medium to approach systemic socio-political scenarios from an academic feminist standpoint. In conjunction with a theory and methodology that enable us to come near to Lane's song, Miguel's poetry attempts to reflect the feminist potential of conceiving friendship as an asymmetrical affective terrain from which to better counteract racism and neo-colonial forms of exploitation.

Throughout this year, we still embody the discomfort of the possible contradictions that emerge from our academic positions, language, and privileges. How to foster a theoretical encounter between decolonial and posthuman frameworks without replicating Western academic hierarchies? How do gender, ethnic background, and overall politics of location come into play when writing about our friendship and Rebeca Lane's activism? In sum, is it possible to initiate a conversation among peoples from territories with a history of colonization, without falling into the logics of epistemological colonization? Again and again, we have discussed these questions, trying to find in each other's words and vulnerability some healing to the unending contradictions of the world-system we live in.

Being willing to render ourselves vulnerable in our friendship, through music, or in the formulation of an artistic or academic piece, implies finding in friendship an alliance to resist and contest the colonial/modern gender system, as well as the relief to the anxiety permeating any possible attempt to take a stand. Following Lugones and Spelman's manuscript, the co-authorship threaded all along this paper simultaneously voices the affective, positional, and territorial asymmetry investing our feminist and friendly engagement. For the matter of this paper, our memories in conjunction with specific academic references, not only inform but also stimulate these stances, as differentially shared in their affective expression.
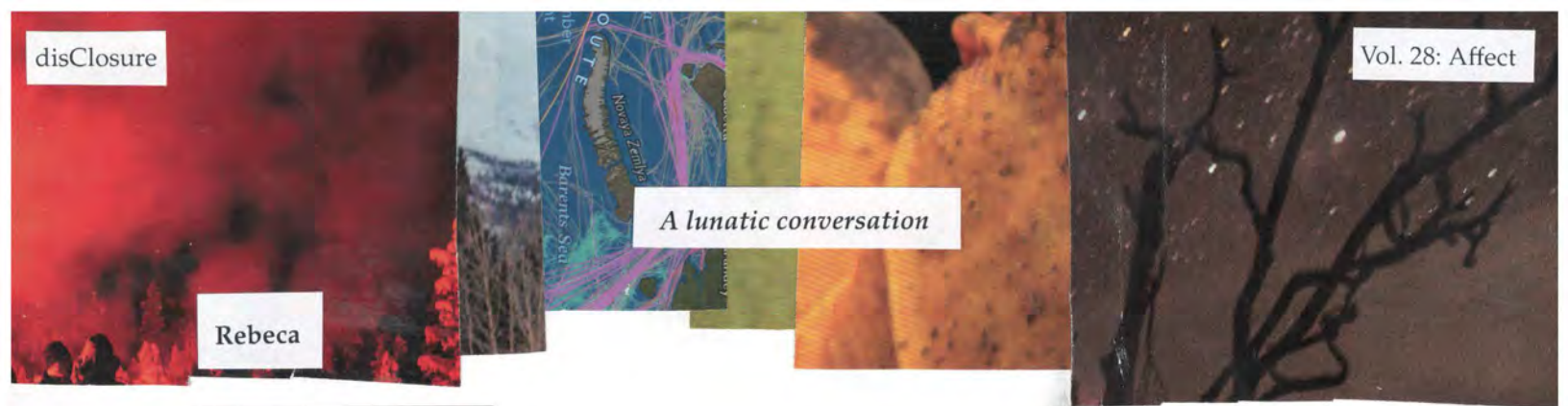
In mid-June 2018, Miguel went to a Rebeca Lane's concert at La Ingobernable,[15] in

Madrid. He remembers walking the communitarian space, listening to Lane, and sending Paola a recorded note of almost every song. Later on, in October 2019, Paola went to a concert of Lane in Mexico City. Likewise, Paola sent Miguel recordings, pictures, while letting him know all her impressions of the event. Even if physically separate, there was a differential affective sharing of the concert between us. Framed within the two concerts of Rebeca Lane, Paola and Miguel have repeatedly doubted, questioned, denied, silenced, interrupted, and misunderstood the validity, legitimacy, scope, structure, and poetry of this paper.

Despite vulnerability, listening, communicating, (co-)writing, reading, thinking, and feeling can become contradictory sites of encounter, we would like to stress again the power of friendship as an affective engagement nurturing feminist militancy, in and outside academia. This might not find rigid answers to any of these questions, nor wishes to do so. Rather, friendship can provide support and alliance in a time when neoliberalism and the circulation of capital entails patriarchal violence against and destruction of living bodies. In the face of it, we vulnerably hope to have documented Rebeca Lane's activism, a relatable academic corpus, and an artistic contribution in the most friendly possible way.

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[15] La Ingobernable (The Ungovernable) was an occupied space in downtown Madrid operating as a feminist communitarian enclave from May 2017 until November 2019, when the newly elected right-wing government of Madrid forced its eviction. During its running, La Ingobernable worked as a self-managed social center offering a number of open courses and activities. As part of Rebeca Lane's European tour, she offered a concert at La Ingobernable to raise funds to help those affected by the eruption of the *Volcán de Fuego* in Guatemala in June 2018.

A lunatic conversation

Rebeca

Cosmic consciousness
From a magical heritage
Seeking in the shadow
The traits of my soul.[16]

Miguel
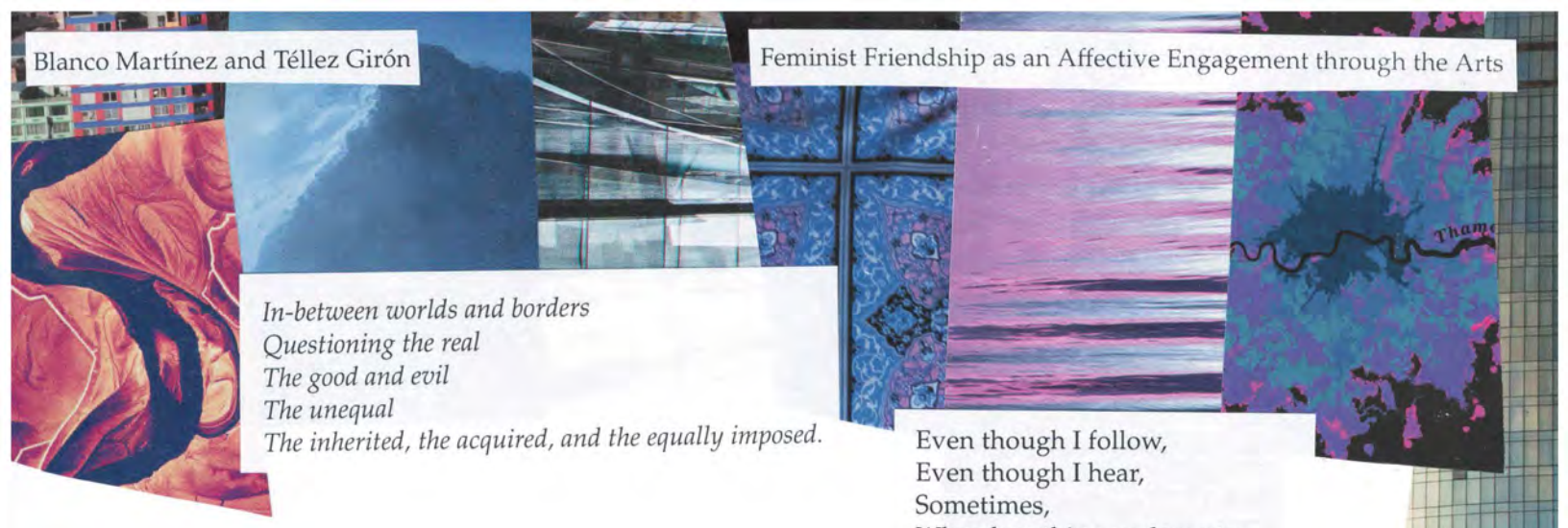
Tengo el alma asustada.
Jadeando como un perro
I listen to your soul
To the heritage of the never grieved,
Of the never mourned,
That now, as ever,
Seek for a calling of their names.

Tengo el alma asustada.
Jadeando como un perro
It is harder and harder to hear.
The TV screams at you,
While the president denies your consciousness,
And the king ignores the magic
They could never convert.

Learning how to become an animal, like a Nahual
I am a body transiting the spiritual path
It is not linear
My language is ancestral
I travel spirally.

In this blinding noise,
The beating
Where your pains inhabit
Affects my body,
Its odysseic back,
Its thin skin,
Flesh,
Sex,
Drowning under this ocean
That after stealing my breath,
Teaches me how to swim
Otherwise.
And so, I follow.
And so, I breathe again,
Or perhaps for the first time.

[16] The whole song has been freely translated from Spanish by Miguel and together revised with Paola.

In-between worlds and borders
Questioning the real
The good and evil
The unequal
The inherited, the acquired, and the equally imposed.

Even though I follow,
Even though I hear,
Sometimes,
When breathing underwater
I still fear they might scream.
They with a universal name.
They with a masculine voice.
They with gentle speeches built
Upon dead bodies,
Silenced tongues,
And burned traditions.
Yet it's this terror
The source of my deception,
The colonial suffocation
Where the erasure of your body
Incarnates the privilege of mine.

I am a creature
In-between cultures
Navigating through the trash
The beliefs that nullify me
To bury them.
Mother-Nature
Tenderly sutures
The rupture of my body
Once I freed myself from
My tough armor.
Because it does not mature
A wound that is not healed
A mind without madness
A heart without ties.
To flow is to destroy and to construct again
A house without walls
And to lose the fear to die.

This fear
Lies as the reminder
Of what they left behind.
The armor of
Self-denial,
The armor of
Colonial killing.
To bridge anew.
With homes surpassing borders,
With bodies knitting on each other
The healing colors of
Mother-Nature.

27

Mestiza I am
Atrocious contradiction
The four colors of corn in my color.

Abhorrent they say.
Dirty they say.
Animal they call you.
Because ignorance is
As fragile as fear,
And unlike yours,
Their skin is so thick
They cannot speak the
Wisdom of their bodies.

Uttering instead
The universal speech,
The unhuman solitary tone.
But not you.
Contradicción atroz.
Voz mestiza.
Echoing the power
Of self-calling,
Of collective calling,
Of nature calling.

Looking for my identity in a racist society
The colonial mind installed in my pupil
The reflection in the mirror gives me back what I believe
If I do not mold my soul.
I do it in the Eurocentric phallocentric models
That transform my experience into an exotic object
Painting cultures as something folkloric
Skipping the subjective from theoretical models.
They wanted me to keep quiet about the heritage of my blood
They wanted me to forget the violence against my mother
But they could not take from us the internal fire
The eternal knowledge
The signals found in dreams.

They know it.
They know how disruptive
Bodies can be,
And how deceptive
Seeing can be.
And it is.
Because my eyes couldn't see,
And the mirror that reflects us
Is the same one that divides us.
Transforming the personal into
The laughable,
The cultural into
The exotic,
And the cosmic into
Madness.

But once I turned my back to the mirror,
I happened to see what was around me.
There I felt the haunting force
Of unspoken genealogies
And the roots of an earthly survival.
Because the power of the oral exceeds
The privilege of the written.
And so, I listen.

That is why we defend our land and its secrets
With two raised fists and amulets in the soul
With the force of the volcano
The roar of the jaguar
The strength of the female warrior and of the animal spirit.

It's almost full moon, Paola.
And lunatic I remember
Our last ritual.
It was full of love,
And you taught me to call me back.
To call my back
So I could bridge with you,
Nature,
Myself.

Together we heard you,
Rebeca.
We heard you
Calling yourself
And all the names,
Traditions, and tongues
Colonial killing attempted to silence,
But never dared to bury.

Mestiza I am
Atrocious contradiction
The four colors of corn in my color.

So here we are.
Here we all are.
Calling our backs,
And the backs of the others,
So we can see,
And feel,
Backwards,
Non-linear,
And only with
Corporeal reflections.
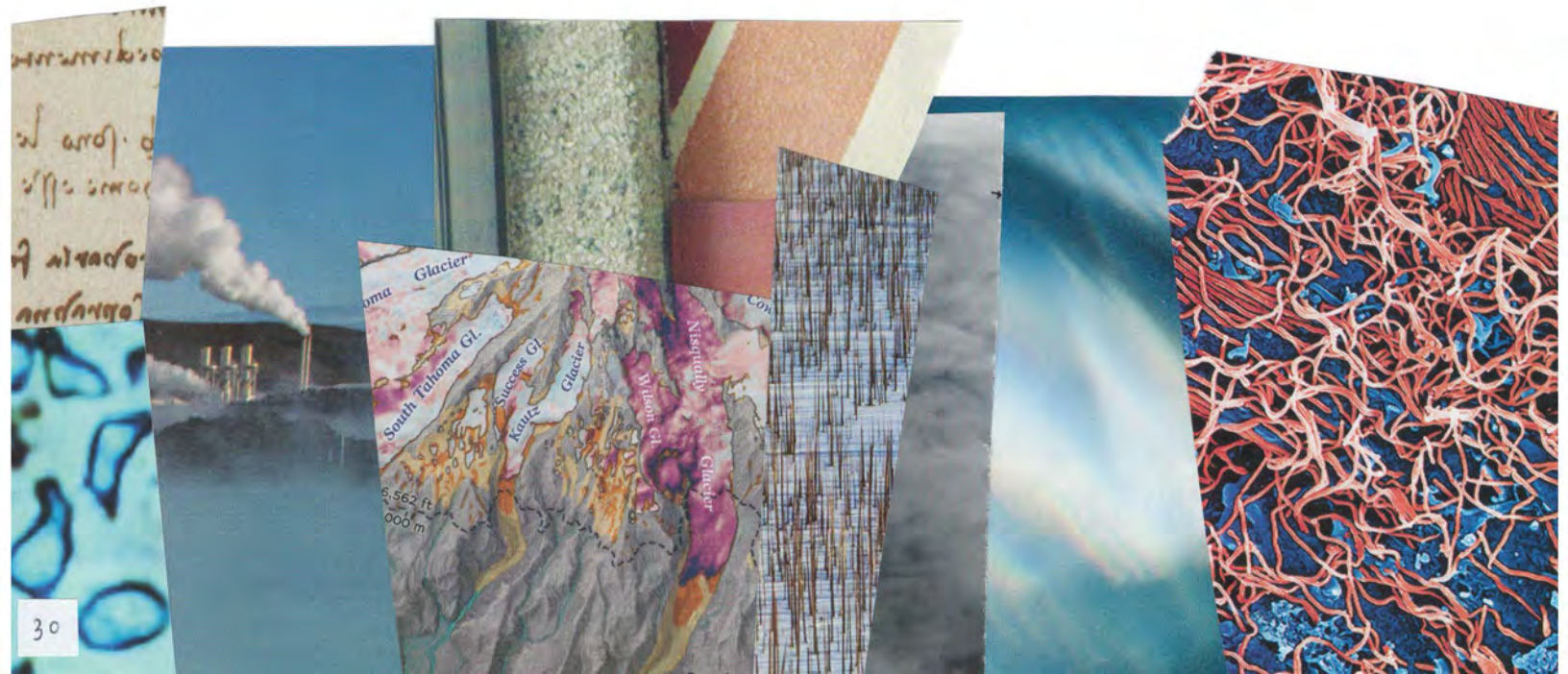
Figure 1. A winter view from *casa feminista*. Personal photograph.
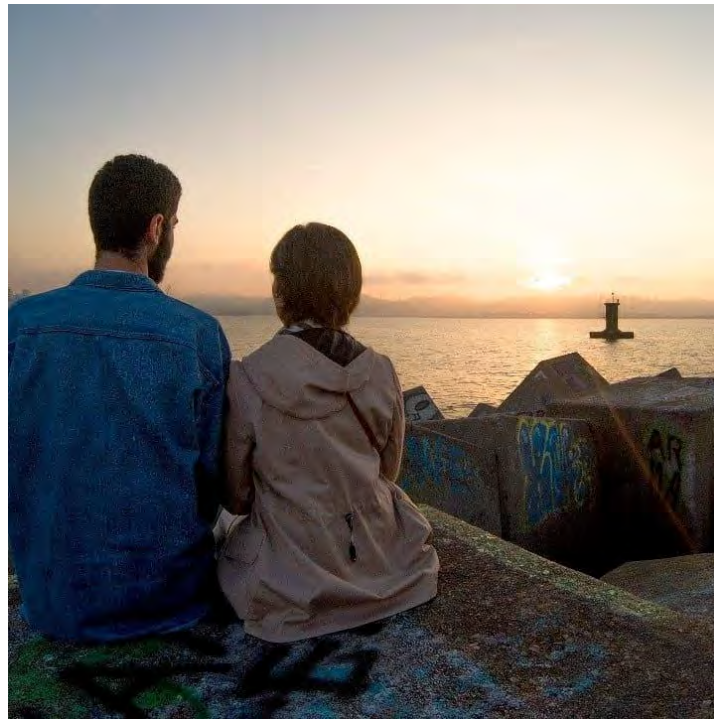
Figure 2. Our backs, as we face the waters that connect us (Gijón, Asturias). Personal photograph.
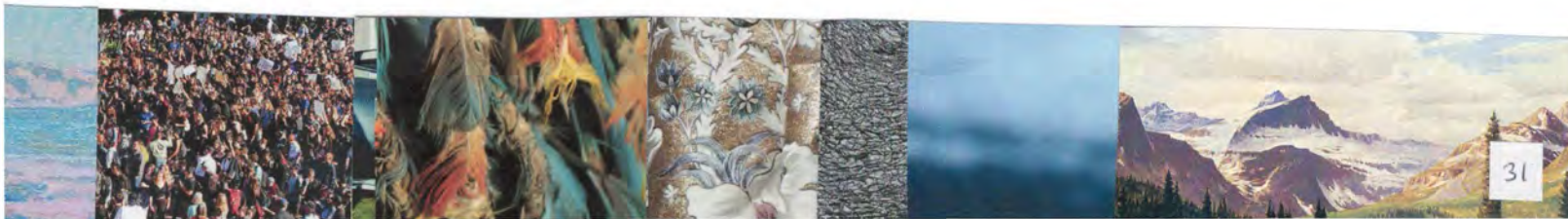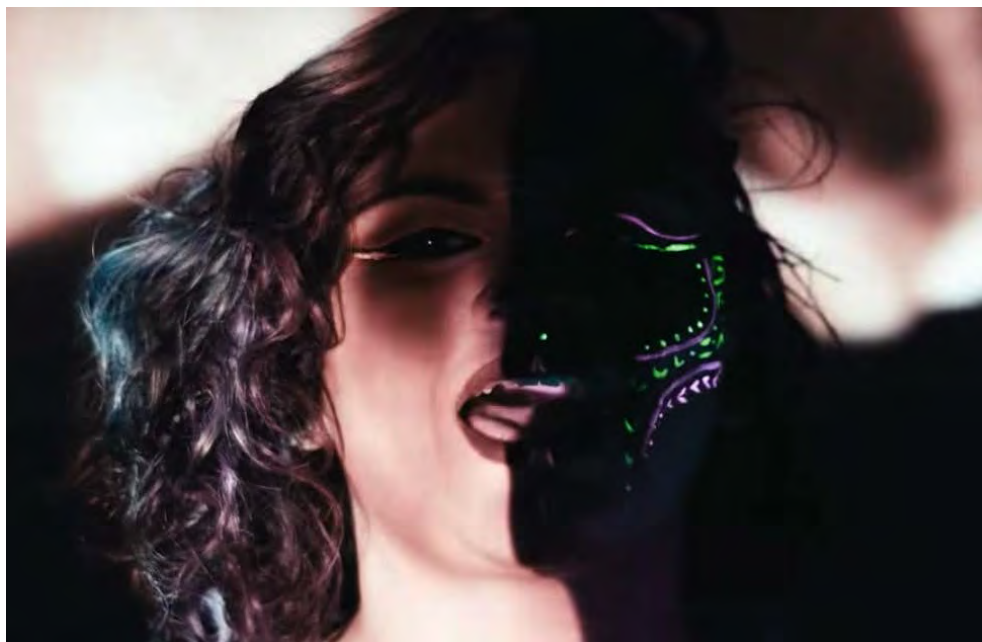
Figure 3. A screenshot from the video-clip of "Alma Mestiza" showing Rebeca Lane singing with an aesthetic that addresses the message of the song.

Figure 4. A screenshot from the video-clip of "Alma Mestiza" showing Rebeca Lane along with a group of women in friendly companionship.[17]

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[17] To watch the video-clip of "Alma Mestiza," see:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8Y0BB7kh2c>.

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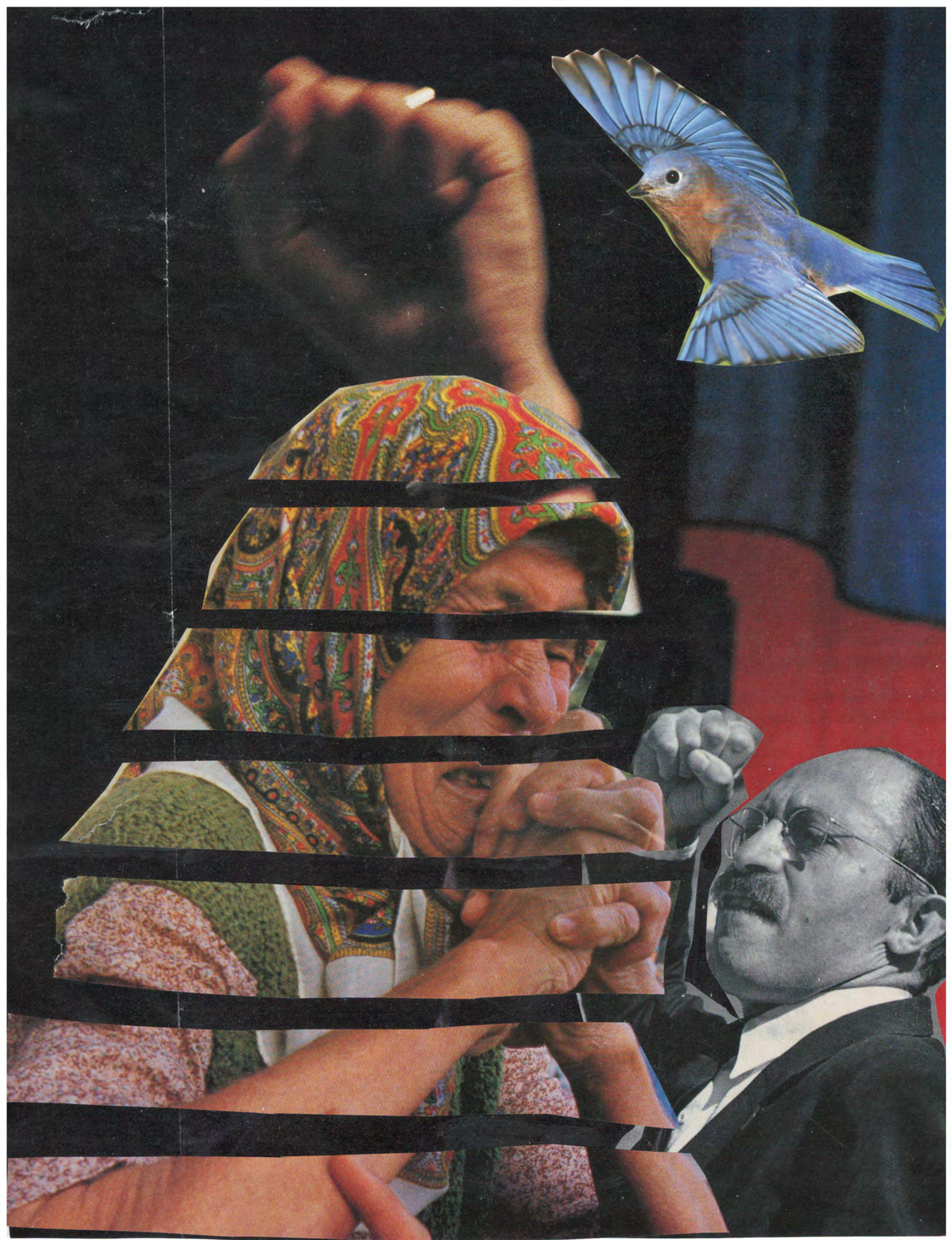
Affect and Manhattan's West Side Piers

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Derek P. McCormack (2010) argues, "Affect, is like an atmosphere: it might not be visible, but at any given point it might be sensed… Emotion, in turn, can be understood as the sociocultural expression of this felt intensity" (643). This paper puts McCormack (2010) and Ben Anderson (2009) into conversation to think through the ways in which *atmosphere* in relation to *affective* and *emotive* life has been conceptualized. I center the affective atmospheres that happen with queer bodies that make New York's west side piers queerly affective. I use "queer bodies" to signal the dis-identification with heteronormativity or binaristic sexualities. Queer sexualities carry political weight with regard to the comments that the politically loaded term "queer" brings to public consciousness. So queer sexualities and queer bodies substantively challenge cisgender and heteronormative social institutions that are disgustingly oppressive to the queer bodies that, perhaps, use the piers as a space to mark their affective and emotive capabilities. Ultimately, my aim is to situate atmosphere as an analytic to explore the socio-spatial meanings that are attached to spaces and places. As a result, I wish to further spatial knowledge that considers atmospheres as a legitimate dimension of space and placemaking.

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This paper thinks through the ways in which places and spaces – two spheres of endless and unprecedented possibilities – become queerly and erotically atmospheric not by simply who or what occupies the place or space, but what bodies do or *potentially* do while sited to a locale such as Manhattan's West Side piers. LaToya Eaves (2014) argues that Black women's geographies support spatial epistemologies and ontologies as well as analyses of space, place, and landscape. I argue that atmosphere is a spatial epistemology, an analytic, and a concept that is almost already a consequence and an affect of spatial production and placemaking. I rely on the images from Alvin Baltrop's *The Piers* to think through how people who have been cast at the fringes of society such as gay men, re-fashioned Manhattan's West Side piers from the early 20th century to the mid-1980s not by simply being placed in space, but their queer performances and acts alongside and within the piers. I deploy queer as a critique, a social formation, and an identity; it refers to people who embody and enact forms of gender and sexual nonconformity (Eaves 2014, McGlotten 2012, Bowden 2012). Alvin Baltrop (1948-2004) was an important Black queer photographer from the Bronx who captured decaying landscapes, despair, and sexuality, simultaneously. He documents a period of queer eroticism between Stonewall and the AIDS pandemic (1980s), his friends who were in the Navy with him, the graffiti art of Tava, and Gordon Matta-Clark's "Day's End." He is widely known for his images of New York's West Side piers in the 1970s. His images are distinct insofar as they are voyeuristic, queer, and erotic. *Dreams into Glass* notes that Baltrop's photography does not end and begin with *The Piers*, but rather, he documented images of the homeless, young runaways, sex workers, and public sexual acts throughout the city.

Defining Atmosphere and Attunement

Geographic thought frames *atmosphere* as an important dimension/effect of Black queer spatiality. On the one hand, Marxist geographers have considered the reproduction of social formations and class relations. On the other hand, feminist geographers have thought about the sex-gender system and the extent to which it is spatialized. Yet humanist geographers who take lived experiences as a point of departure fail to address the point at which "bodies' interiorities and exteriorities, depth, and surfaces come together or apart" (Longhurst 2001, 24). Atmospheres help us contend with this disconnect and find ourselves amongst the complication that is characteristic of space (Eaves 2014). Atmosphere is a becoming that is felt rather than seen. Ben Anderson (2009) defines atmosphere as the "shared ground from which subjective states and their attendant feelings and emotions emerge" (78). Anderson also argues that it is the very ambiguity of affective atmospheres – between presence and absence, between subject and object, and between the definite and indefinite that enable us to reflect on affective experience as occurring beyond, around, and alongside the formation of subjectivity. Considering his theorization, atmosphere envelopes social relationships in place with people's subject formations, which together make a given space-place distinct.

According to Kathleen Stewart (2011, 445), "Atmospheric attunements are a process of what Heidegger (1962) calls worlding – an intimate compositional process of dwelling in spaces that bears, gestures, gestates, worlds. Here, things matter not because of how they are represented but because they have qualities, rhythms, forces, relations, and movements." Take Chinatown as an example. As a place, it has forces, relations, and movements that are responsive to the social and cultural desires of the spaces in which it resides. This is to say that

the process of worlding and placemaking are, in fact, political processes with cyclical affectual consequences: attunements. Stewart explains that when worlding happens, inhabitants may fall in line with the status quo – even if that status quo is derived from normalization initiated by the state. "Chinatown" for instance is a product of worlding that has been co-produced by people and the state (an institution that has now acted out its fetish of the "other"). Attunement is called into being when we consider the affective orientation of daily life. Shaka McGlotten (2012) takes up *attunement* to think through affective ordinariness that is prompted by advanced or late capitalism in an effort to do justice to a young Black gay boy who was a victim of racist and homophobic violence. McGlotten (2012) says,

> [I]f theories of intersectionality work to identify the structural inequalities that shape everyday life as a world of violence, unequal access, and limited or nonexistent resources punctuated by a range of minor resistances, then everyday life comes to refer only to those forms of life lived under what bell hooks has famously called White supremacist capitalist patriarchy. This tends to subsume what I take up to be some of the critical stuff of life, the something-else-ness of life – the ephemeral, or incoherent modes of awareness, attunement (5).

I ask us to consider the something-else-ness that seldom gets mentioned in writings on space and place. Thereby, I take up *attunement* and *atmosphere* as analytics that help us think through how we – as social actors – understand, produce, and utilize space, place, perhaps outside of normalization; they signal a way to *craft* and *do* spatiality. Spatiality is the theory behind the production of space that is inherently co-constitutive (Kirby 1996). Spatiality engages the premise that space/place-making is a process that involves remembering, animating, and feeling. These practices and affects produce atmosphere. The benefit of using the analytic of atmosphere, and by extension, spatiality, is to

analyze what people do alongside what is felt in a place – where social relationships and performances are sited to understand some extent of the desires and social identities that mark the place. Atmosphere is the feeling that encompasses the place and looms over and between people.

Ben Anderson (2009) has conceptualized *atmosphere* in relation to *affective* and *emotive* life. Affect is an unmediated potential for things to happen. Affect, according to Raymond Williams (1977), involves a happening across structures of feeling. There are a number of social, cultural, and political inspirations that channel affect ranging from media and capital to governments. Emotive life, on the other hand, is the mediated, static, and conclusive personal reaction of affect. In this paper, I center the affective atmospheres that happen with queer bodies that make New York's west side piers queerly affective, and make it, well, a distinct place. I use "queer bodies" to signal the dis-identification with heteronormativity or binaristic sexualities. Queer sexualities carry political weight in regard to the comments that the politically loaded term "queer" brings to public consciousness.

Anderson's (2009) conceptualizations and theorizations regarding atmosphere have been motivated by Karl Marx (1856) who argues that the capitalist mode of production conditions people's lives; it presses on social life. Simultaneously, atmosphere envelopes and affects social life. Anderson (2009) is also driven by the phenomenology of aesthetics by Mikel Dufrenne (1973). According to Dufrenne, and by extension, Anderson (2009), "atmospheres are perpetually forming and deforming, appearing and disappearing, as bodies enter in relation with one another. They are never finished, static, or at rest" (79). In this sense, Anderson is alluding to the spatio-temporal and kinesthetic aspects regarding movements, people, and as a result, atmospheres.

Baltrop's *The Piers* (1977) and *Becoming Atmospheric*

To think through the structures of feeling that preempts the production of space (Henri Lefebvre 1974), I will center Baltrop's *The Piers* (1977) to consider how New York City's Christopher Street Pier (Pier 45) was re-appropriated by gay men to meet, hangout, and have public sex. While hiding from his subjects, Baltrop strived to capture the liveliness, unrest, and becoming of Pier 45.

Pier 45 and the West Side piers have historically carried a queer atmosphere by what people did in the area: hookup. In the early 20th century, the area was a temporary outpost for well over 500,000 seamen and other workers who had traveled from all over the world. By World War I, Pier 45 and the surrounding area (see Figure 1 and Figure 2) was dense with bars, warehouses, *and* men. Its isolation made it an ideal location to have privacy in public (see Chauncey 1994). There were a number of bars in the area that had become a common cruising area for gay men. Will Kohler (2016) says that gay men in the mid-1960s would cruise between the trucks that were parked under the raised West Side Highway (now demolished) at night. He goes on to say that that the trucks were empty and unlocked, which allowed gay men to have public sex, which was common up to the early-1980s. Stonewall (1969) marked Pier 45 as the nucleus of gay life since the riot was the act that pushed back on the state and its arms that were oppressing LGBT people who made claim to the area. Considering public sex was a common occurrence at the piers, they carry a distinct atmosphere, which is historic and queer.

Atmospheres have both subjective and objective qualities that are felt (emotional) and pre-personal (affective). According to German philosopher Gernot Böhme (1993),

Atmospheres are neither something objective, that is, qualities possessed by things, and yet they are something thing-like, belonging to the thing in that things articulate their presence through qualities – conceived as ecstasies. Nor are atmospheres something subjective, for example determinations of a psychic state. And yet they are subject-like, belong to subjects in that they are sensed in bodily presence by human beings and this sensing is at the same time a bodily state of being of subjects in space (122).

In light of this quote, though non-definitive, atmospheres are thing-like and subject-like, simultaneously. In my sense of the atmosphere of Pier 45, they are both/and the object of inquiry waiting to be discovered through its (im)materially emotive and affective capabilities. Atmospheres are realized through the senses; they are spatial happenings within their indeterminate boundaries. Atmospheres *become* through what bodies or things do. Think how energies and intensities between bodies are felt rather than traced or mapped. Perhaps Böhme (1993) was accurate to leave his estimation of atmosphere intentionally vague and non-static.

Baltrop's images in *The Piers* consider the ways in which queer people make the piers atmospheric instantaneously. Baltrop captures the possibilities that the subjects make of the space by what they do at the piers – either through sex, sunbathing, or being physically harmed. To be frank, Pier 45 becomes atmospheric through distinctive behaviors and body attractions and repulsions that are felt. According to Anderson (2009), "atmospheres have a characteristic spatial form – diffusion within a sphere. Returning to Deleuze and Guattari, we can say that atmospheres are generated by bodies – of multiple types – affecting one another as some form of 'envelopment' is produced" (80). In this case, the sexualized bodies that are captured by Baltrop are affecting. The images have the capability to affect at the moment you may experience them from elsewhere. In this regard, where and when you may experience the images envelopes the space, making it atmospheric.

Pier 45 becomes erotically atmospheric through the ways in which the queer bodies

have been positioned relative to the piers, and relative to one another. In Figure 3, two men lay naked on the pier. The man pictured to the right lays flat on the pier while the man pictured to the left faces the man to the right; both men's body language as it is captured in the image is welcoming – their bodies attract. In Figure 4, 5, and 7 men sit naked on the pier; lumber rests at their feet. Their pensive gazes are oriented toward the Hudson River (see Figure 1). Although they are naked, their bodies rest; they are comfortable with one another. Two men walk past each other in a large, dilapidated warehouse in Figure 6. The man pictured to the left is smiling. He is wearing wide-legged jeans, a white, plain t-shirt, and black shoes. He is walking toward the camera and his gaze is focused on the naked buttocks of the man on the right. The man pictured to the right is walking away from the camera. He is wearing black boots, a leather vest, and wristwear on his right wrist. In Figure 8, two men are engaging in oral sex in front of a window in a room that is cluttered with old lumber and crumbling cement walls. The man pictured on the left wears only a white t-shirt while his pants are below his knees. His knees are bent, and his body is lowered close to the ground to perform oral sex on the man pictured to the right. The man on the right is wearing a dark t-shirt and his pants are down; he towers over the man on the left and his left hand is touching the man on the left's shoulder. Considering Baltrop's images, the gay men who are sited at Pier 45 produce an atmosphere which is queer and erotic due to their relative queer acts – either through engaging in public sex or resting on the pier. The queer and erotic atmosphere is a significant dimension of queer spatiality.

To borrow from Anderson (2009), "there are two different spatialities. The first is the spatiality of the 'sphere' in the sense of a certain type of envelope or surround. The second spatiality is spherical, but it is, more specifically, a dyadic space of resonance – atmospheres 'radiate' from one individual to another" (80). For me, the intersection of spatialities, atmosphere, and queer life envelopes the

possibilities of queer sexual behavior and queer place-making that underscores how places are almost always sites of becoming. Anderson's approach to spatialities and their connections to atmospheres is informed by Edward Relph's *Place and Placelessness*. Relph (1976) argues that spatial experience has various intensities which fall on a spectrum: "direct experience at one extreme and abstract thought at another" (9). Thereby, the placelessness of the piers, particularly Pier 45, is an attitude, not a fact. The attitude of the photos that are captured by Baltrop is, in my opinion, characterized with depth, rhythm, and intentionality of the queer subjects that move within the sexualized atmosphere of Pier 45. What I mean by depth is what is seen and not seen but gestured towards. Specifically, Baltrop's queer subjects are gesturing towards the ways in which Pier 45, as a place of becoming, is, perhaps, a site of conceived and perceived sexualization and queer identities. Secondly, the rhythms of Pier 45, as it has been captured by Baltrop have affective and emotive capabilities through the slowing of time-space by the gay men at Pier 45. Consider how men are positioned in a way that signals to the onlooker how time-space is perhaps slowed through the leisurely gestures and nudity. Now, closely gaze at the intentionality of the queer subjects that are captured by Baltrop. The intentionality of the queer subjects to make the space of Pier 45 become erotically atmospheric through their body comportment is rooted in the understanding that Pier 45 is public space that is not inviting to those who do not adopt heteronormativity or politics of respectability. In this regard, the piers are presented as an illegal mechanism of colonialism – they are a publicly private space, which means that they are only understood to be a space reserved for those who adopt respectability and live their public lives in a heteronormative manner.

In a nuanced sense, spaces and places become atmospheric according to people's actions, their engagement with objects/things, and the immaterial aspects that are felt. Taking this further, the requirements for *becoming*

atmospheric involves some degree of depth, rhythm, and intentionality. So, a space and place, such as the piers, broadly, and Pier 45, in particular, as they have been captured by Baltrop have *affects* – that is, rhythms that have intentionality and depth with felt consequences. The requirements and the sensing of atmosphere(s) are motivated by a set of politics as well. Besides, ask yourself: for whom and for what meaning making end do atmospheres unfold? The answer may lie in the intentions of the people who produce the space and place, and, by extension, the atmosphere.
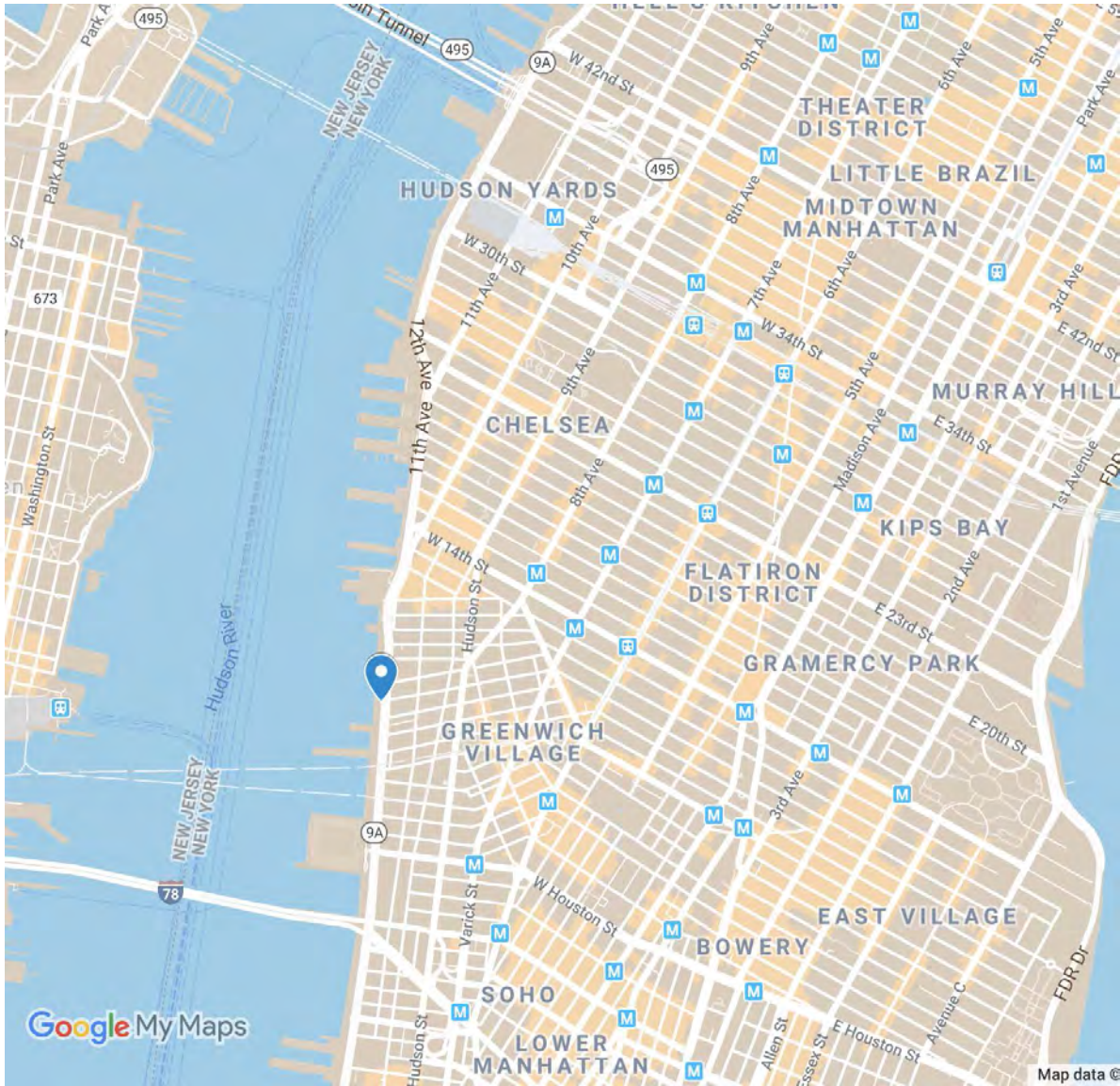
Figure 1. Map of Manhattan's West Side
Google Maps
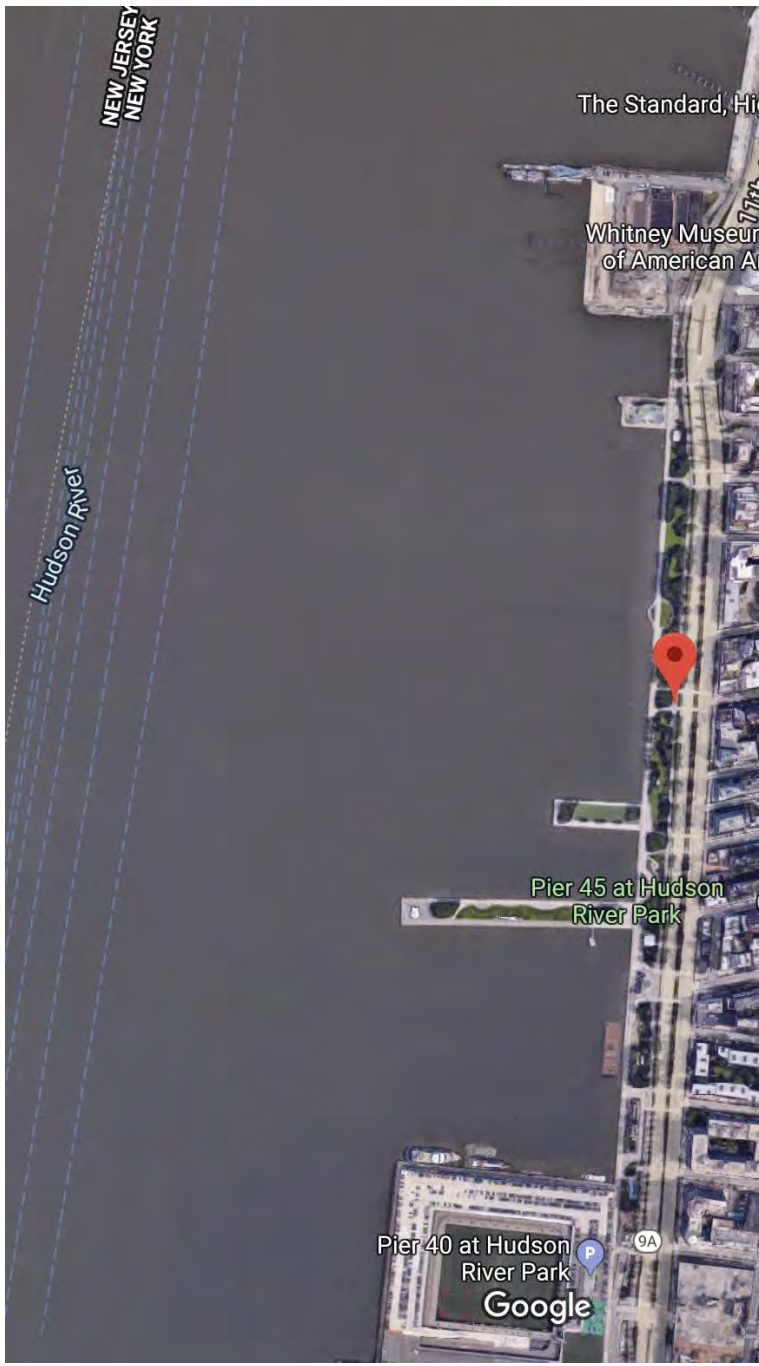
Figure 2. Map of Manhattan's West Side (Satellite View)
Google Maps

Figure 3. Two men lay on the pier.
From Baltrop, Alvin (1977). *Alvin Baltrop: The Piers*. Madrid: TF Editores.
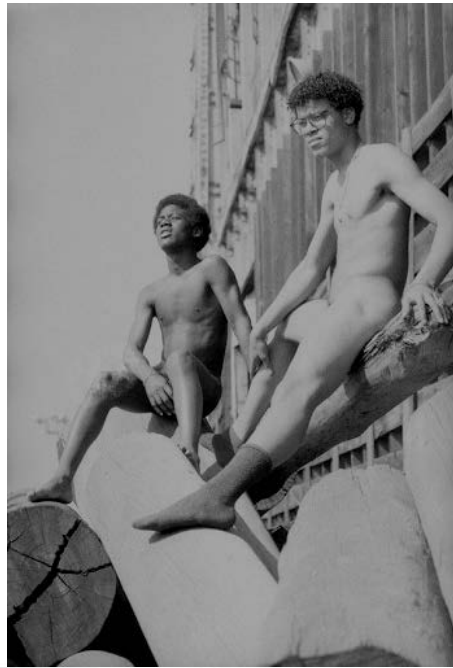
Figure 4. Two men sit unclothed on the pier.
From Baltrop, Alvin (1977). *Alvin Baltrop: The Piers*. Madrid: TF Editores.

Figure 5. Men lay on the pier.
From Baltrop, Alvin (1977). *Alvin Baltrop: The Piers*. Madrid: TF Editores.

Figure 6. Two men pass each other. One man gazes at a semi-nude man.
From Baltrop, Alvin (1977). *Alvin Baltrop: The Piers*. Madrid: TF Editores.
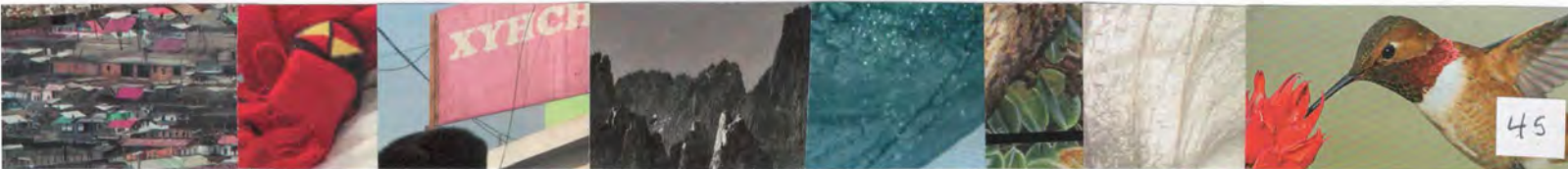
Figure 7. Three men sit and stand unclothed on the pier.
From Baltrop, Alvin (1977). *Alvin Baltrop: The Piers*. Madrid: TF Editores.

Figure 8. Two men engage in oral sex.
From Baltrop, Alvin (1977). *Alvin Baltrop: The Piers*. Madrid: TF Editores.

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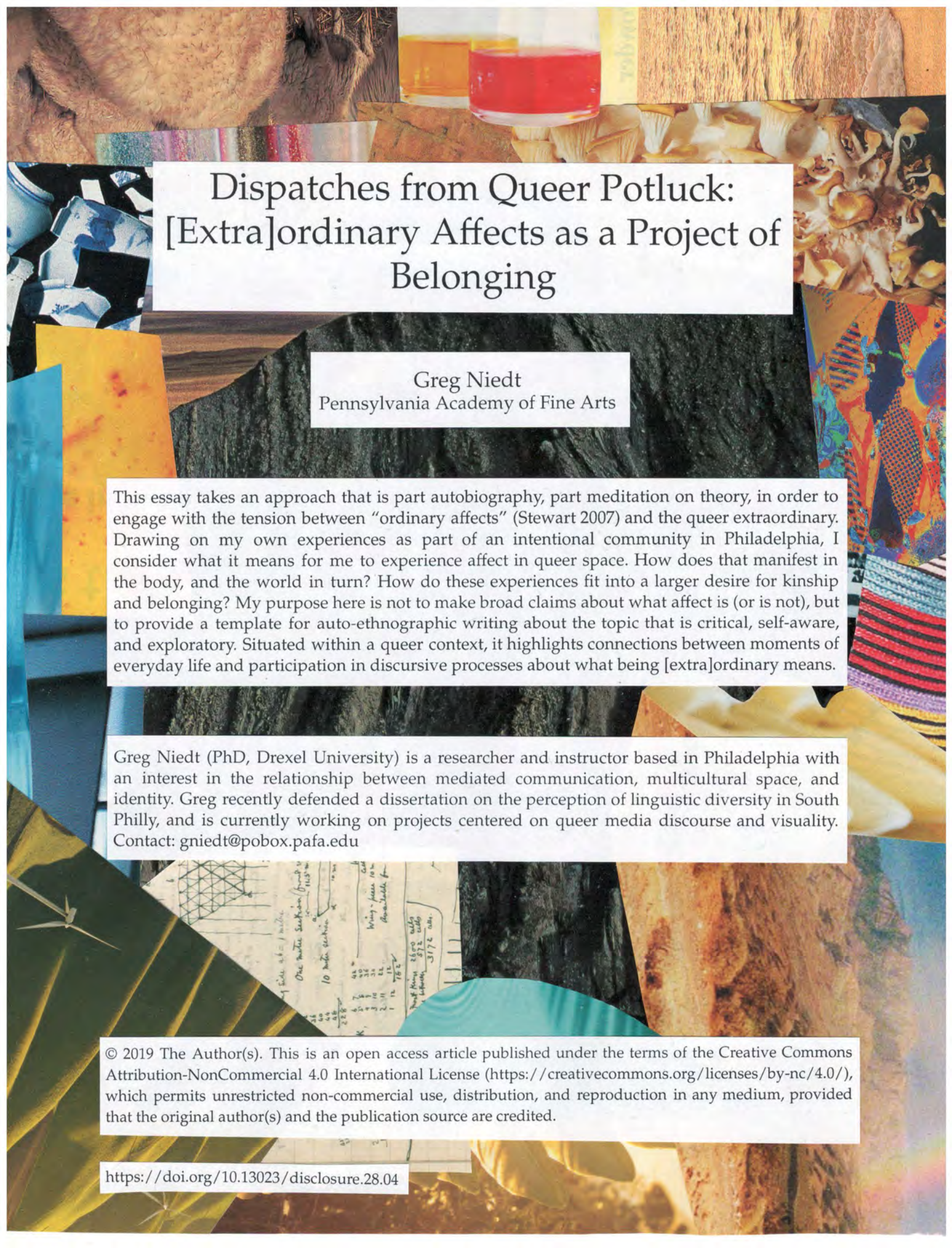
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YWEATHERSTOCK

Dispatches from Queer Potluck: [Extra]ordinary Affects as a Project of Belonging

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This essay takes an approach that is part autobiography, part meditation on theory, in order to engage with the tension between "ordinary affects" (Stewart 2007) and the queer extraordinary. Drawing on my own experiences as part of an intentional community in Philadelphia, I consider what it means for me to experience affect in queer space. How does that manifest in the body, and the world in turn? How do these experiences fit into a larger desire for kinship and belonging? My purpose here is not to make broad claims about what affect is (or is not), but to provide a template for auto-ethnographic writing about the topic that is critical, self-aware, and exploratory. Situated within a queer context, it highlights connections between moments of everyday life and participation in discursive processes about what being [extra]ordinary means.

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We sit silently in a circle, on cushions and mats, some of us bare to the waist, some of us in flowing fabric. We sit around a string of beads lying in the center on the floor. One of us – I can't remember who – tossed it there to serve as the talisman or skeptron: whoever takes it up will have the right to speak and be heard. The room is warm but dim, high-ceilinged and with walls covered in paintings. There is soft music and the smell of freshly-burnt sage in the air. Memories of silent worship at Friends schools are on my mind, and I think of the spirit moving me to speak. But I have nothing to say, at the moment; and it's my first one of these meetings, so whenever I feel about to stir to action, the impulse is noticed, caught, and suppressed. I want to see how it's done. So I wait until some imperceptible cue catches me off-guard: the twitch of a hand, a tension in someone else's shoulders, their intake of breath. After a moment, it happens. We all know [he] is about to do it just before [he] does it, leaning to grab the beads and begin –

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What I want to do here is feel my way in. For some time, I've been keenly aware of the difference between *attending* potluck – one of the core activities of this self-proclaimed radical association – and *being present* at potluck. At some point (when?), I transitioned from *showing up* to *entering*. Many of those who come to the dinners each week, spanning the range of the gender spectrum or casting it off entirely, have become my friends. Thursday night rituals of greeting, embracing, lining up with plates in hand, have become second nature. But as comfortable as I am now with being here, listening and learning, I still feel that something keeps me from total engagement with the spirit of the group. I want to write my way into this, recording my senses before they are assigned too much meaning; the aim is one of "disorienting and disrupting [...] impermanence and change" (Holman Jones and Harris 2019, 7).

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I became aware of the group through social media comments from friends of friends, allusions to parties and dinners, the occasional oblique reference in literature. It is an intentional community: wholeheartedly and unabashedly queer, centered around elders (but ultimately without hierarchy), politically and civically engaged, a dash of universalist spirituality. For years, I moved on the fringes, and when I was finally granted access, it was by luck more than anything else. It was during a date in Manhattan, as we sat at Christopher Street Pier watching the sunset; my companion mentioned the group and suggested I come to an event the next night. (I didn't want to seem *too* eager, but I accepted.) It wasn't exactly the camaraderie I'd hoped for and needed, at least at first – life in New York was too hectic, the get-togethers too performative. Only after moving back to Philadelphia a few years later did it begin to feel like I had time and breathing room to appreciate it more deeply.

I've been thinking about the experience of my body in queer space, trying to the capture with definitions the intensities it feels and the way stimuli create responses. In its presentation, my body signifies oppression: white, cis-male-presenting, mobile. The challenge is to know exactly how much to self-negate, and how much to actively flex my embodied and exbodied privilege for the benefit of others. Within spaces where queerness is the default position, I am aware of relaxation. My movements feel more natural, less pre-judged and pre-determined. It seems like an entirely different body than I am used to, unstable but celebratory. But when I think about *affect*, I lean towards its preconscious aspect, occupying the interstices between actions and conceptions, tangible in the body *before* it can be definable (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, Massumi 1995). Given the array of approaches to grappling with a topic that is, by (some) definition, indefinable (Figlerowicz 2012), here is my own attempt at operationalizing affect: the landscape of not-quite-noticeable physical intensities that underlie our experience of the world, which give rise to things we name and categorize as emotions, reactions, understandings… To be more metaphorical about it, maybe affects are the seeds (or rhizomes?) whose character only becomes apparent after they have already bloomed into discernibly different flora. They render themselves unknowable, and yet each blossom carries the material to pollinate the next.

It is an imperfect definition. But it is what I use for the ruminations in this essay, whose structure owes a great deal to Patricia Clough's (2008) genre-bending work. Feeling and writing my way in means reading between the lines of my own history, looking for the affects in the negative space. And when it comes to queerness – well, to paraphrase Eva Green in *Casino Royale*, there are queer affects, and then there are queer affects. This is my attempt at the latter. First and foremost, it is the story of my participation in a network of like-minded queer folks.

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My eye gets lost in the artwork covering the walls, wide strokes of tempera paint on sheets of brown paper, abstract but with shades of Haring. In the half-lit room their riotous colors are somewhat muted. I know that the apartment's owner created them, though I never watched [him] do any of these particular pieces; I have seen [him] make other works; and my mind combines these two pieces of information to visualize [his] hands holding the brush, tacking the finished paper to the plaster. This assumed history unfolds even as the two of us are sitting together on the other side of the room, talking about who-knows-what. Later, [he] will see me drawing sigils of my own; later still, one of these will take their place in the kitchen, like a proud parent adding a child's scribble to the fridge. But how do I confess that [he] was the one who inspired me to try in the first place? That the echo of [his] past is what the wandering eye translated into the unlocking of (one small corner of) my future? It feels too simple to call this inspiration, but I search for some other way to honor what moments like this have done for me, to articulate the connecting spark –

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(I've resisted using many specifics here when talking about the community. This is not out of a desire for secrecy but to maintain privacy, even given the encouraging feedback from members who have read the draft of this essay, some of whom appear in it. Perhaps I'm also afraid of disturbing the enchantment that I've been able to feel time and again within the boundaries it constantly seems to re-invent. But as one friend said before I made contact with the group in New York, "If you need to find them, you'll find them.")

My first experience with the Philadelphia branch was one of these potlucks, at an apartment in Center City, a space rich with more body positivity, fluid identity, and ritualism than I had ever encountered at one time before. Tables groaned from the surfeit of homemade dishes. There seemed to be much greater bodily, psychological, and socioeconomic diversity among those present than among the New Yorkers. They were not as self-conscious about their overt expression of queerness; they cared more about safety and survival, an atmosphere of home, recognizing and understanding each other. Certainly there was all the language and structure of "fictive kin," interactions that indexed a familial connection, echoing Weston's descriptions of dinner with a self-declared family of choice (1997). But forming deeper ties that endured from one week to the next was a benefit, not the Point; what stands out to me as the central experience was the process of displacement, sense-making, and alignment that kept recurring every week. Each time I walked through the door, arms full of vegan, gluten-free casseroles, there was the potentiality of that cycle. Halberstam (2011) talks about *forgetfulness* as a strategy of disconnection from more retrogressive, even damaging, ideas of kinship. Given the large size of the community, there were always different configurations of people with shifting gender expressions, names, relations. To strategically forget was a prerequisite of attendance, creating a fugue state from which new potentialities of queer kinship, new social ties and the significances they bear, could emerge.

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We begin by joining hands and announcing our names and pronouns. The pronouns are a recent addition, and some of the more traditionally-minded are not fond of the change. But there are many younger folks here now, bearing different ideas about the world and how it is put together, so we want to be respectful. We go around the circle one by one. There are some faces I recognize, and some I don't, either of which may correspond to the names I recognize, or don't. (People come and go so strangely here!) The wave of voices comes to me, and I say for the first time about my pronoun, "whatever you like." I mean it, I realize. Does it make a difference to me if someone in this space refers to me by this third-person pronoun or that one, especially if I'm not standing there to hear it? Not particularly. There is a nervous sensation that I begin to understand is a feeling of liberation; I think I came to a decision about gender and my destination in relation to it. Some part of my brain conducted that into my answer just before I spoke it. Now the words are echoing in the air, which is when words always feel truest. And then the pause is over, and the next voice begins to sound –

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Affect seems to occur in the moments when our shared breaths mysteriously synchronize. I am suddenly, specifically aware of the bones and muscle tension in my neighbor's hand as I hold it. There is someone across the room who I find myself attracted to, or more precisely *intensified by*. Before this is translated by the undeniable privileging of sexuality in queer space, there is a sudden, inexplicable compulsion to merely *be close* that pre-empts lust. Each sensation is recognized and assigned meaning in a queer context; it is like gathering wildflowers.

Lately, as though it were some kind of bibliomancy, I've been flipping through Kathleen Stewart's *Ordinary Affects* (2007) each night before bed, looking for resonance in the slice-of-life vignettes that populate the book. When I first read it, some of the moments, framed by Stewart's theoretical comments, felt familiar to me; others call on places and circumstances that are so foreign, I struggle to find any kind of connection with the people (should I call them subjects? characters?) that are described. The affects that echoed in me as I read and digested those stories resolved into feelings that didn't sit right, that were almost clinical. *How sad. How charming.* What I recognize now is that I had approached these stories on unfamiliar terms rather than their own. Perhaps it's just that as a queer urbanite, moments from the rural U.S. don't generate the same intensities in me. Maybe I've internalized a combative stance towards what they represent, reading into their heteronormative framework an implicit (or, at certain points in the book, explicit) homophobia. Whatever the cause, I find myself searching too consciously for connections between my own experience of affect and what is going on in this book. Why can't I get hold of it? Stewart's language is by turns elegant and meditative, always as complete as it needs to be; linguistically, I can understand the content, so what is the fundamental break?

If *ordinary* affects underlie some set of universal experiences and sentiments, then presumably there must be *extraordinary* affects as well, with the basic denotation of "outside the ordinary" – nothing more, nothing less. But it's all relative, of course. Martin (1994) and Love (2015), among others, take queer theorists and those who seek to enact their ideas to task for creating a differential experience that doesn't necessarily have to exist. Why try so hard to be extraordinary or deviant at all? I think there is room for both attitudes: as long as mainstream culture continues to draw lines of exclusion, then folks who do queerness ought to reclaim and reframe their deviance as exceptionality. Yet surely most people believe that the average moments of their lives aren't *that* special. Cavalcante (2018) argues for broadening the concept of the ordinary to encompass the everyday experiences of those whom mainstream society usually considers and represents as anything but (in particular, transgender folks). And even affects arising from the most substantial events, generating the most dizzying of emotions, must eventually lose their extraordinary character with enough repetition or time to acclimate to them. But if forgetfulness is a virtue, isn't is possible to resist that? What would it mean to keep the affects always extraordinary, to make a life out of those? *How unusual! How queer!*

It's too easy to say that my experiences in the community never seem to get old (because they often do), or that they are always entirely new (because they often aren't). Rather, as they build up a life, they are in turn built upon an impossibility of expectations. Like a villanelle or a ghazal, being part of the community has a rhyme scheme and refrains, but the frisson comes from the anticipation of the unknown that fills in the rest of it. Extraordinary affects are the ones you never feel coming, even though some part of you knows they will.

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I offer what I can. For some folks, this might be their only meal today, and I want to contribute. This evening I've made something that I hope will tick all the dietary-restriction boxes: sweet potato and apple crumble, verified gluten-free oats on top, soaked in maple syrup steeped with ginger. [They] come to the table, looking over the ingredient cards and considering what is edible and what is not. My dish is put to the test: vegan, gluten-free, soy-free, perfect! But alas! [they] don't care for sweet potato. There is a tightening in my chest that resolves into a mix of emotions that can't be teased apart, although certainly disappointment is in there. As I sit across from the table in silence, I see [them] hold one hand over a bowl of hummus, dangling a pendulum that oscillates in small loops. Disappointment gives way to curiosity as I comprehend that [they] are divining the food. What sensation must that produce? I imagine it would be, and thereby I feel through some kind of sympathy, a flutter in the stomach. But more likely it's a tremble in the hand, some distinctive magnetism that points this way and that –

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To move queerly through the world entails an experience of queer affects, and if those proceed from the body, they can also be positioned in space. The same could be said of queerness itself: whether it is an affect, an identity, or some other construct entirely, it has something to do with the body – therefore space. I am thinking in particular of how Ahmed (2006, 2010) outlines a form of queer phenomenology that addresses this concept, and points to how far it extends. Individuals, deep-seated social and cultural structures, arrangements within arrangements of objects… what is it like to encounter them? Perhaps the most useful thing I've learned by going to potluck is to resist the attribution of gender, reflexively. Having met so many wonderful people who mix, flex, and otherwise trouble the parameters of gender has made it easier, but the affect still persists. My eyes take in the visual data of clothing, body shape, facial features, et cetera. In that yawning half-second where they are assembled into an individual, the impulse to categorize *male/female* is still there, and I don't know if it will ever go away.

(Note that Stewart (2007) refers to herself as "she" throughout her book in order "to mark the difference between this writerly identity and the kind of subject that arises as a daydream of simple presence" (5). The approach appeals to me, but my daydream, and the daydream of the others who populate my memory, have become progressively more ungendered. If third-person gender must be assigned at all, I want it to be bracketed, asterisked, to denote its uncertainty.)

There should also be a distinction drawn between queer and extraordinary affects, even though the definition of the former implies that it must be part of the latter. Take the dinner table, for instance. (As Ahmed (2006) points out, "Queers have their tables for sure. Stories of queer kinship will be full of tables" (167).) If I were thinking queerly, I look at the potluck table and know, before I even realize that I know, that there is difference here with every other potluck table around which I've sat outside this space. But then I also recognize difference of the experience itself, simultaneous to my recognition of the object. The meanings layered into the table that follow my translation of that intensity separate: I understand the nature and non-standard familial origins of the food, queer by virtue of what this represents in discourses of various shapes and sizes. And memories of all the encounters with potluck tables in my life become a metric in my mind, extraordinary by virtue of what this represents only for me.

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[She] is young, barely twenty-two; [she] identifies as Black, and [she] is in the process of transitioning (transgressing, transcending) gender. [Her] nerves sometimes fire unexpectedly: a gasping laugh, a strained exclamation, the flutter of hands. We are in another room of the apartment after the meal has finished, sharing a decaying couch as we gather with others at the coffee table, sorting through markers and sketches. I could hardly be more different from [her], and it is true that we have little common conversational ground. [She] has endured more hardship than I could ever dream of. But we are physically close, our skin just about touching. Energy thrums between us. It generates an impulse to say something, do something, as though by overcoming our immediate nearness, I should do my part to narrow our ongoing distance, negotiating the disparity between these two coexisting states. But I am not the one who acts. A cup of cheap wine is passed around like communion. [She] gives it to me, teaches my hand the feel of reassurance. A firm and warm reminder that [she] is still here –

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What can I call gratitude? It's not just what stems from the physical sensation of nourishment, or from the honest acknowledgment for those in need; I am fortunate to have other parts of my life where I receive these things. What the group has taught me most in its coming-together, what I am most grateful for, are the lessons in hearing from others' experiences, understanding the differential between theirs and mine, and the encouragement to do something about it. *From each according to [their] ability, to each according to [their] needs.*

The trap is the inclination to center my own experience at the expense of others, running the risk of committing one more form of violence. The intersectionality of my identity is largely unhindered by forms of systemic discrimination. And while that of many other potluck guests can become a "prism" (de Vries 2015) that sheds complex light on the unfolding of identities, bodies in space, it would be inappropriate for me to make claims about how that revelation happens for anyone else. This account is self-centered because it has to do with affect, which is about as intensely personal and phenomenological a thing one can explore. I did not conduct interviews or provide direct quotations, this time. (In this regard, besides his attention to the difficulties and horrors of the trans experience, de Vries' work is a further inspiration for its interplay of perspectives.) Yet the feeling of contrasting experience in interaction has been enough to make me question my own positioning, as I try to grasp what affects I might engender in others, before they become full emotions. If someone at potluck tells me I make them uncomfortable, it is my duty to change my behavior, but my hope is that this never has to happen. Before their moment of conscious discomfort, my task as one of the most unreasonably privileged is to allow awareness to permeate my muscles, nerves, and skin, habituating myself to automatically do or not do whatever it takes to put others at ease. I have to accept that this is not always possible, and equally that I must keep trying.

Ahmed (2006) refers to the "hesitation" that characterizes putting a queer body forward into space, an exposure of the body that – depending on the nature of the place, the nature of the body and its expression, and that of other bodies present – opens up a range of possibilities from violence to "[giving] the world a new shape" (102). I recognize my own bodily capital. Key elements of the gender identities I perform can be put on or removed, stored in a backpack or hidden under a coat as I walk to and from the potluck through the Philadelphia Gayborhood. My being doesn't really challenge anyone as I pass, which is a source of something that grows into guilt, especially when I hear stories of the harassment or threats that others have received for their more overtly non-binary appearance and behavior. I tell myself that I should be flexing my privilege and trying to tear down heteronormativity in my own city; I fail to do so, again and again. On some level, maybe I feel that I deserve happiness, and as Heather Love (2007) puts it, "Sometimes it seems that the only way for queers to start being happy is to stop being queers" (62). But it is ridiculous for me to feel that I have to suppress myself, when there is already so little to suppress, and balanced against that is my desire for kinship, for solidarity.

It is on my mind more or less constantly now. Queer space emerges wherever queerness is present. The intensities present among the members of the community begin to intrude elsewhere in my life.

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We see each other in the coffeeshop on some random Tuesday afternoon; I am stopping in on my way from point A to point B, [he] is there canvassing for work. We hug and exchange pleasantries; I show off my latest nails, an iridescent navy topped with blue glitter that took me an hour to get right. At the table for two, covered in flyers, stickers, clipboards, these few minutes feel like a micro-potluck. The same rules apply. There are no assumptions of gender. Yet there is something uneasy, as though we have pulled back the curtains on our own private space and let the world gather at the window. [He] is wearing a nametag with [his] Christian alias, not the name I know [him] by. And when the barista calls mine, my throat tightens into embarrassment. Now we have been given weaponry to use against each other, that we did not ask for and will not use. I take my coffee in hand and say my farewells. We hug again. I move towards the exit, feeling that I could have added something more or done something differently –

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My goal here was not to be opaque or self-important about affect and my relationship with it. But I think it is a concept we all could think about a little more, not just within the queer community. Increased attention to how the world brushes against us (and vice versa) can lead us to greater self-awareness. That being said, any group that is consistently reified as an Other needs every tool it can get its hands on to make sense of every quality of their experience. To be labeled as queer suggests that one's affects are seen as similarly skewed. I believe in writing into this experience: even though there is insufficient language to accurately convey the preconscious, there is still some benefit to be gained in describing what it surrounds. To narrate one's own history, to dig as deep as one can down the roots of the emotions therein, to pay attention to one's own body as it moves through space and encounters other bodies, floating among the webs of discourse – all of these are valuable elements of a project whose end goal is, perhaps, a queer and affective belonging.

I don't mean to say that everyone who identifies as queer will have the same visceral reaction to everything that befalls them, in no small part because such a wide variety of other factors influence what does. Nor will every queer individual interpret their responses in the same way. But what does cut across this diversity of phenomena is the outsider's expectation that those responses will be something other than "normal," their impressions of the world distorted by their queer *orientations* (Ahmed 2006). Rather than allowing this to be a mark of negative distinction, we can build contexts where it becomes a source of strength. Despite all the fractures within the queer population, the affects we share can empower us to reject the normative understanding of how one "should" approach the world. And while I have focused on queer issues here as the disjoint I feel, the same potential is there (as long as it is borne out of support and validation) for any group whose way of being is nonstandard, demonized, or suppressed. From what I have experienced, I believe the best way to find that kind of existential security is through sharing space with those of like mind – or rather, not-quite-mind, the thing that comes before thought.

This essay was an attempt to explore one possible unfolding of this idea, with its communitarian result. I do sincerely believe that queer space enables intensities that are somehow ineffably different, if for no other reason than they are discursively positioned as such. Even in that difference, some kind of comfort and connection can be found. In the most esoteric, ritualistic moments, the ones that would most perplex those who most stringently believe in normativity, there is an opportunity for a new and familiar kind of ordinary that is simultaneously extraordinary.

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After the plates have been cleared and the compost tucked into plastic containers, some of us are sitting or reclining on cushions, chatting and listening to music. We talk flea markets, politics, recent moves across town. A track comes on the speaker with an insistent beat that moves underneath our talk. It's impossible to say how it starts: someone begins tapping [their] fingers against a metal bowl, someone else the armrest of a chair. Heads nod. Feet move. Even as we keep discussing the matters of the week, rhythms arise and dissipate as each person's body in the circle finds its own way of engaging with the music. Our host steps away for a moment and returns with more bowls and a drum. Soon enough, the conversation is drowned in percussion and – from one corner – wordless singing. No one prepared for a jam session, but everyone was ready for it, it seems. The kind of synchronicity and improvisation one might expect from session musicians is replicated here, around the potluck table. Motive force replies to motive force. This is our affect – kinship created by the unified action of bodies, upturning chairs now and banging on floors, someone has produced a trumpet, of all things, from who-knows-where – just another night at potluck in something we can call home –

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THE HEARTBEAT

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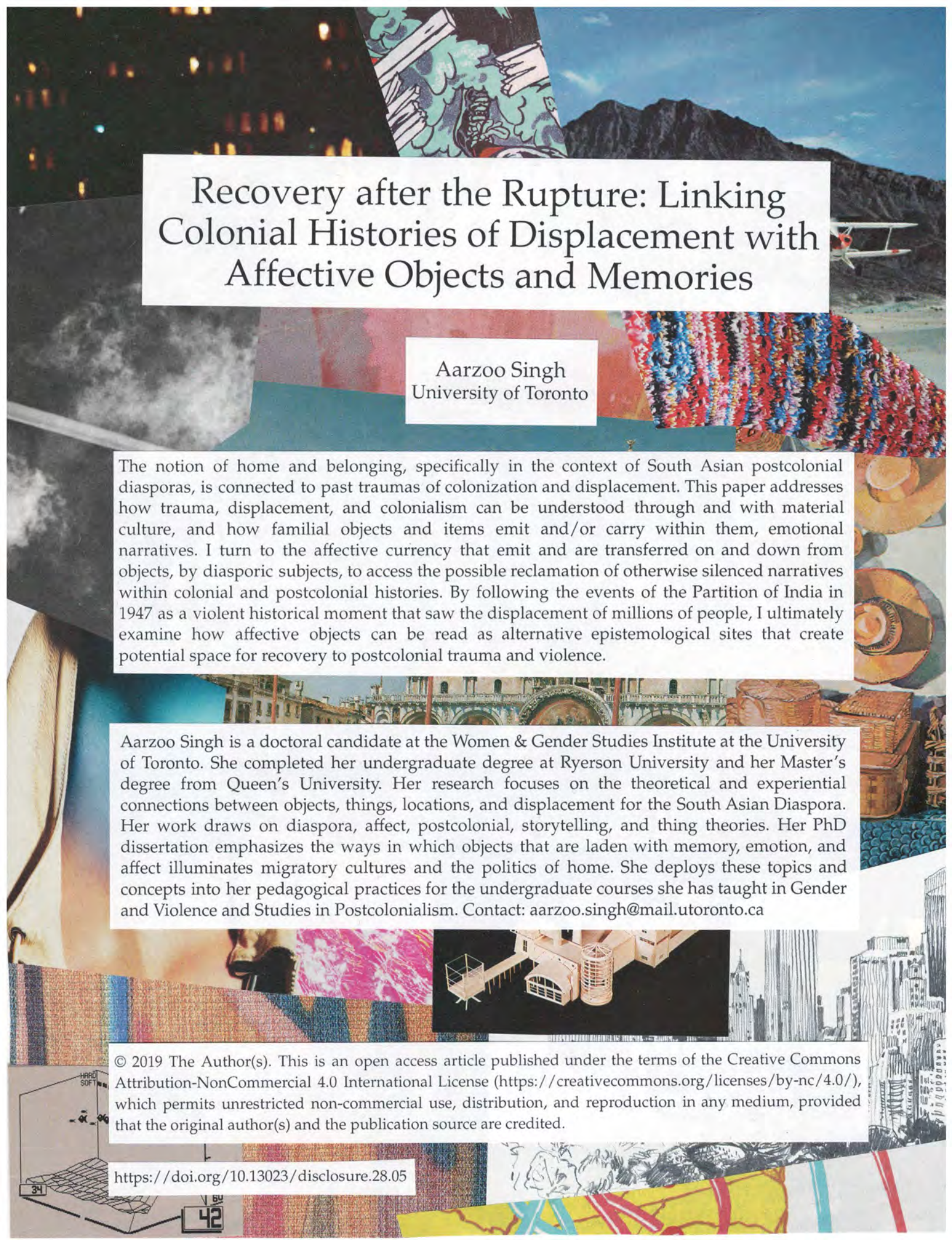
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Recovery after the Rupture: Linking Colonial Histories of Displacement with Affective Objects and Memories

Aarzoo Singh
University of Toronto

The notion of home and belonging, specifically in the context of South Asian postcolonial diasporas, is connected to past traumas of colonization and displacement. This paper addresses how trauma, displacement, and colonialism can be understood through and with material culture, and how familial objects and items emit and/or carry within them, emotional narratives. I turn to the affective currency that emit and are transferred on and down from objects, by diasporic subjects, to access the possible reclamation of otherwise silenced narratives within colonial and postcolonial histories. By following the events of the Partition of India in 1947 as a violent historical moment that saw the displacement of millions of people, I ultimately examine how affective objects can be read as alternative epistemological sites that create potential space for recovery to postcolonial trauma and violence.

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For many postcolonial diasporic subjects, belonging and not belonging are often negotiated within conceptions of home. Home is a geography that contains memories and emotions that are, in the postcolonial context, linked to displacement, histories of conflict, and colonial exile. As a result, home, or the idea of home, can be defined as an emotional location rather than a strictly material and three-dimensional geographical location. The manifestation of these emotional locations – whether through human relationships, spaces, or the memory of metaphorical and physical heirlooms and artefacts – have affective qualities that can engender intergenerational linkages among postcolonial diasporic subjects, creating potential spaces for recovery and belonging. In other words, the *idea* of home, and its emotional meanings and its familial significations, can be transferred on to objects, artefacts, and heirlooms.

I suggest that the question of home and belonging, specifically in the context of South Asian postcolonial diasporas, is connected to past traumas of colonization and displacement.[1] This article addresses, therefore, how trauma, displacement, and colonialism can be understood through and with material culture, and how familial objects and items emit and/or carry within them, emotional narratives. I expand upon

existing conversations regarding objects and homes having emotional value in the context of displacement by arguing that understanding material things as affective objects allows us to rethink the ways in which colonial histories of violence are taken up within official archives; and that considering material things in this way makes room for alternative epistemological sites to exist. Put simply, my argument addresses how within the context of colonial and postcolonial violence for South Asian diasporas, there are some experiences of trauma and violence that are beyond words. The inability to articulate experiences of colonial and postcolonial violences results in a lack of space within official state narratives about personal experiences of displacement. The absence of voices of those diasporic subjects in official records then in turn allows for practices of silence to permeate intergenerational understandings of home and belonging for those communities. Thus, I turn to the affective currency that emit and transfer on and down from objects, by diasporic subjects, to access the potential recovery of otherwise silenced narratives of colonial and postcolonial trauma.

In this article, I situate affective objects within postcolonial frameworks by using diaspora, trauma, and object theories. I begin by unpacking the ways in which affect as a concept is taken up within the field of affect studies and how it extends to non-organic matter, or objects. In this way I attend to the question of "why objects?", or what about the nature of physical things allows for a useful discussion on affect? This then leads into a discussion of how affective objects inform notions of belonging through the loss of home. Here, I look to the ways in which ideas of home and belonging are particularly contentious for diasporic subjects within postcolonial histories and discourses. I consider how home, for South Asian diasporic subjects, can thus become mobile when we consider affective objects as narrative and voice-giving entities. I use the specific example of the Partition of India in 1947 as a violent historical moment that saw the displacement of millions of people – where individuals were forced to flee and abandon their dwellings only to resettle in the abandoned homes

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[1] In this article I refer to members of the South Asian diaspora as postcolonial subjects and to their experiences of trauma as both postcolonial and colonial experiences of violence. I slide between postcolonial and colonial violence, in this context, because of the ways in which some subjects experienced the violences of pre-Partition and Partition, which were moments of direct colonial encounters with the British Raj. Some of those same subjects and their family members, generations later, continue to experience the ripple effects of that catastrophic event in a postcolonial context. Thus, my slippage between the terms colonial and postcolonial indicates the ways in which colonialism is part of the on-going present (Bhabha 1994). I am referring here to the argument in the field of postcolonial studies that the "post" in postcolonial does not refer to an "after", but rather works as a marker from where we start to recognize the presence of "coloniality" or "modernism" (7).

of their "enemies" on the other side of the border. In this way, I examine the ways in which survival and recovery of such traumas are intergenerationally passed on and down through physical objects. Finally, these theories and discussions come together to recognize that the potential space created by affective objects can be voice-giving to otherwise silenced narratives in postcolonial archives.

Affective Objects

Affect is described by Sarah Ahmed (2010) as "what sticks, or what sustains or preserves the connection between ideas, values, and objects" (29). Affects are those prediscursive forces that are outside our conscious knowing and emotions that impact our thoughts and types of relationships. Melissa Gregg and Gregory Steigworth (2010) explain that there is no pure or original state of affect. It is something that can be found in the "in-between-ness" of our ability to act and is therefore a result of a state of relation and the passage of that force (1). As well, affect is an ever-changing and ever-evolving force and its movements vary depending on the type of body or thing it encounters. Emotional geographer Steve Pile (2010) describes affect as "a transpersonal *capacity* which a body has to be affected (through affection) and to affect (as the result of modifications)" (8). That is, affect has potential possibilities through its capacities. Affect is always expanding into areas of (and beyond) living, non-living, matter, sensation, events, atmospheres, and feeling-tones (Gregg and Steigworth 2010, 2).

In this paper, I look at affect specifically as it extends onto objects and things. An object's affective quality can be determined based on its location and time – when and where the object is situated is when and where one would experience its affect. This is to say that to experience an object *as* affective is to consider not only the object, but also what is around the object (Ahmed 2010, 33). As Ahmed explains, to be affected by something is to assess that thing, to understand it (31). In pairing affect with objects in order to reassess certain postcolonial histories of violence, what is

thus created is a space to get to the *truth* (Morrison 1998) of lived experience, which are often left out of official state-sanctioned histories. I am referring here to Toni Morrison's discussion on *truth* vs. *facts* as she states, "[…] facts can exist without human intelligence, but truth cannot" (93). I particularly push against investigations of "official" histories of the South Asian diaspora – those narratives that are deemed "legitimate" or "acceptable" (whether it be memorials, official documents, history books, etc.). These "acceptable" narratives were, mostly, written by those who had not experienced the trauma of displacement or indeed were the very colonial bodies that incited the violence. In this way I attend to the voices of displaced postcolonial Indians that were otherwise silenced. The importance of this idea lies in its exploration of those silences and the ways in which we can access them without disrupting the well-being of the victims of displacement.

In understanding objects as affective sites, we can find that materiality is not only the value of an object. The value, for the most part, exists in the tangible processes of humans' interactions with things (Hockey 2007). Humans are as material as the objects they make and are also moulded by the supposedly "dead matter" that they are surrounded by (138). As Hockey et al. state in reference to Peter Pels, "things also tell us who we are, not in words, but by embodying our intentions. In our everyday traffic of existence, we can also learn about ourselves from objects, almost as much as from people" (138). Objects and material agency foster powers that raise hope, induce loss and sadness, and create fear and happiness – along with other human-based senses and emotions. They can also engender a space for memories and memory-sharing, particularly when we begin to consider objects as "inalienable possessions" – things that cannot be replaced by any other object (Myers 2001, 9). It is to this approach that I consider a very particular human-object relationship in cherished items.

"Inalienable possessions" are types of objects that are categorized as artefacts, heirlooms, and familial belongings. Heirlooms are symbolically heavy with cultural meaning and are

collected as prized ancestral relics (Myers 2001, 9). Annette Weiner (1992) describes how the heaviness or "denseness" of such objects is created through ancestral histories, the object's association with its "owner," secrecy, sadness, and sacredness. Heirlooms and objects are also exchanged, passed around, passed on, and if they are tied to familial histories, can be read as replacements to memories. As identity-bearing objects that hold memories, heirlooms become what Weiner describes as "keeping-while-giving" (13). The residual effects of the individual's experience are intermingled with the heirloom's affects as it is passed along. Therefore, the materiality of everyday objects and their survival across time and location illuminates a particular relationship between human lives, memories, experiences, and culture.

The memories of such objects, I argue, are accessed through *genealogical* connections and intergenerational stories. This is to say that these culturally specific objects, which have transmittable memories, do not do this same kind of emotional work if separated from their ethnographic ties when, for example, they are reclassified as "art" and placed in museums in a Western context[2] (Myers 2001, 10). Within postcolonial frameworks, the relocation of

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[2] To clarify the concept of the varying types of emotional work done by the narratives attached to affective objects, I consider their context. That is, the narrative that is *given* or prescribed to objects (in the form of panels or didactic texts) that have been taken from the homes and possession of postcolonial subjects and put into Western institutional settings, like a museum or archive – usually at the hands of the colonizer – does not evoke this same kind of connection when it comes to familial narratives and objects. That is, the object itself may resist the narrative that it is assigned in a museum setting (through its affectual currency and residue), but its assigned panel or description (which has been written by the institution) that it accompanies, does not tell its truth, but rather, more of its "facts" (Morrison 1998, 93).

materials and material culture insists on an understanding that value cannot be simply defined but that is engrossed in various routes of exchange, display, and storage (12). The appropriation of culturally significant items into colonial routes of exchange are historically loaded, thus the ways in which affective objects can be read as sites of recovery can only be done so within the setting of familial narratives of victims of colonial and postcolonial violence. In the context of familial heirlooms, a genealogical link is used as a space to communicate, but while keeping in mind the complexity of such relationships. Thus, the spaces in which these affective objects are held become important vessels in which belonging and not belonging is negotiated. This space is traditionally considered to be the home or familial dwelling. However, for South Asian postcolonial diasporic subjects, the loss of such a space opens the possibility of notions of home becoming mobile, as home attaches itself to its affective objects.

Home and Belonging

Anat Hecht (2001) powerfully states, "to lose a home is to lose a private museum of memory, identity and creative appropriation" (123). To be separated from one's home and belongings is often equated to being separated from all that is familiar and steady. When discussing the South Asian diaspora, this separation is particularly important to note because diaspora cannot exist without the *loss* of home or the displacement from homelands. This unfolds vis-à-vis identity formation (the loss of home is a kind of identity loss, too). Moreover, homes are not just sites of conditioning, social relations, and economic management; they also represent a position that is in relation to the nation as a whole. The house is not only integral to the individual identity, but that of the community and nation in its entirety. This is to say that place and home represent belonging in terms of individual identity as well as citizenship and national identity (Hua 2011, 52).

In understanding the home as a pivotal component in both the construction of individual

and national identity, we can then look towards the physical things that make up the home. A house holds an array of different materials and therefore collectively creates a living experience that is more important than the total of its parts (Hecht 2001, 123). All of these materials are supplied with meaning, memory, and emotion, which are what turn a *house* – infrastructure, property – into a *home*. However, in the context of postcolonial diasporic experiences, homes and all their various held objects become lost or displaced. This concept exposes the tangled tensions that exist between humans and objects, drawing specific attention to objects that are removed or demolished and thus do *not* "out-live" their owners. With this I ask: if objects are supposed to be cherished sites of memory, what happens when these sites are destroyed or ruined? What is at stake if an identity-forming environment, like a home, disappears? And, finally, how does the idea of home, and displacement, play out across generations?

One of the ways to begin thinking about the connections between objects, memory, emotion, diaspora, and location, is to notice how, during war and conflict, objects are both removed and cherished. The emotive energies emitted by artefacts and objects appropriated during war by members of the "enemy" community demonstrate the non-human agency and consequential affective ties that material goods have. Yael Navaro-Yashin, in her work *Affective Spaces, Melancholic, Objects: Ruination and the Production of Anthropological Knowledge* (2009), for example, considers people who are displaced from their homes and are forced to flee and take shelter in other abandoned houses, producing the odd result of a diaspora living in homes of another diaspora; and in doing so, she explores how it feels to live with objects and within ruins left behind by the earlier, displaced, community. Navaro-Yashin describes the things within houses as being charged with the traces of other people's lives. She demonstrates how homes are charged with "cultural agency" and as objects of political and legal substance (179). Her specific study examines Turkish-Cypriots' relations to houses, land, and objects that they appropriated from

Greek-Cypriots during the war of 1974 and the subsequent Partition of Cyprus.

Through this work, the notion that those who have been uprooted from their homes because of the threat of war, conflict, or violence is investigated by the ways in which they become surrounded by objects of ruin. For Navaro-Yashin "ruined matter" refers to things that are a result of an act of violation (5). She explains that these abject objects and environments have acquired their status because they could not be carried or taken with their owners due to the displacement incited by conflict or war, rather than because these things were not needed or wanted. This rejected material is then reused, recycled, and appropriated by those who are left behind.

The emotive energy of focus in Navaro-Yashin's work is melancholia, or what she calls *"maraz"* (4). According to Navaro-Yashin, *maraz* is a way the displaced Turkish-Cypriots described their condition of depression in their inner state of being. It is a state of deep and unrecoverable sadness that is located by the lack of calmness and happiness within their internal selves (4). It is a concept that represents a feeling that is beyond words; an affective state that permeates experiences of survival for victims of displacement. These spatial and experiential tensions highlight the dualism between the material and the ideational, between tangibility and social imaginaries (1), which becomes key in analysing the colonial discourses that encapsulate the portable affective objects. That is, what becomes apparent are the limitations of language when it comes to experiences of trauma.

The limitations of language when expressing experiences of colonial and postcolonial trauma results in some members of postcolonial diasporic communities becoming emotionally attached to, and therefore internally (psychically) responsive to, family mementos, objects, and artefacts; it is this process that helps underscore the connections between the material and the ideational. As a result, emotion can be understood alongside memory and affect in order to draw attention to how the human "senses" are inseparable from the ways people act and live. This coupling allows us to think about the
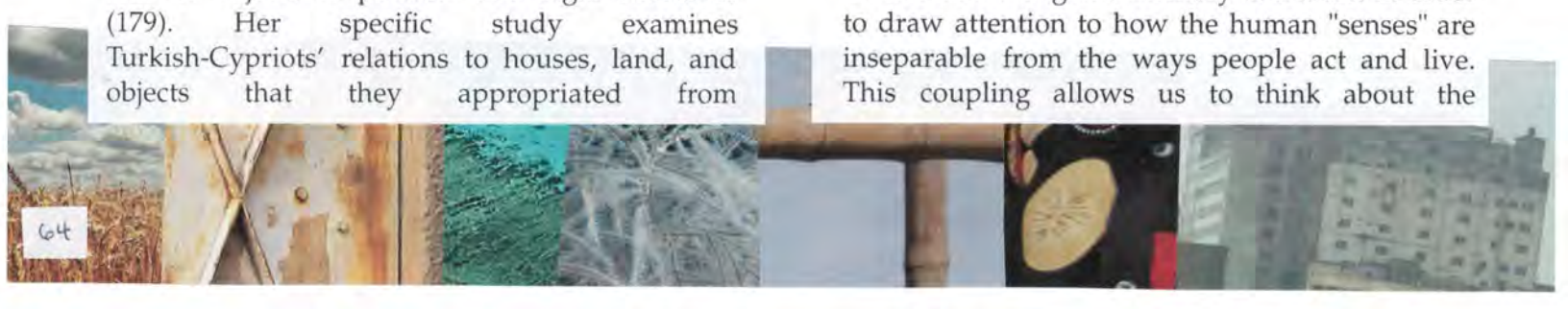
relationship between human and object and encourages new understandings of how colonial histories are inseparable from material objects that existed in and through conflicts, displacements, and migrations (Edwards 2006, 4).

Remembering Difficult Histories

In the context of the South Asian diasporic subjects, histories of colonialization and displacement are most notably centered around the catastrophic event of the Partition of India in 1947. The end of the British Raj resulted in the birth of two nations: India and Pakistan – an event that led to murderous riots, unspeakable violence, and mass loss of lives and homes. Partition saw the division and separation of Hindu, Muslim and Sikh populations into newly assigned countries, creating interethnic conflicts and fissures that continue to have rippling effects to date. This event, in many ways, parallels but does not twin with the Partition of Cyprus that Navaro-Yashin focuses on in her study. The Partition of India and Pakistan also resulted in a mass displacement of between eight to ten million people who were forced to flee across the border into their newly created country of either India or Pakistan (Didur 2006, 4). The violence of this rupture saw the death of half a million people, and whole communities abandoned their homes and belongings on one side of the border to resettle on the other side in the deserted homes and spaces of their "enemies" who were doing the same thing in their homes (Das 2007, 20).

The suddenness of this loss and relocation manifested a lasting trauma on victims of this violence that have been passed on intergenerationally. Dhooleka Raj (2000) notes that amongst the three different generations that experienced different stages and moments of Partition and post-Partition, there are various understandings of what Partition is and was. These generations grew up in different periods and their family narratives are disjointed. At the same time, those who directly experienced Partition often obscured their stories when passing them on to other generations by often sharing "new" or "different" memories of the events. As

Gyanendra Pandey (2001) explains, these new memories did not often include Partition when they were retold; what emerged was the mentality that stated, "what is the point telling today's children about these things? [...] All that has nothing to do with their lives and their problems" (16). From this, the story of Partition as told to the children and grandchildren of victims, becomes faded from shared stories. In this way, the voices of the victims are strikingly silent and many do not recount their experiences unless asked (Das 2007, 80). As well, the knowledge of Partition's trauma is not explicitly shared between parents and children – therefore the sharing of stories between family members becomes understood as silent practices (Raj 2000, 31). Raj explains that individuals do not want to remember, that families do not want to "recall the bad times" (36), and that many would rather avoid the stigma of being known as a refugee. This becomes particularly potent for Sikh diasporas in post-Partition India, as the newly formed India became a Hindu state and Pakistan a Muslim state, and the Sikh community suddenly found themselves belonging to nowhere.

The absorption of Partition narratives into silent practices has meant that many descendants of the refugees do not realize that when their refugee family members left the Pakistan side to come to India, and vice versa, they assumed the move was temporary (39). There is a lack of understanding, by the later generations, of how the migration was perceived as impermanent and what difficulties were faced when the refugees realized they were, indeed, not going back home. What resulted for the displaced was a deep feeling of nostalgia and a desire to see their homes one last time, which they could not do, leaving many not wanting to speak about Partition at all (39).

On the side of official state narratives, Partition, as a subject, has been generally neglected in Indian public culture – there have been no attempts to "memorialize Partition" through monuments, museums, or even public hearings and trials (Das 2007, 19). This approach has had an impact on how refugees feel stigmatized and uneasy about sharing their experiences with family members. Veena Das

describes the lack of response to Partition as a reoccurring trope in Indian historiography that views trauma as "witness to some forgotten wound" (102). What results, then, is an "official history" that is largely accepted and structured based on statistical figures and timelines, leaving out the lived experiences of those victims of violence.

In the general silence that surrounds narratives of Partition as an event, something else emerges. In many cases, a different kind of remembering happens where familial stories that are intergenerationally passed down from refugees of Partition to their next of kin often takes on a quality of a "frozen slide." In other words, the storytelling that does transpire tends to focus more on life pre-Partition – what life was like "on the other side." Stories would therefore include the details of everyday life: stories of neighbourly gossip, how fresh the fruit used to be in their old homeland, or how they missed the shopping at their neighbourhood bazaar (80). Through this, there is an attempt to recover aspects of the past that re-enters life experienced prior to displacement.

Items that were somehow carried across the border in the chaos of Partition become now cherished possessions as they represent survival – a nod to the fact that if the item survived, so did its owner. As a descendant of refugees of Partition myself, I have experienced this very moment with my own family members. Stories of "what happened" always centered around an object or physical thing that stands as proof that there was indeed a time before this rupture happened. For example, my Sikh grandmother – who died when I was much too young to remember her – left with her son, my father, a wedding necklace known as a *Rani Harr*. This heirloom was one that was beloved and charged with familial history but was also one that was almost lost during the upheaval of Partition. Yet, now it sits in my possession as a physical link to a past that I would have never otherwise known or understood. There are no words that come with the *Rani Harr*, only an affectual residue that this item once sat in the hands of my grandmother and acted as a witness to a moment of horrific trauma and violence as it

was tucked away against my great-grandmother's body to be carried across the border into a place that promised safety.

Recovery in the Loss

The difficulties that resulted from the intergenerational traumas of Partition have led to a reliance on official state records and archives for general knowledge and understandings of its history. As Gayatri Spivak (2008) explains in her discussion of the gendered subaltern, communication between daughters and mothers, and between grand-daughters and grandmothers, is difficult. Language, location, and time create barriers that are difficult to penetrate (7). This is where the affective object becomes useful when thinking about the ways in which post-partition subjects may be able to recover an intergenerational connection to their familial past. To put it simply: there are some traumas that are beyond words.

Dina Georgis, in her work in *The Better Story: Queer Affects from the Middle East* (2013), elucidates, "indeed, when it comes to trauma, the only thing we can be sure of is that our experience resists thought and language" (169). With this explanation, the question of survival is not only understood through what is said; it can also be understood through experiential knowledge and silences. Here I argue that affective objects not only complicate language, but do not always have to depend on language. I contend that survival is articulated through the object's tangibility and materiality as well as oral narrative or storytelling. The affective feelings surrounding objects, and the desire to keep, discard, and share objects, aids in the production of diasporic recovery to colonial trauma in the postcolonial present while offering a new or different set of thematics linked to, but outside of, embodied personhood.

The affective quality of the objects can create or destroy "the better life" depending on whether the object projects a melancholic history or what Georgis calls "the better story" (1). Georgis argues that narrative is an emotional resource for learning and for generating better futures. She suggests that narrative gives us

insight into understanding the unknowable processes by which we create collective memories, histories, and identities. Georgis uses stories to link us to forgotten spaces of history; she highlights narratives that have been disregarded and thinks about how social injustice is articulated (and how some narratives, despite *wanting* to speak against injustice, fail to do so).

Understanding affect, memory, and narratives as power, and connecting this power to the task of retelling postcolonial histories, complicates how "legitimate histories" are conveyed. With this I highlight the power of counter-narratives that emerge from sites and voices that are otherwise silenced. For example, my grandmother's wedding necklace allows for a connection between her and I, generations apart. It is a gendered object that represents her gendered experience as a Sikh woman, who was never given space to speak about her experiences of trauma pre and post-Partition. As such, objects do not speak in a written language but, in their very existence, they can create a space and incite us to return to forgotten memories from forgotten peoples.

The affective qualities of such laden objects give them *capacities* for survival. They work as "unaffected witnesses" to everyday lives (Olsen 2010, 8); they are unbiased participators of the everyday. Indeed, they are *participators* as they are intrinsically and indispensably involved in enabling actions. As Jas Elsner (2013) explains, objects work *against* our assumptions about the motives, character, actions, and causes of the past through the ways in which they place a literal material obstacle within discursive patterns of writing, thereby moving these writings to an actuality (167). In other words, objects inject a "realness" into writings of histories in their ability to withstand history without changing in form – they are physical and metaphorical evidences of the past. Elsner states, "Objects are part of the story or agenda or theme they have been summoned to help on its way. They can conjure imaginations from a space of real-life experience outside the narrative. They exist in a space that is outside the narrative while being within it" (167).

By accepting the suggestions that the question of survival can be understood through what is unsaid, affect as it attaches itself to objects and artefacts – material things – creates points of inquiry into, and potential understandings of, experiences that are beyond words. In linking these concepts to trauma and displacement, the emotions surrounding the affective object – the subjective meanings attached to things – uncovers some of the unspoken and unsaid complexities of displacement. The very characteristic of portability of objects creates an ability to *carry* a history, narrative, and even home. What is lost in upheaval and violence can, once again, be found in the memories the objects hold.

Conclusion

Belonging, for many in the South Asian diaspora, is a contentious issue that is connected to feelings of colonial exile. Their narratives and histories of home are often rooted in displacement and violent ruptures. Through traumatic events that occurred to the Indian nation during the twentieth century, including the Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, voices of survivors and victims have oftentimes been undermined by the "official" histories of the South Asian diaspora (as seen in memorials, official documents, and history books) or through the wilful erasures that seek recuperation in silence.

In order to uncover these otherwise silenced stories, I have turned to objects and theorized how they provide us with alternative sites of remembering. By attending to emotion, memory, and affect through the medium of material culture, I have drawn connections between objects and the human experience. In order to access the narratives that come from affective objects, in the context of post-Partition India, I have argued that a genealogical link is produced through affective objects and their attendant narrated memories, which are often found in material things passed down through generations. I emphasized the importance of familial and intergenerational ties within this discussion as it is key in accessing the objects' affective currency. Ultimately what the study of
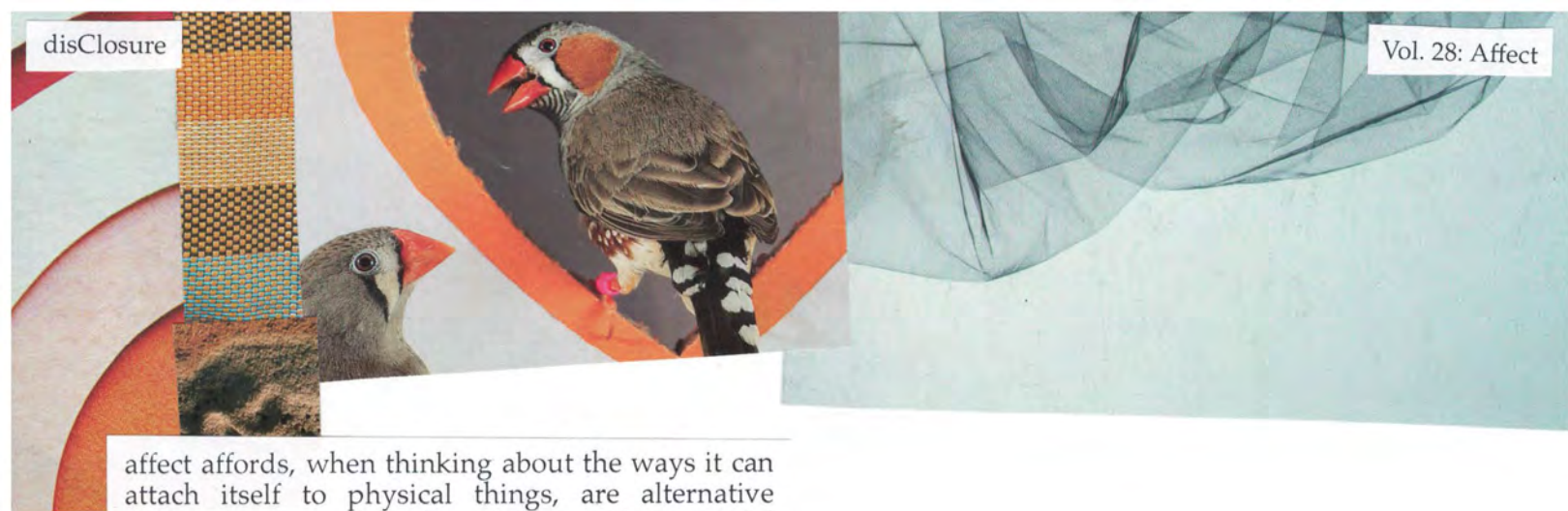
affect affords, when thinking about the ways it can attach itself to physical things, are alternative epistemological sites that can provide potential spaces for recovery to postcolonial trauma and violence.

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RISKY BUSINESS

Higher Risk
Preference

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Lower Risk
Preference

10-11   12-13   14-15   16-17   18-21   22-25   26-30
Age
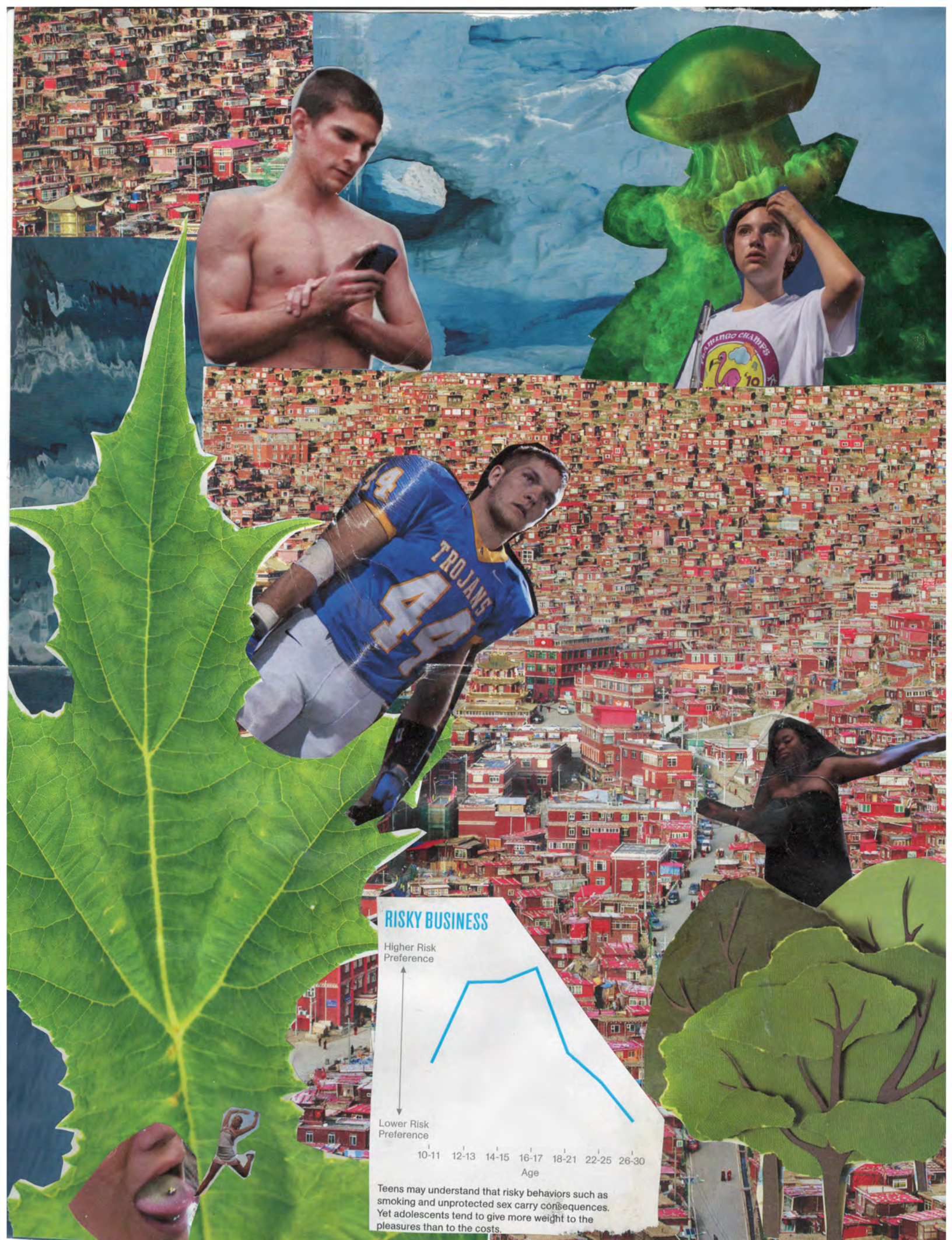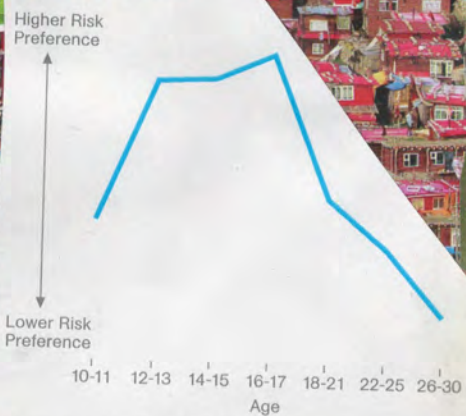
Teens may understand that risky behaviors such as
smoking and unprotected sex carry consequences.
Yet adolescents tend to give more weight to the
pleasures than to the costs.

Weatherlessness: Affect, Mood, Temperament, the Death of the Will, and Politics

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First, I develop an account of the nature of moods and the relation of mood to emotion and temperament. This account stresses that social and individual moods are marked by four features: They are *transactional* – neither wholly subjective nor objective; in experience they *shade into and blur back and forth with feeling and temperament*; they are *ambient and atmospheric*, a habit of living in the world more expansive than a habit of mind; and, whether conscious or not, moods have causes that, if known, *may be manipulated* to advance both personal and political ends. Second, I focus on a particular mood that, following the novelist John Barth, I term "weatherlessness." I then distinguish weatherlessness from both learned helplessness and manufactured consent. Third, I conclude by showing ways in which weatherlessness is fatal to democracy, to government *of, by, and for* the people. Here I suggest ways in which weatherlessness can be a tool used by authoritarian regimes, including those that disguise themselves as democracies.

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1. Moods

Supposing that truth is a mood – what then? Supposing every philosophy and every politics expresses the mood of its originators – what then?

OK, don't even try to answer these questions, don't even start to read this essay until you're in the right mood. Following a good sleep and healthy breakfast. Your mouth holding a pen crosswise, not by its end. A sunny day and pleasant breeze, maybe some exercise or some time in the park. When you want to be right here, right where you are. After an ocean of love. That could make all the difference. And this difference is not merely personal: Associations, organizations, governments, and cultures call forth, are marked by, and nourish or starve particular moods. Moods may be political; they may be manipulated to advance both personal and political ends.

What is a mood? With roots in Old English, Gothic German, and Old Norse words for mind, spirit, courage, and anger, mood is typically defined as *an individual's particular and temporary feeling or state of mind, a distinctive emotional quality or tone, a pervading impression or general attitude or tone of some thing or some time, and a person's inclination or disposition or receptivity or temper to some activity or thing.* (The term also has specialized and precise meanings in logic (as classification of categorical syllogisms) and grammar (as categories of verb inflection to indicate syntactic relations among clauses or attitudes of speakers with respect to certainty/uncertainty, wish/command, and emphasis/hesitancy. I note here that the main character discussed in this essay's next section is a grammar teacher – in part a teacher of moods.) Mood is most often attributed to individuals, but a mood may be a feature of a social group, political regime, or historical era – e.g., the mood of a people during a war or the mood of an age of enlightenment or time

of famine – or to creative works – e.g., the characteristic mood of a painter's period of work or the tone of a piece of music – or a location – e.g., the mood of a military cemetery or the feel of a lake house. In her song, "Ventura," Lucinda Williams (2003) sings:

Haven't spoken to no one
Haven't been in the mood
Pour some soup, get a spoon and
Stir it up real good.

Sometimes "mood" is used almost synonymously with "feeling" or "emotion" – such that, for example, to be in a good mood is simply to feel cheerful or have positive emotions and to be in a bad mood is to feel irritated or suffer from negative emotions. Many psychologists, however, differentiate emotion and mood. In these cases, an emotion or "emotional episode" is characterized as an experience marked by: a particular (usually relatively short-term) quality and caused by particular physiological (e.g., neurological and endocrinal) changes and conditions; behaviors (e.g., smiling or running away) caused by and consistent with this experience; attention directed toward an eliciting stimulus; cognitive appraisal of the meaning and possible consequences of the stimulus; and, attribution of the genesis of the experience to the stimulus. An important point here is that emotions are *not* reactions to perceptions and then, afterwards, the cause of bodily expressions. Instead, perceptions give rise to bodily expressions the awareness of which is emotion. William James (1981 [1890]) put this nicely: "Bodily changes follow directly the perception of the exciting fact, and . . . our feeling of the same changes as they occur is the emotion." We feel sorry because we cry and afraid because we tremble, James explained; we do not cry because we feel sorry or tremble because we are afraid. Without the bodily expressions

following perception, those perceptions would be wholly cognitive – we might judge it best to run but we "should not actually feel afraid" (1065-66). So characterized, emotions are brought about *by something*, are feelings of bodily reactions *to something*, and are *about something* cognitively appraised. Examples include anger, fear, sadness, happiness, disgust, and surprise. Indeed, many researchers argue that these are the six, and only, universal emotions. That may be right, but I'd like to think that the sentiment of rationality – James's phrase for the fact that rationality itself is a sentiment – might be very widespread too.

By contrast, a mood is characterized as an affective state that lasts longer than an emotion and often is temporally distant from the stimulus and its resulting behavior that is its cause (e.g., waking up one morning in a bad mood because of an argument several months earlier or being depressed years after the death of a loved one). This includes moods brought on by causes unrecognized by the given individual – causes such as nutrition, weather, facial muscles, physical activity, persistent poverty, a culture of violence, structural absence of opportunity, and so on. A mood is more diffuse and general than an emotion – less about something in particular that is cognitively appraised and more about everything in general (e.g., anxiety not about an important exam in an hour but about one's whole future); less a reaction to something in particular than a reaction to life more generally (e.g., irritability brought on not by one particular co-worker but by absolutely everyone around); and less brought on by something particular but, instead, more sustained across many different particular experiences (e.g., a depressive state due to the totality of one's self). So characterized, moods are relatively long term, broad scope, and diffuse affective states. From this perspective, moods are generally viewed as having two primary dimensions or valences: positive affect (and the positive consequences

of this affect) and negative affect (and the negative consequences of this affect); that is, being in a good mood or being in a bad mood. Examples of moods include depression, anxiety, resignation, confidence, and serenity.

I accept and want to make use of the notion of mood understood in this brief, unfinished but, I hope, workable sketch. That said, I also want to add four important points to this account of mood. First, any adequate account of mood must be *shady*. This means it must not claim neat separations between instincts, emotions, moods, and temperaments. Rather, they blur into one another. To note this is simply to extend an observation by James (1981 [1890]): "Instinctive reactions and emotional expressions thus shade imperceptibly into each other" (1058). So too do emotions, moods, and temperaments. We can feel hopeful or be in a hopeful mood or have a hopeful temperament. Somebody can just be an anxious person, find one's self in an anxious mood, or feel anxious. As James (1981 [1890]) noted, "The result of all this flux is that the merely descriptive literature of the emotions is one of the most tedious parts of psychology. And not only is it tedious, but you feel that its subdivisions are to a great extent either fictitious or unimportant, and that its pretences to accuracy are a sham" (1064). Differences in both life and language among instincts, emotions, moods, and temperaments are shady, blurry, vague. An emotion can coexist with or produce a mood or a temperament over time, but so too a mood can call forth and exist simultaneously with a particular emotion.

I go out with a friend
Maybe a little music might help
But I can't pretend
I wish I was somewhere else (Williams 2003).

Second, any adequate account of mood must be *transactional*. This means that moods

are not wholly subjective or wholly objective. Rather, they are what James called "double-barreled," applying to both the *how* and the *what* of experience, features of irreducibly interrelated consciousness and object. Moods are what John Dewey (1989 [1949]) called "unfractured" – without radical separation between knower and known, namer and named, organism and environment, subject and object (96-97). For Heidegger as for Dewey, moods are features of a world, not simply subjective overlays or reactions to it. Just as Dewey asserted that reality possesses practical character, so too it possesses affective character. Reality is moody. Our ordinary language captures this and displays our unsettlement about our being in a mood or a mood being in us. Place: The dark streets were foreboding, tense, unforgiving, full of danger, without hope. Action: The gunfire was terrifying, scary, frightening, horrific. Person: After her death, he was disconsolate, depressed, unable to cope, dark, without joy. Time: "Ah distinctly, I remember, it was in the bleak December," the mood was grim, there were shootings almost every day, it was a dismal period. The affective is thick and stretches across our lives. In now-outdated language, tertiary qualities are features of reality – and that includes emotion, mood, and temperament. Mood colors, fixes, and transforms both the how and the what of experience.

Third, affect includes more than instinct, feeling, and mood. It is *ambient and atmospheric*. It also includes temperament. By temperament I mean not just a person's or a group's habit of mind, but something more expansive – one's habit of living, one's constitution or characteristic modes of feeling and action. As feelings come and go and shade into more diffuse moods that may last a while or longer, so too moods often shade and blur into temperaments. In such cases, moods become habitual in duration and wide in scope – affective undergoings, doings, and dispositions across wide swaths of one's life. They become whole climates rather than the

weather one particular day or even one season. This points to another standard or dictionary meaning of "temperament" that sheds additional light: temperament is the condition of the weather or climate, regarded as resulting from a combination of heat or cold, dryness or humidity. One's temperament is one's personal weather. We all know some people who are warm, others who are cold, some who are arid, and yet others who are stormy (and so on). Understood this way, temperament shares more with feeling and less with mood a connection with action and disposition to action. Icy feelings and an icy temperament are called forth and displayed in icy behavior; an icy mood is more atmospheric – "I had no idea you were in that kind of mood!" – and may be barely evident in action. Affects blur along a temporal arc of shorter-term feelings, longer-lasting moods, and relatively durable temperaments.

The fourth point about moods is this: They have causes. They are the product of physiological, environmental, and cultural conditions. The fact that a person may not know what brought on a mood (e.g., "I have no idea why I'm in such an unhappy mood") does not mean that the existence of the mood is irreducibly mysterious or unknowable. Just as it is possible to manufacture feelings (e.g., "If I let her in on this secret, she will be so jealous"), so too it is possible to manufacture moods (e.g., "We had to get out of the Pacific Northwest to cure his seasonal affective disorder," or, "Whenever the manager turned on Fox News, I felt anger at Trump and my whole mood turned confrontational and hostile"). This has potential practical implications for anyone marketing products, ideas, or regimes – or even philosophies if one accepts Deleuze and Guattari's (1994 [1991]) observation that "philosophy has not remained unaffected by the general movement that replaced Critique with sales promotion" (10). As it is possible to inflame a crowd, create desires, learn emotions and emotional responses, produce belief, and

engineer consent, so it is possible to manufacture mood – crucial perhaps in some kinds of administration of populations.

Individual and social moods, then, are shady and transactional, blurring back and forth with feeling and temperament, and caused by conditions that, if known, may be manipulated to advance both personal and political ends.

2. Weatherlessness

In light of this general understanding of mood, I want to focus briefly on a particular mood for the purpose of reflecting on its origins and its political as well as personal uses. I take the name for this mood – *weatherlessness* – from the novelist John Barth. To be weatherless is to be in a moodless mood, to be without climate, without feeling, freedom, or purpose. When habitual, it is the complete absence of disposition and inclination, the absence of any temperament. It is to be helpless, unable to act and without desires or goals, paralyzed to the point of inaction. Just as Hemingway recorded the death of love after World War I in *The Sun Also Rises*, so Barth recounted the death of the will after World War II in his 1958 novel, *The End of the Road* (1969 [1958]). Hemingway chronicled the "lost generation" while Barth illuminated the "submission generation." For the book's "hero," Jacob Horner, there is no convincing reason to prefer or do anything and so he does nothing (except at the command of the "Doctor," a psychiatrist-counselor-mentor-God, as impersonal, aloof, and inexplicable as fate).

The book opens with a six-word sentence suggesting uncertainty and absurdity: "In a sense, I am Jacob Horner" (Barth 1969 [1958], 1). Next: "It was on the advice of the Doctor that I entered the teaching profession." The mood of weatherlessness and a temperament of paralysis are set quickly: Readers are treated to two long paragraphs dealing solemnly with the vexing problems of how to sit

properly in the Doctor's office and the equally grave problem of how one's arms should be placed. After discussing the shifting of positions and arms, Jacob Horner tells us that the story of his life is contained in the sentence which says that this shifting is a "recognition of the fact that when one is faced with such a multitude of desirable choices, no one choice seems satisfactory for very long by comparison with the aggregate desirability of all the rest, though compared to any one of the others it would not be found inferior." This sentence, which Jacob Horner describes as "a double predicate nominative expression in the second independent clause of a rather intricate compound sentence" (Barth 1969 [1958], 2-3), not only shows that Horner is a grammar teacher but also reveals Barth's contempt for conventional rules and societal customs, for sense and order, for logic and principles. Jacob Horner's mastery of these techniques was no avail against his impotency.

> You like it under the trees in autumn,
> Because everything is half dead
> The wind moves like a cripple among the leaves
> And repeats words without meaning.
> . . . you yourself were never quite yourself
> And did not want nor have to be,
> Desiring the exhilarations of changes:
> The motive for metaphor, shrinking from
> The weight of primary noon,
> The ABC of being (Stevens 1993 [1947], 288).

Factually and briefly, *The End of the Road* is a story supposedly written by Jake Horner in 1955 about an incident, which took place in 1953, an event caused by the advice of the strange Doctor whom Horner met in 1951 and with whom he is doomed to serve the rest of his aimless, empty life. The novel opens with the Doctor's advice to Jake Horner to go to third-rate Wicomico State Teachers College in Maryland's Eastern Shore to get a job teaching grammar. At Wicomico, Jake's first

and only friend is Joe Morgan, a liberal academic "emancipated" from objective values: "What the hell, Jake," says Joe, "when you say good-by to objective values, you really have to flex your muscles and keep your eyes open, because you're on your own. It takes energy; not just personal energy, but cultural energy, or you're lost. Energy's what makes the difference between American pragmatism and French existentialism – where the hell else but in America could you have a cheerful nihilism, for God's sake?" (Barth 1969 [1958], 47). Jake had also said goodbye to objective values – after all, he had been ordered by the Doctor to read Sartre and to be an existentialist and instructed that "Choosing is existence: To the extent you don't choose, you don't exist" (Barth 1969 [1958], 83) – but he did not accept Joe's cheerful spirit. He had no experience of himself as a unified self. Jake claimed: "Indeed, the conflict between individual points of view that Joe admitted lay close to heart of his subjectivism I should carry even further, for subjectivism implies a self, and where one feels a plurality of selves, one is subject to the same conflict on an intensely intramural level, each of one's selves claiming the same irrefutable validity for its special point of view that, in Joe's system individuals and institutions may claim" (Barth 1969 [1958], 142). Here Barth pokes fun at the American Dream, American progressivism, and meliorism that smile in the face of adversity and hope for better things ahead. Jake does not smile. He is immobilized, helpless, sapped of will, doomed to immobility and living what Wallace Stevens (1993 [1949]) characterized as a "skeleton's life" in "As You Leave the Room":

I wonder, have I lived a skeleton's life,
As a disbeliever in reality,
A countryman of all the bones in the world?
Now, here, the snow I had forgotten becomes
Part of a major reality, part of

An appreciation of a reality
. . .
And yet nothing has been changed except what is
Unreal, as if nothing had been changed at all (488).

Joe kept pushing his wife, Rennie, toward Jake and found ways for them to spend time together. When he learns of their affair, Joe makes it the subject of long, open philosophical conversations, as he does when Rennie becomes pregnant (whether by Jake or Joe no one knows). After a discussion of death as the only alternative to bearing the unwanted child, the three discuss another alternative, abortion. Jake's Doctor agrees to perform the abortion, the price being complete ownership of Jake for the rest of his life. Rennie is killed on the operating table, leaving Jake to break the news to Joe. Joe disappears into oblivion while Jake departs by taxi for the Doctor's Remobilization Farm where he is fated to live his life in complete dependence on, and total submission to, the Doctor. The book's final word – Jake says this to the driver – is "Terminal" (Barth 1969 [1958], 198).

Weatherlessness: After recounting a dream in which a meteorologist announces that there simply will be no weather tomorrow, Jake says this:

A day without weather is unthinkable, but for me at least there were frequently days without any mood at all. On these days, Jacob Horner, except in a meaningless metabolistic sense, ceased to exist, for I was without a personality. Like those microscopic specimens that biologists must dye in order to make them visible at all, I had to be colored with some mood or other if there was to be a recognizable self to me. The fact that my successive and discontinuous selves were linked to one another by the two unstable threads of body and memory; the fact that in the nature of Western languages the word

change presupposes something upon which the changes operate; the fact that although the specimen is invisible without the dye, the dye is not the specimen – these are considerations of which I was aware but in which I had no interest. On my weatherless days my body sat in a rocking chair and rocked and rocked and rocked, and my mind was as nearly empty as interstellar space (Barth 1969 [1958], 36).

And like the bodies of individual persons, so too political bodies may sit in a rocking chair, just rocking and empty.

3. Manufactured Helplessness and Politics

Barth's novel presented a mood of weatherlessness, the absence of temperament and disposition – the death of the will – and the resulting paralysis and impotence of action primarily as an *individual's* (Jacob's) psychological condition and as a philosophical problem (if one makes certain "existentialist" assumptions about the world, freedom and choice, and values). I want now to consider weatherlessness and the death of the will in a more explicitly *political* context because I find these ideas illuminate central commitments and problems for democratic practice – for practices that broadly value and are marked by broad participation, consent, and benefit of the governed. To do this, it is necessary to view weatherlessness not simply as an individual trait but as a social *product* – something socially manufactured (indirectly – whether fully conscious or not – via sentiments) in particular ways in particular times and places with particular consequences for particular selves. The reason for doing this is straight-forward: the self, to use the language of George Herbert Mead, is a social product (and so there can be no question about mood being either only wholly personal or only wholly social). It is also necessary to view weatherlessness as a cultural *deployment* – a strategy (conscious or not) on behalf of particular interests and

powers, particular forms of government, and particular cultural relations.

In this light, it is helpful to contrast weatherlessness and the death of the will with two other phenomena: learned helplessness and manufactured consent. Following Seligman (1975a, 1975b, and 1993), learned helplessness is a condition in which a person, after a traumatic experience or repeated harm and failure, learns powerlessness and absence of control and then gives up even trying, taking no action to avoid subsequent harm – even in subsequent changed conditions in which the harm could be escaped or stopped. Two points stand out here: the helplessness learned in the original situation is warranted – the subject actually is helpless with respect to the given trauma or harm; and, in later changed conditions, the habituated helplessness does not appear warranted to third-party observers who know surely the conditions have changed such that the person is no longer helpless, but it does appear warranted to the person who has no reason to realize that conditions have changed – and who finally does act to avoid trauma or harm only after being shown that this is possible. In learned helplessness, then, the self first discovers it has no effective power to act, no ability to achieve its goals, and then concludes there is no point acting. This paralysis of will, understood as a habit, is the result of actual helplessness in a given environment. In cases of weatherlessness, in contrast, the self first finds itself in an indifferent, no-mood mood, without temperament or disposition, and this mood washes over will, drowning it, the self then having no inclination to act at all. In learned helplessness, the self's will to act is defeated by its actual environment. And the self *learns* that fact. In weatherlessness, the self's will is defeated by its own indifferent mood and a-disposed temperament (and the physiological, environmental, and cultural forces that create and sustain this mood and temperament). And the self *expresses* that fact. The result is the same – paralysis of action;

however, the cause is different (and, therefore, any remedy also would be different).

Manufactured consent, following Lippmann (who coined the term in his 1922 *Public Opinion*) and Herman and Chomsky (who took it up in their 1968 *Manufacturing Consent*), is the idea that formally or outwardly democratic regimes can support themselves without any overt coercion by employing propaganda-functioning mass communications that create citizen consent. Here the roles of the media and manufactured consent in a democracy are viewed as functionally parallel to the roles of the military and violence in an old-fashioned dictatorial or openly authoritarian regime. Understood in a political context, both manufactured consent and weatherlessness are societal creations. However, in these two cases of manufacturing, both the immediate producers and the resulting product are very different. Manufactured consent produces just that – consent – through the work of profit-driven corporations and investors who utilize mass media, government agencies, and regulation of social interactions to serve their private interests. Weatherlessness, on the other hand, produces vapid spectatorship, non-engagement, and non-allegiance in politics as a result of an indifferent mood and a temperament lacking all disposition. Weatherlessness does not manufacture consent – or dissent; it manufactures a-consent, even "sleeping through a revolution."

And it may well be that we will have to repent in this generation. Not merely for the vitriolic words and the violent actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence and indifference of the good people who sit around and say, "Wait on time." (King, Jr. 1968)

Yes, but weatherlessness is not a long marking of time, a waiting on time. It is not waiting, even long-game waiting; it is only sitting – paralysis without expectation or anticipation.
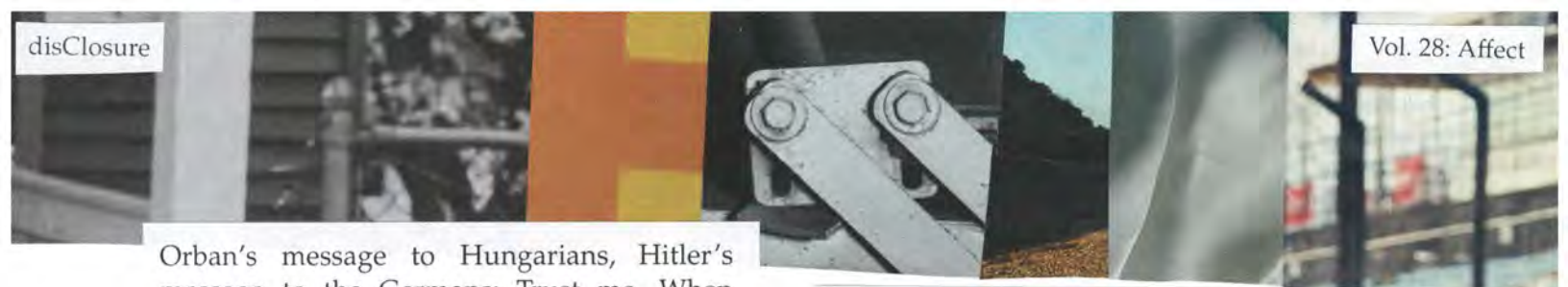
Viewed this way, it is clear that weatherlessness is fatal for democracy – for any government *of*, *by*, and *for* the people. The point is not simply that those who are weatherless do not participate. That is true at the individual level. However, at the social level, weatherlessness is not simply the *death* of some individual's will. Rather, weatherlessness in effect is the *outsourcing* of the will, a space that allows the creation of a people's *surrogate* will. In the *End of the Road*, for example, from the novel's start at Wicomico State Teachers College to its end en route to the Remobilization Farm, Jake does not really himself act at all – but only on the instruction of, only under the control of, the Doctor. Weatherlessness is a means to, and a mark of, authoritarian political regimes.

Here is a natural history or genealogy of authoritarian politics in democratic disguise: At first, those who will not consent must be rendered unable to oppose effectively – the work of armies, jailers, and executioners; then, that opposition, frequently so difficult to control, must be remanufactured more efficiently into consent – the work of advertisers and marketers, mass media professionals, and private corporations; finally, consent, frequently unable to keep hidden the traces of its manufacture (and so remain effective), must be retooled as weatherlessness and its paralysis of inclination and action – the work of mood managers and temperament creators via one's physiology, environment, and culture (including one's self).

Like all forms of government, democracy is moody (and I think it is very useful to think of democracy as a mood, affect, and temperament rather than *merely* a doctrine or set of practices). The mood of illiberal democracy – external trappings of democratic government adopted by anti-democratic ways of life – is, at least in large part, weatherlessness. In such regimes, popular unrest, political protest, and social action are mood disorders. The Doctor's message to Jake, Donald Trump's message to Americans, Xi Jinping's message to the Chinese, Viktor
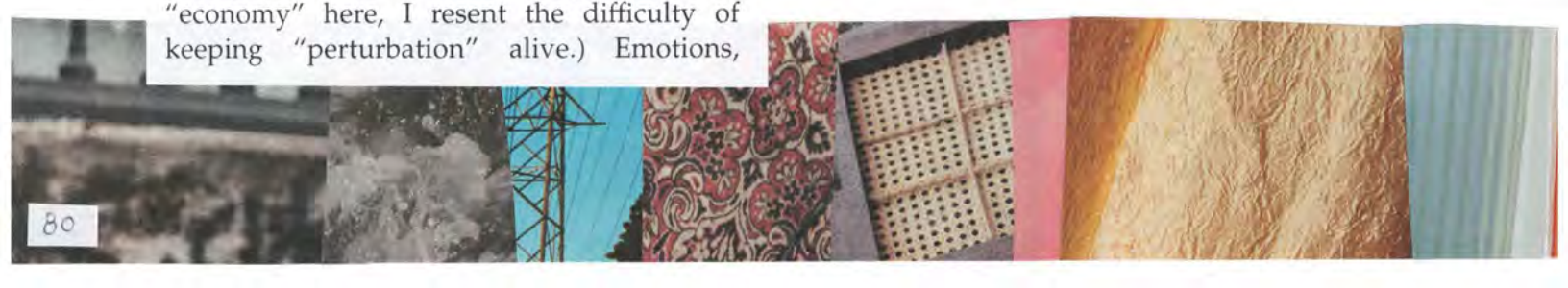
Orban's message to Hungarians, Hitler's message to the Germans: Trust me. When Trump proclaims "Make America Great Again," he is not laying out any platform; he is expressing and strengthening, among his tribe, a mood. *Mood blurs into temperament. Temperament separated from will is an abstraction and without motivation. Will separated from hope makes hope ineffective, mere wish. This hope is a mood.*

I close with three points about weatherlessness in political contexts. First, it is rarely all-or-nothing. One can be, for example, weatherless with respect to a national election but deeply concerned and involved with local school board issues. This means that if one views weatherlessness as a mood blurring into a feeling, there may be little weatherlessness. One feels the school shooting is tragic, feels NRA funds in politics are obscene, or feels perplexed by the idea of schoolteachers carrying guns. But if weatherlessness is seen as a mood shading toward temperament, inclination, and disposition, then weatherlessness clearly is widespread today in American society and in other traditionally liberal and democratic societies. One sees the televised school shooting, reads about dark money in politics, watches pictures of the rainforest set on fire to clear it, drives past extreme poverty and does nothing – rocking with Jake Horner in one's chair. This is paralysis – or its practical equivalent. Weatherlessness is not merely the paralysis of wish; it is also the paralysis of action.

Second, how is this produced? Both psychologically and politically. James described brilliantly the physical process on the nerves – he called it an "economy of nerve-paths" – by which emotion slides into inattention and indifference. (This explanation captures many lives to date in the Trump Era – and while I appreciate the "economy" here, I resent the difficulty of keeping "perturbation" alive.) Emotions,

James (1981 [1890]) wrote, *"blunt themselves by repetition"*:

> The more we exercise ourselves at anything, the fewer muscles we employ . . . The first time we saw [some stimulus] we could perhaps neither act nor think at all, and had no reaction but organic perturbation. The emotions of startled surprise, wonder, or curiosity were the result. Now we look on with absolutely no emotion (1089).

Third, finally and importantly, weatherlessness has more indirect cultural causes as well as proximate emotional/physiological causes. If every claim is met with a counter-claim, if every fact is suspected on the basis of alternative facts, if a commitment one day is not a commitment the next, if all news is fake according to someone, if science and its critics both are suspect, if many voices shout many messages equally loudly, if every claim is a lie, there may come to seem to be little reason to listen at all. Or, it may be impossible to hear anything at all but collective background noise. Indifference in mood and in practice, weatherlessness, can result from there really being no difference among all alternatives, but it also can result from situations in which it is impossible to judge differences, impossible to differentiate, impossible any longer to look on, as James put it, with any emotion or care. In such cases, Joe was right when he told Jake that pluralism and democracy take political and cultural, not just personal, hope and effort. Hope for that effort is hope for conditions for a more fully democratic mood.

Suddenly everyone was run over by a truck (O'Donoghue 1971, 16).

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Street Affects: An Exercise on Why We Listen To But Don't Hear the Street Music[1]

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This paper argues that affective moments between street musicians and the audience in Istanbul, Turkey suggest a loose connection to open and highly affective practices of hearing. The street brings them together during the moments of performance. The performance twists the power of sound that the musician makes and draws that into visualization of the moment, which underlines a peculiar affective attachment on the audience's side. The city's, musician's, and the listening practices' significance in these moments are taken into account and narrated with examples from the fieldwork.

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[1] The author would like to thank Prof. Anna Secor for her comments on an early draft of this paper.

What is going on in the affective sphere between the street musician and their audience on the street? It is more than a mix of visual and aural sensations of bodies in transit, bodies that are either working in, passing by or touring the place, and that are lured by an immediate, short-lived yet repetitive, sometimes makeshift musical performance. Reasons to perform on the street vary from managing precarity to making a public statement of an alternate politics of music and life, even to building confidence out of difference. But street performers' motives are beyond this short essay's focus. Here, I problematize the audience's obsession with visualization in their fleeting affective encounters with street music(ians) in Istanbul, Turkey. My role there as a researcher was to take account of moments of performance and record events, encounters, ruptures and flows surrounding those moments in Istanbul's street music scene between 2014 to 2016.
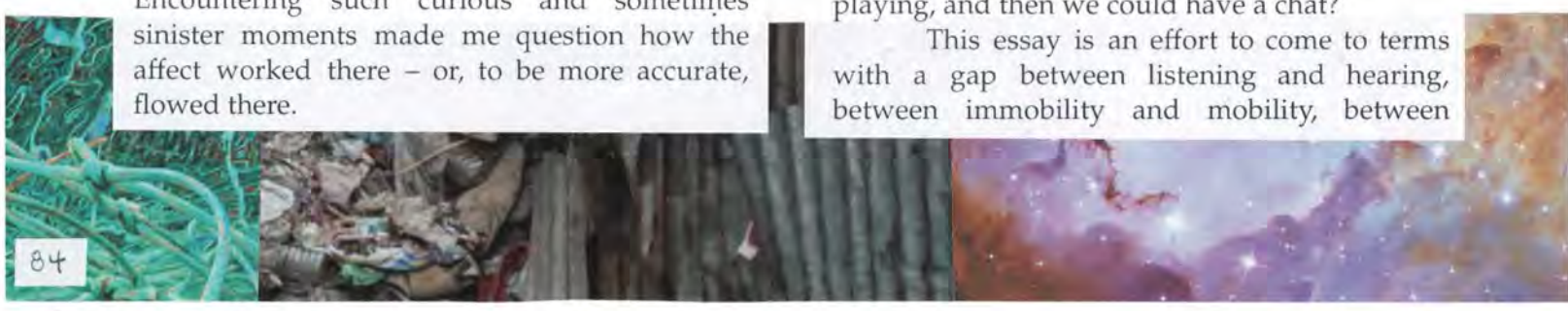
One immediate note was that so many photos, videos and notes got posted on social media – not always with geotagging – of a performance that was found endearing or interesting or touching or just weird. From time to time, when interaction with musicians took place, it was with its twists and surprises: for example, think of the peculiar rhythm of when someone in the audience was getting too close to the performer without permission in order to take a picture without even having a word with them, treating the stage as dead as a sculpture. Or, when communication is much more relaxed between the band and a small group of onlookers who cheered to songs, danced, clapped and hung out with the performers: it turns out part of the audience knew some of the musicians, and so they shared an even ground – sometimes they are among friends. Both of these situations hinted at a temporary – yet strong – bond at the same level, but they contrasted in the sense that each flowed from an uneven end and met here on the shared street stage. Encountering such curious and sometimes sinister moments made me question how the affect worked there – or, to be more accurate, flowed there.

I approached this affective sphere even more carefully after having repeatedly observed that people who stopped to *listen* to the music took selfies at the scene and photos of the scene like in an enchanted *reflex*. I found it perplexing how space that was so open to influences from all over the place allowed *listening*, yet skipped *hearing*. Perhaps the need to make it visual comes up naturally by being there; then, does witnessing the auditory dimension command visual documentation? It seemed to me that international and local tourists alike strived to prove they're listening – was it a kind of duty? Was that act required to verify an abstract purchase (in an economy of experience), and functioned like a certificate of the fact that they had been affected by what they found there on the spot? Perhaps an act of appreciation is not quite distanced from an act of capturing the practice on camera? After all, I occasionally recorded these stages too, for my own purpose of documenting what happened there, even if my rhythm was different: I did not listen and hit the share button hastily to move on quickly with my route afterwards. Besides, the musician-body shares a similar obsession with the touring-body, that is to say, the want of visibility. When on the feeble, makeshift yet seamless stage that is built out of the street, band members habitually ask people to "take and share photos of their performance on Facebook" if they "like [the band] on Facebook." That would do them good. The online presence will presumably affirm and expand their struggle, a proto-business that is more in the form of a pursuit of art and life (or the other way around?). Does being visible equal appreciation and promotion? Does it secure that the musicians and the context of their song are being heard all right? Perhaps it is for the sake of being visible. What did it mean when the musician I ran into and asked for an interview repeatedly pointed me to visit their online presence so that I would send them a message online to check when they are downtown, playing, and then we could have a chat?

This essay is an effort to come to terms with a gap between listening and hearing, between immobility and mobility, between

"sonorization of images" that Virilio (2003) criticized, and getting immersed in soundscapes, a practice sound studies have spoken so fondly of (Schafer 1993, among many others). This is a gap full of affective bonds. What is the matter with affect when we recognize and problematize a rift between listening and hearing? Murray Schafer (1993), a pioneer of listening to one's environment actively, defended an active, almost biophilic listening: he went against the grain and suggested that dominant soundscapes of the urban and the industrial silenced the richness of life around us. It takes effort and patience to actively listen to one's environment, to its less visible components, thanks to an aggressive urbanization. However, for the audience in my case, listening in the city center remains a rather superficial act; if they listened to the sounds and music a la Schafer, they would not necessarily like what they heard; it would be too long, too detailed, and even noisy. That is why I present a twist between listening and hearing in this essay: hearing patiently where the music comes from and goes to is serious work that an audience member, who pauses to photograph street music, would not easily be willing to undertake. The passing audience member allows themselves to get affected by the sound and space in a peculiar way. Hearing sound and space would mean to let go of a touristic control in a sense; yet, people in the audience are selective when they take a selfie or choose to pause to listen to a certain sight for a while. It is not about patience, it is not about opening up and defending the sounds of an environment beneath an aggressive urban context. What touristic hearing does is socially reproductive. I pick up on this behavioral nuance thanks to their haste, their short span of attention, and, when they, as touring-bodies, do not engage in conversation out of curiosity about the musicians. On an interesting note, Marie Thompson (2017), who returns to Michel Serres' work on parasitism in order to write about the materiality of affect, suggests that noise is heard as a "generative force" (60): we do not listen to noise, we hear it; and in hearing its parasitic context, we find new information, new ground.

Noise is "an affective, perturbing force" (ibid., 60), and it becomes sound that allows a substantial communication between ends. When we hear stuff, we open; we are at a receiving end without having to be instrumental about taking something from the milieu for profit. We allow interruption; we are situated in a milieu that brings to us surprises along with what we receive. Thompson's argument confronts the average ears that the heard parasitic components can highlight relation and communication, and I realize the hearing component can be equally significant in thinking about street musicians' performance. However, when the passing audience member listens to the musicians for consuming a certain message inscribed on the façade, the force of their songs and sounds becomes attenuated. In this essay, I want to take up the exercise of thinking about the audience's rhythms as they pause for the musicians who performed.

The City

In *Politics of Affect*, in a conversation with Joel McKim on Micropolitics, Massumi (2015, 59) talks about an "enacted past" running "active in the present." Regarding affective memory, Massumi argued that

> there is no such thing as starting from scratch. Everything re-begins, in a very crowded, overpopulated world. Even one body alone is prepopulated – by instincts, by inclinations, by teeming feelings and masses of memories, conscious and nonconscious, with all manner of shadings in between (2015, 51).

Massumi reminds the reader that perceiving shock is elemental in understanding the workings of circulating affect. If the question is when and how a politics of something is born, then the *thought* of something is equally significant as the action in constituting the present, while that thought runs in the mass beyond its consciousness. When taking a selfie of a moment of musical performance found,

listened to, and lost in the street is an affective act, the act begs to take us beyond the façade, i.e. the listening façade. I think that is how an "enacted past" will be observed "running active in the present." What brought the musician to that spot, and what brought the touring-body and the touring-ears there have a lot of personal reasons, of course; however, there are collective reasons to their encounter, too. There is a past that is not heard in such an act, and affect is one way how association can be formed between one body and the mass. Here, we are dealing with "microshocks" and their impact on us as "microperceptions"; and the latter is graspable as "something that is felt without registering consciously" (ibid., 53), with reference to Deleuze and Guattari. I recognize that the power of microperceptions speaks much to how the touring, listening, watching or musical body in the street swims in the material and immaterial currents of the street. So, such an active memory is alive in particular nodes and corners of a city, too; and yet, it sleepwalks as long as it circulates.

In this sense, Istanbul's main public corridor, *Istiklal Street*, a touristic catch and a pedestrian street that opens up to Taksim Square next to a tiny public park with a much contested history that extends well beyond the local area, carries such nonlinear vibes to the present. Following a tide of youthful political protest in the Summer 2013 in Istanbul, the authoritarian response to it showed that the past is alive in the commercial and urban governmental ambitions to reshape the milieu of this square (see Dikeç 2013; Hammond 2013; Hammond and Angell 2013; among others, who noted that these ambitions very much circulated in the space). Then came 2014 and 2015, an intense period of elections and strife in the country. The protests had coincided with the fervent Arab Spring, and would touch Istanbul's already troubled mood; the latter, in the mood for elections, brought more of those complicated feelings about difference. According to Genç (2016), the protests had incited a local generation of young artists' greater attention to the Taksim area, where tensions over an imperial reconfiguration of the site met with future-oriented concerns

over what to make of this space. Yörük (2013; 2014) discussed how the liberating air from summer 2013 stirred a mobilized Kurdish politics in the country along with giving more space to other political discussions over rights and wrongs of religion, morality, sexuality, economy and so on. In my own field notes, I was able to record more relaxed and energized Kurdish voices next to Black Sea sounds and dances, joining musically to the space next to Turkish and Farsi songs, Balkan and klezmer tunes, or more exotic performances of, say, Korean dancers or vuvuzela performers, alongside the dances of the pride parades and political demonstrations. It was not surprising to have those all together; after all, this space was a massive tourist attraction.

Meanwhile, businesses on the street noticed and responded to the flow of Arab tourists (see for instance, Tremblay's news report on it, 2016) along with a slow yet persistent inflow of refugees from Syria. Economic stress was also becoming a part of everyday, as business took off and shops closed. Now, new actors joined the rhythm of the place in their own ways; one, for displacement and escaping the conflict; the other, fulfilling the duties of a touring-citizen. What is more, added to this picture was the 2014-2015 election frenzy in the country, which actually ended up creating a sense of mess, and pushing much of local youth away from this axis of the city. It was no longer fun, safe or interesting to be there in a cacophony. One day, one of my research participants would take me to an artists' café where many Middle Eastern (not necessarily Arab) musicians and youth were regulars; the next day, I would walk the *Istiklal* to hear a woman's random cry as she begged in Arabic in the middle of the pavement, next to the tram route. The male tourist who flew into the city from a country south of Turkey to get a "hair transplant" and took the family along for a vacation would perhaps understand the language, but did one need to know that language to "hear" the anguish and burden in her voice? Mind you, what is caricatured in the above character became a popular – i.e. selective

– image of a typical new tourist in the country since 2015 – and the image finds embodiment toward the right end in Photo 1 below, too, as he held out the selfie stick closely and ambitiously to capture the performance. One day I would find my way to a concert by a musician from Syria living in Istanbul, organized in the context of a festival to acknowledge her culture; another day, I would stand in the crowd and listen to a street concert, next to the typical new tourist holding a selfie stick attached to his phone camera, and usually surrounded by family on the trip. However, he was not the only figure who embraced the sounds with his camera as he toured; in that sense, many others in the audience repeated the act of "sonorization of images and all audio-visual icons," if I may build on Virilio's (2003, 69) phrase on the workings of global multimedia on works of art.

The Musician

I was curious if the musicians I talked to *really* liked this place, this mess, this flow and the rich attention it brought about. The city has showed up as a hub in global music production with world music tunes in the recent decades (Değirmenci 2010; 2013); and, even before the 2000s, Istiklal Street was marked by sounds and sights of the musician as a transnational figure seeking new platforms: as early as 1990, Sun Ra had visited the city and played live on a truck touring Istiklal Street; his concert was apparently organized and video recorded by a music organization company in Istanbul still active in the sector (Kortun 2013). The jazz and experimental tunes of Sun Ra had met the street as a stage. When I learned about this visit in 2016, after accidentally seeing a picture of it on the wall of a concert venue, I mainly thought about two things. First, this performance had already marked *Istiklal Street* as a stage, and regardless of whether musicians I talked to knew about this or not, it did not matter: it was already born as a stage, and it was constantly being (re)born as new bands, amateur and schooled musicians stopped by at its collective stage. If it did happen in the 1990s, in the wake

of a stressful period of internal displacement and migration in the country, it was no surprise that it would happen now; the word would spread and it would attract more, alternative musical visits. While I am not making any inferences that this truck concert was what started it all, the fact that a concert organization company got involved in recording a performance that changed a lot in the soundscape of this street was striking enough. Second, I thought of whether and how musicians ignored the audience circulating and flowing before their eyes, as I recalled listening to funky jazz tunes from an orchestra on a tram going back and forth on the street, which was part of a day of festivities organized by the local government. Sun Ra's orchestra had toured the same route; the resemblance was no surprise, given that this was *the* touristic corridor of the city. The transiency of the relationship between the performer and the audience was shocking, though.

Taking note of a disconnect between street performers and audience, I am taken aback by how one of my early conversations with a street musician nailed it. Playing guitar and timbrel on his own on a night in October in the Galata area, near *Istiklal*, he told me that he was a travelling musician, originally from Greece. I had to stand on the sidewalk near him for a long bit before I was able to strike up the conversation. When he took a break from playing, I introduced myself. "You're not a musician, if you were, you wouldn't find it interesting. You would be like let's play, let's go," he situated me. "For a musician, it is [a] feeling; let's do it, let's play, come on [sort of feeling]," he added. It was noisy because the street was not closed to car traffic. In the really narrow street (see Photo 2), few people stopped to pay attention to the performance. At one time, I noticed that laborers across the street working on the construction of a store paid attention to him without coming closer. I asked him what he thought of people who "stopped and listened": "I visit [during] September-October-November every year. Doing this for four years, it is different than the last year. Last year, people

Photo 1. Musicians performing in front of locals, tourists, street children. Ortakoy, Istanbul; August-September 2015. Photo by the author.
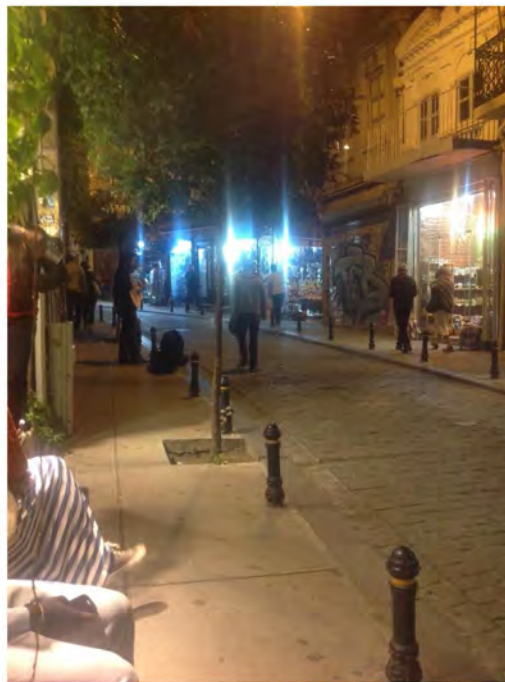

Photo 2. Playing to a narrow street near Galata, October 2014. Photo by the author.

were making music with me, joining. This year, it is silent. They just go by. […] Money is not important, sometimes they like your 'figure' so they give [you] money. I play in bars too. This is different [though], I want [random] people to join." He clearly desired the audience to participate; that came up again when I asked him to tell me more on what instruments meant to him: he explained that he used the timbrel to clue the audience into the rhythm and to help them join in.

Other musicians may give different accounts of interactive music-making. A Turkish performer published his diaries chronicling the period when he made music in the street; he played Persian *santur* (dulcimer), which required him to avoid looking up or across to the audience. Anar (2018) mentioned being able to only look at people's shoes in front of him and not their faces as he played. This allowed him to avoid the audience in a sense, to play uninterrupted — unless by other means. It did not make a connection between musicians and performers impossible of course; perhaps, it simply hints at how the instrument imposes on genre, genre imposes on posture, posture imposes on the connection to the street. If someone in the audience wanted to get into a conversation with him, this would not stop the person. On the B-side of the narration, he tells of a time when someone who already worked elsewhere, say, in a public office, played with them on the street. This temporary band member wore sunglasses to go unrecognized, and simply did not feel like taking a share from the money donated by the audience (Anar 2018, 172). In my notes and conversations, I recall instances of when someone in the audience could leave some money and take the change they wanted by picking coins from musician's instrument case/donation box. Taking a picture or a video of such a public performance seems not to require permission. Taking a selfie with the musician during an ongoing performance is another story, though. Having witnessed such moments on *Istiklal Street*, as a random young woman jumped on the stage, got behind the performers as they played, asked her friend to

take her picture with the band, not asking permission before or after, I asked the musician how they felt: "Just rude, but can you do anything?" was a common answer. I would get the feeling the musician wanted to disregard that instance. It is not like the listening-body changes their rhythm according to that of musician's; instead, it seems like they are interfering without being interfered with. How is that an affective moment? The flow of interaction in such an affective sphere reminds me of Kathleen Stewart's talk of "being in the mainstream" (2007, 51): being in tune without getting involved deeply in the tune (because that would alter you irreversibly).

Unlike those who casually shoot a picture and keep going, children are welcome and not an interruption to performers. Many times, street musicians add that it is nice to get a response from children. It feels different. Bodily commotion, voice and informal interaction from kids dancing to their tunes, talking to the instruments and getting excited on the stage are all part of a child's affective involvement in the scene. This is not the same as the tourist who is hastily going for their camera and shooting with it. Above, in Photo 1 from *Ortakoy*, Istanbul, you can see working kids getting up close to the performers, placing chaplets on their heads and just hanging out around them. They are not street kids, but they are a regular part of the scene: working kids, who are supposedly sent there to sell those chaplets to the touristic crowd in this busy part of the city. They associated with the affective sphere as sharecroppers, not customers.

Listening versus Hearing

I'd like to end the essay with positioning touristic listening, which remains brief, on the go and on the surface, as opposed to situated hearing, which comes up to the façade in a constant struggle with tensions of the city and the place itself, and plays with an affective memory while surviving the place. The makeshift stage of the street is perfectly integrated in the economy of the city that relies

on tourist inflow, which is indispensable for the municipality to make a profit, in the face of inherited tensions and practices from the past(s). To be fair, the street musician is also aware of the stage; otherwise they would not consider being there while their performance runs on selfies, donations and love/attention coming from passers-by (stoppers-by). These are fundamental to their presence and performance. They are creating a performance to be watched as much as listened to in the street. They want to be seen, and they might honestly want to be seen for the sake of making a statement alongside the rhythm of capital on the street. Speaking of the street and its rhythms, Pasi Falk (1997, 181) conceived of the dynamic street as a platform for "serial looking," where touching is usually out of question. It should not be too intense to stop the flow.

However, the kind of street I documented is quite tactile. There is a change in the rhythm of the place at the moment a performance hopes to turn strangers to (kind of) neighbors and sway them from "serial looking" into deliberate conversation. The musician welcomes this touch, too, even though it may fall short of a situated hearing. Meanwhile, the literature on encounter (Valentine 2008; 2013; Wilson 2017, among others), finds that "face-to-face encounter" can acknowledge tension and conflict. Being immersed in one's craft/art in the street is not a solitary act; the musician cannot escape the mess. Being on the street is a tool for "meeting between adversaries or opposing forces and thus a meeting 'in conflict' " stated Helen Wilson (2017). Based on that, we can state that we enter a strife with prejudice and "micro-publics" in the moment of encounter, according to Gill Valentine, utilizing Ash Amin's work. There are obvious gaps during an encounter; it is just that the encounter means a will to be open to be affected by that, too.

A gap between listening to the music and hearing the sound of it becomes relevant to understanding encounter in the street, as the tourist-body acts like immersed in the musical performance until the excitement of a selfie

wears out. Sound studies scholars tell the difference of careful, active listening from just being exposed to sounds, and describe the former closer to what I take as *situated hearing* in this essay. Recalling Schafer, in his piece titled *Open Ears*, he simplified the gap to be between the developed, industrial world and the rest: "Sound objects in the oriental landscape encourage peripheral listening, while sounds in the West compete for focused attention – can this be true?" he asked (Schafer 2003, 18). In my understanding, hearing as an act is less than controllable; it is not a rationalized effort, whereas this fits into the frame of "deep listening" discussed by acoustic ecologists such as Schafer. In my case, the act of hearing is also more complicated than a situated contrast between the industrial urban and the rest in the countryside landscape. My motivation to distinguish listening from hearing so comes from bell hooks. In her autobiographical book, *Wounds of Passion*, there is a passage where she reminisces about her university experience in California, her encounters with class and ethnic differences. This passage might indicate a failure of hopeful encounter, but it also hints at how people can avoid being affected much by their surroundings, avoid hearing (the difference) when they are too busy affirming themselves. In hooks' words:

> When I speak everyone stops to listen but then no one hears. They are all white and they are all here to celebrate being female. They do not want to hear that the shared reality of femaleness does not mean an equal share in powerlessness. [...] They listen to me but they don't hear. They don't have to hear. This is what it means to be among the colonizers, you do not have to listen to what the colonized have to say, especially if their ideas come from experience and not from books. They ask you if there is a book they can read that will explain what you are talking about (1997, 98).

Listeners are indeed affected, but how? The story of encounter between street musicians

and their audience becomes a visual moment that is disguised (and marketed) as a sonorous moment. In awkward interactive moments, the audience leans on the fact that the street, i.e. the musician's stage, is a visual dominion. The sound experience we get on the street is stuck in a visual experience when the audience fails to give in to hearing. It would still be a sonorized image that they are capturing, following Virilio's confrontation. It's the practice of a habit, which is quite different than nonconscious thought in Massumi's terms. Massumi warns that affect is not the same as "habit [which] has become a reflex, lost its adaptive power, its powers of variation, its force of futurity, that has ceased to be the slightest bit surprised by the world" (2015, 66). The street musician/performer may not primarily be concerned with such a reflex when they put themselves out to face the flow of the street: they attempt to change the flow as well as accept being changed by it; alas, what they have been witnessing lately is that reflex. Streets are always going to be porous and open to surprise – think about kids! – so being on the street is always helpful for being "in tune" with the affective sphere. When the habit of sonorized images may be taking over the affective sphere, the rhythm of the tourist-body is not the real trouble. We would need to be concerned why hearing what is not intentionally captured on cameras, selfies and ears is the challenge. Engaging in situated hearing is crucial in the sense that it will open up the street and let us trace *what* is "running active in the present."

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SAVAGE TORPOR

Feels like nothing.

Affect and Activism
An Interview with Deborah Gould

Interviewed by Rory Barron, Brittany Frodge, and Robby Hardesty

Deborah Gould is an Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Santa Cruz (and Affiliated Faculty in Feminist Studies, History of Consciousness, and Politics). Her book *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT UP's Fight Against AIDS* (University of Chicago Press, 2009) won the Distinguished Contribution to Scholarship Best Book Award from the American Sociological Association's Political Sociology Section (2010) and the Ruth Benedict Book Prize from the American Anthropological Association (2010). She is currently working on another book about political emotion, *Composing Collectivities: Appetite, Encounters, and the Not-Yet of Politics*. She was involved in ACT UP/Chicago for many years, and later in Queer to the Left, and was a founding member of the research/art/activism collaborative group, Feel Tank Chicago, most famous for its International Parades of the Politically Depressed.

Brittany Frodge (BF): In the introduction to *Moving Politics*, you define affect as an unnamed force "bursting with potential" which suffers a reduction once it is labeled as an emotion. How can we harness the raw power of affect without subjecting it to potentially reductive linguistic labels?

Deborah Gould (Gould): Your question touches on many things, it might be best to begin by saying something about how I understand the difference between affect and emotions, and the relationship between them. I'm drawing from Brian Massumi here who himself is drawing from Spinoza and Deleuze. They define affect as the capacity to affect and to be affected, so it has to do with a body's movement through a world of other bodies, all of which have the capacity to affect and to be affected. Following Spinoza, when a body is affected, its capacities are either augmented or diminished, and that change in capacity, however slight it may be, is felt, that is to say, it registers, not consciously but rather as a sensory experience of having been affected and thereby changed. An affected body prepares to respond – to affect in turn – and that response might go in any number of different directions, which is to say, the response is not predetermined. There is a lot going on in that relational experience of affecting and being affected and preparing to affect in turn. An *emotion*, according to Massumi, is a personalized expression or account of that experience, an approximation – using, for example, language, conventionalized meanings, gestures – of what the body has experienced in terms of that change in capacity, that transition which results from affecting and being affected and preparing to respond.

To understand the relationship between affect and an emotion, it's helpful to think about how we try to make sense of a vague or barely perceptible bodily sensation or feeling. We pull from our storehouse of knowledge, from the prevailing ways of making sense of a feeling, from culturally available names and conventional labels for feeling states, from habits and norms about feelings and their expression, and so on. That's what an emotion is, it's within a system of meaning and helps us make sense of what we're experiencing as we move through the world affecting and being affected by what we encounter. The less-than-fully conscious experience of being affected and sensing the accompanying change in bodily capacity, that is what is bursting with potential in the sense that there is nothing predetermined about what then will follow; given the bodily change in capacity, things could unfold in any number of different ways, even if things might *tend* to flow in a particular direction. An emotion – the personalized expression, through language and gesture, of that changed bodily state and all of the potential therein – is in that sense a reduction of an experience that really is more relational, multiple, and open-ended.
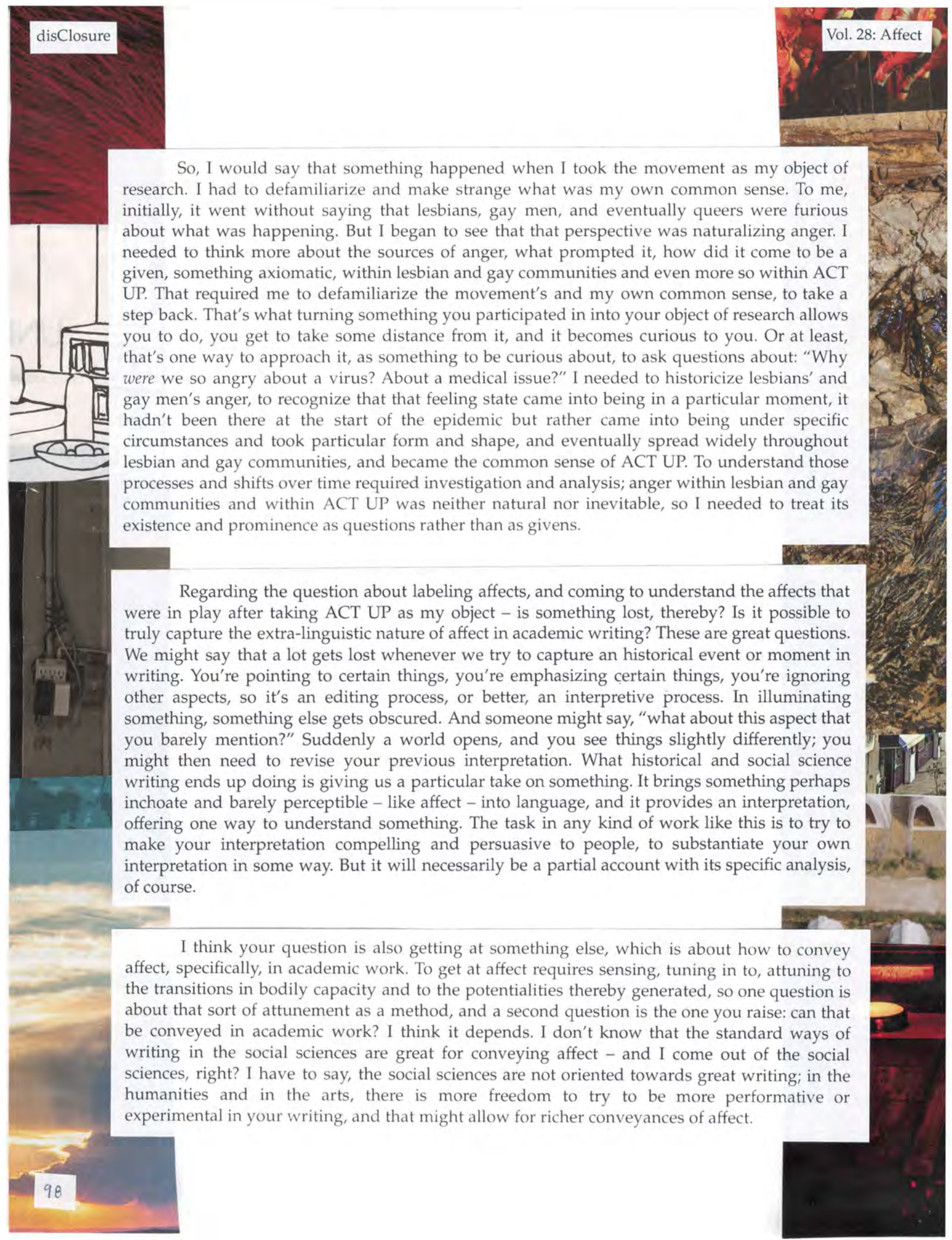
The idea of affect bursting with potential is precisely what's interesting to me about affect as a concept. The notion of potentiality is a way to carve out conceptual space for the idea that any moment contains within it multiple possible unfurlings, meaning any moment holds within it multiple possibilities for something different to emerge, for the present and future to unfold differently than the past. The notion of potentiality points to the *something else* of each moment, to the fact that what gets actualized in social life is not all there is. And that's why it's important, conceptually and politically, to pay attention to affect. What doesn't get actualized is still there in potential, and in that sense is in the mix, exerting force, shaping social life. And because things always could have unfolded differently, and because things might unfold in any number of different ways in a situation we now might be facing, we need to tune into that *moreness*, that potentiality, if we care about how we might play a role in bringing about social change.

To turn to the part of your question about harnessing what you call the raw power of affect without subjecting it to potentially reductive linguistic labels, I get why you say "the raw power" of affect, because it is a *direct*, and in that sense *unmediated*, experience of being affected and a body's capacity being changed, and so we might call that *raw*. But I'm a bit wary of that word because it seems to align affect with nature and the presocial. The way I see it, affect presupposes sociality. Affect is the capacity to affect and be affected, and thus has to do with contact, encounter, relation with other bodies. In that sense, affect is all about sociality, it's a body's way of processing the conditions it encounters, that it affects and that affect it.

To address the part of your question about harnessing the power of affect before it is reduced through language, I would say that power, in general, operates in part by producing regularities, normativities, tendencies. In that light, cultivating an awareness of the potential of any moment, of any situation, developing an awareness of what else might be possible, of what might occur if we break out of those perhaps deeply grooved patterns of thought and action, in short, cultivating a sensibility that tunes in to the potentialities of any given moment, seems important for harnessing, as you say, the power of affect.

BF: You also imply in the introduction that, while you were participating in ACT UP, you weren't aware how *angry* you and your fellow organizers were. Do you feel that, in revisiting this period of your life from an academic perspective and labeling the affects that structured your movement, something is lost? Is affect, in its extra-linguistic nature, impossible to truly capture in academic writing?

Gould: I would probably need to look at how I wrote that. I don't remember saying we weren't aware of how angry we were. Maybe what I was saying is that being angry about the AIDS crisis was the "common sense" of the movement, it was hegemonic. In many ways, anger was the dominant emotion within what I would call our *emotional habitus*. And that meant that we were familiar with that anger toward state and society, we knew how to enact it and perform it, and in some ways, we thus knew how to feel it. Other affective states kind of fell by the wayside, or couldn't be acknowledged, and certainly did not have the same collectivized form. Anger, in contrast, was collectivized within ACT UP.

So, I would say that something happened when I took the movement as my object of research. I had to defamiliarize and make strange what was my own common sense. To me, initially, it went without saying that lesbians, gay men, and eventually queers were furious about what was happening. But I began to see that that perspective was naturalizing anger. I needed to think more about the sources of anger, what prompted it, how did it come to be a given, something axiomatic, within lesbian and gay communities and even more so within ACT UP. That required me to defamiliarize the movement's and my own common sense, to take a step back. That's what turning something you participated in into your object of research allows you to do, you get to take some distance from it, and it becomes curious to you. Or at least, that's one way to approach it, as something to be curious about, to ask questions about: "Why *were* we so angry about a virus? About a medical issue?" I needed to historicize lesbians' and gay men's anger, to recognize that that feeling state came into being in a particular moment, it hadn't been there at the start of the epidemic but rather came into being under specific circumstances and took particular form and shape, and eventually spread widely throughout lesbian and gay communities, and became the common sense of ACT UP. To understand those processes and shifts over time required investigation and analysis; anger within lesbian and gay communities and within ACT UP was neither natural nor inevitable, so I needed to treat its existence and prominence as questions rather than as givens.

Regarding the question about labeling affects, and coming to understand the affects that were in play after taking ACT UP as my object – is something lost, thereby? Is it possible to truly capture the extra-linguistic nature of affect in academic writing? These are great questions. We might say that a lot gets lost whenever we try to capture an historical event or moment in writing. You're pointing to certain things, you're emphasizing certain things, you're ignoring other aspects, so it's an editing process, or better, an interpretive process. In illuminating something, something else gets obscured. And someone might say, "what about this aspect that you barely mention?" Suddenly a world opens, and you see things slightly differently; you might then need to revise your previous interpretation. What historical and social science writing ends up doing is giving us a particular take on something. It brings something perhaps inchoate and barely perceptible – like affect – into language, and it provides an interpretation, offering one way to understand something. The task in any kind of work like this is to try to make your interpretation compelling and persuasive to people, to substantiate your own interpretation in some way. But it will necessarily be a partial account with its specific analysis, of course.

I think your question is also getting at something else, which is about how to convey affect, specifically, in academic work. To get at affect requires sensing, tuning in to, attuning to the transitions in bodily capacity and to the potentialities thereby generated, so one question is about that sort of attunement as a method, and a second question is the one you raise: can that be conveyed in academic work? I think it depends. I don't know that the standard ways of writing in the social sciences are great for conveying affect – and I come out of the social sciences, right? I have to say, the social sciences are not oriented towards great writing; in the humanities and in the arts, there is more freedom to try to be more performative or experimental in your writing, and that might allow for richer conveyances of affect.

BF: Yeah, I think that something is lost when you write, regardless of whether you're writing about affect. But that performative aspect is interesting.

Gould: Yeah, there's a need to experiment with different ways of trying to convey affect. In *Moving Politics*, I begin with a "scene" and a long quote from David Wojnarowicz, who died of AIDS-related complications; he was an artist, a lot of his work came out of the AIDS epidemic, and he was an AIDS activist. I felt like there was something about the way he put words together that had a speed, an intensity, a motion to it, and it seemed to convey some of the affects circulating in queer worlds, and within ACT UP, in that moment. Even if I'm not able to write like that myself, I wanted to signal the ways in which a written work derives from affective states and can generate affective states as well.

Robby Hardesty (RH): Do you think we can see a more performative paradigm in social scientific writing? Do you think things would be lost if we sort of "swerved" into the more performative?

Gould: I think it'd be great, it would be liberating in many ways. And I really like a good argument, but that can be done in a way that is more creative. Experimenting more to try to enliven our writing more would be great. Would something be lost thereby, by bringing more affect into our work? I don't think so. Or I'm not too worried about that. So long as we recognize that academic work isn't the only site for interpretations of the past and interventions in the present.

BF: It's been really tricky in this course to try to "catch" affect and write about it, like we're so tempted by the thesis statement – point one, point two, point three.

Rory Baron (RB): I talk about this with a lot of my friends who are creative writing majors, and I'm *not* – I'm a thoroughly social science person – we talk a lot about the difficulties of trying to harness that affective writing within English or Creative Writing rather than a more argument-style type of writing. The structure's already there for you within a thesis-style writing, but within creative writing, you have to come up with that structure on your own.

BF: Yeah, writing is so colonized by Western rationality. Alright, question three: In laying out your usage of the emotional habitus, you describe it as a set of emotional labels, or an emotional pedagogy for group members to use, as well as a force which operates beneath conscious awareness. Can you talk more about how the emotional habitus provides labeling and pedagogy, but on an unconscious level?

Gould: With the term *emotional habitus* (drawing from Bourdieu), I am pointing toward a social grouping's collective and only partly conscious emotional dispositions, that is, members' embodied, axiomatic inclinations toward certain feelings and ways of emoting. It operates at a nonconscious level by and large. I prefer *nonconscious* to *unconscious* because the word unconscious, as used in psychoanalytic theory, requires repression, whereas *nonconscious* denotes anything outside of conscious awareness. Now, of course, processes like disavowal or denial which push painful or traumatizing perceptions out of conscious awareness oftentimes are in play, but not always, and not only. That's why I prefer the word *nonconscious*.

An emotional habitus is not consciously taken on and consciously used, but rather is something that works *through* us. By which I mean, it is produced and reproduced through a social group's emotional practices, and as a member of that social group engaging in and subject to such practices, it gets into you, suffuses you, becomes your "nature." What we experience and understand as our own nature, our human nature, is about this habitus shaping us, and disposing us towards particular actions. A habitus, as in a kind of disposition, an orientation, a kind of common sense, an axiomatic way of perceiving and being and acting, that's all happening largely outside of our conscious awareness. You're not thinking, oh, in order to be legible as an X, I need to walk in this way, and hold my body in this way, or talk in this way. It doesn't happen like that. It's more that we imbibe ways to be a proper X in a given field, through all of the ways that we look around ourselves and learn – that's what I mean by pedagogy; I'll return to that.

In terms of an emotional habitus for, as you said, group members *to use*, that sounds slightly purposive, and voluntarist, and strategic. To be sure, that certainly happens. An example I discuss in *Moving Politics* is from very early on in ACT UP when AIDS activists wondered, "How do we turn grief into anger? How do we turn people's rage into action?" That was a form of strategic thinking around emotions. Activists do indeed sometimes try to cultivate in themselves and others what they think are the proper feelings for their activist goals. And that purposive "emotion work" helps to create the group's emotional habitus. But in using the term habitus, I'm trying to emphasize the more bodily and less-than-fully conscious dimensions of its forcefulness.

Here's how I see an emotional habitus working. Operating beneath or to the side of conscious awareness, and instantiated through practices like enactments or intimations of feelings, and through statements about what is (non)normative regarding feelings and their expression, an emotional habitus provides members of a social grouping with an emotional disposition, with a sense of what to feel, with ways of figuring out, understanding, and naming what they are feeling, and with ways of then expressing those feelings. It is an emotional pedagogy in the sense that it offers a sort of template for what and how to feel under particular circumstances. It guides people's feeling and emoting by conferring on some feelings and modes of expression an axiomatic, natural quality and making other feeling states unintelligible within its terms and thus in a sense unfeelable and inexpressible.

Arlie Hochschild's important notion of "feelings rules" speaks to these social and cultural dimensions of feeling and emoting. What I like about the habitus concept is that it allows us to see how such feeling rules or norms operate beneath conscious awareness. Indeed, an emotional habitus has force precisely because its bodily and axiomatic qualities obscure the social, conventional nature of feelings and generate the sense that what you are feeling is natural and individual, entirely your own. The habitus concept also allows us to grasp the bodily, nonconscious, affective processes through which we all are conscripted, unwittingly but willingly, into the social.

RB: Do you think there's any way to disrupt the flow of the consciousness into the nonconsciousness in order to make people aware of that process?

Gould: I do think it's possible to make what is nonconscious more conscious. I think that's a really good question. Psychoanalysis is a theory and method that uses talk therapy to make conscious what is unconscious; it is about trying to become more aware. Affect theorists such as Massumi talk about attending to the newness of every situation, being sensitive to its openness in the sense of remembering that nothing is predetermined and sensing that things could go in a number of different directions even if there may be a tendency for the present to unfold like the past. So, that sort of sensing and tuning in to the unactualized potentials of any situation, tuning in to and amplifying alternative responses, alternative capacities that have been potentiated by the unfolding of an event but that aren't yet being tapped into, that is a way to try to make more conscious what is happening at a nonconscious level.

Something I've noticed in some contemporary activist contexts, some groups have what's called a – what is it? It's like a "feeling monitor," but there's a name for it and I can't remember what it is. Oh, it's a "vibe watcher," and sometimes that person will interrupt the whole meeting and say something like, "There's a lot of tension in the room right now." That may sound kind of new age-y, but really they're simply tuning in to the dynamics in the room, sensing that things are going awry or that the meeting has hit an impasse, they're feeling into the affects circulating in the space and interrupting a particular unfolding by drawing attention to what may be barely conscious but in the room even so, and exerting force. The way I understand it, the vibe watcher is paying attention to, trying to tune in to, the affects in the room, thereby opening up the possibility that the group might navigate internal dynamics and difficulties differently. That's an example of trying to tune in to the complex feeling states circulating in a scene of some sort, and trying to make them more conscious. And it's not that we can then navigate everything perfectly, but rather than allow them to take over and drive, it's about trying to develop more of a relation to the affective dimensions of activist scenes and use that greater awareness to hit pause: "Oh, something's happening here. Let's see if we can actually try to talk about it, think about it, and maybe approach things differently."

RB: That's really interesting.

BF: Yeah, I think that kind of addresses another question we had: you describe the emotional habitus as "flexible." How and under what circumstances does a group's emotional habitus shift, and does this happen consciously or unconsciously?

Gould: Yeah, so the habitus concept as Bourdieu developed it ended up sounding very structural, almost deterministic, and very much about social reproduction. I don't really read him that way. I read him as thinking in terms of tendencies, probabilities, likelihoods, and I see him as recognizing that there's a *shaping* rather than *determining* quality to a habitus. So it's flexible in that sense. And I see it as flexible because a habitus gets reproduced – if differently – through practices, human practices, human doings, through sociality, through the events of affecting and being affected by. All of those practices can cause a habitus to shift over time. In a way, *Moving Politics* is an ethnography of a shifting emotional habitus. It tries to account for an initial emotional habitus that shaped lesbians' and gay men's political horizons in very specific ways, their senses of political possibilities early in the AIDS epidemic, and then explores how that emotional habitus was transformed in a manner that opened up different, more militant political horizons in lesbian and gay communities across the United States. I was interested in how that newer emotional habitus emerged and then was reproduced over time – how it took form, how it crystallized and solidified, and then why and how it too eventually was transformed, a transformation that contributed to the shrinking of ACT UP and the decline of many chapters nationwide. My point is that it's important to think about a habitus processually and historically. An emotional habitus comes into being under particular historical circumstances, or more precisely, through human practices that are shaped by and unfolding within particular circumstances, and as it solidifies and congeals and later may be transformed, all of that happens under very specific historical conditions. And, as I said earlier, I think all of those practices occur largely non-consciously. Which is not to say that there aren't conscious, purposive, strategic attempts by activists to alter an emotional habitus. But you can't simply say, "Okay, everyone! Be angry!" and then everyone suddenly is angry. It doesn't work that way. The task as a scholar is to track, through painstaking empirical research, the discursive, bodily, gestural, emotive practices that bring an emotional habitus into being, that stabilize and reproduce it over time, and that sometimes transform it as well. The political dimension of this scholarly pursuit is that it's helpful for us as activists to think about those practices and about the ways that a resulting emotional habitus shapes political collectivities, their political horizons, and their political doings.

RB: You discuss the role that affect has in political and activist movements at several points in your book, especially in your observations about ACT UP's utilization of negative affects. In contemporary movements such as Black Lives Matter, there's also this use of affect both positive and negative, and we can see this in other movements like Water is Life, in the Standing Rock movement, and MeToo – being probably one of the most recent of these – and the very titles of these movements are based on affective responses to the hegemony. And you know, Black Lives Matter uses both positive and negative affects in phrases like, "Stop killing us!" "I can't breathe!" so in that sense it's similar to what ACT UP does. But in the case of BLM, the title itself refers to a positive affect. Do you feel that positive affects can survive generationally as a strategy the way the negative affects in social movements have?

Gould: I'm not sure I'm fully grasping your question, but what you're saying about positive and negative affect and social movements makes me want to say that movements, even if they're not aware of it, engage in affective politics in the sense that they often attune to the affects circulating in a given context and, often not consciously, engage in practices that try to bring out some of the potential of the moment. Consider, for example, the Black Power movement and its symbol of the raised fist. That symbol consorts with positive affects like pride, black pride, joining that feeling to power and political militancy; the Black Power movement tapped into that militant potential. That raised fist is a symbol, tethered to pride and militancy, that has endured, and it has migrated: to women's and gay liberation movements, for example. Sometimes movements try to reckon with the hard, negative affects – the bad feelings that people can have – trying to transform those into either more positive feelings or activating feelings or whatever. Consider the women's movement; consciousness-raising groups in some ways were reckoning with the depression that some women were feeling given life in a male supremacist society. Depression can be a very individualizing feeling where the person feeling depressed might say, "There's something wrong with *me*." Consciousness-raising groups provided a different narrative: "No, there's nothing wrong with you, and you're not depressed, you're angry." That consciousness-raising work was emotion work. It transformed people from feeling depressed into feeling angry, allowing women to collectivize, and the women's liberation movement was in some ways born within and out of that process of emotional transformation.

So, movements engage in emotion work; not necessarily consciously and strategically and purposefully, but sometimes they do, in order to produce the "right" kinds of feeling states to activate people. In my experience, the left sometimes prohibits certain feeling states. I write about despair at the end of *Moving Politics*, how there wasn't much space for it in the movement. And that's true in many left contexts. You're supposed to feel hopeful, and you're supposed to feel angry about all of the social injustice – this is kind of the pedagogy or emotional habitus of the left, you know – feel angry, and enraged by what's going on, and feel hopeful that through our collective action, we can and will change the world. And if you feel despair, well, there's not a lot of space for that. But come on, it's a really important negative affect. And there's a lot to feel despair about. So, in that chapter in *Moving Politics* about despair, I was trying to think about what it would have been like if, rather than disallowing despair, the movement had carved out some space for us to experience that despair collectively. Because the imperative was to be angry, and to continue to be hopeful that we would save our friends' and comrades' lives, and our communities. So, when people began to feel despair – this was before the invention of protease inhibitors, so people were feeling despair about the never-ending deaths, and about our inability to actually do what we said we were going to do which was save people's lives and bring social change – there was no collective space created for that bad feeling. So what ended up happening is people who started to feel despair would just kind of slink away from the movement, especially as the refrain in the movement increasingly became, "Where's your anger? Where's your anger?" And at a certain point, some people just felt despair.

Many bad feelings are political. Disappointment is a *deeply* political feeling, and if the left was able to reckon with it, and politicize it, and collectivize it, we might be able to address that feeling and thereby mobilize people. I don't want to sound so instrumentalizing, as if we even could instrumentalize people's feelings for the purposes of social change, but my point is that those feelings are out there, and if we ignore them, if we don't create a space for them, or if we simply hector people into not feeling them, telling them, "No, don't feel despair, you've got to feel angry," then we're not really dealing with reality. And there's a lot of political potential in those bad feelings.

RB: Yeah, so I'm thinking about how despair is highly discouraged, and you're only supposed to feel anger and hopefulness – that kind of ties into purity politics, and it drives a lot of people away. I think we live in a very apathetic time right now, and I think that these kinds of trends have kind of contributed to that. Do you think there's any way to utilize affect as a way to kind of collectivize, as you say, and kind of transform these apathies into despair, or as a collective kind of emotion that moves us forward into political action?

Gould: So apathy implies not caring about what's going on, and I would rather understand what gets called apathy through what people's behavior actually is, which is political withdrawal; in multiple ways, people have withdrawn from political life. To call it apathy presumes to know that people are withdrawing because they don't care very much about what's going on, but we actually don't know whether people care or not. My hunch is that people actually do care deeply about what's going on around them, and so the question is, why then have they withdrawn? Why do people withdraw from the political? And I think that's really complex. Sometimes it has to do with the ineloquence of the political, by which I mean the way in which the political doesn't speak to them, doesn't address them, doesn't acknowledge people's needs, and desires, and aspirations, and pain, and difficulties. To the contrary, elected leaders, politicians, say things like, "the recession is over," and "the economy's booming." So then, if you're not booming, it must be your fault. What I'm saying is that the political repeatedly fails to address people where people are at in terms of their needs and wants, and so on. So then, I wouldn't call it apathy; what we see around us is political withdrawal, and that raises all kinds of questions as to why. I think that what we were talking about earlier – about tuning in to feelings – can help us, because if people feel disappointed by the political, if they feel dismissed by the political, if they feel unaddressed by the political, those are feeling states that if we tune in and attend to them, we can say to ourselves, well what kind of a political context do we need to build that actually listens to what many people are feeling, and that cares about people's disappointments, and despairs, and furies, and so on? Turning towards affect is in some ways just attuning to what's already there, which is that people are affected by whatever is going on around them, and if we're going to try to collectivize, we need to be really attuned to what people are affected by, and what that then makes them do or not do. And the idea of potentiality, the notion that things could go in this direction, or this direction, or this direction, and that the direction things will go is not predetermined, that is suggestive of the need to really try to tune in to the affects that are circulating, because in that attunement we might gain a more adequate grasp of what's going on, and that might allow us to push some of that potentiality in a good direction, in a direction that would, for example, bring about greater social change in the form of, say, greater freedom and a more just and equal distribution of resources.

RB: Yeah, we could also go into how other forms of not constructive political movements utilize affect as a way to kind of push things in a different, more unjust direction.

Gould: Yeah! And of course all movements – whether from the right, or the left, or the middle – are trying to build some sort of a collectivity, and they're trying to intervene in some kind of way, and all of them are trafficking in affect. And of course the state works to produce all kinds of affective states like fear and anxiety that help to control populations. They may not be doing that purposively, or they may be doing that purposively, that's a question to be investigated, but my point is that we can't think politics without thinking affect, whether the politics is happening on the left, or the right, or the middle, or from the state, or from the people, from different groupings of the people. Affect saturates the political.

RB: Yeah, I agree. So related to the last question, the neoliberal hegemony has caught on, in a sense, and I don't know if "appropriated affect" is a good term –

Gould: Neoliberalism certainly lassoes affect, yes –

RB: – yeah, as a method of manipulation in order to sell the hegemony. Seemingly "activist" organizations and movements such as "It Gets Better" is a good example of this, because they're kind of pushing a more capitalist, normative framework. Do you think that affect can be used to combat affect – and we've kind of touched upon this already – does it open up political horizons that were previously cut off? Do you think leftist activism can ever successfully use affect as a way to move on the offense rather than perpetually being on the defense?

Gould: Yeah, I think so. What your question gets at is the way the state uses affect to control populations, to maintain the status quo, to continue the project of profit-making and staying in power. And movements are constantly lassoing affect, consciously or not, to oppose things, or to pursue their own agenda. I don't know that it's affect alone that would allow the left to go on the offensive rather than be always on the defensive. That requires organizing, building movements. There are already many movements, so it's about figuring out how to amplify those, how to have cross-fertilization among them, and affect obviously is in the mix there. Figuring out how to amplify solidarities, how to create the conditions for people to touch across difference and feel okay about that, and to desire that, how to create the conditions in which people feel they can survive in their daily lives while being activists as well. All of those are things that we need to figure out. Once again, I'll just say that affect is in the mix there. You can't think about these kinds of questions of organization and of solidarity and movement-building without thinking about affect and emotion.
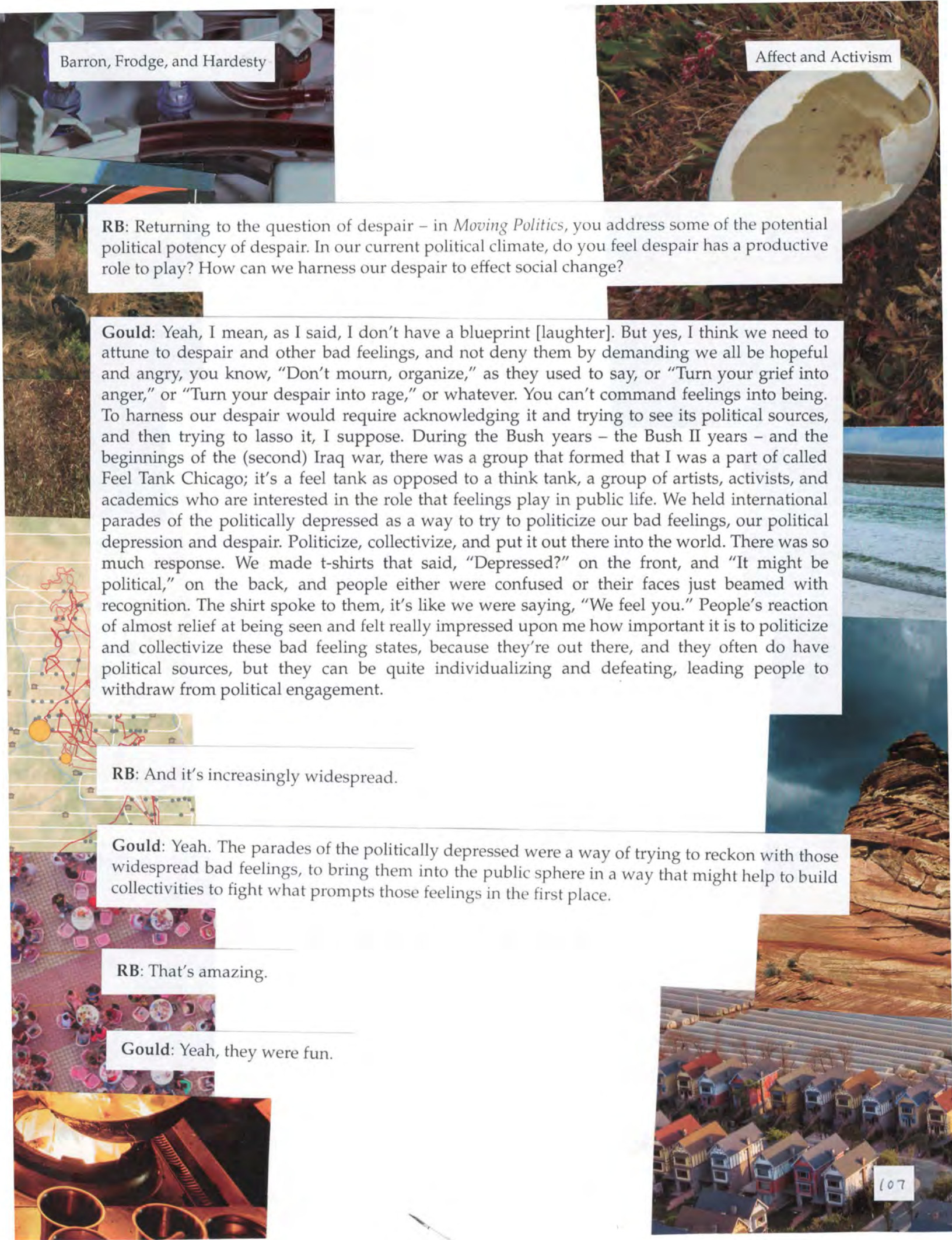
RB: A question regarding your most recent book project – the "Not-Yet" of politics – how do we decide what's possible? What do you envision as the next step for leftist activism?

Gould: I'm not sure about the second part of your question, about what I envision as the next step; my talk this afternoon is in some ways about *not* knowing what is to be done, and about inhabiting that unknowingness in a manner that allows us to act even so. But regarding the question of how do we decide what's possible. The word "decide" makes it seem like there are several options and we decide which one, or that we can simply sit down and consciously decide what's possible. And of course activists *do* sit around and ask, "Okay, what can we achieve here? What do we want to try to do?" But senses of possibility and impossibility, I think, are deeply political, as your question suggests, and movements need to be concerned about where senses of possibility, and perhaps more importantly, senses of *impossibility*, come from. We can't say in an abstract sense, or in a transhistorical sense, where a sense of possibility comes from or how we decide what's possible or not. But again, from a political perspective, it's important to be thinking about that question: where *do* senses of possibility come from? How do they emerge and take hold, and then sometimes change over time? Sometimes it's an external event that challenges our sense of possibility. Maybe you see what happened in Cairo, people occupying a public square and collectivizing themselves and challenging state authority and in fact bringing down a 30-year dictatorship, and you say, "We could try to do that too." You see what happened in West Virginia with teachers going on strike and winning, and you're in Oklahoma, and you say, "Maybe we could go on strike too." And so in thinking about this question of senses of possibility, we should note that we give one another senses of possibility. We also oftentimes destroy one another's senses of possibility by saying, "That's not realistic, that's not going to happen, that won't work." It's useful to attune to those tonalities, to those forms of knowingness, it gives us a sense of how we participate in creating particular senses of possibility and impossibility. Attuning to that is really important, I think. Which is all to say, I like the sentiment of your question a lot! And I think it's important to have an orientation towards creating senses of possibility. But of course, if we think about that question of what's possible only in terms of what's achievable, that can truncate our political horizons. We need to think about the seemingly impossible if we want to bring it into being. If we only allow ourselves to think about the achievable, we never think beyond *what is*; *what is* tells us what's achievable, and it thereby limits what's achievable, so we have to think beyond that, otherwise we can get stuck. In any event, this question of senses of possibility and impossibility is a very important question.

RB: It's probably one we'll be spending a lot of time on as organizers.

Gould: Yeah, definitely.

RB: Returning to the question of despair – in *Moving Politics*, you address some of the potential political potency of despair. In our current political climate, do you feel despair has a productive role to play? How can we harness our despair to effect social change?

Gould: Yeah, I mean, as I said, I don't have a blueprint [laughter]. But yes, I think we need to attune to despair and other bad feelings, and not deny them by demanding we all be hopeful and angry, you know, "Don't mourn, organize," as they used to say, or "Turn your grief into anger," or "Turn your despair into rage," or whatever. You can't command feelings into being. To harness our despair would require acknowledging it and trying to see its political sources, and then trying to lasso it, I suppose. During the Bush years – the Bush II years – and the beginnings of the (second) Iraq war, there was a group that formed that I was a part of called Feel Tank Chicago; it's a feel tank as opposed to a think tank, a group of artists, activists, and academics who are interested in the role that feelings play in public life. We held international parades of the politically depressed as a way to try to politicize our bad feelings, our political depression and despair. Politicize, collectivize, and put it out there into the world. There was so much response. We made t-shirts that said, "Depressed?" on the front, and "It might be political," on the back, and people either were confused or their faces just beamed with recognition. The shirt spoke to them, it's like we were saying, "We feel you." People's reaction of almost relief at being seen and felt really impressed upon me how important it is to politicize and collectivize these bad feeling states, because they're out there, and they often do have political sources, but they can be quite individualizing and defeating, leading people to withdraw from political engagement.

RB: And it's increasingly widespread.

Gould: Yeah. The parades of the politically depressed were a way of trying to reckon with those widespread bad feelings, to bring them into the public sphere in a way that might help to build collectivities to fight what prompts those feelings in the first place.

RB: That's amazing.

Gould: Yeah, they were fun.

RB: So the last question is, what role does affective despair play outside of activist circles? That's kind of a hard question!

Gould: Yeah, it is. Well, regarding despair, you're right, it is widespread, and I think it's often individualized, and people just kind of throw up their hands. It's in activist scenes where, rather than throwing up our hands about how awful everything is, we typically try to figure out what to do. So, how appropriate in activist scenes to try to figure out what to do with that widespread despair! We do indeed need to tune in to the affective states that are widely circulating, and consider their sources, contours, and how they affect the composing, and decomposing, of collectivities. So, yes, despair does play a role outside of activist circles, and in some ways, that's precisely the audience for activist circles.

RB: Right, that's where activists need to be attuning to.

Gould: Yes, exactly.

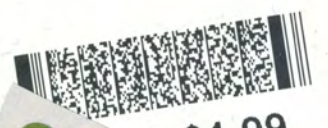**RB**: Thank you so much for talking with us.

Gould: Thank you!

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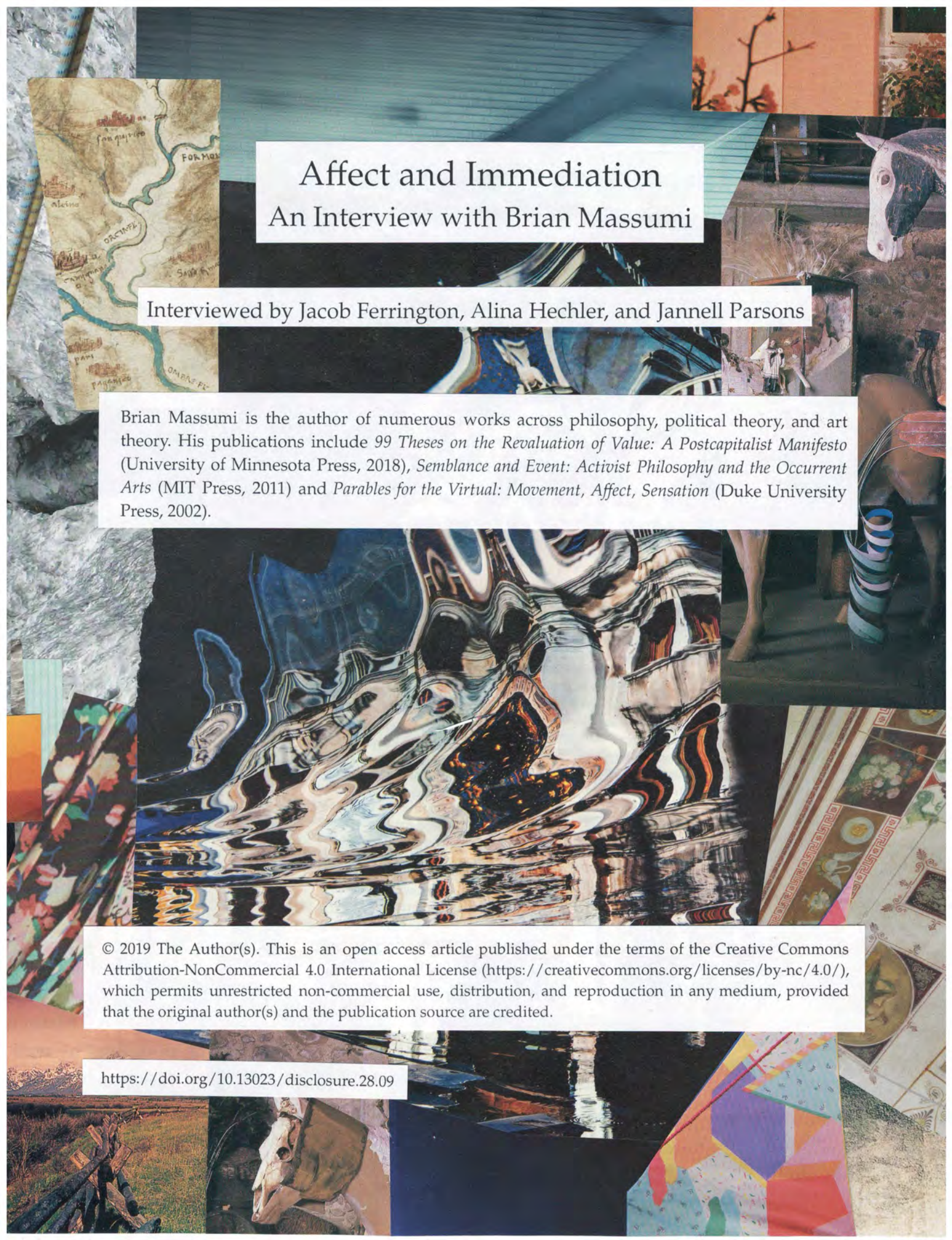
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Affect and Immediation
An Interview with Brian Massumi

Interviewed by Jacob Ferrington, Alina Hechler, and Jannell Parsons

Brian Massumi is the author of numerous works across philosophy, political theory, and art theory. His publications include *99 Theses on the Revaluation of Value: A Postcapitalist Manifesto* (University of Minnesota Press, 2018), *Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts* (MIT Press, 2011) and *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Duke University Press, 2002).

Jannell Parsons (JP): The first question we wanted to ask you, because we know you'll be talking about immediation in your talk tomorrow, is how are you thinking about this notion of immediation in relationship to affect? Or, maybe put another way, how did thinking about affect bring you to wanting to theorize a notion of immediation?

Brian Massumi (Massumi): The two concerns came at the same time. My original interest in affect didn't separate affect out. It was enfolded with a number of issues, forming a kind of complex. That is why I was surprised when the term "affect theory" started being used and I found myself categorized as an affect theorist. It made no sense to me to approach it in separation, since it is a dimension of every event. What I was after, more than a theory of affect, was a philosophy of the event. In *Parables for the Virtual*, I approached the event through the question of movement, understood not as a simple displacement in space but as qualitative transformation. Affect was a way of getting at the qualitative registering, in the event, of change taking place. Affect comes flush with the event, in the immediacy of its occurring. But the registering wouldn't be of a transformation if there were not, wrapped in the affect, a sense of the state just left, as well as a sense of the shift in potential left for subsequent events to come. So immediacy couldn't be reduced to the present, figured in the traditional way as a width-less point of the present. It is, as William James said, a "saddle." It shades off in both directions into abstract, or non-present, dimensions of experience: the immediate past that is already no longer, and the future of potential that is not yet. I tried to address that inclusion of the abstract in the concreteness of experience through the concept of the virtual, highlighting the paradoxical question of how it is that the virtual – that which is real but abstract – might be actually felt. That question has stayed with me throughout my work, and became especially central in *Semblance and Event*, where I start turning to the concept of immediation in earnest. The question of immediation is: are there practices for making the potential dimension of affect more felt? This would amount to an intensification of experience, highlighting its changefulness. It requires practices of the event which take potential as their object. Which means, practices which take relation as their object, because potential, as the power to affect, is by definition relational. Changefulness, potential, relation: the question of immediation is immediately political.

This is the terrain that the research-creation lab I have worked with since 2004 has explored. The SenseLab started from the question of what makes an event, and moved explicitly toward the question of immediation, which became the concern of a years-long collective project, some of the results of which will be presented soon in two collective volumes of the SenseLab's *Immediations* book series at Open Humanities Press. My thinking about immediation has been entirely bound up with the collective practice of the SenseLab.

JP: So, I think since you're talking about the SenseLab here, that maybe leads to the next question. We've been reading your *The Power at the End of the Economy*, but all of your work seems to challenge the Cartesian rational/affective binaries we are so used to. You return again and again to a need to rethink "the very concept of the rational in its relation to affect" (2). Could you talk for a minute about why we continue to cling to that division and what it might take for us to begin to move past it? To understand the rational and the affective as intertwined?

Massumi: The trick is to overcome the Cartesian dichotomy without throwing out the ability to make distinctions. Affirming one side of the dichotomy over the other just reproduces it, except with half of it under erasure. That makes it difficult, if not impossible, to give an account of the aspects of reality the suppressed term was trying to make thinkable. The tendency is then for the pendulum to swing back, to recover what can no longer be accounted for. The result is a sterile oscillation. The question is never "either-or." It is always a question of co-occurrence. In what distribution? With what concurrences or inferences? How does the one implicate the other? Can one become the other? If one can become the other, can they be construed as degrees on the same continuum? What kind of events contain both in germ, and how and why do they diverge from that embryonic coming-together? The capacity to diverge requires that we maintain distinctions, even that troubling Cartesian distinction between the mental and the physical. However, the co-occurrence, co-implication, and reciprocal becoming requires that we refrain from rigidifying the distinction into a dichotomy, or only operate with that distinction. What is needed is what I call a logic of differential mutual inclusion: a kind of monism of the multiple that studies how distinctions, any number of distinctions, and a proliferating count of them, come differently together. Philosophy is the art of making and multiplying distinctions. Nothing is thrown out, not even the bugbear of the rational.

What rational thought does when it strives to separate itself from affect is to judge as if it could stand aside from events and from that neutral vantage point assess the best course of action based on the most complete understanding of order and causality it can arrive at. This conveniently brackets its constitutive co-implication with affect. As Hume argued, reason can rationalize many things, but its own exercise is not one of them: it can give no ultimate reason why reason is better. That is why its use is so often the object of passionate exhortation. It has to overpower the passions – in effect, make itself prime among them. Reason, then, *is* a passion. The preachy, overbearing affective tone of contemporary champions of rationality, such as Richard Dawkins, says as much. But it is not only its birth that is affectively inflected, but also its end. Hume also pointed out that reason has nothing in its own operation that can tell it when to stop. It has a stopping problem, not unlike the halting problem in computer programming. There might always be a key consideration or bit of information that was missed but could well prove crucial. Reason is, in fact, the functional equivalent of doubt. Its ruminations, endless by right, can only be cut off by taking an affectively propelled leap into action at what is felt to be the propitious moment. This is an act of intuition. Affect is belief in the world – a noncognitve, embodied belief in the world's potential, directly felt, and no sooner felt than acted-upon. Without the corrective of doubt, affectively propelled action will often go awry. But without belief in the world, action is impossible. We are always plunging headlong into events, affect as the leading edge.
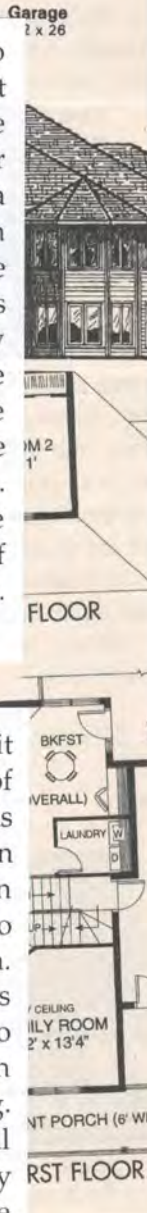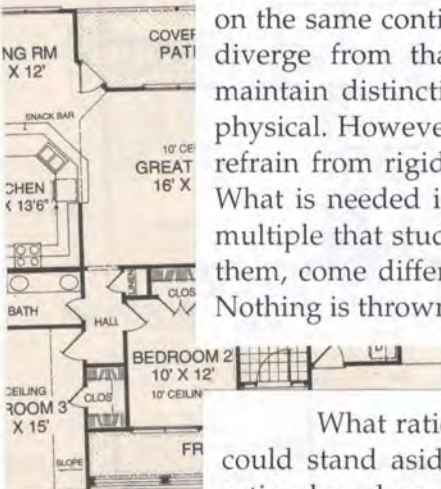
In *The Power at the End of Economy* I develop a number of vocabularies to talk about the differential mutual inclusion of rationality and affect in the event, specifically as it relates to economic thinking. The key is to understand that thought is not all on the side of reason, making affect simply irrational or unthinking. I build on Peirce's concepts of perceptual judgment and abduction, which are modes of hypothetical thought that come flush with the event, enveloped in affect. Affect has what Whitehead would call a "mental pole" to its operation. By this he means the capacity to "prehend" novelty, or in Hume's terms, to exceed the given. This is what affect, as the feeling of capacitation and potential, contributes. Affect is not the opposite of thought. It is the movement *of* thought. It is the force of thought, embodied. It comes before conscious rumination, alimenting it with the direct perceptual judgments that hit like fate in the incipience of every event, but already with a felt sense of potential alternatives. In this aspect, it carries a force of what I call in *The Power at the End of the Economy*, borrowing from the linguist Oswald Ducrot, presupposition. Enveloped in the affect of every dawning event is a presuppositional field, proposing action. This is a lived thinking of importance, of situational constraint and enablement. But affect's force of thought also comes at the end, pressing beyond the given into the future, in the form of abductive leaps into a hypothetical course of action whose importance has yet to play out. In this aspect, it constitutes an enactive speculation. Affect, throughout, is what I call a "thinking-feeling." It is in no way the opposite or the absence of thought. It is in fact rationality that is a limited expression of the power of thought, of which affect is the impetus and leading edge. Affect and rationality are differentially mutually included on the continuum of thought – which is coextensive with the continuum of feeling. It is often where conscious rumination is silenced that thought is most effective. Many performers, in art and sport, speak of the need to silence the "inner monologue" and refrain from "overthinking," to make their thinking coincide with their movements, rather than direct them.

In what I just said, the added distinctions of thought and feeling were added to situate the way in which rationality and affect come together, in their difference. These added distinctions are not there to eliminate or subsume the distinction between rationality and affect, but to carry their difference.

JP: So kind of continuing along in this vein of these binaries and breaking them down and thinking about them in relationship to each other, how do you think about affect in relationship to language? So for example, if we want to recenter the event, rather than bodies and subjects as I think you said to start, in our scholarship, how do we capture those affective intensities of the event via language? *Can* they be captured linguistically? *Should* we be capturing them linguistically?

Massumi: That's a really central question. I don't think affect can be captured by language. I don't think it can be captured by anything without a remainder. There's always something that escapes because affect has to do with potential and potential can't all actualize at one time. That is the meaning of my widely misunderstood term, "the autonomy of affect." Affect is not autonomous from thought, or from language, in the sense of being separated from them or in opposition to them. The point of the concept is that whatever the formation you are talking about, affect will pre-infuse it with importance at the incipient level, and carry over a surplus of potential at the end of the exercise of whatever mode of activity the formation's operations are dedicated to. This surplus-over, remaindered at each pulse of process, for more to come, is the autonomy of affect.

Specifically in relation to language, this means that there is an unabsorbed remainder of meaning left over after the statement is said and done. This is meaning that has yet to come to determinate expression, so it is, strictly speaking nonsense. But is not nonsense simply as the opposite of sense. It is nonsense as a surplus of sense, brewing with meanings to come. It is what Guattari, following Hjelmslev, sometimes calls "purport" – pure matter of meaning, as yet syntactically and semantically unformed, but already pragmatically preaccelerated. The purport narrows down toward determinate expression as the event of expression begins to take force. It forms, for the coming expression, a presuppositional field of the kind I was just talking about.

Another word for that field is a "proposition." A proposition, according to Whitehead, cannot be reduced to its linguistic content. To do so, he says, is the fundamental error of logic. A proposition is a pattern of contrasts delineating alternative courses of the universe, embedded in a certain juncture of history. He puts it in those terms to prevent us from saying "alternative choices." For, he says, "the proposition awaits its subject." The subject of the statement is emergent from the playing out of the expression. It is emergent and occurrent. This asignifying, asubjective dimension of this primary phase of an event where the matter of meaning begins to narrow down toward a determinate issue is not *in* language. It is in the world, immanent to the *act* of language. It is what comes to expression through language. "Prelinguistic" would be a bad terminological choice for this. It is more "prolinguistic": toward language, in an anticipatory dimension that is immanent to its exercise, but cannot be reduced to its structure and signification. In *What Animals Teach Us About Politics*, I argue that animal play sets in place the conditions for language at this level, even where language as such is absent. "Infralinguistic" is in fact a better word than "prolinguistic" for that dimension. And that dimension is affect. Affect cannot be divorced from language, even where language is absent. It is infralinguistic. Its relation to language has the paradoxical status I talk about in relation to the capitalist field in *The Principle of Unrest* and *99 Theses for the Revaluation of Value* of the "immanent outside": of it, but in it. It makes no more sense to say that an act of expression is outside language as it does to say that we can stand outside capitalism. There is no outside of either, in the spatialized sense of an external realm over against an interior realm. This in no way means that everything is "in" (capitalism, language). It's a question of modes and degrees of inclusion, anticipatorily and in fulfilment. In other words, as is always the case with affect, it is a question of potential and its playing out.

How can language capture modes of affective intensity? The more it tries to capture them, the more they slip away, following the prerogatives of the autonomy of affect. Significations and propositions in the conventional logical sense try to capture affective intensity, and fail. It is always already elsewhere before the last "i" is dotted. What language can do is *carry* affective intensities. Language can make its movement coincide with the force of thought moving through affect. It can create openings for the autonomy of affect to lead it, rather than trying to subsume affect under its own structure and enclose it in its semantic content. It can follow affective movements as *tensors* of meaning in their dynamic making. The structure of language, and its formal propositions, are then catalysts for the self-expression of affect, rather than its overlord. The affective force of language moves *across* words, carried in their rhythm. When you feel that the meaning is as much in the gaps between the words as in the words themselves, and that it continues virtually after the words have ended, in the linguistic equivalent of one those optical illusions when you turn your eye from an image and you see virtual movement spin off from it, then you are feeling the affective force of language. We tend to call expressions that make that force felt "poetic," regardless of their genre. That's just the word we reach for when language is outdoing itself affectively. A good philosophical text is "poetic" in this way, however far it is from poetry as such. It carries a conceptually complex movement of thought that wants nothing more than to keep generating more concepts, beyond where the author stopped. A text carrying affective intensity is a generative text. From the autonomy of affect it inherits the surplus-value of always having more to say than it knew how to say – forcing a continuation in the same vein of thought.

Jacob Ferrington (JF): Thinking about a field of potentiality as kind of collapsing into a decision, and the lived experience of somebody making a decision and sort of rationalizing or cognitively/linguistically accounting for their decisions, how does that play into this discussion of this mutually constitutive affect and cognition that it seems like you're getting to?

Massumi: Subjects don't make decisions – events make decisions. What we call the subject is an outcome of decision. We retrospectively own decisions. Whitehead says that decision should be taken in its etymological sense of "to cut." Decision is in the world, it's in the way the world's activity parses itself. It's in the way in which self-affirming modes of activity – tendencies, in a word – interfere and resonate with others toward a complex playing out that ends in a crossing from one threshold of consistency and co-composition to another. Decision is the cut, the cusp, of an emergent composition of forces. Whitehead also says that it is the exception, not the rule, when this happens at the conscious level of cogitation and reflection. Consciousness, he says, is the "acme of experience," underwritten by nonconscious levels of experience shrouded in the incipiency of thought and action. Consciousness follows the playing-out of those levels as they peak into an emergent composition of forces – taking "follow" both in the sense of coming after and in the sense of being in the wake of. The nonconscious level is replete with activity, of the propositional or presuppositional kind I was talking about before. It's the realm of what I call "bare activity" (an as yet asignifying, nonsubject-bound incipient working-out).

One of the things that happens at that level is "priming": the modulation of action by nonconsciously registered cues falling in the gaps of consciousness, which, again quoting Whitehead, is not continuous, but rather continuously "flickers." The importance of priming is that it forbids any notion of "raw experience." Words can prime nonconsciously. In other words, "higher functions," the results of learned behavior of great complexity, fold back into bare activity through priming. I spend a great deal of time in *The Power at the End of the Economy* and *Ontopower* developing the concept of priming and talking about the implications of it. In *Parables* I approached it under the rubric of the "feedback of higher forms." The point is that the so-called "lower" levels of forming experience are no less complex – in fact, they are in many respects more complex – than the "higher," conscious levels. And that although experience at that level is not accessible to sovereign, conscious decision, it is open to modulation, and there are techniques for that modulation. This suggests alternative modes of affect-based politics. The status of rationality must be resituated in this context. Rationality is one modulatory technique feeding back into bare activity among others. It is by no means the only one or, in our period, the most effective.

JF: That might be a good space for us to move into a question about the sense of, say, a voter who sees herself as an autonomous subject and when it comes to walking into the voting booth and casting a vote, how do you conceive of what we'll call the event-space of voting? So what drives a consumer to act the way a consumer acts but also a voter? The ideas we were thinking of in this situation were priming and jamming specifically and how that relational field brings about these seemingly autonomous subjects who go in and change. And also in the back of my head I'm thinking of this group of quote-unquote Obama voters who became Trump voters – what is happening there in that emergent shift?

Massumi: Voting is a way of individualizing co-activity. It's an activity that individuals do together – completely separately. It's a mechanism for decollectivizing activity. This makes it a power mechanism, in and of itself, and not only through its outcomes. Voting is a mass staging of individuals as – as if they were – separate autonomous willing subjects. It produces an effective feeling of this "as if." It destroys any sense of the collective as transindividual – or infraindividual (which can also be called the "dividual").

Voting primes individuals into a sense of separation, in seclusion from every other individual, literally curtained off from any collective dynamic. Here, the collective figures as the simple opposite of decision-making individual segregation. It fosters the feeling that the collective is just some kind of magma of undifferentiated – or more like it in these days of migrant panic, an uncontrollably hyperdifferentiated – humanity threatening to swamp the self and disable decision. This primes for a tendentially aggressive, even paranoid, stance toward the collective. The last thing it does is carve out a space of reflection and considered decision. Instead, it catapults the individual all the more powerfully into affective mechanisms, but in an apparent vacuum of sociality and relationality. In that vacuum, decision is no longer a matter of passing a threshold to an emergent co-composition. It is formatted as a zero-sum game, 0 or 1, yes or no, thumbs up or down. This makes decision an exercise in mutual exclusion, rather than differential mutual inclusion.

The vote in representative democracy, particularly in the age of social media, has become an accelerator of relationally unhinged affect, so much so that calls for a return to rationality ring ridiculously hollow. It's to the point that basing a decision on the reasonableness of an argument strikes voters as counterintuitive. Evidence-based thinking, or what the Bush administration criticized as "reality-based" thinking, can't compete. It is often said we are in a post-fact world. I think that where we are in is the realm of the affective fact.

A matter-of-fact in process-oriented philosophy is the finality of an emergence that plays out the consequences of a thinking-feeling pulse of bare activity, peaking in the crossing of a threshold that makes an irreversible difference. That crossing of the threshold, because it is irreversible, because it has added something to the world that can't be undone, has import that makes relating to it imperative, and that imperative is directly felt. The next pulse of process cannot not take into account toward its own peaking. The thing is that the affective aspect can come without the crossing of the threshold actually taking place. A threat, for example, produces the fear and the felt imperative to flee or fight, even in the absence of an actual danger. This is "unhinged" in the sense that threats can conjure themselves with abandon, independent of the actual conditions for their fulfilment, taking effect purely affectively. This is what I call an affective fact. An affective fact is the felt imperative of an event that did not take place, except through the feeling of the *potential* that it *might*. It is a fact because once the potential has been felt, its consequences actually expressed, for example in fear, it can't be unfelt. It's irreversible. The fear has transpired, and can recur. It remains looming. A threshold has been crossed, but without ever leaving the realm of potential. The event is purely affectively felt, in the conditional: in the might-be, or could-have-been, or would-have-been. In an increasingly chaotic, far-from-equilibrium world, individuals are buffeted, through the media and the social media in particular, by the constant barrage of threats. The world has morphed into what security analysts call the "threat environment." We are barraged by affective facts, roiling together, increasingly autonomous in their triggering. The isolated voter in the booth is hard-pressed to counter this with evidence-based reasoning.

However, in the end it's really not so much a question of fact versus affect, evidence-based rationality versus affect. In a sense, all matters-of-fact are affective facts, if we think of the genesis of every event in thinking-feeling, and the autonomy of affect running through events. It is more a question of postures toward potential, toward uncertainty and the unknown, corresponding to different valences, different modalities of affective fact: atomizing or relational; zero-sum or shaded and graded; trans/infra individual or "as if" merely individual; mutually inclusive or mutually exclusive; differential or hegemonic; positively bracing or paranoia-inducing; composing a world or exuding a threat environment; equal to the complexity of the event, or violently reductive of it in exasperated reaction to its element of uncontrollability. These are ways of rehearsing the Spinozist distinction, taken up by Nietzsche, between active and reactive forces. And it is as a function of this distinction that democracy needs to be reinvented, beyond representative democracy, in new forms of direct democracy.

I'm not at all saying that evidence-based reason and rationality have no role. In this age of complexity and environmental emergency, to argue that rational assessment and instrumental reason have no role would be self-defeating. It is just to say that there no sense in returning to the fiction of their sovereign power of decision. That is just as self-defeating. The role of rationality has always been as course-corrector for affective movements – as a feedback of higher forms that acts as a prime to modulate the playing out of affective processes. The answer is not to oppose reason and affect, but to return reason to its affective ground, and to do so strategically, in ways that prime for differential mutual inclusion and peaks of decision that actively affirm life in all its complexity. Rationality has to learn to be a catalyst, instead of a sovereign. This is a necessity of survival as we hurtle into the growing effects of climate change. The neoliberal and liberal democratic priming for the "as if" of individual decision, supposedly governed by rational deliberation, and supposedly leveraging self-interest for the general good, has had a central role in leading us to this impasse, which is an inevitable outcome of the capitalist drive for more, for quantitative increase at all costs – with which liberal democracy has always been in symbiosis, to the point that under neoliberalism the nation-state has become little more than a territorial operator-console for the capitalist process. More of the same will only yield just that – more of the same. And in this context, more of the same is global catastrophe.

JF: This leads me to something we've been discussing in the course, intersectionality and assemblage theory and trying to understand how that might work especially in relation to identity politics which I think reigns a little bit on the left, and I'm wondering if you can talk a little bit about how that might inform this discussion.

Massumi: Affect theory – or as I prefer to name my own orientation, process thinking – is in many ways incompatible with identity politics. But to situate any critique of identity politics, it is crucial to start from the incontrovertible reality that the first, and still dominant, identity politics is the European identity politics of whiteness. Identity as we understand it today is an outcome of the dual genesis by which a purportedly sovereign subject mirroring at a smaller scale the sovereign nation-state to which it belongs by right arose out of the crucible of colonialism and the slave trade, issuing at the same time, as on parallel tracks, into the brutal rise of modern capitalism and the Enlightenment ideal of progress. The identity politics of oppressed and marginalized minority groups is in reaction to this ur-identity politics, in an attempt to turn its own model against it in order to oblige the dominant white society to live up to its rhetoric of progress and inclusion. The strength of this approach is that takes a known, historically validated form – that of identity – and uses it to confound the dominant usage, which has historically been for purposes of exclusion. The problem is that exclusion is written into the form of identity itself. Identity organizes itself around the self/other, in-group/out-group opposition. This is not incidental to it; it is of its essence. As a result, exclusion effects are impossible to expunge. They are just shifted down the road. You can see this when any identity-based contestation achieves a certain success, carving out a space of inclusion and recognition for itself. The identity schizzes. The success of second-wave feminism, for example, was experienced as an exclusion by lesbians and women of color. The success of the homosexual rights movement was in tension with the trans community, which had to rise up for its own account.

The fact is that people do not live in their identity, they live their differencing. I say differenc*ing* because it continues. Every recognition of an identity leaves out a fraction that must then affirm itself and fight for its own recognition, leading to a proliferation of subdivisions and an expanding abbreviation list, now far exceeding the original "LBG" (I'm old enough to remember a time before there was even a "T"). I commented on this cascading of difference away from the form and content of what at the time I was calling the Man-Standard of whiteness almost thirty years ago in *User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. That tendency has only accelerated since. This is as it should be: differencing is fractal. It does not stop at a convenient boundary line, however finely cut. Its movement exceeds every category, so the only way to keep up with it and approximate its scope is to keep madly multiplying the categories. But at a certain point, another logic has to set in. An individual life is not a particular case of a general identity category, however finely defined. An individual life is a singularity, and singularities come not in categories but in populations, irreducibly dynamic and with fuzzy boundaries. An individual is a fuzzy subset of a population. Individuals do not identify so much as they schizz – invent a *sui generis* variation on the population to which they dynamically and complexly belong. Society is dividual. Every population is internally diverse, and the same is true of every individual within each population. There is always something in an individual that does not fit its assigned category, and that even in utter isolation stands for what Deleuze and Guattari call a "people to come": an emergent mode of life.

Intersectionality is helpful to start getting at this complexity, realizing that identity lines cross, and everyone occupies a certain locus on the intersectional grid. But this doesn't go far enough, because it is still speaking in terms of identity, general category, and particular case. It compounds particularity, rather than fractalizing or dividualizing it, to grasp what Erin Manning calls the "diversity in diversity": the differing of difference. There's a lot of thinking in queer and decolonial thought and in the black radical tradition that go in this direction. Particularly inspiring to me have been Édouard Glissant's concept of "relation identity" and Moten and Harney's concept of the "undercommons," both of which propose a black sociality that opposes the dominant identity politics of whiteness without appealing to the traditional identity form. Although I have deep reservations about identity politics, and many aspects of its culture on the left, I see the need for it in the macro political domain, as a matter of self-defense and survival, and bristle at many criticisms of it, most especially from the right. It's a bit of a red herring to point the finger at the identity politics of the left. It is simply succumbing to media stereotypes. There is so much more to the social movements that is too complex to be meme-worthy, and so barely registers in the media. It's also a diversion from the point I started with: that the first and by far the most virulent and destructive identity politics is white identity politics.

Alina Hechler (AH): And I guess kind of to close up on that, or end on maybe a more positive or futuristic note, in *The Principle of Unrest* you have said that considering the limits of political reason, and these affective facts that are kind of immune to a consistent rational argument, how can we move forward? In *The Principle of Unrest* you have suggested a politics of care. So in a sense, by pure rationality or pure argument we're not going to be able to turn the tide ultimately, so how could we practice a politics of care or promote that?

Massumi: It's something we need to invent collectively. It's not easy. The first thing is to really let it sink in that a politics of care is not about a personal attribute. It's not about having a subjective feeling of care for someone else. That is more a politics of empathy. It doesn't work, because it is based on the face-to-face. It begins by subjectivizing the relation, upstream of any encounter. It puts the other across from the self on the outside, but then, as by a sleight of hand, includes the outside in a structure of mirroring. The mirroring is supposed to be of a commonality, of a common humanity reflected in the faces opposite each other. But this is very often more of an imposition than an invitation, because it neglects to ask the question, "commonality according to whom?" It is in fact an essential gesture of whiteness: assuming we're all the same deep down, "we're all human," so can't we all just get along? To which the answer is another question: "on whose terms?" Expressions of empathy risk doing the exact opposite of what they're meant to do because they neutralize the political, by making the political personal.

A politics of care in the way I mean it has to be a quality of the event, not of a subject. It's a question of how the conditions for events are put into place. It assumes fractalization, not facialization. It assumes that the social field is made up of differentials, not boundary lines, however crossed. It assumes incommensurability: that if you scratch the surface of the mirror, you see that we are all differencing, each in our own dividual/transindividual manner, schizzing the populations to which we would belong into renewed being, always in becoming. Commonality is a veneer of whiteness. There is no commonality across the board. But that doesn't mean we can't live together. There is a word for a dynamic cohabitation of individuals and populations in correlated becoming, always already gone differing: ecology. A politics of care is not about political psychology, it is a political ecology. Neither does it concern itself with ideology. It concerns itself with emergent comings-together: events of differential coming-together from which no common denominator is drawn, but which precipitate a further difference. It requires techniques of the event, which is what we have been working at the SenseLab for many years. These are techniques of relation, and of collective attunement to the mix of tendencies afoot, the potentials they carry, and how they can be primed. This can be theorized in terms of a revised notion of sympathy, in contradistinction to empathy, and that is a big part of the project in *What Animals Teach us About Politics* and *The Power at the End of the Economy.*

AH: I had a question that I'm personally really interested in – we as fledgling academics, the academy is increasingly under siege, at least from a budgetary standpoint and everything, you know, and there seems to be a stratification that we become more and more isolated, and I have a sense that your work with the SenseLab might speak a little bit to this. What is our role in that, in creating that conditioning relational events as academics?

Massumi: At the SenseLab, we're looking at creating an alter-university space, parasitical to the university. We mean that also in the sense of constituting a "para-site," a site that occupies a stratum adjacent to the university, operating by a different logic, not necessarily against it frontally, but rather maintaining what Erin Manning, who founded the SenseLab, calls an "approximation of proximity," so that we can avail ourselves of what the university has positively to offer without being beholden to it. Alter-"university" is a misnomer. It won't give credit or degrees, and it won't have a traditional course structure with the usual student-teacher hierarchy. It will be self-organizing, like the SenseLab, and oriented toward emergent results embodying collective expressions. We're calling it the 3 Ecologies Institute. Experimentation in new forms of value and collective alter-economies is a key aspect, in response to the student debt crisis. 3E will be organized along the lines of a gift economy. A basic principle is never to charge for anything, as has been the practice all along at SenseLab. Hence the urgency of alter-economic thinking. Personally, we're feeling cornered by the university, as it conforms more and more to the dictates of the neoliberal value system and management model. I have already left the university, through the privileged door of early retirement, and Erin is just holding on. The 3 Ecologies does not feel optional to us. It's a matter of survival. It's imperative that we find ways of creating sustaining milieus for thinking and acting together, imbued by a politics of care. They must be open to segments of the population for whom higher education is traditionally inaccessible, including those who are neurodiverse. This requires sustained attention to techniques of relation. The idea is to create a pre-figurative milieu – one of many, for there are projects of this nature popping up everywhere – enacting emergent modes of relation and new forms of knowledge production. There is no time to go more into detail here. Readers can refer to the SenseLab Web site (senselab.ca) for more details and links.

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"Every Sentiment Has a History":
Affect and the Archive
An Interview with Ann Stoler

Interviewed by Erin Clancy and J.D. Saperstein

Ann Stoler is Willy Brandt Distinguished University Professor of Anthropology and Historical Studies at The New School for Social Research. She is the director of the Institute for Critical Social Inquiry. She has worked extensively on the politics of knowledge, colonial governance, racial epistemologies, the sexual politics of empire, and ethnography of the archives. Her books include *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (1995), *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (2002, 2010), and *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (2009).

Erin Clancy (EC): Do you want to start more basic, and just ask what got you started in Academia? What was the impetus of that and the trajectory?
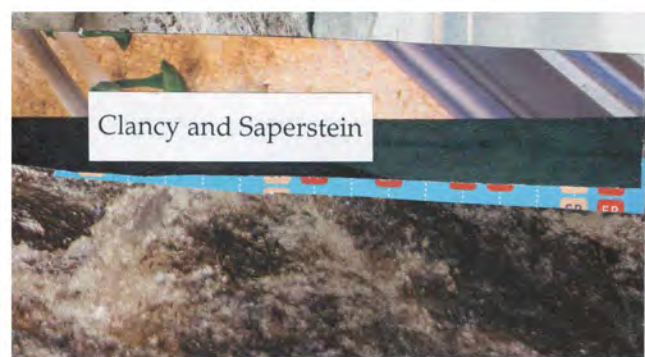
Ann Stoler (Stoler): Hmm just a little question.

EC: Just a small one, just a warm-up question!

Stoler: I'm not sure it is terribly interesting: My sister, nine years older than I, was a Sanskritist with a passion for literature, poetry, and languages. She started teaching in "Oriental Studies" at Barnard the same year I began as a sophomore undergraduate. She was my measure of all things that mattered, my idol. Being an intellectual and getting my doctorate was my way (I thought) of escaping my fate in a category I despised: the smart but not brilliant, ordinary and ornery Jewish girl from a public school on the north shore of Long Island.

However much I wanted to be like her, that was not in the cards. The fact that we came of age in such radically different moments made all the difference. My generation was shaped by the Vietnam War, by how much we detested it, our kudos came from how well we knew Marx, to the number of times we were jailed. It meant that politics and intellectual work seemed organically to belong together and meshed. I had thought to do anthropology (or something like it) in Vietnam. It was far from possible but I did have an opportunity to go for the summer to Indonesia in 1972, at the height of its plunge into the Green Revolution only seven years after the massacre of alleged communist sympathizers across the archipelago. World Bank was eager to make Indonesia "safe for democracy" and promised to reach "the poorest of the poor." As a feisty marxist feminist in the making, I thought to do a summer project about landless women in Java. I put off graduate school and didn't come back to New York and start at Columbia for a year and a half.

For my dissertation research I had some under-formulated notion that I wanted to be in a place where the world capitalist system was playing out its contemporary course. I went to North Sumatra, to the heart of multinational agribusiness in Indonesia, what was once known as "The dollar land of Deli" – the plantation belt. Tobacco, rubber, and an expanding palm oil industry were represented by Goodyear, Uniroyal, Palmolive and in the late 19th century by some of the biggest traders on tobacco futures, cutting across the axis between Europe stock exchanges and North Sumatra's agroindustry. A politics of knowledge and a grossly skewed distribution of power were stamped into people's bodies, the architecture, the land. I suppose one could argue that some course of work was set then: an effort to understand the mechanisms of unequal distributions of privilege, resources, wealth.
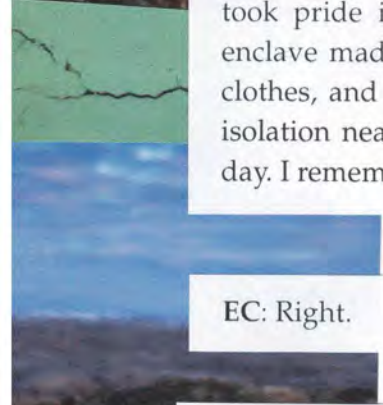
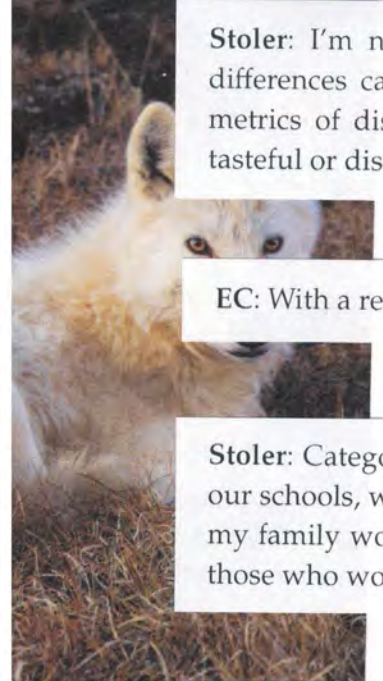I'm sure that being drawn to an attentiveness about entitlement and privilege was something with which I grew up. The north shore of Long Island in the 1960s was a place that took pride in its privilege and ascendance to the upper middle class. It was a well-heeled enclave made up of those who made sure those who came to mow their lawns and iron their clothes, and watch their children did so from a measured distance, lived most of the week in isolation near the kitchen quarters of a house, or took buses back to Queens at the end of the day. I remember how ashamed I was, how awkward I found it, how "easy" and common it was.
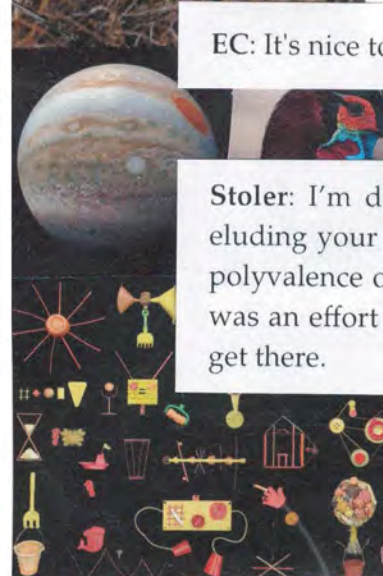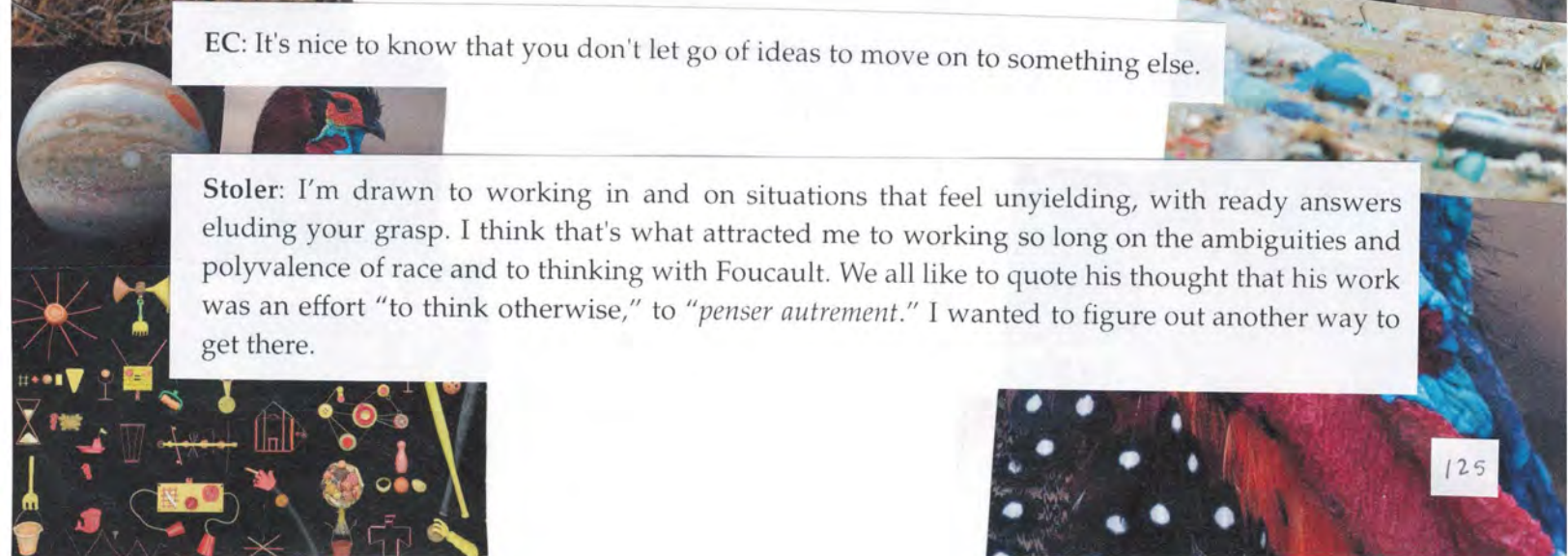
EC: Right.

Stoler: I'm not sure I've ever gotten very far from the quotidian weight of distinctions, of differences carved in the uniforms for maids, or in the creased folds of a taffeta dress. The metrics of distinction and the crafting of race were all there in what we were taught to find tasteful or distasteful. These were the implicit lessons of the everyday.

EC: With a recursive orbit, almost back and forth.

Stoler: Categories of people and things, race was inscribed in that everyday – in who was not in our schools, where my father worked but did not play, where winter vacations took us, in places my family would not go. I'm ever more convinced that race was a subtext in my growing up – those who would be excluded and those places my parents feared I might be excluded from.

EC: It's nice to know that you don't let go of ideas to move on to something else.

Stoler: I'm drawn to working in and on situations that feel unyielding, with ready answers eluding your grasp. I think that's what attracted me to working so long on the ambiguities and polyvalence of race and to thinking with Foucault. We all like to quote his thought that his work was an effort "to think otherwise," to "*penser autrement.*" I wanted to figure out another way to get there.

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EC: That's actually one of our other questions. We were talking the other day about how there seemed to be a shift in your work, where you had been very interested in implementing Foucault and using his ideas in new ways, and then you suddenly switch to emotions and affect. So, maybe this ties back into this recursivity, but we were just curious more about the development of your theoretical lens?

Stoler: I don't see anything very sudden about it – understanding how power works has long pulled me in different directions – from Marx to Foucault to Marguerite Duras and back again through Raymond Williams' "structures of feeling" and again to Foucault. I've been writing about Foucault's treatment of affect and thinking about why sentiment remains so often the object of his work but not a dispositif in itself. In one of my favorite of Foucault's essays on genealogy it made the forceful claim that "every sentiment has a history" but never pursued that insight as one of his projects. I've long had the sense of a prior recognition in reading Foucault, something I know is shared by many others.

J.D. Saperstein (JS): That has been my experience reading Foucault as well.

Stoler: He does something that's so enabling and that you know is right, but you didn't really quite know how to say it, nor could you have the kind of confidence to do so. I started teaching Foucault's Genealogy essay[1] 20 years ago to help me think about how to treat the stories and histories that whites in the colonies told themselves about how they felt in the colonies, and how they should feel toward others and by what measure they ascribed sensibilities to the colonized – all of this so much a part of the imaginary real. My work has pushed between inscription, prescription, and ascription, how race is *inscribed* in the colonial archives, how ways of being are *prescribed* for Europeans and how they in turn *ascribed* features to others, those populations who they so often saw as a potential threat.

JS: With that, what potential do you see and imagine for the field when considering affect in studying post-colonialism?

Stoler: I think it will allow us to understand the multiplex metrics of inequality and the politics of degradations in more meaningful ways.

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[1] Foucault, Michel (1977). "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History." In *Language, Counter-Memory and Practice, Selected Interviews*, edited by D. F. Bouchard. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

JS: You have a really good quotation from *Duress* that I'll read to you, if I can. "Colonial archives can impede the task: They have a way of drawing our attention to their own scripted temporal and spatial designations of what is colonial and what is no longer making it difficult to stretch beyond their guarded frames." So can you talk a bit more about how you've personally navigated the tendency of archives to tell a story already in the way that they're built?

Stoler: Archival labor is about confronting order as mess and what at first appears as arbitrary designations as the logic of an order. There are all kinds of ways in which the archive writes against itself as it's creating a kind of uniformity that can't be held. *Along the Archival Grain* was an effort to untangle obfuscations but also to stay with the tangled arts of governance, scripted through security regimes and segregated schools and in so many other ways. I think of what I'm after as writing history in a "minor key" – a history not of the crescendo of major chords but with lower case tonalities.

EC: Well, it's really interesting. Adjusting the multiscalar functions of imperialism. How anxiety from the body makes this proliferation of categories, which actually increases anxiety.

Stoler: Yes, And perhaps this proliferation makes those categories even more unstable.

EC: Okay. I'll just ask this question. So you mentioned quite a few other writers, how they inspire your work. What are some things that you're finding really excited to read right now?

Stoler: I read in the early hours at sunrise when I feel there is some sharpness to my attention, rarely late at night. I've been reading Kant's "Critique of Judgment" to think about taste and distaste with respect to race. Of course that's not what Kant was doing but I'm trying to understand how these concepts of taste and distaste (gout et degout) have been pulled apart. But to answer your original question: what's next to my bed right now – yes, Kant, and Foucault's first lectures from 1970 at the College de France on La volonte du savoir (I love reading in French)… and some students papers I should have commented on a while ago!

EC: We have time for one more question, maybe.

JS: Do you want to do a plug for your Institute for Critical Social Inquiry?

Stoler: Well I could do a plug but you know we have so many applications I don't need to... still I'd love to talk about this exciting venture that emerged from a fantasy of my own. In our academic lives, as graduate students, assistant professors and more senior ones, there are always so many more thinkers to read and that we feel we need to read, more than we have time for or feel we can grasp on our own: it might be Levinas or Lacan, Hegel or Marx, Freud, Arendt, or Foucault... And each time you hear or see the name you think, "I've got to sit down and read this," feeling you should have already. So my thought was this: would it not be an amazing opportunity, after the semester of teaching is over, to sit with a small group of others for an intensive week and read and think with one of those thinkers – and do it with a "master" of sorts who has written on and thought with a Foucault or Marx for most of their careers?
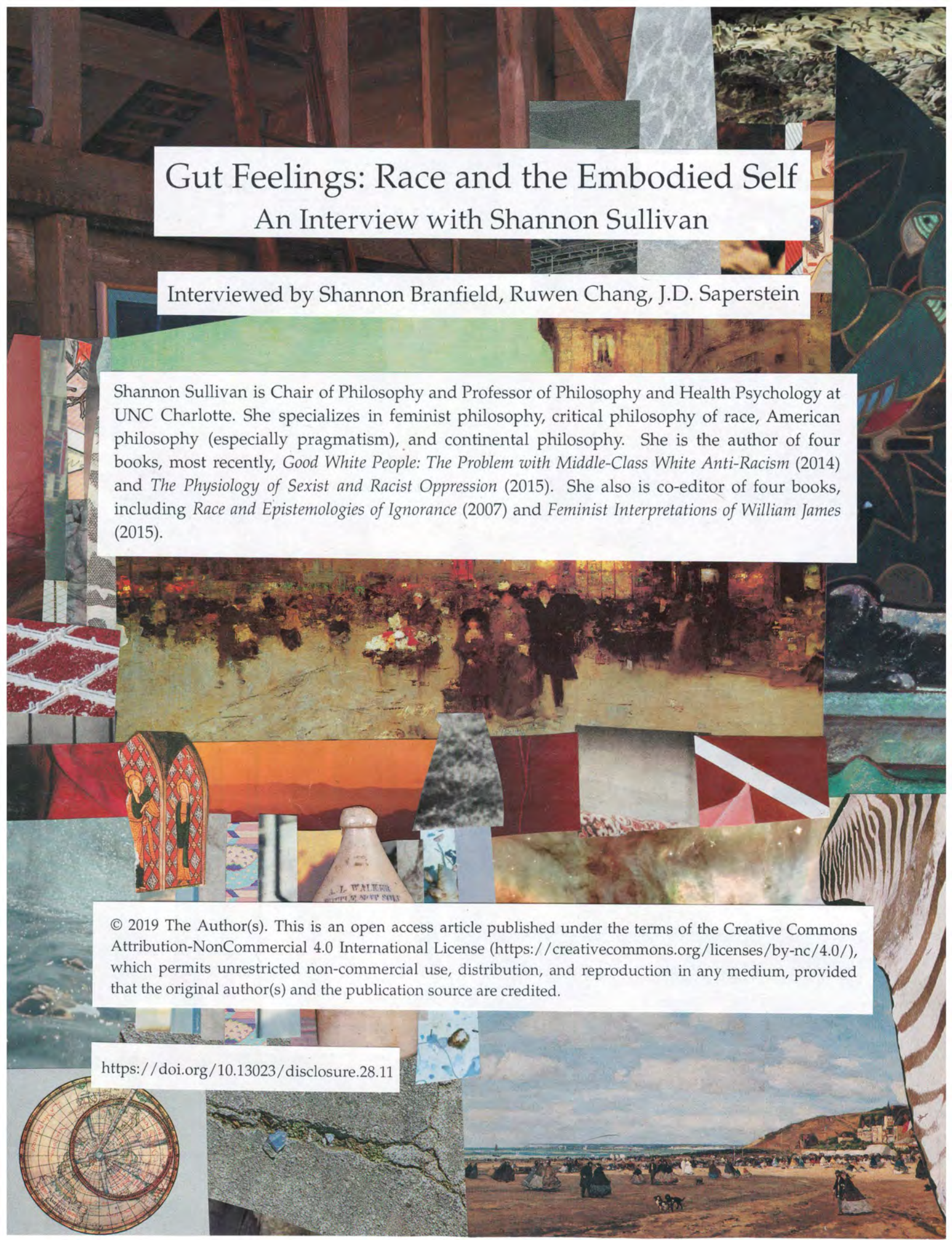
A trustee from the New School shared my enthusiasm for the venture and provided the funds to start five years ago and we are going stronger than ever. Applicants hail from 40 to 50 different countries and the fellows we choose are a mix of advanced graduate students and full professor all there simply to learn, and learn more about what they have sought to know. It's an exhilarating and exhausting week each year and one in which fellows are always asking if they can come back again.

EC: An intellectual sprint and dive.

Stoler: Exactly. A sprint and dive.

he'll stuff 'em in a jar.

Gut Feelings: Race and the Embodied Self
An Interview with Shannon Sullivan

Interviewed by Shannon Branfield, Ruwen Chang, J.D. Saperstein

Shannon Sullivan is Chair of Philosophy and Professor of Philosophy and Health Psychology at UNC Charlotte. She specializes in feminist philosophy, critical philosophy of race, American philosophy (especially pragmatism), and continental philosophy. She is the author of four books, most recently, *Good White People: The Problem with Middle-Class White Anti-Racism* (2014) and *The Physiology of Sexist and Racist Oppression* (2015). She also is co-editor of four books, including *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance* (2007) and *Feminist Interpretations of William James* (2015).

Ruwen Chang (RC): What got you into affect theory?

Shannon Sullivan (Sullivan): I didn't intend to work on affect and emotion. When I taught a course last fall [2017] on philosophies of emotion and affect, I realized that I do work in that area and I hadn't really conceptualized my work that way before. But when I go back to your question properly and think about it, it was connected to being interested in embodiment, which is important to thinking about race in particular. And so, as I was writing the *Good White People* book, I was thinking about white guilt and white shame and how central those emotions are to a lot of discussions about how white people should respond to white privilege. Thinking about guilt and shame then led me to look at different affects and to focus on love, which is the most controversial part of the book.

But the other answer is really three answers. One of them, I realize, is that it's Nietzsche who had a huge influence on me from early on, even before I started working in anything directly in feminist or critical philosophy of race. Nietzsche was an affect theorist before affect theory became popular, particularly in his criticism of guilt and resentment. And then, second, my most recent monograph on *The Physiology of Sexist and Racist Oppression* is, in many ways, about affect. I didn't design it that way initially, but it pushes further to think about being embodied in the context of racism and sexism. I really wanted to consider embodiment not merely phenomenologically or metaphorically, but to think about physiology: stress hormones and epigenetics and heart functions and the like. I wanted to do that in a way that understands affect and emotion in very bodily terms, and so, thirdly, William James's work has become really important to me. Recall the James-Lange theory of emotion, in which emotion is defined as bodily movements and changes. That's the starting point of that book: to think about physiological unconscious habits and the ways that they are structuring and being structured by experiences with racism and sexism. So, I increasingly find affect to be an important part of my work, but getting to that point happened by accident.

RC: I come from China, so race is really a new topic to me. This semester I'm taking a class on race and class. The books we're mainly reading focus on structural forces like police state violence and housing policy, but your work is actually focused on the body rather than structural forces.

Sullivan: Yes. For better or worse, my work tends to focus a lot on that. I won't say on individual experiences necessarily, but on the person and personal experiences. Those are intimately connected with structural and institutional forms of racism or sexism. The personal and the structural are two pieces of a very complex puzzle and they feed into each other. And so my work leans toward looking at ontological issues, in the sense of how we as selves get constituted. That shouldn't be done in a silo or an isolated way from thinking about the world that we're part of and its institutions. But while they can seem to have a life of their own, institutions often are affectively invested in by individual people and this happens sometimes in a very unconscious and bodily way.

We're not really going to fully understand structural and institutional forms of racism and sexism if we don't look at the invested self – affective and otherwise, not just financially invested, but *affectively* invested – this sense of the self that is invested in the structures and institutions of racism and sexism in ways that we don't consciously want to endorse or avow, but that might be there nevertheless.

J.D. Saperstein (JS): Could you explain more the mechanisms by which racism comes to be embodied by our raced selves?

Sullivan: As you know, the concept of habit is really important to me as a way of thinking about patterned predispositions, ways, and styles of engaging the world. I think a lot of this does not happen through conscious deliberate instruction or education. But there are unconscious habits, unconscious ways of doing things as a kind of mechanism. This leads to my interest in childhood as a site, or a location, for the development of unconscious habits. Philosophers don't talk about children much at all. But how do habits that form us as adults get formed in very early ways? Here's where some version of Freud is very important: we need to pay attention to childhood. We get formed as the selves that we are in so many powerful ways as children, which we developmentally cannot consciously be aware of or shape or control as conscious agents.

Shannon Branfield (SB): You use personal experience a lot in your writing. Can you talk a little bit about why you do that? If it's a deliberate choice, or just the best way to explain what you're talking about?

Sullivan: It is a deliberate choice for different reasons. Part of it comes from finding a home in feminist and pragmatist philosophy and the way in which they both insist that philosophy is useful. Philosophy is like a toolkit for doing things with one's life. It's connected to real experience or real situations or practices. I'm not at all opposed to abstraction, but abstraction has got to tie back and be in some kind of interactive relationship with real experiences. That leads me to want to talk about actual experiences when I'm writing. I also find philosophy very therapeutic. It's very much about trying to work out crap in my own life. Hopefully what I'm writing about is not just about me, of course. It's also about broad features situated in human existence. As I'm reading and thinking, I'm sometimes either not finding answers to what I want or not agreeing with what I'm finding, so I'm trying to work it out for myself. How do I live this life as a white woman, as a parent? And can philosophy be a useful tool to help me do that?

I find often it can be, which is why personal examples are in my work. Also, and especially as I began writing more and more about whiteness and race, I felt that it was very important to take the risks that I was implicitly asking white readers to take. I've got to have skin in the game. I've got to be just as much at risk in terms of feeling uncomfortable or feeling exposed, so I've got to be willing to put myself out there and do that too. And if I can't do that, then it doesn't feel very honest as an author.

Some of this approach also comes from teaching. When I teach about gender and race, for example, it's never about scolding the students. I don't want students to think, "And now we're being schooled in how we're supposed to think about X, Y, and Z." For this reason, I try to have the classroom environment be one in which they see that I'm just as much flailing around with this material and just as much at risk existentially as they are. And so sometimes I will direct it back to me: "Here's an example in my life where this happened..." and then that helps everyone relax a little bit.

RC: Yes. I really like your approach that you use personal experience as a method. I really liked that. The next question I would ask is: there's one thing I have difficulty understanding in your book. It's about your mentioning that race is ontological. Can you elaborate more on this argument?

Sullivan: When I use the word ontology, I mean it in an historical, situated, embedded way. There can be ways of using that word that may sound like one is trying to point to something universal and essential for all of being, and I'm not doing that. I'm trying in some basic ways to talk about how we as selves get formed and that is always going to be ongoing – never a static process or a static thing. It's always dynamic, always changing. At the same time, if that formation is happening through habits, they provide a durability to the self that can be difficult to change, which the concept of habit helps explain. Habits also are one way in which the self can be somewhat plastic, somewhat capable of change. So, habit has become an interesting mechanism for thinking about both the durability and the plasticity of who we are. Another word I would use is "transactional": a co-constitutive formation between the self and its various environments, if we take "environment" in a very capacious sense – not just physical environments, but also social and affective environments. I really love the work of Sarah Ahmed and Teresa Brennan that talks about the circulation of affects. I think of circulation as a kind of transaction in which you've got selves and worlds and affects circulating to form the self in a way that is invested and affectively leads to wanting the world to be certain ways.

RC: I also feel like if race is ontological, actually, we can apply this ontological view to gender and class and thus I feel like there's actually a possibility for solidarities between different social groups. Intersectional solidarity.

Sullivan: I think ontology is always intersectional, so "intersectional ontology" might be the best term? At the same time, however, for certain temporary purposes we may need to consider some pieces separately. It's so complicated how we get constituted as selves. It's probably impossible to take it all in, to occupy a God's eye point of view that could see it all at once. There can be reasons to pick out some pieces at times, to focus on them more than others. But that's a functional claim, not a claim that we're constituted in isolated, siloed ways. I think especially in the United States, it's almost impossible to pull race and class apart, for example. This might be true in other countries and situations as well, but in the United States race is classed and class is raced and that's not to collapse them.

I want to resist the notion that there is a neutral core to the self and that things like gender and race are epiphenomenal. And to resist the related claims that if you're doing "real" philosophy, you're examining the core of human existence, and that race and gender aren't important or they are secondary. I think that's changed a lot, but around 25 years ago when I was going through grad school, and even as a young assistant professor, that was definitely a fight that had to be waged. If you were talking about gender or race, it was supposedly a fad. I think a lot of that has changed now, but there are still pockets in philosophy where one has to argue for something like a weaving model rather than a core model. The self is a fabric that's woven together out of different strands, and some of them are more prominent strands and some are minor. It's admittedly not an even playing field where every strand constitutes you in the same way, but there's no core that's neutral or separate from the strands that make you up. It's a very different model of the self than a core-periphery model.

RC: But, if we consider embodiment – or bodies actually – as compared to the constructing of emotions, the body is actually something less constructible, or something real. So it feels like if we don't have a neutral core, actually, we have this body...?

Sullivan: That's a great question, although I want to push to say even our literal bodies get constituted in these transactional ways. The *Physiology* book takes up that claim in a very detailed way. That's not to say that we can't find some generalities about human embodiment, such as we all have to eat or we'll die. But the minute you take that beyond some sort of simple platitude and start talking about it in some very concrete ways – about the food that constitutes us – then the core model is inadequate. For example, I have a chapter in the *Physiology* book on the gut as a site of resistance to taking in the world in certain ways (and I'm greatly influenced here by the work of Elizabeth Wilson). There's a huge connection between what I call gut habits and gut character. In that chapter, I examine, for example, how there is a significant connection between women's guts and incidents of sexual assault and sexual trauma that are gendered. It doesn't mean sexual assault happens only to women or to feminized people, but this doesn't change the fact that gendered patterns exist regarding sexual assault. And this is where philosophy needs to catch up with a lot of material in the health sciences, because this has been known in the health sciences for the last 10 or 15 years. As for the gut – I'm literally talking about intestines and stomachs – it's the largest section of our body that's exposed to the outside world, more than the skin, and doctors will talk about the outside world coming into and passing out of your body via your gut. This is the site of exposure and a kind of dynamic interaction with the world in terms of what you're taking in and what you are – what's forming you, and then what you're giving back to the world. I want to talk about bodies as sites of habits, as physiological habits that are dynamically constituted in ways that are durable and plastic. We can find a transactional relationship developing physiological habits that are shaped by a world that's full of racist and sexist oppression, which helps form biologically unconscious habits. This is a kind of affective shaping in response to the world on the level of our physiological embodiment. Here again is where William James becomes important for tightly connecting movements and changes in the physiological body and with the effects of sexism, racism, and other forms of trauma.

JS: So as you're talking about the physiological and really embodied impacts of racism, how do you see these conversations you're having at this level working in conversations with the broader public?

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Sullivan: I don't know that all of this quickly or easily translates over to talking to a broader public, although I do think it can in part. The *Physiology* book weaves in very concrete case studies, and it opens with a concrete example of a physiological affective sense of pain or struggle, and unpacks it in ways that get to more theoretical points. On this question, I have to admit that one of the things I'm proudest of is that *Good White People* was named *Ms. Magazine* Best Feminist Read for 2014 and a *CHOICE* academic outstanding title for the same year. That meant I was able to talk to both scholarly audiences and public audiences. A broader audience could pick up the book and feel like they got something important out of it. That is somewhat ironic because getting that book published was one of the hardest things I've ever done in my entire life. I don't mean writing the book – I was writing it, rewriting it, and revising it for several years – but the process of dealing with the pushback I got on the manuscript. I thought, "This book will never ever be published, it will never see the light of day," because I got such strong pushback.

JS: Do you find that that happens often in your work? Because I know when we were discussing your article on white priority, there was a lot of discussion about whether it's good to talk about white priority when talking to a non-academic audience. But is it useful academically to separate out these terms? We had a lot of conversations regarding how we speak to a public audience and how we speak in academia. And should there be different conversations happening?

Sullivan: I think the answer has to be "yes." There have to be places where you can move fast, when using technical terms don't feel like jargon, because people know what you're talking about and you can move quickly and you can do more things that way. But I think it's also really important that there be spaces where one is intentionally trying to reach a broader audience. And there are a lot of times where those hopefully overlap. Context really matters, and paying attention to one's audience really matters, whether you're teaching or writing. It's wonderful when sometimes you can speak to multiple audiences at once, but I wouldn't want to insist upon that. There may be times when that doesn't work and you may need different tools in your toolkit and different ways of going at things.

But if I go back to white priority, the worry I have is whether we really need another term. We've got white privilege. We've got white supremacy. We've got white fragility. And now we've got white priority, and this can sound like a mere proliferation of terms. The answer may be that an additional term doesn't turn out to be very helpful. One has to be experimental and see what works. However, I think harm is done if the term white privilege gets overused in ways that don't pay attention to the differences in how privilege cashes out in different people's lives. That's not to let white people off the hook. But I think the pushback that we're increasingly seeing regarding white privilege needs to be taken seriously in a critical way. Otherwise the concept of white privilege might seem to be about an elite set of white people beating down other white people with a stick, shaming and ridiculing them. We still need the concept of white privilege, but we've got to nuance the way we're thinking about whiteness.

SB: Can you talk more about the resistance you get to your work particularly with *Good White People*? You mentioned there was a lot of pushback. It was difficult to get published. What sort of pushback did you get? And why do you think *Good White People* received more of that than your other work?

Sullivan: When that book was going through the review process, it received very strong reviews: really positive and really negative, not much in between. The negative reviews effectively said, "Who cares what white people feel? Don't they need to go change the world?" I had to fight an uphill battle to establish that talking about emotions and affect had any kind of political relevance. Thankfully, I don't feel like I have to fight that fight anymore – that if I want to talk about affect or emotion, it could be connected to work in political philosophy. Then, once I got past that hurdle and when I criticized white guilt and shame, I received strong responses that were concerned that this was a kind of white supremacy in disguise. Or, even if that wasn't my intention, that I was really naive and didn't understand that my arguments were supporting or espousing white supremacy. To go then from criticizing guilt and shame to talking about a form of white self-love as an alternative to white shame, well, that confirmed all the worst fears of some of my critics.

For example, someone told me when I was at SPEP [the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy] presenting some earlier work that fed into the book that there was a person in the audience who leaned over and said, "Next thing you know, she's gonna put on a white hood," referring to the Ku Klux Klan. This happened as I was reading the paper. I will admit that the book takes a lot of risks in saying that the comfortable divides we have between the white supremacists, that is, the bad white people over here, and the good ones over there who are anti-racist – that there are not really such sharp lines and that we cannot be confident where those lines are. For that reason, we need a lot of rethinking of strategies and tactics. But once you blur that line, it presents a difficult epistemological issue. How do you know for sure that you're not furthering a white supremacist agenda? And the answer is we cannot. The attempt to know that with certainty and to be really sure you're not doing that – I worry that often becomes an agenda of protecting yourself as a good white person rather than actually figuring out how we might rethink the problem of racial injustice and make some headway on it. It's pretty clear we haven't made much headway. That was true when the book was written and it is still true now. If you start blurring the line between the good and the bad, it's epistemologically and morally risky – even though I very explicitly argue in the book that this is not an argument saying to give up on the good white people, "Go be a bad white person because there's no difference." Nonetheless, some of the responses I received took the position that once you blur that line, you're just like the white supremacists, and not only that, you also open the way for all the white supremacists to stand as legitimate. That was one concern, and it equated to the claim, "Well, maybe because you didn't care about that line, you really weren't a good one after all." Your so-called true colors are showing. So, finishing that book was a very emotionally, affectively, and existentially difficult process.

JS: We're talking about how you're getting a lot of pushback on ideas concerning affect in the early 2010s. You might not be able to answer this, but what do you think has changed either academically or socially and politically that has allowed for that shift towards accepting ideas of affect, or being turned towards it?

Sullivan: I'm not sure. I have a couple of guesses. There has been work going on in affect studies and affect theory in fields outside of philosophy for a long time. So, some of it feels like philosophy is late to catch up. We're still trying to figure out that we have bodies half the time, for example. And there are other things such as when Martha Nussbaum published her book *Political Emotions: Why Love Is Important for Justice*. Not that Nussbaum is hostile to feminism, but she's not a feminist philosopher, she's a political philosopher who works in ancient philosophy. When you get folks outside of the "fringe" group of feminist and critical race philosophers who are publishing major works with major presses that deal with emotion or affect, now suddenly it's okay in philosophy.

RC: I have a question that goes back to the feedback you received about *Good White People*. When we discussed the book in our class, we also had separate opinions, like, "If we want to make political change we should make people cry, we should make people feel ashamed," which is just like the approach you are criticizing in your book. Another approach is that, "If you want other people to hear your pain, you should first hear their pain." So it's like trying to see even racist white people as emotional beings, to see them as persons with affects. So I feel like your book is trying to say, "OK, we have enough of the first approach. Now we should do something about the second approach."

Sullivan: I do think that something like guilt and shame can be the result of being a white person and confronting that wall of ignorance. There are so many ways in the United States that people don't learn about this stuff and their families don't talk about it. I think back to childhood again: there are very few practices or habits in white, "normal," good white families, where the pattern tends to be: if you talk about race, you talk about people of color. To talk about whiteness and how it functions is very uncomfortable for most white people because it's not something they are used to doing. And if you do talk about whiteness, that tends to mark you as being one of the bad white people. So the safe thing to do is not talking about it at all. I'm not saying white people will never feel guilty or ashamed when they learn about wrongdoings, both personally and in their families, and I also think of the long histories of white supremacy and white privilege in different countries. But cultivating white guilt and shame as the marker of how you've become enlightened to the fact that white privilege exists – I'm concerned that doesn't have much to do with actually trying to fight racism but instead with protecting your moral reputation.

RC: I'm reminded of what you said in your article about Trump's election being a backlash against Obama being elected. So I was thinking that maybe there will be a backlash after Trump's election?

Sullivan: I think one of the biggest dangers is that the pushback against Trump will be merely a push to return to where the nation was before he was elected. I'm worried about the pushback of good white people who want to ensure that we get white privilege in the form of "good" rather than "bad" whiteness back in place. I recognize that Trump's election had a lot to do with Obama, that is, with the fact that there was a black man in the White House. But my worry is that anti-Trump energy is trying to go back to where we were before, when we "knew" who the bad white people were and they were kept in their place, so to speak – that's very problematic. I don't know if there's another backlash coming. I think it's too early to tell. But the fact that there is resistance to Trump does not necessarily mean that it's going to tackle some of these other problems. It's not just that the choices are stale, "Accept a Trump-era or try to return to a pre-Trump-era." They also are harmful. There have got to be some different ways to live as a white person. There have got to be some different options both personally and politically. How we create those different ways of living is going to be hard, and it's going to be risky. But if the pushback against Trump is merely returning to the colorblind days of a supposedly post-racial Obama era, we're in trouble.

JS: Do you see any changes in critical race theory as a subject of academic inquiry, especially in this post-Obama era? Or do you see glaring questions that need to be answered or addressed?

Sullivan: The question that I want to get away from is: "Is race real?" That and similar questions have dominated critical philosophy of race for a long time. I know that's not true in other fields where critical race theory is done. In philosophy, however, we've exhausted that question. I also think we need to confront the vicious feedback that public philosophers sometimes receive. I'm thinking of George Yancy, an African American philosopher who ran a series in "The Stone" in the *New York Times* on race, and in December of 2016 he published an editorial the *New York Times* called "Dear White America." He also has a book coming out in April of 2018 called *Backlash: What Happens When We Talk Honestly about Race*. The massive amount of vile and threatening things that were sent to him in the wake of "Dear White America" is mind-blowing, and as a result Yancy had to have police presence with him when he was on campus for a while. Is this what critical philosophers writing about race have in store for them? Yancy has received support from academics, and the American Philosophical Association recently published a statement in support of him and other public philosophers. But the episode has a chilling effect. Yancy isn't going to back down, he's going to keep doing the work he does. But when you see what got thrown at him…

I've heard a lot of people, including graduate students, pull back and say, "Why be a public philosopher?" or, "If you're going to be a public philosopher, why talk about race, why go there, why risk yourself and your family?" It would be really easy to go back to abstractly analyzing whether race is real or not. Or for young scholars to decide, "You know, I don't need to write my dissertation on that topic, I don't need to have my first publications in that area. I've got to get a job, I've got to get tenure, I don't need that controversy, and so I'll just step back"? It reminds me a little bit of a book by John McCumber called *Time in the Ditch*, which examines the McCarthy era after World War II, what happened in the academic world, and particularly how that shaped what happened in philosophy. He also discusses the type of philosophy that was institutionalized in academic departments, and the kind of philosophy that got shut down. I didn't know this before reading McCumber's book, but philosophers were the main academics fired or otherwise harassed in the McCarthy era; philosophy was the primary discipline that was targeted. And so, there was a huge pullback away from doing anything connected to social-political issues. McCarthyism was very effective in shaping the discipline. And now my worry is: what kind of chilling effect are attacks on public philosophers going to have on the discipline, and not just philosophers but other scholars talking about difficult social political questions? It might seem easy to brush it off and call the 1950s "that strange McCarthy era," but similar things could happen again.

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