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### The affect of writing to it

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# The affect of writing to it: A collaborative response to Deleuze and Guattari

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## Perhaps, an introduction

It was a dark and stormy afternoon when Professor Jonathan Wyatt defied lines of flight to arrive virtually at the DRAW (Departing Radically in Academic Writing) retreat to share his thinking and wondering about writing with Deleuze and Guattari. DRAW is a writing group for higher degree research students and others in the Humanities and Social Sciences academic community at The University of Queensland who are committed to writing their work creatively and critically in rebellion and actively respond to the question, “What might the work of creative and alternative academic writing as inquiry in ‘post’ qualitative research look like?” This particular moment of encounter with Jonathan coincided with our stay at the Moreton Bay Research Station on Minjerrabah and the worlding refrain of a world in unpredictable wet season movement provided the bassline. The atmosphere inside and outside the room was wild and the audience of research higher degree students were perched precariously on the edge of their chairs as they waited in anticipation to be tossed and thrown about by the rebellion in the words and works of these two scholars. Without warning the students’ bodies became without organs, their minds hurled across the room in time with the tempo of the tempest as it raged. “Writing”, Jonathan began in close companionship with Ken Gale, “takes it out of us, and takes us out of ourselves, and out of it. We get out of it by writing. We have to” (2018, p. 121). Words like totalising, sensing, and longing were then flung about as Jonathan shared his theoretical love affair with Deleuze and Guattari. Before we had had time to gather ourselves, other agential cuts were made. Lines of flight encountered assemblages of bodies without organs who clouded and territorialised over us with immanent imperatives and minor literatures, stuttering with emergent language in a logic of sense like nomads forever on the way. Many of his words were as strange as they were strangely moving, so much so that when Jonathan asked, what if—like Deleuze and Guattari, he and Ken Gale—collaborative reading, talking and writing was a way to bring theory alive, we were ready to “cut ourselves and bleed theory”; to take a rebellious line of flight and write to it. Together we then wrote in zigzag fashion to and with one another about the experience of being with Jonathan, being with Deleuze and Guattari and being in communion writing in that moment. This chapter presents the refrains of this collaborative writing as calls and responses in between twos and aims to share the affect of “writing to it”. In doing so, we hope our collection of words stammering in the storm shows that there are creative and critical ways of becoming academic writer in collaboration, and that these, in and of themselves, may be the best hope we have of departing radically in our work to change the world.

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I watched the trees while Jonathan talked about Deleuze and Guattari, and occasionally heard fragments like ...I forgot, but I think I heard some things. Writing affecting bodies and bodies affecting writing. Maybe people reading Deleuze and Guattari think bodily thoughts because the writing is so dense that they try to counterbalance brain discomfort with supplementary bodily comfort. Look at the clock: still another 15 minutes. Deleuze and Guattari: their names evoke an azure-coloured guitar in my mind. Jonathan mentioned music. Deleuze and Guattari strum a refrain on an azure-coloured guitar. Still another eight minutes. I feel like I’m stuck at a family gathering talking to those relatives that I don’t really know but everyone speaks fondly of, so I smile along and tolerate their company. In theory, I know that I can leave but I feel a sense of obligation. It’s hard to break the rhythm of a presence. Finally, an aunty needs help with the dishes, and so I take my line of flight away.

\*

Take a line of flight. We are never stuck at a family gathering or any other kind of gathering. We are not stuck here now. Perhaps we are not here now

at all. Perhaps here is just the moment between where we have been and where we are going. I haven't been to Deleuze and Guattari either. I haven't "done the work". It sure felt like I was doing work. I guess I just wasn't doing *the* work. My work is not *the* work. I am coming from doing work that was not Deleuze and Guattari and on my way to going to Deleuze and Guattari next. I wonder what the weather will be like. I wonder what I should pack. I get the sense it will be a long flight.

\*

This is very sticky writing for first thing in the morning. Yesterday I thought that the 8-9 pm timeslot was too late for writing about Deleuze and Guattari, and today it is too early. What seems to be the independent variable in this equation? Hint: it's not time. See? A bit of clarity never hurt anybody. When I said 'sticky' I meant 'stuck-y', but I don't think that is a word. It should be. I feel stucky alrighty. This writing feels like the PhD Stuck Place, I've no time to be dwelling here thank you very much! My thoughts are already prone to tumbling on directionless winds, I have no need for a Deleuze- and Guattari-parachute to give me extra thrust. I'd rather be on the ground. You know 'the ground', right, Deleuze and Guattari? You mention it but I don't think you've ever come down to the ground.

\*\*\*

But and yet. Three letter words, not four-letter words but perhaps they should be – spoken like explosions with enough grunt to blow the centre of any stronghold. We often dismiss them because they are small. Small is insignificant, small is not worthy of our attention, small is easily passed over, small should never begin a sentence, small is easily overpowered and ground down to dust before it has time to do any damage. These three small words with three letters. Two of them are fully aimed at contradiction while the other prefers connection and yet somehow, they profess to be doing the same kind of conjunctive work. The first and the third differ from the second, always fighting within/against for it is too dangerous to do otherwise. The second holds the privilege of being allowed to be multiple but in its naiveté cannot see that to raise the possibility is the selfsame yet. It is easy to unite when you have no knots to untie. Yet, but, and a three ply not quite braided. There is a thread that hangs loosely between them, the othered letter "why/y". And yet, but?

\*

We may be in a jam now.  
We are. In a fix.  
If we use so few.  
How can we try out a new way of thi.. kno..  
Is it so we axe any big ide...?  
And. Yet. But. Why?

And, yes, we must begin within the containments,  
the so-called "safe" plots.  
From there we start plotting.  
Clouding.  
Writing into.

Yet, we must launch from a place of confusion and annoyance

We must use our angry, feeling, hurting, bleeding, beating  
assemblages to propel our thoughts out into places new and  
different  
Use those four-letter words!  
Think beyond the territorialisation, deterritorialization,  
reterritorialization

But this work takes courage  
To disrupt the tribes  
Free the fixed shackles  
Push further and further into the fluidity of wide-open smooth spaces  
So, keep up the fight  
Raise the possibilities, the multiplicities  
Push further and further  
Ply your wares  
DRAW on your writing allies  
to take those lines of flight

\*

I love the word ally. It feels like a whole basket, a-tisket-a tasket, of  
love and all in a four-letter word. ALL-Y. It too embraces a small  
three letter word, all with a "why/y" at the end of the beginning  
smoothing out the striations which precede it. Re/turn it around  
Y'ALL, where are all in this together apart, singular in our  
separation, as multiple subjects we are becoming verbs. Perhaps this  
is DRAW, perhaps this is DRAWing and becoming a DRAWer.  
Taking a line of flight with the three assemblages of four and tw/o  
one and three, to L(L)AY it all down in the basket, a-tisket-a-tasket of  
love, and in its quartet to remain on refrain. DRAWing,  
RAW(roar)ing, AW(e)ing, Wings to Lizzy-ing, dizzy-ing writing  
that's fizzy-ing with the blood of life if we dare to write to it to take it  
out of ourselves. We have to. ALL-Y.

\*\*\*

*Jonathan was talking about writing and becoming entangled with different concepts  
of Deleuze and Guattari: writing between the two-rhizome—bodies without  
organs—refrain—desire. My mind was juggling with those concepts and I looked  
outside.*

*"It is raining", I thought to myself, "I cannot go for the walk this evening that I  
have planned since morning."*

*I felt a bit down but suddenly my backyard popped up in my mind.*

*"At least my plants will get enough water today".*

*I felt good.*

*I tried to bring back my attention to Jonathan's talk. I pondered on the question that I  
asked Jonathan about Deleuze' concept of desire. I tried to recall the points that*

Jonathan explained in his talk about the concept of desire. Desire is generally seen as negatively relating it to lack of something. Deleuze looks at desire in a different way. He sees desire as a positive and productive force. Desire does not emerge from lacking rather the feeling of lack emerges from desire. The desire to write doesn't emerge from lack of something rather we write to create and produce something. Isn't it interesting?

\*

Deleuze and desire; you, anonymous writer, have given me much to think about. In lieu of the walk you cannot take, I will take a walk with desire and Deleuze, finding a line of flight--I am thinking about the genealogy of ideas, and about lack. Freud, to Lacan, to Deleuze. Freud and Lacan always find women lacking; Freud thinks, even, that women and girls perceive themselves to be lacking, and covet that which they lack. Thinking lack with Lacan, my understanding of his understanding of desire inherently positions men as its holders: women are the original Other, the (m)other, that which the boy child categorises as lacking. Here, I see what Lacan is lacking: where is the girl child? The one who never understood herself to be lacking before she was told it was so, by someone else? This framework, which in its phallogentrism ascribes to me and all who share my body an absence I do not sense and cannot recognise in myself, sets me outside from myself. In the mirror stage, I cannot see myself reflected. Deleuze and Guattari's conception of desire outside of lack, and instead into the real, into a world interacting, moving parts in relation with one another, frees me from a symbolic order in which I exist to symbolise the development of the male Ego. Desire is something I can have; here I exist as a subject, able to aspire.

\*

Amazing! You have opened-up a series of intensive lines that have the potential to disrupt the assemblage/thought that is based on deficit or lacking. The lacking image of thought looks for some ground where a stable subject resides. That subject is a rational man. This image of the thought demands that everybody needs to idealize that subject and strive to become like that image. Deleuze's concept of desire troubles that stable and rational identity and opens up to become different. That is a productive and creative process. Deleuze disrupts the stable being and tries to create a smooth space where a person can become other/different, rather than following a

*specific image of thought. We need to trouble the binary image of man and women  
and open it up to difference or multiplicity.*

\*\*\*

This place brings back a nostalgic memory. I worked on that site in the middle of nowhere, in an exotic island. The site reminds me of that place, where I could see the ocean from where I am sitting. The sound of the toads after the rain, the crickets and the darkness outside were so natural. But inside this building is quite contrast with what I hear from the outside. I feel like I was sitting in that office, at night after work, to call home. After dinner, I usually waited anxiously for colleagues who would take me back to the office. We drove through the dark of the night to the office which was about 5 minutes from the camp. The office was full, just like the normal day. But this time of night, people at the office would call their loved ones. It was the best time of the day when we could connect with the outside world.

★

I imagine the room quickly fills with snippets of conversations. The usual greetings. How was your day? What did you get up to? And laughs or supportive replies. Good nights and speak soon. It is isolating to be so far away, physically and emotionally. Islands can be quite isolating, surrounded by water with no way back, to connect back, to connect beyond the safety of the land. And yet the expanse of water has a way of centering you. You find yourself, a place where you find yourself. You are one with your body, mind and soul. And then you are one with all your surrounds. So, it is with writing. There are conversations around you and in your mind. These pester and tease you to escape. So, you let them free, slowly and cautiously, to place themselves on the page. To see them, for others to see them. They speak to you and you wonder. Wonder about their meaning, how others will see them as they read them, what meaning others will see as they read. Words. So much to say, and yet just symbols on a page. Words we speak, across the waters to loved ones. Words with their own meaning shared by those communicating. Words that define relationships, tell stories, connect and disconnect. Yet just symbols. Symbols with meaning. Many meanings.

★

What did we do in this office anyway? Wasn't it boring to be in the office day and night? We did not feel that way if the night came. It was time to call home and connect with your loved ones. My mother usually answered the phone. I would tell her how I missed her cooking and home. The feeling and desire to go back to outside world after being caged for 31 days in that tiny island was unbearable. I would tell her I would be home soon and would imagine her special cooking would welcome me every time I came back from this site. Time flew so fast. It has been such a long time I left the site in that exotic island. From the seat where I am sitting now, the memory of being in the island has come back.

\*\*\*

“Write to it,” Jonathan says. “Take a line of flight.”  
What has captured your interest?  
To be able to write and see where it goes.  
And then I think of the affective elements.  
It reminds me of what Liz says, “Pay attention to the detail.”  
To write, the detail.  
It is the words.  
It is the rhythm of words, magically placed,  
positioned in partnership.  
To evoke an image, a sensation, a feeling.  
Words that paint a picture.  
They do more.  
They sing to me, they resonate, they are sacred, between us.  
They connect on an inner intimate level.  
Together we connect on our own secret level,  
not yet shared with others. Words.  
Words when shared.  
They form an intimate connection  
between their meaning and the reader.  
I read them.  
A picture forms in my own mind.  
I am alone, in my private world.  
The thoughts are my own.  
It is private.  
It is selfish.  
It is intimate.  
So close.  
And I share the moment with no other.  
Words and writing.  
Writing is the same.  
An act of solitude.  
An act of privacy.  
There is an intimacy with the page,  
the letters, their arrangement, their form, their style.  
It is like a love affair.  
Private and sacred.  
And shared only we choose to share,  
to reveal our relationship.

\*

*The challenge for me though, is that I have to share something, and my personal, intimate, selfish thoughts will eventually be put on eSpace<sup>1</sup> for all to read. They will be free, generating their own lines of flight through minds and worlds. That petrifies me. I didn't even want to share some of this writing with my advisor, crying as I pressed send on emails that she requested, without yet knowing what the contents would be or*

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*what those contents would cost to inscribe on paper. I asked how I might remove some of myself from those pages, making them less personal without losing the essence, and was challenged by her response: "This is a very powerful and honest statement...I have no suggestions for cutting this...". My words had already taken their own lines of flight in my advisor's mind. Perhaps she saw elements of herself, other students, family members, acquaintances, but I will never know. It's not for me to know. Those lines have already flown.*

\*

To step out on a limb is to risk falling. But you will not fall. You are in flight. You may feel like you are flying alone. But be Jonathan Livingston Seagull (by Richard Bach). Be brave. Let the others scuff at you, call you crazy, fly away from you or sit on the wave washed rocks day-in, day-out. Soar to new flights, fly beyond the limits the others fly between. Be free.

Be brave. To be different is not comfortable. But at some point, it is important to acknowledge your thoughts and allow them to be free also.

To challenge the status quo is the only way we can move forward and evolve. Think of it as innovation. Introducing new ideas will always be met with resistance. This is such a human trait. Yet we also welcome change. It may take time for change to be accepted, but once accepted it will spread. Persuade through the value of being authentically you. You have a voice. Others have a voice. You are the vehicle through which voices will be heard. Speak out loudly, honestly and with courage. Others will listen. They cannot deny the voices when you speak and write.

Perhaps you are right in thinking that the words resonate on a level that is uncomfortable. But dis-comfort is an opportunity to acknowledge something within ourselves, even if it is difficult to accept. Our values and beliefs are being challenged. I encourage you to let the words free, to speak for themselves, be to be interpreted as they will, and to be brave. You are growing. Fear nothing. You are freeing lines of flight.

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Thinking with and through Deleuze and Guattari, I am circling around the notion of becoming. Jonathan notes that Deleuze and Guattari contrast becoming with being, "in the phenomenological sense, which is a kind of stasis." Becoming, instead, is a process; through writing, the writer is engaged in a process of becoming. This speaks, to me, of movement; of openness to, and action within, the world. On this windy day I take a line of flight and am swept along to Simone de Beauvoir's concepts of immanence and transcendence. Immanence: objectified, stuck, held down and in place, repetitive, meaningless. Transcendence: active, creative, orientated outwards, a doing-ness marked by subjectivity, intention, meaning. As Beauvoir illuminates, this distinction is gendered; women, as is structured by women's societal position within marriage and family, are rooted in immanence, but at the same time, know themselves to be subjects and thus to be a transcendence. Our existence is thus one of in-betweenness. Leaping



once more into the air, I flit around in the history of ideas and land at one of my favourite essays, "Throwing Like a Girl" by Iris Marion Young, who finds Beauvoir's ideas lying on the ground and picks them up again, throwing them into the air (like a girl) and seeing how they fly. Young's essay argues that feminine bodily comportment, motility and spatiality is characterised by ambiguous transcendence, inhibited intentionality, and discontinuous unity—each of which is partial, fragmented and stuttering. Becoming is, perhaps, situated. Becoming is, perhaps, gendered. Becoming is, perhaps, political.

\*

I have not had a personal encounter with D&G. They emerged a few times, but I had already made up my mind that they are difficult, but Jonathan could translate it to me in a language that I could comprehend. Thinking about becoming, I wonder what my writing will become? What is possible through writing? Jonathan gave a clever hint through the Deleuzian concept to plug a concept in and see what happens. Unexpected writing will be becoming through this experimentation. Of course, it is not happening arbitrarily but through extensive and intensive reading and writing as a process of becoming. Writing cannot do anything if reading does not follow it. They should be walking hand in hand. Through the relational process of writing and reading, my own concept can be created through my embodied experiences as we live with theories and we are indeed leaving theories. Through the process of writing, I am writing about writing and be playful with writing to create a concept. I need to involve things and people that I encounter have a conversation with each other. I can see now that writing is indeed an intra-active entangled relationship between myself, my body, things and people around me.

\*

I read these words about writing and becoming, and I feel I am becoming in the process. And what will become of this becoming? What will emerge in this emerging? In writing in-between writing, we become, as you say, entangled. Thinking back to transcendence, it strikes me that these terms we have been talking about, freedom and becoming and transcendence, are terms rooted in the concept of the individual. But we are two women writing together, becoming together, working with the words of women who came before. Becoming-in-relation in-between. Cixous implores us to write our bodies, to write ourselves as women, but what might it be to write as women, rather than a woman? To write collectively and in-community with one another, from our embodied experiences? Might we then find a way to think and live and be with each other in a place beyond patriarchal-colonial thinking and living and being? You speak about living theory and leaving theory, and I would like to add another adjective to the list: loving. To write theory in-between, I am thinking, is perhaps a loving kind of theory, a loving kind of writing. A love that nourishes life, Hélène Cixous reminds us, is "a love that rejoices in the exchange which multiplies", and this writing feels like, in our exchange, one that has multiplied. I

rejoice. In writing together, writing in abundance. As Cixous reminds us, "in one another, we will never be lacking."

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I always thought of becoming as having an ending, reaching a place where one has become what one aimed to become; but tonight, challenged me to think beyond small goals to the broader picture. When something or someone becomes one thing they are still becoming. Human nature is an endless evolution of survival, development, thought, and exploration. It's not in our nature to stop, we always seek something, becoming in our search. "When people stop, they get sick and die". The words of a doctor proclaiming that they will not retire, until they absolutely must. Continuous becoming is actively and necessarily sought in their profession, but do they really see retirement as a trapdoor held open by the Grim Reaper that slams shut on their careers as their younger colleagues sweep them in, signalling the transition from becoming to de-becoming as they slide backwards through old age?

\*

**You have found some meaning in the concept of becoming. I think it is useful how you are thinking about adults' becoming. I research early childhood, and dominant discourses often focus on children's becoming, at times to the detriment of children's being. What happens to young children today must be linked in a clear and useful way to children's futures, overlooking all the little experiences of being, or indeed little becomings, that are valuable in their own right. Even if such value cannot be captured in numbers or words. Perhaps society does not know what to do with young children or retirees when their everyday activities cannot be clearly linked to financial gain.**

\*

Linked to financial gain, now there's an interesting line of flight. I'm so sick of everything being linked to financial gain. And it's the "being" in that sentence that's so telling, implying dead and done rather than live and kicking. Well kick this: I prefer moving forward than backwards. To slow is to move towards being and to be is to disappear, die, stagnate forever.

Deleuze and Guattari would probably argue that even then, you are becoming; becoming bones, ashes, dust; becoming memory and myth.

But I prefer to choose my becomings and make best of those I can't

choose. Becoming is both a passive and an active process as forces act around us and we respond to them. I want to look to the horizon and see possibility, because even approaching storms carry possibility- the possibility of rain to wash away the dust... or the possibility of getting struck by lightning. We can't control the approaching storms, but we can steer our becoming through and beyond them.

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I sit in the twilight room, my eyes distracted by the motions of the trees as they sway violently in the wind. A cool air rushes through a nearby window, caressing my face with its touch. The words Jonathan says are resonating with me on some level, and I begin to take copious notes. The words of dead people, the webs of thoughts they made in their mind, had always captivated me. It has been so many years that I inhabited this world that I suddenly, right now, began to feel my head spinning even as the breeze continued to wash over me, calming my thoughts. As Jonathan's words swam over my head, I began to wonder who was Deleuze and why he was important. Of course, his name was French, but did this just put him in a category with those other dead white French dudes who were deliberately impenetrable, like Foucault and Derrida? My notes became more cursory as I began to wonder what it was all for. I appreciated the calm, kind clarity that Jonathan took to explain these clearly turgid concepts to me, and there were moments where I sensed some of the breadth of Deleuze and Guattari's ambition. As Jonathan spoke, and he began to unpack some of the linguistic complexity behind their concepts, I wondered if indeed their work had been mistranslated as it made its way into English. There was something in the sound of the words in English—line of flight, bodies without organs, assemblages—that clashed and crashed around in my head, creating an uneasy rhythm that I longed to be free of.

\*

"Am I not pretty enough, is my heart too broken?", Kasey Chambers plaintive song sits with me in contrast to the brightly lit room. Her voice haunts and hacks me back to moments I would rather forget, skulking around in my body, brain and heart in re/turn. It is exhausting remembering what it is you are not. Not pretty enough means not smart enough, and not smart enough means you have to work and be harder, and working and being harder means that you cannot be soft, and not being soft means leaving your heart outside, and leaving your heart outside means that eventually you become so tightly tied up in knots that you are broken, crying too much and becoming too outspoken. If I was pretty enough and not too broken, I would walk right up to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari with my tear stained face to tell them quite plainly, while I think your poetic prose is pretty enough and not too broken, I don't really want to take a line of flight with you if it means leaving my heart outside. I hear the word assemblages, and feel pieces shattering and breaking the world asunder; I hear the phrase bodies without organs and feel my bones crumbling in refrain. I let the rhythm of your words raindrop on my window, I go to sleep dreaming of keys

tapping out minor literatures, I wake in clouded territories of blank pages with words strange and familiar, I go searching for ways to write to it. But yet (rather than and, and, and) I have waited long enough and find that while you might be able to, I cannot *not* leave my not pretty enough and too broken heart outside —and so I shan't.

I don't know where to begin. I don't know what I'm feeling, but it feels like something heavy, inscrutable, like words cannot touch it. It is joy in the beauty of your words, it is sadness, it is a tender poignancy of something lost, a time forgotten, a person we could have become. I have always been fascinated by the past, present and future all wound up into one, of the what if, then, of the endless possibilities and choices that we face. I shirk from the sneaking feeling, as time marches on, that we reach a point in the road where these choices began to narrow, the sum of our previous choices catching up with us, obscuring the horizon from our sight.

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My response after listening to Johnathan's speech was of nervousness as I overwhelmingly call my son asking for help to understand Deleuze. It was not so bad though, I was making sense of some things he was talking, in my own little way. The concept of "being" and "becoming" was "clear and cloudy". While "being" is static denotes stable, and fixed, "becoming" is always in the process. In that context, I was 'being' silly by underestimating my abilities to understand philosophies. However, I am not 'becoming' Deleusian, or rather delusional. We are all different in our own little ways.

While some philosophers may sell like "hot cakes", I affirm my commitment to the old block Paulo Freire. If writing is the process of own becoming, I would rather write simple, reachable, readable. For that is the purpose of writing—reaching out to all and not to the privilege few.

Writing is to immerse and provide purpose but should not be to scare, intimidate or strain you. It's okay to say it loud sometimes— "I don't get you" or break the relationship with the celebrity just like I do.

*For you, then, this is the right flight path, to follow Freire, rather than switching tracks to Deleuze. Freire too spent his life trying to reach a wide audience, rather than those on the path of privilege. You are already on your own line of flight, and that flight path hadn't crossed paths with Deleuze...until now. Perhaps, to understand Freire's work your flight path needed to connect with Deleuze, like a stop-over on a long haul. On this stop over you disembark, search the scene, and spend some time in the flight lounge. Just being, and perhaps becoming also. Perhaps when you are in this transit lounge bad weather sets in, it becomes unclear and cloudy, and so you are forced to spend more time in this Deleuzian transit lounge. It's not forever, just for the time being. It might be a few hours, maybe a few days. Eventually, you will re-board the flight to Freire once more. And you will be on your way. But you will always remember that time you were delayed in the Deleuzian stop-over.*

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Very well said, it's the journey that matters and not the destination. Deleuze stop-over was like a little fling, a little secret that may stay hidden in the book closet or may come out when least expected. Learning is fluid. Openness to admit the flaws, trying and engaging is what really matters. For what Deleuze said may seem to be just sounds and howls in that

moment, I open up the Wiki page to know more about “Body without organs”.

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I do like Jonathon. He had me at clouding. I'm not entirely sure what clouding means. Jonathon spoke into strange concepts at such a rapid-fire pace...assemblage, territorialisation, deterritorialization, reterritorialization. I tried to keep up, I really did. I'm a PhD candidate, on a writing retreat at a research station! But Jonathon's curtains keep pulling focus. It's their heaviness. You just don't see heavy curtains like that here. Oops. I'm off task. Concentrate. Jonathon is still speaking into those tricky concepts... stasis, refrains, backflips, body-without-organs, fluidity and fixivity. I'm having a hard time keeping up. I wonder if Jonathon could be my new husband. I like his intellect. Even though I don't quite understand him. I must concentrate if I'm going to marry him. Did I hear

him right? Did he just talk about Jonathoning?  
He's now Jonathoning about plots of land and  
lines of flight. He shares a story of his reading  
group sitting in the same booth every time they  
meet. I think I'd like to meet him, there in the  
booth, and talk.

\*

Your marriage idea—daydreaming I would say,  
For there were many contenders nodding and noting to what he  
had to say.

But your letter gives the comfort of knowing that I was not  
alone,  
Though not intending to marry him, if that is a console.

I felt intellectually challenged for a while.  
Thought to get-up and say goodbye,

The alienation heightened with group engaging in a  
discussion,  
I don't belong to the world that is "Delusional"

For me, simplicity is the way it be,  
Without worrying about the complexity of "being" and  
"becoming".

\*

Dear Deleuzioned,  
Such a calming response to my anguished  
soul.  
Your challenged intellect meets my  
bleeding heart.  
In a room full of nods and notes.

But please do not feel alienated.

Draw comfort from your DRAWing  
comrades.

It would seem we all had wobbles and  
worries over worldly refrains  
as we thought into this thinker's thoughts.  
He was after all a most becoming  
philosopher.

And we my dear friend are just at the start  
of always being and becoming.

So many concepts to conceptualise,  
theories to theorise, territories to de- and  
re- territorialise.

I'm so glad you stayed in this place where  
you belong.

Together we will shift the organs of our  
bodies into new positions.

There must be discomfort with this if we  
are ever to find different ways of doing  
things.

May all your lines of flight be long and  
free.

With love,

Mel

P.S. I am wondering if you would like to be  
our bridesmaid?

\*\*\*

*There is a sense of pain when talking about refrain.  
My head hurts. It feels like something is squeezing my brain.  
A refrain, says Johnathon, is about marking territory, longing for  
territory, warding off chaos.  
Terror claims territory. My chest tightens. Breath becomes air, like  
water in the shallows.  
Territory. Enclave. A place of barriers and boundaries.  
Terror-tory.  
This is not my refrain.  
I look out the window searching for an escape to this refrain. An  
escape from the boundaries and borders that Deleuze and  
Guattari seem to have built around me with their inescapable  
words. All I see is wind and water and all I hear is the wailing of  
the curlews and a few bull frogs croaking away the night.  
Arak, arak, arak. Roop, roop, roop.  
We have invaded their territory. Perhaps they are the ones feeling  
terror of our refrain.  
I don't want to terrorise them with my refrain.  
The truth is I chafe at this refrain. I want to think of a refrain as  
a bloom space, like Kathleen Stewart. A worlding refrain where  
things grow without terror. Things. Ideas. Plants. Curlews. Bull  
frogs. Where everything blooms without the terror of territories: an  
idyllic refrain. A refrain that lets things take flight and cross the  
invisible borders and boundaries of our minds and the land and  
the sand.  
Some might accuse me of a socialist refrain. But it is not. It's just  
refusing to be pigeonholed back into the terror-tory of that  
refrain. I prefer the common refrain.*

\*

Interesting! Everybody needs a little territory or space of her/his own. When we hum while cooking/taking bath/walking we try to create a little space to stand on for some moment. In other words, we put an umbrella up to make a little shadow for us. But suddenly we find a hole in the umbrella, sunlight comes in and shakes our territory. We find ourselves deterritorialized and try to find another territory for us through reterritorialize. Ah, but there is no permanent territory. You cannot step twice in the same river.

\*



*The territory you talk about reminds me of the way Karen Barad's diffracts her words. I am no physicist and stumble and stutter as I wander around her words but what I see and hear could be that sunlight through the umbrella. She speaks about the way light in dark places pushes "through and around boundaries". When light is forced through a pinhole, light intrudes in unexpected places, in shadows, in places that should be places of total darkness. I like that idea of light in the darkness. It enlightens me.*

\*\*\*

*Make productive use of this time. Search, stretch, reach for a question. Ask about the clouds. None of the words make any sense to me at all. Refrain. They look up in acknowledgement of something familiar. Make productive use of this time. You don't have time to sit here for this long, not knowing, not learning, not doing, not... Make productive use of this time. Clench the pelvic floor. Now pull the belly button towards the spine. Add the glutes. Now inhale and let them go. Or is it exhale and let them go? I never know. Why do I never know? Assemblage. They nod in shared understanding. That must be another important word, I better write it down. Squeeze the pelvic floor, add the abs, now the glutes. Turn on glutes. There we go. Make productive use of this time. Listen attentively. It is laying the groundwork for future understanding. What even is this? Did I feel like this when I first read Foucault, Derrida and Bourdieu? Probably. Remember that trip away when I spent the whole holiday in my room reading about Foucault, Derrida and Bourdieu? Make productive use of the time, I had thought. Take a line of flight.*

\*

*Everywhere I sense obligation, duty, command. Someone else, somewhere, watching me, telling me what to do, how to spend my time. What if I don't like it? What if I want to break free, take a line of flight, reassemble my body organs to create a new me, with untold capacities and potential? The words of old white French men linger in the room like a heavy raincloud about to burst. What was clouding again? They are old, they are white, they are French, they are dead.*

*Does that mean I shouldn't give them a try? Try to sense the vibrations, the frequency, the waves in their minds, speaking to me*

*across the multitude of chasms that separate us in language, time, distance, gender? I felt doubt creep in as I was pulled in this direction, and then that, suddenly feeling as though I wasn't sure where to go. But then I wonder what it is to create these kinds of divisions and doubts in our minds. How theory can exclude as well as include. I think back to Deleuze and Guattari with their radical aspirations on the eve of those heady nights in 1968, the university poised on the brink of internal collapse, and wonder what it is that our universities have become. In this time and place, with these pressures, with these politics of inclusion and exclusion, to make us feel as though we aren't good enough, that we don't belong. I feel a sliver of sadness creep into my mind, wending its way slowly through the back alleys in my mind. I suppose I had always been an idealist. I dreamed of the university as an emancipatory space, one where knowledge would set us all free. These naive thoughts of a seventeen-year-old crept back to haunt me now and I realised that we will never truly be free until we break the shackles of the oppressive discourses that are always there, clutching their claws at our necks, waiting to ensnare us. Why aren't you working? Why don't you get this? I calmed the thoughts in my mind and allowed myself to be, like a pebble on the shore, oblivious to the tide about to engulf me.*

\*

*Why don't I get this? Why don't I see my story and the stories of those whose stories I collect, in the theory of these old white French men? "You have to be able to defend why you don't use them," they warn. "They are who everyone is talking about now. If you are not, you'll need to defend yourself." A lifetime of defending myself, of defending the women in my family, the girls in my school, the women I know, the women I don't know, always defending the women. Defending yourself is feminist work. It seems defending my feminist work is my next feminist work. A lifetime of practice should have me prepared. I don't feel prepared. I feel spent. Perhaps I too am the naïve seventeen-year-old who expected to be set free. Perhaps learning to defend myself will set me free.*

\*\*\*

(Not a) conclusion

I am back again at that Moreton Bay research station in the room with the big windows with these writers, with you all. When you were there, I was here in Edinburgh in my flat with the heavy curtains that pulled you off task. I am with you all now, differently. It's months on from then. Reading your text(s) it's as if I have stepped through the screen into that place by the ocean, that island writing retreat, at the tables with you, feeling, seeing, hearing the wind and storms, that event.

Yet I am now also here at my desk, writing in another apartment. This room has light curtains; they would not distract you. It's late northern hemisphere post-Covid-lockdown Spring, with its sense of opening and release. From this window I see the plant-strewn yard where my neighbour trains her assistance dogs. I am hoping she will appear with Lawrence, her current one, and set up a new game, a new exercise, so that I can witness his endearing movements and skills.

I am meanwhile back with you looking out into the darkness, feeling the flows and currents here and now, there and then, these flows and currents of Deleuze and Guattari in the zigzag of writing between you. I feel your writing landing here, resting here, moving here in these moments; before long this multiplicitous text and all it speaks, sings, and dances of, will move on elsewhere, finding its place with others.

My guitar rests against the wall, with its back to me, varnished brown, though I now can only see it as azure. I can only see it as Deleuze and Guattari playing their complex, arcane notes and ambiguous, terror-ful refrains.

Can you see how you're with me? Can you sense how your 'writing to it' evokes and provokes, elicits and affects? How I am zigzagging between you, between the becomings of you? I think about calling my 92-year-old mother, whom I have not seen for months, and telling her I miss her and miss her cooking. I have Deleuze and Guattari here on my couch and I am speaking with them, with these old white dead dudes, together with gift of your words. I am with them as well as around your tables, thinking Deleuze and Guattari would also feel like they were stuck at a family gathering. Guattari, in particular, would be restless, wanting to shake it up, to move around in between us. I see Guattari, that blast of disruptive energy, being amused and energised by the notion that he and Deleuze were a stopover on a long-haul flight. He would be happy with that, with being a brief pause, a liminal space, a threshold, with being on the move.

Which this, your—now our—writing, is: always already on the move. Disruptive, disturbing, rebellious. Defiantly never pretty enough, always living and writing with a broken heart.

## References

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