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Non-Representational Methodologies

Re-Envisioning Research

Edited by
Phillip Vannini



Non-Representational Methodologies

Non-representational theory is one of the contemporary moment's most influential theoretical perspectives within social and cultural theory. It is now widely considered to be the logical successor of postmodern theory, the logical development of poststructuralist thought, and the most notable intellectual force behind the turn across the social and cultural sciences away from cognition, meaning, and textuality. Yet it is often poorly understood. This is in part because of its complexity, but also because of its limited treatment in the few volumes chiefly dedicated to it. Theories must be useful to researchers keen on utilizing concepts and analytical frames for their personal interpretive purposes. How useful non-representational theory is, in this sense, is yet to be understood. This book outlines a variety of ways in which non-representational ideas can influence the research process, the very value of empirical research, the nature of data, the political value of data and evidence, the methods of research, the very notion of method, and the styles, genres, and media of research.

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Foreword

Tim Ingold

One night, a few years ago, I woke from a dream with the following lines in my head:

*Often in the midst of my endeavors
Something ups and says
“Enough of words,
Let’s meet the world.”*

I do not know who put these lines there. Certainly, I did not invent them. But immediately upon waking, and before they had time to evaporate, I rose from my bed to write them down. They remain, pinned to a notice board in my office, and every so often I take a look at them, to remind myself of the message they contain.

They could perhaps be taken as a manifesto for a non-representational way of working. This is not exactly a theory, nor is it a method or technique as commonly understood. It is not a set of regulated steps to be taken towards the realization of some predetermined end. It is a means, rather, of carrying on and of being carried—that is, of living a life with others, humans and non-humans all—that is cognizant of the past, finely attuned to the conditions of the present, and speculatively open to the possibilities of the future. I call it *correspondence*, in the sense not of coming up with some exact match or simulacrum for what we find in the things and happenings going on around us, but of *answering* to them with interventions, questions, and responses of our own. It is as though we were involved in an exchange of letters. “Let’s meet the world,” for me, is an invitation—an exhortation or command even—to join in such a correspondence. It is, at the same time, a complaint against the cowardice of scholars who would preferably retreat into a stance that I once heard described as “tangentialism,” in which our meeting is but a glance that shears away from the uncomfortable business of mixing our own endeavors too closely with the lives and times of those with whom our researches have brought us into contact. Indeed, correspondence and tangentialism are precise opposites, and they entail quite different understandings of what is meant by scholarly research. This book sets

out, by precept and example, just what this difference is and how it impacts upon the way we work.

“Enough of words,” my muse declared, and I sympathize. We are suffering, in academic life, from a surfeit of words. It would not be so bad if these words, like good food, were rich in flavor, varied in texture, and lingering in the contemplative feelings they evoke. Carefully selected and well-prepared words are conducive to rumination. They enliven the spirit, which responds in kind. But the fact that word-craft of this kind has been hived off to a restricted domain, known as poetry, is indicative of where the problem lies. If writing had not lost its soul, then what need would we have for poetry? We go there to find what otherwise is lost. Relentlessly bombarded by the formulaic concoctions of academic prose, weighed down with arcane vocabulary, honorific name-calling, and ever-extending lists of citations, my muse had had enough. So have I. But I would not want to go the whole way, and to give up on words altogether. Words are, indeed, our most precious possessions and should be treated as such, like a casket of sparkling jewels. To hold such a jewel is to hold the world in the palm of your hand. We *can* correspond with words, as letter-writers used to do, but only if we allow our words to shine.

The challenge, then, is to find a different way of writing. That’s what this book is about. Every chapter is in the nature of an experiment: it is a matter of trying things out and seeing what happens. These experiments-so-far, however, are necessarily constrained by the conventions of the printed word. These conventions make writing seem like an act of verbal composition, rather than one of inscriptive performance. With a keyboard wired up to a mechanical printer—the typical apparatus of the academic writer—the expressive possibilities of the word, as a concatenation of marks on paper, are sorely limited. To be sure, one can vary the font, and use various means of highlighting, but these are nothing compared with the continuous modulations of feeling and form in a simple calligraphic line—a line that registers every nuance of the hand that draws it. If our words are truly to shine like jewels, must they not be restored to the hand?

Surely, our reflections on ways of working cannot be confined to matters of style and composition. They must also extend to the instruments we use, and their orchestration. How does the keyboard compare with the pen, pencil, and brush? Let’s try them out and see. Perhaps, then, we will find that working with words, the writer can once again become a draughtsman or an artist, or even a musician of sorts. We might cease our endless writing *about* performance, and become performers ourselves. The art of correspondence demands no less. It could be because of our addiction to the keyboard that we academics are so taken with the idea of tacit, embodied knowledge. We think, like my muse, that the only way to join with the world—that is, to participate in its unfolding from the very inside of our being—is by escape from the domain of the word, of representation. It seems to us that words are always on the outside: they articulate, specify,

make explicit. As such, their role is to pin things down, to define them and render them immobile.

Yet behind these tapped-out words of ours, the beating heart of the tacit continues to animate our movements and feelings, and to show its hand in voice and gesture. Why, then, should this voice and gesture be wordless? Only because we start from a notion of the word from which all traces of vocal and manual performance, of expression and affect, have been stripped away. This is the kind of word we academics are used to, and it puts us in league with the professions for which an academic training is deemed essential: statesmen, bureaucrats, lawyers, doctors, and managers. But this is not the word of poets, singers, actors, calligraphers, and craftsmen. For them, the word is performed, often noisily and turbulently, in skilled and sensuous bodily practice—not just in the practice of handwriting, signing, singing, or speaking but also in reading aloud. If this is the domain of the tacit, then the tacit is neither wordless nor silent. It is raucously verbal. It is in the realm of the explicit, not the tacit, that silence reigns. Here alone, adrift upon the printed page, the word has lost its voice. Tacit is to explicit as voiced is to voiceless, not the other way around.

Perhaps, then, we need a new understanding of language, one that brings it back to life as a practice of “*linguaging*.” In a living language—one that is not semantically locked into a categorical frame but endlessly creating itself in the inventive telling of its speakers—words can be as lively and mobile as the practices to which they correspond. They can be declarative, as when the practitioner cries out with the satisfaction of a job well done, inviting others to join in its appreciation, or alternatively, when things go off course, leading to error and mishap. And they can be discursive, as in their use in narrative and storytelling. But in neither case are they joined up, or articulated, in explicit, propositional forms. Does that make them any less verbal? Who, other than those whose lives are confined to the academy, would be so pompous, and so limited in their imaginative horizons, as invariably to put the word “*articulate*” before the word “*speech*” or “*writing*,” in such a way as to relegate to the sublinguistic or non-verbal any utterance or inscription that is not syntactically structured as a joined-up assembly? In truth, it is articulation that has silenced the word, by drawing it out and fixing its coordinates of reference, independently of the vocal-gestural currents of its production.

Let’s not be afraid, then, to meet the world with words. Other creatures do it differently, but verbal intercourse has always been our human way, and our entitlement. But let these be words of greeting, not of confrontation, of questioning, not of interrogation or interview, of response, not of representation, of anticipation, not of prediction. This is not to say that we should all become poets or novelists, let alone that we should seek to emulate philosophers who, when it comes to their worldly involvements, have signally failed to practice what they preach, and for whom neither coherence of thought nor clarity of expression has ever been among their

strongest suits. But it does mean that we should work our words as craftsmen work their materials, in ways that testify, in their inscriptive traces, to the labor of their production, and that offer these inscriptions as things of beauty in themselves.

Aberdeen, March 1, 2014

1 Non-Representational Research Methodologies

An Introduction

Phillip Vannini

There are, and there will always be, miserable days in the lives of researchers.

These are the days when the inevitable realization that our work is utterly inadequate at apprehending the intricate textures of the lifeworld subjects of our analysis and description strikes with its mightiest force. These are the days when reading again one's writings, playing back one's video or audio documentaries, staring at one's photos, or recalling one's performances pushes an author over the depressing abyss of self-insufficiency and doubt. These are the days when researchers wish they had chosen an art career devoid of the pretensions of accurate representation. For some of us the doldrums of these forlorn days fade away with the next long-awaited book contract or the prospect of a jaunt to an exotic conference destination. But the awareness that our work is invariably partial, simplistic, or even unimaginative and inauthentic is bound to resurface again, and again. Depiction—it seems—is futile.

Should we then surrender? Or perhaps come up with a new scientific method? Or maybe, given the zeitgeist, a cute new “app” for our journals? Maybe we could. But we will not be doing any of that here. This book is not a self-help manual for the sufferer of a midlife epistemological crisis. It does not promise handy solutions, formulas, procedures, or codes for a more accurate representation of disparate lifeworlds. And because it does not aim to offer original laments over the crisis of representation or the death of the author it does not hope to lend a shoulder to cry on either. So, you might wonder: what exactly are these sheets of paper good for? Well, for a more radical solution, really: to quit—hopefully for good—our obsession with representation. Let this volume be a manifesto for the ethos of *non-representational research*.

Non-representational research—the skeptical reader might immediately react—sounds like the most apropos synonym for non-funded and non-published research. How can, after all, research—which is the very process of describing, understanding, and explaining an empirical reality—deny its very *raison d'être*? How can people whose job responsibility is to be all but fiction authors pretend to be able to obliterate the single criterion that separates them from the domain of fantasy?

2 Phillip Vannini

Admittedly, these are not ungrounded, unsympathetic, or merely cynical critiques. And to complicate the picture even further, non-representational authors themselves may even have deep and fundamental doubts about the value of non-representational “research”—and for some the scare quotes here are absolutely obligatory. Some may indeed question the very idea of research and of method, for example, or deny the value of a body of knowledge—epistemology or methodology—exclusively dedicated to doing research more accurately. Yet all of us writing in these pages in the end hold the belief that the research we all do has at least some merit and promise. Is our denial of representationalism the true answer to the crisis of authority and representation then? Non-representational research methodologies—of which this book provides a panoramic gaze—offer, if not definitive, at least compelling responses to this interrogative.

But let us back up for a second. What is all this fuss about non-representational research? Our quest for non-representational methodologies is born out of the growth of non-representational theory. Briefly, non-representational theory (or as it is sometimes referred to, “more-than-representational” theory; see Lorimer, 2005) is one of the contemporary moment’s most influential theoretical perspectives within social and cultural theory. As evidence of this popularity, simply consider Nigel Thrift’s (2008) instant classic *Non-Representational Theory: Space/Politics/Affect*. Only five years after its publication the book, according to Google Scholar, has been cited 646 times. Non-representational theory is now widely considered to be the successor of postmodern theory, the logical development of post-structuralist thought, and the most notable intellectual force behind the turn away from cognition, symbolic meaning, and textuality.

Non-representational theory is popular and influential, but it is controversial and often poorly understood. This is in part because of its complexity, but in large part also because of its limited application in research practice and because of its many unanswered methodological questions. How actually powerful and useful non-representational research is, in this sense, is yet to be fully appreciated. This book proposes to tackle this very subject by outlining a variety of ways in which non-representational ideas can influence the research process, the very value of empirical research, the nature of data, the political value of evidence, the methods and modes of research, the very notion of method, and the styles, genres, and media of research. The chapters to follow, therefore, aim to serve as a launching point for a diverse non-representational research “agenda.” Such parliament of perspectives, we hope, will spearhead a long-lasting non-representational research tradition across the social and cultural sciences. But let us proceed by outlining first the nature of non-representational theory.

NON-REPRESENTATIONAL THEORY

As Lorimer (2005, p. 83) concisely puts it, “Non-representational theory is an umbrella term for diverse work that seeks to better cope with our

self-evidently more-than-human, more-than-textual, multisensual worlds.” With roots in the fine and performing arts, solid foundations in human geography, and expansions across cultural studies, the humanities, and the social sciences, non-representational theory is a mosaic of theoretical ideas borrowed from fields as different as performance studies, material culture studies, science and technology studies, contemporary continental philosophy, political ecology, cultural geographies, ecological anthropology, biological philosophy, cultural studies, the sociology of the body and emotions, and the sociology and anthropology of the senses—to name only a few.

Theoretically, non-representational theory stands as a synthesizing effort to amalgamate diverse but interrelated theoretical perspectives, such as actor-network theory, biological philosophy, neomaterialism, process philosophy, speculative realism, social ecology, performance theory, poststructuralist feminism, critical theory, postphenomenology, and pragmatism. Its typical reference lists therefore tend to feature names of philosophers like Michelle Serres, Bruno Latour, Michel de Certeau, Judith Butler, Elizabeth Grosz, Donna Haraway, Erving Goffman, Alphonso Lingis, Brian Massumi, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Tim Ingold, Emmanuel Levinas, Alfred North Whitehead, Isabelle Stengers, Maurice Blanchot, Jean Luc Nancy, Alain Badiou, Gilbert Simondon, Nigel Thrift, and probably most commonly of all Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari.

Due to its eclectic character it is quite difficult to summarize non-representational theory’s diverse ideas succinctly. Thrift’s (2008) work is quite helpful in this regard. In a difficult but remarkably clear, well-organized, and contagiously enthusiastic opening chapter to his foundational volume on the topic, Thrift outlines seven core principles, or ideal qualities, of non-representational theory. Thrift is quick to point out that his intent in territorializing non-representational theory is not to systematize it but rather to outline the potentials of a new experimental genre: a hybrid genre for a hybrid world. His seven principles, therefore, are to be understood as a tentative formation of a new intellectual landscape that is liable to enliven—through the “application of a series of procedures and techniques of expression” (p. 2)—a new hybrid: a science/art that works as an interpretive “supplement to the ordinary, a sacrament for the everyday, a hymn to the superfluous” (p. 2). Neither laws nor root images, the principles work as exercises in creative production and as “practices of vocation” (p. 3) meant for an imprecise science concerned more with hope for politico-epistemic renewal than validity. And—opportunistically—the principles very much aid our brief overview.

According to Thrift, non-representational theory’s first programmatic tenet is to “capture the ‘onflow’ . . . of everyday life” (p. 5). Life is movement—geographic and existential kinesis. Movements of all kinds are profoundly social activities that are both perceptive of the world and generative and transformative of it (Ingold, 2011). Life is a viscous becoming in time-space moved by the “desire to do more than simply squeeze meaning from the world” (Thrift, 2008, p. 5). Existence is marked by an instinctive intentionality—a Deweyan qualitative immediacy of sorts—that transcends

consciousness, and by an effervescent energy unharnessed and unprogrammed by thought. Non-representational theory therefore rejects the cognitive tendencies of radical empiricism, representational identity politics, and the post-modern obsession with deconstructing textual meaning (Lorimer, 2005). It emphasizes instead the power of the precognitive as a performative technology for adaptive living, as an instrument of sensation, play, and imagination, and a life force fueling the excesses and the rituals of everyday living.

Second, “non-representational theory is resolutely anti-biographical and preindividual” (Thrift, 2008, p. 7). Autobiography “provide[s] a spurious sense of oneness,” whereas biography offers a “suspect intimacy with the dead” (p. 7). What Thrift—borrowing here from Freud—seems to fear is biography’s ambition to find, as well as construct, an artificial sense of individual wholeness and hermeneutic coherence in the past, whereas non-representational theory is truly anchored in the present of practice. Of all seven principles this is arguably the most obscure, as Thrift fails to specify what precise types of biographical work he is most inimical toward, what further reasons he has—besides the battle cry remarks reported earlier—for conflating biography with humanistic whole-ism, and whether his criticism extends to more contemporary poststructuralist forms of narrative inquiry. In spite of the cryptic meaning of this point, together tenets one and two constitute non-representational theory’s criticism of methodological individualism and a strong incitation for complexity and relationality, a point taken up later in this chapter and in several chapters of this book.

Third, non-representational theory concerns itself with practice, action, and performance. Non-representational theorists are weary of the structuralist heritage of the social sciences and suspicious of all attempts to uncover symbolic meaning where other, more practical forms of meaning or even no meaning at all exist. Relying primarily on performative approaches to relational action and on postphenomenological and Deleuzian philosophy, non-representational work puts a premium on the corporeal rituals and entanglements embedded in embodied action rather than talk or cognitive attitudes. As Lorimer (2005, p. 84) puts it,

The focus falls on how life takes shape and gains expression in shared experiences, everyday routines, fleeting encounters, embodied movements, precognitive triggers, practical skills, affective intensities, enduring urges, unexceptional interactions and sensuous dispositions. Attention to these kinds of expression, it is contended, offers an escape from the established academic habit of striving to uncover meanings and values that apparently await our discovery, interpretation, judgment and ultimate representation. In short, so much ordinary action gives no advance notice of what it will become.

Fourth, non-representational theory is built on the principle—borrowed primarily from actor-network theory—of relational materialism. Material

objects are no mere props for performance but parts and parcel of hybrid assemblages endowed with diffused personhood and relational agency. “The human body”—Thrift tells us—“is what it is because of its unparalleled ability to co-evolve with things” (p. 10). In this sense material objects are to be given the same conceptual and empirical weight that is warranted to their human companions. Things form a “technological anteaconscious” (p. 10) with the human body’s nervous system, and therefore non-representational theory ought to reject any separation between corporeality, materiality, and sociality. Going even farther than Thrift, Ingold (2011) argues that materiality is a useless abstraction: it is a concept we impute to things because we do not bother to hold them in sufficient regard for what they are and what they do. The actual “materials, it seems, have gone missing” (*ibid.*, p. 20) from social scientific analysis because the symbolic qualities of the “objects” they make up unduly take precedence. But upon close examination non-representational writers realize that materials are active: “they circulate, mix with one another, solidify and dissolve in the formation of more or less enduring things” (*ibid.*, p. 16). Materials are their doing and it is through their qualities, movements, and force that they exert their life.

Fifth, non-representational theory is meant to be experimental. Non-representational theorists feel a deep antipathy for the hyper-empirical conservative tendencies of the traditional social sciences, for the conventions of realism, and—obviously—for any manifestation of positivism. By invoking the expressive power of the performance arts, Thrift calls on social scientists-cum-artists to “crawl out to the edge of the cliff of the conceptual” (Vendler, 1995, p. 79, cited in Thrift, 2008, p. 12) and to engage in a battle against methodological fetishism and in a “poetics of the release of energy that might be thought to resemble play” (p. 12). By refusing a social science obsessed with control, prediction, and the will to explain and understand everything, Thrift calls for a sense of wonder to be injected back into the social sciences (also see Ingold, 2011b). Non-representational work tries to be restless and willfully immature. It seeks to push limits and strives for renewal. Indeed, as we will discuss throughout this entire book, non-representational work aims to rupture, unsettle, animate, and reverberate rather than report and represent.

Sixth, non-representational theory stresses the importance of bodies. Thrift (2008) views bodies not as subjects for microsociological empirical attention but as the engines of political regeneration, driving the new politics and ethics of hope that he proposes. Bodies are especially important because of their affective capacities. Affects are “properties, competencies, modalities, energies, attunements, arrangements and intensities of differing texture, temporality, velocity and spatiality, that act on bodies, are produced through bodies and transmitted by bodies” (Lorimer, 2008, p. 552). Non-representational theory’s attention to affect and its derivatives—moods, passions, emotions, intensities, and feelings (Anderson, 2006)—transcends the human, focusing on relations amid inanimate objects, living, non-human

matter, place, ephemeral phenomena, events, technologies, and much more (McCormack, 2006). Thus non-representational theorists posit affect as an uncircumscribed force unbounded to a whole self and unanchored in human subjectivity (McCormack, 2006).

At last, the seventh tenet of non-representational theory stresses an ethic of novelty suggesting “a particular form of boosting aliveness” (p. 14) and a promissory, regenerating Jamesian potentiality: a “jump to another world” (p. 15). Traditional ethical systems will not suffice for non-representational thinkers, built as they are on traditional humanistic principles of a univocal human subject, “transparent, rational, and continuous” (p. 14). A new ethics built on the craftsmanship of everyday life and existing on the “interstices of interaction” (p. 15) is liable to “build new forms of life” in which “strangeness itself [is] the locus of new forms of neighborliness and community” (Santner, 2001, p. 6, cited in Thrift, 2008, p. 14).

Non-representational theory’s seven tenets are meant to sensitize social scientists to the fact that “they are there to hear the world and make sure that it can speak back, just as much as they are there to produce wild ideas,” “to render the world problematic by elaborating questions,” and to open research and theorizing to “more action, more imagination, more light, more fun, even” (Thrift, 2008, pp. 18–20). These tenets are points not only of theoretical departure but also of methodological inspiration, as we will see next.

NON-REPRESENTATIONAL RESEARCH

Representation is a tricky affair. Doel (2010, p. 117) explains,

Ordinarily, representation is bound to a specific form of repetition: the repetition of the same. Through representation, what has already been given will come to have been given again. Such is its fidelity: to give again, and again, what has already been given, without deviation or departure. Such is its fidelity to an original that is fated to return through a profusion of dutiful copies; an original whose identity is secured and re-secured through a perpetual return of the same and whose identity is threatened by the inherent capacity of the copy to be a deviant or degraded repetition, a repetition that may introduce an illicit differentiation in the place ostensibly reserved for an identification.

In wishing to do away with the repetitions, the structures, the orders, the givens, and the identities of representation, non-representational theory is quite ambitious. It seeks novelty and experimental originality. Rather than to resemble, it seeks to dissemble (Doel, 2010, p. 117). It wants to make us feel something powerful, to give us a sense of the ephemeral, the fleeting, and the not-quite-graspable. It hopes to give life to the inanimate and

the more-than-human. It strives to be animated, to be on the move, to be constantly doing something meaningful (and occasionally something meaningless and not so serious) without necessarily having to resort to spoken commentary, to extended captions, and to research informants' transcribed accounts and illustrating narrations. It does not refute representation but it pursues it in parallel with differentiation (Doel, 2010). It wants the impossible, really. No wonder then, as Dewsbury (2009) puts it, it is destined to fail it. Yet, as he incites us to do following Beckett's famous dictum, in the end our job as non-representationalists is to simply fail better.

But what exactly do non-representationalists do, to begin with? Can a student of non-representational theory hope to study anything—from public opinion on third-trimester abortion to the effects of mobile media use on adolescents' political outlooks, or from environmental NGOs' best practices to the moral dimensions of the self-concept—with her newly found theoretical muse? Or is it more prudent to suggest that some research topics are better tackled with other, more appropriate tools, lest one end up hammering away at a screw? Given non-representational theorists' propensity to develop ideas around bodies and performances and about “the making of meaning and signification in the manifold of actions and interactions rather than in a supplementary dimension such as that of discourse, ideology, and symbolic order” (Anderson & Harrison, 2010, p. 2) we believe that non-representational research will be better equipped—at least in the first instance—to tackle the following subject matter, in no particular order.

Firstly, non-representational research concentrates on *events*. Events are happenings, unfoldings, regular occurrences inspired (but not overdetermined) by states of anticipation and irregular actions that shatter expectations. Events—their sites, actors, stakes, consequences, politics, and temporalities—reveal old and new potentialities for collective “being, doing, and thinking” (Anderson & Harrison, 2010, p. 19). Events bring forth drama and conflict, uncertainties and ways of thinking, subjectivities, differences, and repetitions (Dewsbury, 2000; Turner, 1975). Events are indeterminate, excessive, and irretrievable (Dewsbury, 2000) affairs whose unfolding allow us to apprehend the structures of change and the dynamics of stability (Massumi, 2002). Accidents, predicaments, advents, transactions, adventures, appearances, turns, calamities, proceedings, celebrations, mishaps, phenomena, ceremonies, coincidences, crises, emergencies, episodes, junctures, milestones, becomings, miracles, occasions, chances, triumphs, and many more events all equally reveal “the contingency of orders to morph into an explicit concern with the new, and with the chances of invention and creativity” (Anderson & Harrison, 2010, p. 19). Events, in sum, are examined because they inevitably highlight not instrumental plans, blueprints for action, and a priori scripts and conditions but rather the possibility of alternative futures, the failures of representations, the contingencies of interventions, and the effervescence with which things actually take place.

Secondly, non-representational research privileges the study of *relations*. Non-representational researchers, alongside with relational scholars, believe that life arises from the entanglement of actors—human and non-human animals, organic matter, and material objects. Inspired by either actor-network-theory (e.g., Law & Hassard, 1999), knowledge on assemblages (DeLanda, 2006), or meshworks (Ingold, 2011), non-representational researchers study not units in controlled isolation but rather the vital processes through which relations take place. Herein lies much of the non-representational skepticism towards methodological individualism, with its tendencies to single out, bracket, and narrow down phenomena, as well as its humanistic bias for conflating the social and the cultural with human exceptionalism. A relational view of the lifeworld, on the other hand, zeros in on the crossroads between metaphysical and material, crossroads “where many different things gather, not just deliberative humans, but a diverse range of actors and forces, some of which we know about, some not, and some of which may be just on the edge of awareness” (Anderson & Harrison, 2010, p. 10). Such emphasis on relational materialism, immanence, and the sociality of “things” prompts non-representational researchers to study associations, mutual formations, ecologies, constellations, and cofabrications that highlight how the conjunction “AND” matters more than the verb “IS” (ibid., p. 15 after Deleuze, 2001, p. 38).

Thirdly, non-representational research focuses on *doings*: practices and performances. The non-representational attention to *doings*—from the most mundane and routine to the most ritualized—stands in sharp contrast to other perspectives’ preoccupation with “internal” states of mind, like thoughts, ideas, motivations, drives, values, beliefs, traits, and attitudes. Whereas representational theories study the mind and its operations as preconditions for action, non-representational researchers examine thought exclusively in action, concentrating on unreflexive, semireflexive, unintrospective, preobjective, and habitual actions and interactions. The idea of performance captures well the meaning of practice and helps non-representational researchers “unlock and animate new (human and nonhuman) potentialities” (Thrift & Dewsbury, 2000, p. 411). Performance is a kind of action. To be sure, actors perform, but so do others, and without any scripts. Athletes perform by running faster or hitting harder, cars perform by driving more efficiently or hugging the road more securely, lovers perform by lasting longer and pleasing more, and so on. Performance is, essentially, about getting things done. Performance is therefore a potential waiting to be actualized: an opening, a possibility awaiting the unfolding of practice (Schechner, 2006). Non-representational researchers then study performances as expressive engagements of the body’s kinesthetic and intuitive power to produce certain effects, whether expected or unexpected, intended or unintended, inventive or uninventive, effective or ineffective.

Fourthly, non-representational research analyzes *affective resonances*. Affect is a pull and a push, an intensity of feeling, a sensation, a passion,

an atmosphere, an urge, a mood, a drive—all of the above and none of the above in particular. Affect is embodied but not coterminous with the body. Non-representational theory was born, in large part, as a reaction to the textualist tendencies of social constructivism (Anderson & Harrison, 2010). Among many other concerns, non-representational researchers found much to be desired in the constructivist techniques of “reading” the human body and its endless representations in various media as if it were a text. Moreover, non-representational students of affect prefer to study the unsaid and the barely sayable (see McCormack, 2002; Stewart, 2007). Thus non-representational researchers examine affect as a capacity: the body’s capacity to be moved and be affected, and the body’s capacity to move and affect other people and other things. According to Anderson (2006, p. 735) therefore affect is best understood non-representationally as “a transpersonal capacity which a body has to be affected (through an affection) and to affect (as the result of modifications)” — a definition that underlines the body’s productive capacity and its radical openness to others, and its origin in a transpersonal space marked by emergent doings of various kinds.

Fifthly, non-representational researchers are keen on examining *backgrounds*. Backgrounds are the sites that fall outside of common awareness, the atmospheres we take for granted, the places in which habitual dispositions regularly unfold. Anderson and Harrison (2010, p. 8) explain that a background is the backdrop “against which particular things show up and take on significance: a mobile but more or less stable ensemble of practices, involvements, relations, capacities, tendencies, and affordances. A zone of stabilisation within the manifold of actions and interactions which has the form of a holding wave or recursive patterning.” Backgrounds are thus (post) phenomenological lifeworlds that come to being as an outcome of practices of habitation (Ingold, 2011). They are the roads and trails our wayfinding weaves (Ingold, 2011), the piping and the cables our quest for speed, power, and light forms (Bennett, 2010; Thrift, 1996), the knowledge our doings enact (Latour, 1999), the gatherings, the homes, the towns, and the spaces by the roadside where ordinary affects pervade our bodies (Stewart, 2007). Backgrounds are made up and “open to intervention, manipulation, and innovation” as well as “colonisation, domination, control, cultivation, and intervention” (Anderson & Harrison, 2010, pp. 10–11), but for that no less real, no less tangible, no less consequential.

Events, relations, practices and performances, affects, and backgrounds aren’t everything. They aren’t little either. They are often little understood, infrequently studied, but very intriguing staples of the non-representational research regimen and its future appetite. There are more subjects, of course. But together these five important sets of interests make up more than just an arsenal of research avenues, for whatever a non-representational study may be precisely about, these five forces reverberate across the lifeworld, informing and shaping each other, unfolding in more intricate patterns as new research directions are revealed, inspiring non-representational analysis

and rendition. But if events, relations, practices and performances, affects, and backgrounds are mostly the “what” of non-representational research, and the beginning of the “how,” what more can be said about the actual conduction of non-representational work? Is there a non-representational methodology? Can there be non-representational methods?

NON-REPRESENTATIONAL METHODOLOGIES

Now that the central tenets and key research foci of non-representational theory have been properly introduced, let us return for a moment to the event with which we opened this chapter: the sad day in the academic’s representational life. Feelings of despondence, inefficacy, and frustration may very well be the epitome of the futile scholarly effort over representation, but to truly understand the significance of this situation and its relevance for the non-representational paradigm we must reflect on this case in greater depth. In fact, to be honest, there is nothing prototypically non-representational about this situation. After the crisis of representation (see Clifford & Marcus, 1986) *all* academics regardless of theoretical persuasion and methodological orientation are likely to struggle with the “validity” of their representations. Realists may endeavor to portray a faithful account of a social world, for instance, just as tirelessly as nominalists may labor to construct the nuances their narratives. To write—but the same can be said of other modes of scholarly communication as well—about a research subject is always, inevitably, to translate. And *traduttore, traditore*—the translator is a traitor—as we all know. So, how does the non-representational ethos come into play in all of this? How can non-representational ideas tackle this challenge in unique ways? In a moment we will find out, but for now another introductory step back.

To speak of methodologies is not the same as to speak of method—despite the myriad journal articles with their mistaken interchangeable headings on these matters. *Research methods*, let us be precise about this, are procedures for the collection of empirical material (i.e., data) (e.g., see Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Collection means obtaining and inventorying through gathering techniques, such as interviews, participant observation, and so forth. Research methods also encompass other issues pertinent to data collection, such as case selection, sampling, recruiting participants, and much more. Methods, in other words, are tools through which we get data. What we do with these data once we have accumulated enough is a matter of research strategy. *Research strategies* are procedures for the treatment of data, such as data organization, analysis, and presentation. One may thus adopt a sensory ethnographic strategy to data collected via participant observation methods, for example, or a narrative strategy, or grounded theory, or very much anything else that fits the researcher’s preference. Methods and strategies require that students and scholars exercise judgment and make explicit

choices throughout the research process. These choices are all but random, as large bodies of knowledge—both practical applications of methods and strategy, as well as more abstract reflections on pros and cons and on epistemological foundations (e.g., this book)—have accumulated over time. These bodies of knowledge are what we refer to as *methodologies*.

So, now that methods, strategies, and methodologies have been clearly defined we can finally tackle the big question behind this chapter: are there unique non-representational methodologies? The answer is a resounding yes, though as it will be clear from reading the chapters included in this book there is no univocal and orthodox non-representational methodological school of thought. Some agreement exists however, I surmise, in how the despondence and sense of insufficiency felt by our poor frustrated colleague might be tackled. And that approach, I believe, might very well be the trademark of non-representational methodologies. What is that approach, then? First, let us rule out some possible alternatives.

The very first option to rule out is that of a unique non-representational method. There simply isn't one. Non-representational researchers conduct interviews, focus groups, observations, participant observations, introspections, archival research, case studies, breaching experiments, artistic interventions, performances, and a plethora of other traditions of data collection that researchers affiliated with many other paradigms and theories undertake. About this Thrift (2008)—in singling out particular methods—is simply wrong. The non-representational researcher is not characterized by the choice or by the rejection of a particular method. And indeed the non-representational researcher—concerned as she is with issues of novelty, extemporaneity, vitality, emergence, and experimental creativity—might very well be uninterested in systematic procedures of data collection.

The second option to rule out is that of a unique non-representational mode or medium of communication. Non-representational research can unfold through writing, through photography, through dance, or through poetry, video, sound, art installations, or any of the other research communication modes and media available in the twenty-first century (for very extensive and useful directories, see Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Knowles & Cole, 2007). In this sense we must be skeptical towards pronouncements about the absolute superiority of “performance”-based strategies over others. First, this is because performance is no magic-bullet strategy: it has its pros (e.g., liveliness, embodied presence, relationality) and it has its cons (e.g., limited applicability and analytical depth). Second, because despite all the lip service paid to performance and in spite of all the claims to be doing performance hardly anyone does it (no, a journal article is not a performance!; see Saldana, 2006) and, honestly, even fewer people do it right.

And the third option to rule out is that of an escape from data and a retreat into theoretical solipsism. Although there is nothing wrong in developing theoretical essays with little or no grounding in an immediately

observable empirical background or case, non-representational theory, if it is to continue to be useful, must not retreat into developing theory for theory's sake. In a global, neoliberal academic environment overpreoccupied with research impact and universities' relevance in their communities, eschewing empirical analysis altogether is not something we should wish to encourage anyone to do (and indeed this might very well be a shortcoming of current non-representational work in general: too few are non-representational research studies in relative comparison to the sheer number of conceptual elaborations and theoretical interventions).

What is the unique non-representational approach, then? It is an issue of *style*—a unique style in territorializing, de-territorializing, reterritorializing, and animating life. To say this differently, the non-representational answer to the crisis of representation lies in a variety of research styles and techniques that do not concern themselves so much with representing life-worlds as with issuing forth novel reverberations. The key lies in a different orientation to “data.” Data, the Latin word for given, is not so much what interests non-representationalists. Other scholars—phenomenologists, nominalists, and constructivists to name a few—are similarly skeptical towards the world as given. But what truly distinguishes the non-representational research from others is a different orientation to the temporality of knowledge, for non-representationalists are much less interested in representing an empirical reality that has taken place *before* the act of representation than they are in enacting multiple and diverse potentials of what knowledge can become *afterwards*. This can get awfully complicated, so let us say it in different and simpler terms.

Imagine you are actually the one academic frustrated by your all-too-human inability to represent an event or feeling or encounter as you experienced it. Your orientation is towards the *past* of knowledge: you struggle to report precisely—or sufficiently creatively—something that happened already. That is happening because events are unique and their mimesis is impossible. But let us say your orientation changes. You cease to be so preoccupied with how the past unfolded and with your responsibility for capturing it. You become instead interested in evoking, in the present moment, a future impression in your reader, viewer, or listener. It is the present that suddenly interests you, and how the present can unfold in the future: what can become of your work, in what unique and novel ways it can reverberate with people, what social change or intellectual fascination it can inspire, what impressions it can animate, what surprises it can generate, what expectations it can violate, what new stories it can generate. It is no longer what happened that matters so much but rather what is happening now and what can happen next. It is no longer depiction, reporting, or representation that frustrates you. Rather, it is enactment, rupture, and actualization that engage your attention. Such is the ideal nature of non-representational research, its unique “strategy”—or to sound a bit less instrumental—its signature *style*.

TOWARDS A NON-REPRESENTATIONAL STYLE

Over the last ten years a number of explicitly methodological reflections on the potential of non-representational work have appeared in the literature (see especially Dewsbury, 2009; Doel, 2010; Greenhough, 2010; Hinchcliffe, 2000; Latham, 2003; Thorpe & Rinehart, 2010; Stewart, 2011; Wylie, 2005). Although none of these observers has claimed to hold the magic ingredients for an authentic non-representational research recipe—and if that ever were to exist, it would undoubtedly constitute an egregious contradiction in terms—several points of agreement have emerged.

For example, Latham (2003) argues that the beginning point must be a fight against methodological timidity. Timidity is difficult to define but easy to recognize. Thrift (2000, p. 3) finds the prototypical expressions of timidity in the interview and ethnographic data “nicely packaged up in a few supposedly illustrative quotations” commonly displayed in qualitative research articles across disciplines and more broadly in the “know and tell” (Thrift, 2004, p. 81) style of much empirical research. I, personally, view the problem as less inherent in the method and more in the actuality of practicing particular methods. Indeed “the representational is not the enemy” (Dewsbury, 2009, p. 323; also see Doel, 2010; Lorimer, 2005). There is nothing wrong in sharing illustrating data, but there is much left to be desired in making ethnographic and qualitative knowledge entirely subservient to theory and utterly secondary to it, so much so that knowing takes precedence over telling and silences it under heavy introductions and even bulkier formulaic literature reviews, discussions, and conclusions. The very accepted format of the typical journal article with its focus on what happened during research procedures indeed might very well be the most forceful weapon with which the hegemony of timidity asserts its conservative power (see Stoller, 1984; Vannini, Waskul, & Gottschalk, 2011).

A wider range of methods and styles than those most typically practiced in books and journal articles can allow researchers to engage in more creative and more performative practices. To this effect, Dewsbury (2009, p. 324) calls for the disruption of research habits and for novel expressions of creativity:

The point is that procedure is not known. The point is, rather, that something performative in research itself, something experimental and creative, and above all problematic, will occur if certain proscriptions are raised instead. These proscriptions then take place as a series of injunctions, as temporary antidotes to the inevitable scientism in which our research is staged (we too often, but not always, have to affirm certain outcomes in advance, acknowledge certain literatures to found and contextualize our own research, we have to encounter the world through familiar modes of conduct and communication, we have to confirm existing representations as we attempt to express others we

have encountered, and we have to be certain especially when we conclude). Whilst we all know and face this, and as already intimated we do have to proceed intelligently and effectively, my beef here is with the “too often;” let this be a moment of “not always” to ensure that the spark of those “unthought” moments have as long a duration and affect as possible.

For Dewsbury (2009) the key thus lies in making research more performative. This does not necessarily mean staging research and acting out findings (though given all the performance rhetoric it would be nice if it did, at least *some time*), but striving to find inspiration in the arts, in the poetics of embodied living, in enacting the very unactualized expressive and impressive potentials of social-scientific knowledge, in taking dedicated risks, in exercising passion, and in finding ways to reconfigure thinking, sensing, and presenting by emphasizing the singular powers of action, locution, and thought (*ibid.*).

Like Dewsbury, Latham argues that new styles can draw inspiration from the sensuous, embodied, “non-cognitive, preintentional, and commonsensical” (2003, p. 1998) practices of everyday life, as these are laden with creativity and possibility. As he writes (*ibid.*, p. 2000),

Where Thrift seems determined to push for some kind of rupture in our ways of doing research (a stance that is somewhat ironic given his general distaste for stories of rupture, break, and discontinuity), I want to suggest that, rather than ditching the methodological skills that human geography has so painfully accumulated, we should work through how we can imbue traditional research methodologies with a sense of the creative, the practical, and being with practice-ness that Thrift is seeking. Pushed in the appropriate direction there is no reason why these methods cannot be made to dance a little.

Of course, whatever “the appropriate direction” is truly is the question, and many of the contributions to this book tackle this precise subject. For Thorpe and Rinehart (2010) the direction is affective, kinesthetic, and sensuous. For Laurier and Philo (2006) the direction is that of seeking what *more* and what *else* can be said through instance of language in use. For Stoller (2008) the place to go is in the “in-between,” or as Hinchcliffe (2000) puts it: in the gaps of knowing and in the unsaid. For me (Vannini, 2012) and for Pink (2009) a possible direction lies in going beyond the book, towards the realm of the multimodal. For Ingold (2011) it is in new traces of writing, like drawing and sketching, whereas for Stewart (2011) the direction is in evoking the ordinary affects of everyday atmospheres.

The idea that research should try to “dance a little” more has been explored by many other non-representational thinkers (e.g., see Thrift, 2003; Thrift & Dewsbury, 2000). Consequently, a greater focus on events, reflexivity,

affective states, the unsaid, and the incompleteness and openness of everyday performances is beginning to characterize the non-representational research style writ large (e.g., see McCormack, 2002; Stewart, 2007; Wylie, 2005). The key distinction of these approaches is that—in the words of Dewsbury (2009)—they relish the failures of knowledge. Dewsbury (2009) and Doel (2010), for example, incite researchers to embrace experimentation, to view the impossibility of empirical research as a creative opportunity (rather than a damming condition), to unsettle the systematicity of procedure, to reconfigure (rather than mimic) the lifeworld, and in sum to learn to fail, to fail better.

The non-representational idea that there are other diverse ways of knowing (e.g., see Hinchliffe, 2000) is perhaps more than anything else at the core of the ethos of *animation*. By animating lifeworlds non-representational research styles aim to enliven rather than report, to render rather than represent, to resonate rather than validate, to rupture and reimagine rather than to faithfully describe, to generate possibilities of encounter rather than construct representative ideal types (see Thrift & Dewsbury, 2000). If indeed there is a quintessential non-representational style, then it is that of becoming entangled in relations and objects rather than studying their structures and symbolic meanings (Hinchliffe, 2000).

Let us then conclude this brief section with a brief but inspiring example of what this style might entail. In *Redrawing Anthropology*—an edited collection aimed at stimulating the non-representational imagination of anthropologists and ethnographers alike—Ingold (2011) begins his introduction with a curious-looking drawing: a swoosh-like zigzag line that, he tells us, is a salmon. When prompted to draw a fish most of us would draw an oval body and add fins, tails, and a head marked by the typical gluttonous and gullible expression of a fish. In other words, asked to draw a fish most of us would admittedly draw a representation of its image, of its being. But Ingold suggests, instead, that to draw life as contained within clear lines of demarcation, lines that encapsulate and contain a body, is to draw death, because bodies are open to the lifeworld and move along with it, not inside of it. Regrettably, much of contemporary social scientific research ends up, indeed, focusing on things that are stable, static, completed. Drawing a fish as the line of its movements and its practice teaches us a way to reenliven research. The zigzag line—indefinitely more than the oval shape—animates the fish and reverberates its doings, goings, and becomings, and that is the lesson for all of us: to be attuned to life as an unfinished process of growth and movement; to be attuned not to where life lies but rather to where it is going next.

So, if this is where we are (or is it?) where do we go next? And how do we stand on more comfortable grounds? How do we better communicate to wider audiences of students and scholars the uniqueness of non-representational research? How do we insure that the vitality captured by non-representational theory is articulated within its empirical projects?

How do we establish the value of non-representational research in the face of regressive, realist, evidence-based, institutional politics? How do we experiment differently? And how long should we go on experimenting? How do we engage other media, other genres, other styles, other tools? How do we ensure ethical principles are respected? How do we convey the hybridity of the lifeworld when most methods are so uniform? How do we express sensuality through largely asensual modes, such as writing? How do we practically ensure fluidity, openness, fallibility, and all that in the face of shrinking word count limits? How do we convey relationality? How do we ensure performativity when research continues to be mediated at a distance by writing and other absent modes? How do we write about affect? How do we manifest corporeality in the face of a lingering culture of researcher uninvolvement? How do we value materiality for what it is, rather than who it is for? How do we gain further appreciation for affirmativity and still maintain a foot in the world of interpretive practice? How do we ensure space is made for multimodality? And how can research practices that are so concentrated on ineffability be politically committed, sustainable, moral, intelligible, relevant, and consequential? These are some—indeed most—of the questions asked in this book.

Typically introductions to edited books summarize each chapter's content in a few sentences. I won't do that here. Short summaries of that kind are but small representations, small souvenirs, small concessions to a worldview of books as objects that have already taken place and now await cataloguing. Rather, I leave you to follow the threads of each chapter on your own, as they evolve and move in succession. For this reason my work as editor has also been minimal. I have not held the authors to a template, a precise set of expectations, or to a particular area or subject I wanted them to represent. I have simply pestered them to stick to some kind of deadline, and then I've watched them swim in currents of their own choosing. Hayden Lorimer, who has done the same, has written a reflection on where the following of the chapters has taken him. But he, as much as I have, and presumably you will, has simply witnessed these chapters as events in the trajectory of our colleagues' thinking. It is in this spirit that we can now follow them.

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2 New England Red

Kathleen Stewart

I aimed to be a student not of longing but of light.

(Nelson, 2009, p. 95)

RED HOUSE

This is how Sarah Messer Viking begins her eclectic ruminations on what she calls Red House—New England’s oldest continuously lived-in house (or so she says).

Before the highway, the oil slick, the outflow pipe; before the blizzard, the sea monster, the Girl Scout camp; before the nudist colony and flower farm; before the tidal wave broke the river’s mouth, salting the cedar forest; before the ironworks, tack factory, and the shoe-peg mill; before the landing where skinny-dipping white boys jumped through berry bushes; before hay-field, ferry, oyster bed; before Daniel Webster’s horses stood buried in their graves; before militiamen’s talk of separating; before Unitarians and Quakers, the shipyards and mills, the nineteen barns burned in the Indian raid—even then the Hatches had already built the Red House. (2004, p. 1)

In this passage, Red House is a compositional node; a form of matter worlding landscape and event. Its attending, enduring presence is a perspectival agency in which things jump into relation but remain unglued. Lines of contact radiate out in a prismatic structure of etchings and refrains. What comes into view is an ecology of paths in which any object or angle can be sent into a spin. History, here, literally accretes. Energies distribute across a field of subjects-objects-bodies-trajectories-affects.

The world according to Red House is an attachment to the forms and forces of emergence and concrescence itself, of accrual and loss, of potentiality and its incomplete capture in the actuality of this and that. As a compositional jumping off point, Red House and everything it leans into become phenomena lifted out of the realm of killed-off things. Sarah Viking’s

writing meets Red House's registers of difference, singularity, motion, and transduction like two parallel magical coloring books, spreading qualities and scenes across a cartography. Its more-than-representational mode veers off the critical track of tacking perception, context, and cause onto an order of representations located nowhere in particular or in some paranoid hyper-place, like the state or regional prejudice. What happens instead is the throwing together of the phenomena of wood and water, territory, mood, atmosphere, and sensory charge.

People, rivers, time, and space pop with significance like the raised knap of corduroy or a paper doll cut out of a dreamworld. Representational things—things that were once named, perhaps written down, perhaps in some momentary consensus or, just as likely (to say the least), through some kind of trickery, manipulation, or accident, and then somehow metastasized into circulation—are raised, incised, made singular and charged, turned into an ether that reminds us of something, or rest on us like the weight of a diffuse headache induced by a shift in the barometric pressure. Their fabrications appear as an atmospheric trace or a momentary might-have-been.

Their sensory/noumenal registers activate what Erin Manning calls “the more-than” of experience—“the ineffable amodality that activates the contours of the event toward a moving, an encountering, a being-moved in a complex ecology of practice” (Manning, 2011, p. 41).

Space stretches out and pulls in as an immediate surround, time speeds and slows, simultaneously pausing on a still life and zooming through eras as if epochs were clouds casting shadows on the edifice of the shape-shifting house, like a realist film fast-forwarded through great arcs of history-in-itself or place-in-itself.

Here I treat Sarah Messer Viking's opening paragraph as a more-than-representational method of writing attuned to the qualities of phenomena. Its compositionality prompts curiosity and care about the potentialities in the things that happen. It tones itself to habitations and passing or enduring impacts. This is the doubled compositionality of a writing method that works by calling out and scoring over refrains of expressivity stretching between form and matter.

What was it like when the white boys . . . when the horses . . . ? What was an Indian then, or a Unitarian, or a Hatch? What else happened here? Under what spell did things happen or half-happen or start to happen and fail? What is the river whose mouth was broken or the field then infused with marsh water? What are the river and the field doing now? What was it like when people and things gave up, or faltered, wore out, or started up again because of something?

Theory can be drawn, through writing, into the ways that people and things venture out into reals—reals that, it must be said, are not the kind of thing that a representation later brings to life or gives meaning, but a recursive haecceity (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) that loops through things starting to emerge or layering into an accretion. Reals are “transversal arrays of

qualities or activities which, like musical refrains, give order to materials and situations, human bodies and brains included, as actions undertaken act-back to shape muscles and hone senses” (Anderson & Harrison, 2010b, p. 8). This is not the work of imagination on dead matter but a “mattering (that) is about the (contingent and temporary) becoming-determinate (and becoming-indeterminate) of *matter* and *meaning*” (Barad, 2010, p. 254)—an acting-back along singular lines of action and attachment.

The point of figuring compositional reals is not just that humans and matter are formed in relation but rather that the real of relationality and event has registers and capacities. That a world in the present tense is always other than its representation, or what we know of it (Anderson & Harrison, 2010a). That reals, built out of difference and repetition (Deleuze, 1994), and composed of potentiality and loss (Berlant, 2011), lean towards that which exists singularly as event, or as a gap, without ground or against the background of nothing (Dewsbury, 2010). That the social is composed of entities that are both present and absent—atmospheres, affects, virtual memories, hauntings, and that these are themselves moments of endurance (or not), instants of the holding together of the disparate itself (Doel, 2010). Being in a real is a corporeal and incorporeal capacity to be in a continuous variation of matter and event—one that sets off questions of discernibility (Seigworth, 1998).

These are the lines a compositional node pulls into view and sets spinning.

THE COLOR RED

A real is a tangle of elements somehow thrown together yet still moving in directions, singly and in clumps, and opening onto other things. Any one element can become a territory, or get derailed by its own, or other, aspects or qualities. A path can open onto a line, or a series of lines, that can be followed or abandoned as they intersect other lines. Compositional writing as a non-representational method, then, has to stay nimble in the effort to keep up with the distributed agencies of what’s throwing together and falling apart. It is in this practice of trying to follow where things (might) go that habits of attunement become an associational logic.

Take, for instance, the element of the color red. It moves through streams and tendrils into an associational register of connections and differences, materials and noumena, the coagulations and diffusions of lines of influence and bits of matter.

Red House was certainly not at first red but built with an eye to the careful weathering of the unpainted wood through an attention to routes of sunshine, wind patterns, and the possibilities for water drainage. But at some point in the long life of the house, color caught on and *that* happened, in New England, within the sensibility of red. Red houses and red barns became architectural poppies in a landscape animated by the primariness

of color. Redness sparked from red leaf to red barn to red apple against supergreen grass, white snow, dark, dark ocean, lakes, ponds, eventually the white red blue of flags everywhere, the buntings, the yellow light passing out of windows to yards. Redness set in motion an ecology of sharp, crisp color popping into relief against things less striking, perhaps less buoyant or promising.

Redness became iconic of a region, establishing a regional worlding on a scenic register (among others). But rather than jump to the meaning of this redness, or pull a rope around a bag of its social constructions, keep in mind the life of redness itself as it etched onto the landscape and into the place through flickering or hardening shards and angles and eventually came, in certain ways, to be lived, sensed, worlded. Redness meant some things to the puritans. The British Army in the American Revolution was the Red Coats, and the very eruption of that war was figured and refigured as a visual and aural refrain that the Red Coats were coming into the charged colonial atmosphere and an inhabited landscape. American Indians became “red” through a complex semiotics of encounters with colonists, the circulations among indigenous peoples, and ritual meanings of colors used in body paint to mark charged occasions (Shoemaker, 1997). Redness in the colonies helped cement a nascent traditionality, producing tactile ties to the Old Country and to other parts of earliest Americana—the Pennsylvania Dutch superstitious arts (the large, colorful hex signs painted on houses and barns to frighten the devil), or the old world charms and comforts of red bricks, red geraniums, and even, among the Germans, reddish-brown cows.

Paint is a subline within the line of red (others are maple trees, chapped or alcoholic cheeks, brick streets and sidewalks, the blood of young women scalped when their long hair was caught in the early industrial machinery of the textile mills, the redheaded Irish immigrants who flooded Boston during the famine, the “redness” of the Wobblies in the early trade-union strikes and the massive red-white-and-blue flags sewn to drape over the width of the mills in the mixed metaphors of strikers’ surge for a life and management’s enflamed tactics . . .).

The first paint—“Indian Red”—was made, as the common story has it, following American Indian custom, of clay mixed with the whites of wild turkey eggs and turkey blood. Then, to make paint colorfast and suitable for outside use, a plastic-like coating was made out of skimmed milk, lime, and red iron oxide, producing another natural red hue. It is said that red paint actualized New England practicality (it had the utility and function to absorb the sun’s rays in the winter). Linseed oil was added to soak the color into the wood and prevent it from hardening too quickly and peeling off in sheets. Through a series of experiments that ended in some habits and forms and a literal coagulation of connections, affinities, and mixtures, paint took off as a phenomenon and established itself as a trajectory, magnetizing things to the purpose of covering wood. Then paint (and art) became an industry; natural matter and hues gave way to the bright fabrications of

marketing and their surreal intensification of color—redder than red, realer than real (Taussig, 2009).

But the synthetic world tacks back before and around and after paint. Long before and after paint became an industry, the relationality of nature and commerce set heads spinning. The dance of color and nature, social hierarchy and collective sensibilities, popped colonial New England houses in bright reds, greens, and blues. It was not until the nineteenth century that the weight of the already heavily industrialized region became a vision of pure white (whiter than white) colonial houses encircling the town commons as if to return to sharp, crisp nature (Conforti, 2001). Town centers threw together, and the red poppies of barns and outlying farmhouses like Red House then radiated out to dot the hills and become the color of rurality and the cottage industries of dairy farming and maple sugaring. The beautiful, occasional shock of red nestled into a wooded zone off the hard-core beat of gray and bloody industry that ruled by means of large bright white houses perched over experimental industrial villages full of immigrants.

By the time New England Red became iconic and lodged itself in the senses of the place, it was sparking from tree to blood to paint to skin to photograph. The cartography of color it pulled into relief revealed a world made of transient matter—a mode of being copresent to history and place. Redness (along with white-green-blue) had become a qualia of the “incipience of movement in its very taking form” (Manning, 2008, p. 325). Its compositionality had set things spinning in an interworlding between animate and inanimate movement, preconceptions and anticipations. It had become a mutating realism of a certain vision of light meeting movement, a transduction shifting between planes that catches the actual in its vibratory constellation—its becoming hued (Manning, 2008, p. 334).

New England Red was a flickering variation on the potential to activate new fields for perception (Manning, 2008, p. 329). It became a supplement to the ordinary, a superfluous promissory note. It became an instinctive intentionality sparking in a world’s immediate on-flow and loss, the virtual, relational precision of redness that took shape in triggers, skills, and sensuous dispositions. Was there ever any advance notice of what it was becoming? Did it ever feel like a cresting wave (McCormack, 2010)?

In the story of New England Red, color rolled and peaked with regionalism, the local color movements of the 1930s and the 1970s, surrealism, the winter sky, the importance of labor made visible as painted wood or woven cloth, and any number of other bigger or smaller events of light, hue, and density. A redness-intensified reanimated a landscape abstraction to a quality that was realer than real. Robert Frost almost single-handedly reconstructed New England by pulling the region out of the gritty industrialization of the three southern states to New Hampshire through the portal of a dreamy abstraction done in red, white, green, and blue. Vast archives of early American words and objects were preserved with a new purpose. *Yankee* magazine’s depression-era rurality pulled the dream of

straight-up Americana into the postwar, upwardly mobile nation (Conforti, 2001). The new New England was a way of life present to itself in (and as) moments of composition—the road taken, the scene animated by the qualia of sounds and sights and weather. As if time stood still for the split second the image appeared; as if plainness had been revived. In its long, prismatic path of lines, redness had lifted into a color quale—the whatness that made a particular feeling or experience what it was. Peirce calls this phenomenon a first: “certain qualities of feeling, such as the color of magenta, the odor of attar, the sound of a railway whistle” (Peirce, 1931, vol. 1, p. 304). Redness saturated New England as an irreducible quality lodged in events in the arts and commerce, in religion, class, race, and migration. It spread across fields of vision hardened into kernel-scenes of red maples, sugaring houses, and red barns. It travelled, with the leaves of the maple tree in autumn, through picturesque calendars, a body of poetry, leaf tourism, and who knows what kinds of desires, fears, and dead ends. It took place as accidents, encounters, laws, horrors, exchanges, adventures, occasional appearances, dull routines, brightenings, chances, tools, milestones, and losses. It had events and so sites, actors, stakes, consequences, properties, competencies, modalities, attunements, and velocities (see Anderson & Harrison, 2010b).

In the end, redness was far more than a symbolic element in a representational order and far more matter-of-fact as well. It was not a representation actualized but an actual composition spun into representations, objects, and states of sensory alert.

It popped in the manner of an infrastructure repainted for its promise. It magnetized qualities and senses as it pulled objects into its orbit. It sat picturesquely evident in the field of Kerouac’s speed-vision of an America *On the Road*. It sedimented into a pastoral clearing in the distance, a path to a horizon, a promise of encounter. It cast a spell over residents and tourists alike. It inspired a flood of photography, painting, literature, and postcards.

It had become a germinal aesthetic, a tendril of practices and sensibilities gathered into an energetics of form. It had produced affinities, accidental admixtures, and refrains on which people and things travelled. It had worlded.

Like the Red House itself, New England Red out-survived all its particulars to become a singular hinge opening onto a world throwing together and falling apart.

Many things ensued.

Redness became an improvisatory conceptuality that pushed matter itself into a state of emergent expressivity (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Hard and impersonal, it permeated the contours of the landscape, the climate, the layers of determinations laid down by histories, the leftovers of everything that happened.

Its ephemeral spark created an atmosphere that pulled qualities of sociality, personality, and language out of people (e.g., the town accents, the intimate public spaces of walking, stopping to talk, sitting together, the joking

about the human condition, the stories). It pressed people and things into service (e.g., neighbor men cutting down trees together, my brother's satisfaction at cutting down all the trees around his house after a protracted battle with squirrels in his attic). The red barns, the red dining rooms created spaces of care, territoriality, order, horror (e.g., you don't put your old furniture out on the street for people to pick up, you keep up with the painting as it weathers, you don't warm up to strangers, you know who you're talking to, you watch what's going on, you help those in the circle who need it).

Windows came to matter, not only as an aesthetic interface with an outside world but also as a method of worlding in themselves—a node of lines of sociality and mood. In the downtown neighborhood of the small New England town where I grew up, fifty miles from Red House, windows were kept uncurtained. Curtained houses were a sinkhole in the neighborhood—not just a sign of something amiss (depression, withdrawal, indifference, dysfunction) but the actual physical shadow of a state of being that broke the circuit of a gestural economy of seeing and being seen. People walked the neighborhood to see the still lives of those inside reading the paper or up early, as usual, drinking their coffee. Lamps were strongly favored over overhead lighting, lending texture and specificity to the scenes.

Windows were left open at night. This meant that the bedrooms of houses were left unheated through the winter and all that that entailed (strong bladders, electric blankets, a lifelong intolerance for the way heat dries the nostrils while sleeping).

One of the regular rhythms of the day was to pause at a window, fitted out with panes and shutters folded back on each side, to check in with the unfolding and pleating of a world pulled in and out through the glass. This was not just a practice of looking but a mood—ruminative or touched, for good or bad. That mood was a contact point with the threat of being shut in or stuck (see Pine, 2012). It was as if “getting out” was a necessary balancing act against the kind of intensity that came of being inside peering out of those powerful windows attuned to the compositionality of ordinary things. Raking leaves, shoveling snow, planting colorful pansies, painting the house, going to Dunkin' Donuts and the ice cream stands on every road out of town, and cutting down trees with your neighbors were somehow palliative acts of dispersal—a lightening of the intensity of mood. Public space was intensely intimate: when they met on the street or in a store, people stopped to talk about the weather (i.e., the human condition); neighbors watched and checked in and went to wakes at the end; there were benches everywhere to sit and visit; the town bars felt like 1970s basement recreation rooms; town accents marked intimate territories and a slack-jawed willingness to be copresent (see also Vannini, 2011, p. 289).

New England Red had become a way of hearing the world—a dissembling and a shock to thought, a machine in which things threw together and pulled apart, hardened up and sloughed off.

COMPOSITION

Strands tangle in a composition. The opening passage of *Red House* and my outline of New England Red here are suggestive cartographies of the mixing of elements and their varied, solid, or flickering ontologies. The expansive mapping of elements in play adds a disorienting weight to the stark mantras of representational critique: that the play of abstracted categories (i.e., real/fabricated, nature/human habitat, wild/tame, red/white, high/low) bloodlessly determines worlds or adequately describes them; that to say that everything is political means to always already know what the Political is (i.e., something that exists in the big picture or broader significance, something strongly obvious—but not to most people!); that meanings can be easily (even automatically) assigned to things and are the basis of those things' value.

In a composition, categories, meanings, and plays of force become generative in the course of something taking place. It is not that the things that happened to New England Red along the sparking lines of nation, region, class, race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, migration, in the industries and the arts, and in the constant shifts and hardenings that make up daily life were the mere effects of contexts or causes but rather that history and determination took place through lines of color and the other forms of the compositionality of living through the things that were throwing together and wearing out. These things happened in moments, scenes, and forms that swelled into a knap and matter pulled into line with a real: the moment in the nineteenth century when unrealistic stylization of visual experience became the hallmark of a new realism and the town centers starkly whitened; the scene of the red barn and the red maple leaf charging the landscape with the singularities of domestic industries and the promise of nature; the way that Hart Crane's short stories began to operate through color irreducible to subjective experience or objective physical properties.

Crane lifted the feeling of blue from its visual appearance to infuse it into his language, word touching world not in a mere symmetry of registers but as a generative relation. Gaskill (2009) likens this relation to the relation between water flowing through a turbine and the electrical current that is produced. In the same way, visual artists' use of colors did not simply replicate the new hypervalent styles and colors of advertising posters and tomato-can labels. Rather, art as a form was energized by the perceptual experience of the fin de siècle city and countryside in ways that led to the animation and even personification of color (Gaskill, 2009, p. 731).

In a cartography of compositional elements, formal compositions and unmarked ways of being loop around each other, fly out on a wing and back up. Wallace Stevens' poetry flew the queer-compositionality of color into the twentieth century by abstracting colors into a structure of being in a world composed out of shifting elemental qualities (McFadden, 1961, p. 187). A palette of colors made a reality (something that could be accepted) by adding form to being: black sky and ocean (limit, outline, elemental flux,

matter waiting formlessly to be changed); white ice and snow (stasis, shape and form, a blankness that challenges composition, the transitoriness of an ice cream cone); red (the feebly real, the long, low-frequency wavelength of the dying stars, the past, the effort to fix dead reality in a cast); green (plants that glare with a harsh reality, the violence at the heart of the world we inhabit); blue (a limited, temporary success in fixing experience in a pattern) (McFadden, 1961, p. 189). Prime colors indicated the capacity for a shift in perception attentive to forms raised or cut out of the materials of life. The evanescent glimpse of being is the closest we come to the ground of things (Miller, 1964, p. 100). The present is “physical if the eye is quick enough” (Stevens, 1954, p. 444) and also compositional so that a “day still full of summer” changes profoundly when the leaves, poised in the trees as if asleep, suddenly fall “and the leafless sound of the wind is no longer a sound of summer” (Stevens, 1954, p. 488).

A Stevens poem looks to the pure sensation of things as they are in their “living changingness” (Stevens, 1954, p. 380). The poem fastens itself to the moment poised between form and formlessness, a crystallization filled with the potentiality of dissolution. It is a de-creation that exposes reality as a rhythmic alternation between objects, events, and words, an uncreated world with everything still to be started up. “An ordinary evening in New Haven” is “a permanence composed of impermanence. So that morning and evening are like promises kept” (Stevens, 1954, p. 471). Reality is solid not because of a premise but because “a shade . . . traverses a dust, a force . . . traverses a shade” (Stevens, 1954, pp. 488–489).

OPENING ENDINGS

The question of *New England Red* is the question of actions, labors, nightmares, grubs, chemicals, forms of touch and repulsion. It is the question of a series of worlds unfolding and folding up again, each with a “we”—a matter of compositions. Are they tired or fresh? Are they feeble, experimental, eccentric, habitual, generous, gestural, half turned away? Have they reached the expressivity of a mood, an infusion, a tone of voice? Do they lighten things or load them down?

My mother is dying in the nursing home. I escape for lunch, walking several miles to the Pizza Factory on the highway to get a Greek salad with chicken and pita bread. Lured by the sight of a red barn, I am veered off into a route through the woods. This is an adventure and I am alone, anxious but also setting off. On the way back I see a different path going up over the hill and decide to take the detour. Then hours pass lost. I am dehydrated, becoming physically disoriented. Finally able to retrace my steps all the way back, I catch a glimpse of the white and gray buildings on the far side of a long wooded patch of overgrown bushes and raspberry briars. I run through it to the hardtop and the buildings that now seem to have been waiting, on hold.

This affective event of the ever-so-slightly reckless impulse to venture into a place that pulls watchful bodies out of windows and off tracks is familiar and strangely satisfying, almost compulsory—an allure into a stranding in a moody solid world of trees, punctuated, and even initiated, by an instance of red, and further broken, perhaps, by an occasional weathered shack, a sudden wild turkey run. I recognize the allure of a stranding in a still life of nature overlooking the scene of the human world not as an iconic ideological message imprinted on experience but as a structure of attachment to a future already passing, a present saturated with potential and threat, a composition made explicit in the figure of the active survivor and the knowing reader of impacts. The act of going off track and finding a way back was a search for the touch of a red-piqued world my mother and father had lodged themselves in. As children we had watched for the occasional glimpse of that world’s emergence when the breaking waves and worn grooves of a present took off in an associational spin. This is a watchfulness-turned-impulse that ends not in meaning but in the haptic, multiangled, sensorimotor qualities of a world’s unimaginable detail.

PHENOMENAL RED

In “Why Red Looks Red Rather Than Sounding Like a Bell,” J. Kevin O’Regan outlines four qualities of sensorimotor interactions with environments that are not reducible either to thoughts and imaginings or to the physical properties of things in themselves: richness (a scene spied provides infinite detail beyond what you can invent), bodiliness (the motions of the body affect sensory input), insubordinateness (the world has a life of its own; things move by themselves), and grabbiness (sensory impacts matter apart from their cognition) (2010, p. 16). Having a phenomenal experience is having skills with these qualities.

* * *

New England Red is a presence even when it isn’t actual. Walking home in the middle of my first drunk night as a fifteen-year-old, I peed under a huge elm tree right on Main Street as if these trees, red-piqued by the maples, created an intimate public space out of the world (see Berlant, 2008).

* * *

I came across an old photograph of an icehouse on Lake Cochichewick. Men would cut great blocks of ice out of the lake and drag them with horses up to the icehouse, where the ice would stay frozen all year. Then they cut the ice into blocks and delivered them to iceboxes all over town. The icehouses didn’t get painted red like the sugaring houses did. What’s the question to ask about all this labor and why they did it?

* * *

The body learns to respond to red. If you turn your head, for instance. Or if you are sitting in an Adirondack chair at the top of a hill in winter. You can see over the bare trees to the lake and the hills behind it. The winter sky is a beautiful blue-gray. The hour is stolen from the hard time of being in the nursing home down below. In there, the colors of the walls and bedding are muted, though New England pops in wood built-ins and large photographs and paintings of coastal villages and paths through dense fall woods. Out here the colors have a fresh smell. They sting the cheeks. You can breathe. It's an interlude cordoned off by the phenomenon of Red. Not now, but soon, red buckets will be hung from the maple trees at the bottom of the hill, where some of the old people can still get out to walk or at least remember walking or at least see the color red out there.

CHECKING IN

Writing, like New England Red, is not epiphenomenal, not an expression of knowledge already garnered from scholarship, but a phenomenal method of attending and composing. It can get on a roll, cook things down to a sensation, spin out of critical thinking's bad habits—the facile moralisms, the prizing of prefabricated good objects over bad. Writing, like red, can be a hinge. Or a necessary detour. Or a phenomenal cartography that reaches a point of expressivity: a queer performativity of flighty infrastructures, an energetics of attention, a comagnetizing of things.

In *Checked out OK* (2013) Corwin Ericson pulls police reports from small-town western Massachusetts papers into smooth, speculative little clumps of phenomena. Subphenomena pop up, establish little lines of their own, and tangle. There are forms of corecognition, something witnessed that gets cooked down into something saucy. Compositions sort into forms. Bits and pieces of reporting throw little lights on phenomenal compositions of noticing what happens and routine acts of checking in attuned to the “more than” of experience.

Aug 4 2:15 p.m. and Aug 6, 11 a.m. A Wendell Road resident told police someone had been using a pruning device to remove branches from trees on the property. Police determined the damage was actually being caused by porcupines.

9:14 a.m. Police determined that a child reported home alone at the Brook Estates was actually an adult who was OK.

2:38 p.m. A suspicious man seen looking into car windows on Spring Street was determined to be a blind man who was just waiting for a bus.

6:34 p.m. A group of males putting a branch with spikes on Harkness Road turned out to be a pine branch.

4:50 p.m. A swimmer at Puffer's Pond reported that three people with weapons and holding walkie-talkies were loitering in the area. Police determined that members of the department's detective bureau were working there.

4:07 p.m. An Amherst Road resident reported that there was a rabid mole in her yard snapping and attacking a plastic trash bag. The resident drowned the mole in a bucket of water. Police said there was no sign that the mole had been rabid. And the resident was advised to bury the animal.

10:48 a.m. A man crawling in the middle of Main Street was issued a warning to stay out of the travel lane.

(There were three other cases reported of men crawling in the middle of, and usually licking, the road. This is a line of composition.)

2:52 p.m. A person reported finding two jackets in a snow bank alongside the Norwattuck Rail Trail where it crosses under South Pleasant Street. The jackets were left in case they had been placed there deliberately.

9:33 a.m. A man licking the locks on doorways of apartments on North Pleasant Street was gone when police got there.

(The licking again.)

3:28 p.m. A Belchertown Road resident was advised to talk to her roommates after she said someone entered her apartment and ate bananas.

5:06 p.m. Witchcraft was allegedly being practiced at a Pelham Road home. The woman who reported the witchcraft called police the following day at 8:28 to report more trickery taking place.

(There is a line of obsessive endurance when it comes to suspicious acts or acts of injustice. People complain to the police that a store that claims to be open 24 hours isn't open at 5 a.m. or that one that is supposed to be open at 6 a.m. still isn't open at 6:05 even though there are people moving around in there.)

4 p.m. Police received a report from the management at Bart's Home-made that a woman causing problems would not leave the store. The woman told police that she had asked for a piece of pie but was refused service because the pie was allegedly frozen. When she returned to the store, she discovered that the pie, by that time defrosted, had been sold to another customer. She told police she may file a civil complaint against the store.

12:50 p.m. Police received a report that a human hand was in the middle of the Route 116 near the Goten of Japan restaurant. Police

determined it was a rubber glove and contacted the Highway Department to remove it.

(A couple of months later a blood-soaked glove was reported on the ground outside the DB Mart on West Street. Police located the glove and determined that in the moonlight its pink color just made it look red. There are a lot of people sitting in cars who turn out to be just looking at the stars.)

10:33 a.m. A dangerous-looking animal that a Pondview Drive resident reported was moving about on his property turned out to be a black plastic trash bag blowing in the wind.

2:47 p.m. A Village Park woman told police that she found a brownie underneath her license plate.

6:25 p.m. A call was made reporting that a duck near the campus pond had not moved in three or four days. An officer responded and determined that the duck in question was a wooden duck.

2:59 p.m. A Village Park woman reported four 60-watt light bulbs and four boxes of cranberry bread mix were stolen from the residence. Police were unsure whether any break-in had occurred.

5 p.m. A Lake Wyola area resident told police that threatening graffiti was placed on his lawn. Police determined that the graffiti was just markings made by phone company employees.

9:57 p.m. A Station Road resident reported hearing a strange noise in the area. Police determined it was just wind in the trees.

9:12 p.m. A Hawkins Meadow woman told police that someone may have been entering her apartment while she's not home as she found her toilet filled with urine when she returned. There were three other cases of women finding alien urine in their toilets and assuming someone had broken in to put it there.

The more-than representation, the more-than what we know, stretches out into nether lands and then snaps back to the register of sensory phenomena and compositional leaps. It catches attention, sets off lines and habits, spreads into an ecology of paths that matter by means of the things that happen in a present in which we are lost yet attuned.

As Taussig, thinking of Walter Benjamin's compositional methods, puts it,

Back to the red butterfly as seen under the influence of opium, same color as the poppies filling the fields, vibrating blood red in the summer haze of Ibiza. Back to Goethe, positing color as a function of the human body, itself seen as an ongoing experiment in nature's relation to culture, language being right there on the cusp where nature and culture intertwine closer than ancient ivy. (2009, p. 252)

THE THING ABOUT RED

This red is a clumping of trees and painted faces, war colors and dreams of cottage industries far from the bloody gray of industrialization. It's domestic touches, the invention of landscape, and the price you pay for being in a place that spins in a tangle of events, lines, and accretions. It's a compositional method scored through matter, a leaning in to a worlding. A knapping up, a refrain that loops out and back between form and matter. It's a quality that became atmospheric, sensory, an ecology of potentiality marked by violence and care. An expressivity stretched across a field. A register of compositionality and all the ways that people and things venture out into reals. A prismatic fan of projects and momentary might-have-beens throwing together and falling apart. It became a capacity more than, and alien to, the representational. The non-representational method of following red's lines here has suggested an associational logic of connections, divergences, the coagulations and diffusions of lines of influence and bits of matter.

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3 Atmospheric Methods

Ben Anderson and James Ash

How might we approach the non-representational background of thought and life? One claim that is shared across non-representational theories is that the background matters: there exist a series of affective, embodied, conditions for representational acts and practices. The background is not an inert, natural backdrop but a collectively lived and shaped condition. How, then, to research these conditions that shape, without determining, representational life? And how might we learn to focus on the problems that researching such conditions poses to social analysis? In this chapter we address these questions by way of reflections on the methodological challenges of researching one such collective condition: affective atmospheres.

Within the social sciences there is a burgeoning literature on the concept of atmosphere (Adey et al., 2013; Anderson, 2009; Ash, 2012, 2013; Stewart 2011). This literature emerges from, and seeks to develop, existing work on affect and affect theory—itsself an increasingly prominent series of theoretical trajectories for analyzing how life is organized outside of strictly representational registers and structures of meaning. For non-representational theory, a turn to affect has opened new ways of thinking about the relationship between bodies and spaces that attend to the often-taken-for-granted and implicit effects that encounters between human and non-human bodies can generate. Whereas earlier literature on affect focused on its individualized actualization as a particular emotional state in a human body, a turn to the concept of affective atmosphere has been a way to think about the diffuse, collective nature of affective life. As Adey et al. put it,

Thinking about affective atmospheres also draws attention to how affects can be “collective” and be transmitted between people. Such atmospheres “form part of the ubiquitous backdrop of everyday life” but a backdrop that is at the same time “forceful and affect[s] the ways in which we inhabit . . . spaces” (Bissell, 2010, p. 272). (Adey et al., 2013, p. 301)

Atmospheres appear to exemplify a non-representational object of inquiry: they are part of the “ubiquitous backdrop” of life and thought, while at the same time exerting some kind of force.

There are, though, a series of methodological challenges the concept of atmosphere poses. Adey et al. argue that in practice “there are conceptual limits to just how the field is being rendered as a site of affect and how it might be researched” (Adey et al., 2013, p. 301). Indeed, these limits are linked to theorizations of affect that are often predicated on the notion of the encounter, where affects emerge when two beings or entities contact one another in some way. This has resulted in various critiques that ask how affects can travel or how the same affect can be experienced by multiple bodies (Pile, 2009). In Seyfert’s words, “How can an affect be simultaneously defined as an effect that only emerges from the encounter between bodies and also as a force external to these bodies?” (2012, p. 29).

The problem is that an atmosphere is at once a condition and is itself conditioned. How is it possible to research both the formation of an affective atmosphere—that is, how it is conditioned—and what an atmosphere does—that is, how it conditions, or affects? The problem of understanding the non-representational background as conditioned and condition is not unique to the concept of affective atmospheres—far from it. An emphasis on the background is shared across non-representational theories, alongside an attentiveness to how meaning emerges from practical action and how events introduce the chance of something different into life. The background has been given a number of names, such as milieu or context. However, much in the same way that Bruno Latour (2005) critiques the concept of society, notions of context or background can become caught up in a logic of explanation; either the background is explained away by reference to something else, or it is used to explain. What non-representational theories do in relation to the background is break with this reductive logic of explanation. This means that non-representational methods are part of styles of research and analysis that treat non-representational phenomena as at once conditioned and conditions. Seemingly ephemeral, seemingly vague and diffuse, atmospheres nevertheless have effects and are effects. Non-representational methods work to intensify the problems that the background poses to social analysis and to sense and disclose how the background is composed and organized.

The chapter is organized around four problematics that are intensified in relation to the concept of atmosphere but are shared by other non-representational phenomena. We discuss these problematics through empirical vignettes drawn from our recent experiences of waiting in NHS (National Health Service) hospitals in Newcastle Upon Tyne and Gateshead, UK. First, how is it possible to name an atmosphere, if naming is generally considered to be a representational act that fixes and therefore reduces a phenomenon? Particularly intense atmospheres, such as mass

panic or fear, may be easy to identify, but it seems harder to analyze and differentiate between more everyday, banal, or quotidian atmospheres, that may in fact be more important to the ongoing maintenance of social life or the performance of power and politics. Second, how is it possible to account for the coexistence of non-representational conditions? That is to say, can atmospheres coexist in the same space, or do they require separation and exteriority from one another in order to exist? Third, how might we become sensitive to the causal powers of phenomena that exert a force, but may be vague and diffuse, ephemeral and indeterminate? How can we account for or assign causality to an atmosphere in situations where atmospheres mix with other participants and are themselves multiple? Fourth, if atmospheres are ephemeral then what mechanisms or processes dictate an atmosphere's capacity for change and how do these changes come about? How do we think about change in the background of thought and life without reproducing a model of linear succession?

IDENTIFICATION

A child sits and is soothed and sick is wiped away; a name is called by a receptionist, another a few minutes later; business as people arrive and leave, occasional glances at posters quietly documenting mundane safety routines; doors off to somewhere, background chatter of hushed voices; what looks like a head wound; arms around shoulders, heads awkwardly resting against arms; one of us waits with the almost but not quite soothed child, hoping she won't be sick.

Perhaps we could name the atmosphere of the waiting room of a north-east A&E department as anxious waiting. Perhaps it, if an atmosphere is an "it," is better named as the urgency and expectancy of a scene of emergency. Perhaps anxious waiting for the hope of treatment better evokes the atmosphere. Perhaps all of these names and none of them would serve to express, reflect, or enact the background affective quality of a room in which matters of life and death are never far away.

Atmospheres are routinely and regularly individualized by being named. Naming is, of course, central to efforts to explicate atmospheres in order to render them subject to intervention. Naming is in this respect a pragmatic act. The name fixes an end point to be produced through some kind of intervention. It specifies what should be brought into being, and is usually part of familiar taxonomies of atmospheres. Naming is also a pragmatic way of giving an account of a situation or event. Names are ascribed to atmospheres in ways that enable, or not, joint recognition. But naming also occurs as part of all research into and with atmospheres. Here it poses more of a problem for any analysis influenced by non-representational approaches, for it would be easy to reduce naming to one particular function: fixing within a representational economy. On this understanding, naming would freeze

what is in process, determine what is indeterminate. An atmosphere or a set of atmospheres would from then on be housed within the unity of a name. What would supposedly be lost is precisely atmosphere as a condition that exists ambiguously.

Atmospheres appear to be a strange class of non-representational thing—what Galloway and Thacker (2007, p. 11) call “the persistent naming of the entity-that-cannot-be-named. What is obvious and immediate is the same thing that is shadowy and unknown.” The problem is, then, hardly unique to atmospheres but crosses between various non-representational phenomena: the sense that not only do names miss their referent but also the division between representation and referent is an effect of a particular version of representation. Even though atmospheres are also regularly named by those within them or have just exited them, there would be something suspect about naming, something that appeared to sit uneasily in a book on non-representational methods.

Although there is much to be said for this account of naming, it risks reproducing a too one-dimensional account of the relation between researching atmospheres and representation. In particular, it risks presuming a difference in kind between the representational and non-representational and reproducing a one-dimensional understanding of representation. Let’s return to our hesitancy in naming the atmospheres that coexisted within the waiting room to summarize some alternative representational practices and strategies. Proliferating names for atmospheres might be one way of responding to the volatility of atmospheres, or their ambiguous, indeterminate status, by placing in question whether an atmosphere is a determinate thing with fixed properties and capacities. Another representational strategy might be to be cryptic about the name given to an atmosphere, attempting to acknowledge the tension that inheres in naming the background of life and thought by hinting or through misdirection. Another representational strategy is to invent fabulous new names for every atmosphere encountered, in doing so refusing to invoke any kind of universal descriptor for an atmosphere. Inventing a new name—names that do not allow for recognition, names that confuse, names that resonate—for every atmosphere would affirm the singularity of this or that atmosphere and its irreducibility. Here the name wouldn’t be pulled off the shelf and applied to a situation.

But perhaps we get a different sense of the work naming does if we think about naming as part of a methodological practice involving a combination of description and speculation—a practice that acknowledges that atmospheres cannot be faced without a name, but treats naming as one act in a practice orientated to the emanation of an atmosphere. Naming an atmosphere is, first, recognition of the individuation of a particular atmosphere and its difference from other atmospheres. Naming presupposes, then, the existence of that which is named. It is one part of a process of ascribing an identity to an atmosphere that occurs alongside a research process that makes present the individuation of this or that atmosphere.

Specifically, naming is an act within a practice of description that attunes to the composition of an atmosphere and the emanation of an atmosphere from some kind of ensemble. As a practice, it might be that many names are tried out for atmospheres before one fits the particular affective quality. In this respect, naming emerges, in part, from how the researcher is simultaneously orientated towards an atmosphere and dwells within that same atmosphere.

Identification is an ongoing process that involves assembling traces of an atmosphere from a multiplicity of bits and pieces. But, and second, naming is also an act that evokes something beyond the name and can hint towards how uncertainty inheres in the process of ascribing an identity to an atmosphere. We could say, first, that any name invokes the singularity and generality of any atmosphere. A name is singular in that it speaks to the specificity of how a particular atmosphere emanates. It gestures towards something that clearly and obviously exceeds the unity of a name. Naming is also general, though. It gestures towards commonalities and differences with other atmospheres. It invites us to consider that something might be shared between the ensembles from which atmospheres emanate and in the way in which atmospheres condition.

We could then emphasize, slightly differently, how naming acts to evoke something of the particularity of an atmosphere and how an atmosphere conditions. Perhaps, a certain atmosphere comes to attach to the name itself, conjuring other atmospheres. Riley (2005) reminds us that names have a tone. They move. By highlighting the role of naming in orientating towards the individuation of an atmosphere, we are trying to rescue naming from its devaluation as a representational act somehow counter to non-representational methods. Naming is a necessary act because, whether done cryptically, inventively, or otherwise, by evoking atmosphere as one entity among others it provides a necessary starting point for any analysis: that atmospheres are real phenomena that are part of the conditions for life and thought, albeit strange phenomena whose existence is always in question.

COEXISTENCE

A group of people are sitting in a square waiting room, next to a series of doors leading to a variety of examination and treatment rooms. Based in the optometry department, the room provides patients a space to sit after they have been booked into the hospital away from the general waiting area, but before they have been seen by a nurse or doctor. The patients are all there regarding some issue with their eyes. Each waits, not knowing the severity or banality of the medical problem the other patients (or perhaps themselves) may suffer from. Nor are they aware of the treatment that the other patients may be about to experience behind the closed doors that line

the waiting room's walls. Some may be there for a routine eye test, others for a more invasive procedure, and yet others looking to receive a diagnosis for some seemingly obscure ailment. This ambiguity over the medical status of each individual, alongside the fear, anticipation, or calm that accompanies the knowledge, or lack thereof, of what will happen in the examination or treatment room, makes it difficult to discern an overarching atmosphere that unites or pervades the various assembled bodies. Some patients appear relaxed, and others appear tense and nervous. Two older ladies chat about television soap operas and immigration, while a younger man looks at the ground and taps his feet.

It is tempting to summarize the tone or feel of an atmosphere under one overarching name, such as fear or panic, and assume that an atmosphere's single feel or tone is what gives an atmosphere the capacity to dictate or dominate a particular situation or environment. Such a strategy might suggest that the assemblage of bodies and objects that constitute the waiting room just described has generated an atmosphere of uncertainty or ambiguity. For example, whereas the older women appear relaxed and chatty, other patients appear tense and uncomfortable. However, turning to this simple vignette again, it is possible to argue that the waiting room is constituted by multiple atmospheres that touch, contact, and rub up against one another, rather than a single, overarching, or dominant one. The two ladies chatting appeared at ease and the sound and gentle manner of their conversation about ostensibly public issues and television shows touched other waiting patients and drew them into the conversation, bolstering and amplifying an atmosphere of calm conviviality. At the same moment, others sitting in the waiting room clearly did not want to be involved in this conversation and turned their heads towards the floor or away from the conversation to avoid being drawn into the mundane chatter. These patients were emanating a more hesitant or fearful comportment, expressed through their body language and behavior, such as sighing loudly and shifting from side to side in their seat. Rather than competing with one another, these forces and their associated affects (of hesitancy, calm, and potential worry) existed alongside one another without direct collision or competition. In this example there was no clear relationship of dominance in which one atmosphere overrode or cancelled out the other. In other words, these multiple atmospheres seemingly contacted or touched one another, while remaining affectively discrete. For a non-representational analysis of atmospheres to be effective, this requires understanding how to account for these forms of contact and touch.

Graham Harman's reading of Jean-Luc Nancy's theory of touch is useful in this regard. As Harman argues,

To touch something is to make contact with it even when remaining separate from it because the entities that touch do not fuse together. To touch is to caress a surface that belongs to something else, but never to

master or consume it. It requires a certain space between beings, but also an interface where they meet. (Harman, 2012, p. 98)

In relation to the examples discussed earlier, the atmospheres emanating from the various bodies and objects in the waiting room touched, but did not simply mix or fuse together. Rather, they existed as discrete phenomena. The sound waves and intonation of the voices of the ladies sitting in the waiting room may have affected the bodies of the more hesitant patients, causing them to shift or look away, but they did not override the atmosphere of hesitancy the voices exuded. In this case affects that can constitute an atmosphere may completely miss other affects that could cause an atmosphere to change. Harman alludes to objects that “miss” or do not touch and affect one another, even when in the same environment through the simple example of a paper screen:

We can bring to mind an oriental paper screen of the type that is used to divide fashionable rooms into sectors, filtering lamplight into a muted glow. Such a device offers a formidable barrier for the particles of dust that continually drift into it, or even gravel chips that might accidentally be kicked up against it. But the soft light passing through the room encounters it only as a partial obstacle. (Harman, 2002, p. 31)

Atmospheres can then coexist alongside one another without fusing or melting together precisely because the objects and bodies that make up an atmosphere do not exist as a set of totally interactive or accessible relations (also see Ash, 2013).

We can further elucidate how atmospheres potentially coexist in the same environment while still appearing distinct and separate, without necessarily affecting one another, through Nancy’s distinction between the weight and mass of bodies. In *Corpus*, Nancy (2008) argues the weight of a body is what it exerts on other things, whereas the mass of a thing is the amount of matter it is composed of. Comparing weight and mass “Nancy contrasts the weight that bodies exert on other bodies with the mass through which they concentrate in themselves . . . here the weight of mutual relations takes clear precedence” (Harman, 2012, p. 100). For Nancy, a body or object is defined by its boundary and a boundary is determined by a relationship to something other than itself. In Harman’s reading, for Nancy, it is the mutual weighing of bodies that is primary to giving a thing its boundary (and thus defining it). However, at the same time, a process of weighing is possible only because of a thing’s mass, which is singular and precedes its encounter with other things. The thing’s non-relational mass and its relational weight are therefore intertwined, but it is the thing’s weight (rather than its mass) that emerges when contacting or touching with other things.

Translating this into our language of atmospheres, mass refers to each individual object and body’s features or properties that give it a unique

potential to affect, dependent on its relational configuration with other things. Weight refers to the affects that emerge from the selective relations between objects that actually occur within a given situation and thus form a specific atmosphere. In other words, bodies or objects have a mass, which shapes their capacity to affect, but do not necessarily weigh upon one another. For example, a sound wave may not affect a concrete block and so may be unable to contribute or shape the atmosphere associated with the concrete block, even if the sound wave physically touches the block. At the same time, when aspects of objects do contact and affect one another this can create a mutual weighing, in which affective communication takes place and thus an atmosphere is formed. Although seemingly abstract, this account of atmospheres having a weight actually chimes with lived experience, where people often refer to a situation as “heavy” or a room as expressing a “light and airy feeling.”

We can use the distinction between non-relational mass and relational weight, alongside our understanding of objects as selectively encountering one another, to understand how atmospheres can be composed of a number of the same bodies and objects, while remaining mutually exterior from one another. For example, the affects the ladies in the sitting room generated through the specific sound and intonation of their voices extended and met the bodies of the other patients in the waiting room. Most patients were affected by this, which caused some to turn and join the conversation and others to turn away. In this case the same affect had differential impacts on the bodies involved in the encounter. Some affects touched, communicated, and weighed against one another, generating an atmosphere, whereas in other cases particular bodies or objects touched but did not communicate or missed one another, thus remaining outside of the atmosphere. In other cases, bodies or objects in an environment neither touched nor communicated at all. These relations of touch, communication, and non-touch, in turn, generated different effects and thus another atmosphere. Crucially both atmospheres, of convivial conversation and polite frustration, were equally present, while remaining distinct, even when specific objects and bodies were contributing to both atmospheres at the same time. In the optometry ward, the weighing and thus coexistence of these two atmospheres in turn emphasized and highlighted the distinction and difference between them to the patients who were waiting for treatment or diagnosis.

In terms of non-representational methods, understanding how objects selectively encounter and weigh or fail to weigh against each other could be aided by the further development of what Shaw et al. (2013) term a “standpoint ontology.” Referring to mosquitos, Shaw et al. understand standpoint ontology as seeing “lived experience as unavoidably partial and fragmented: as a very particular experience of being-in-the-world” (p. 263). To occupy a mosquito’s standpoint they suggest it is necessary to “delve beneath the molar forms and discover a world of chemistry, ions and sparks: where environment and organism pulsate together” (p. 263).

Whereas Shaw et al.'s standpoint ontology assumes perspective is limited to living things, developing a standpoint ontology to study atmospheres would require the researcher to attempt to occupy the position of multiple entities, both living and non-living, to think through how an object or force encounters other things.

A non-representational approach to atmospheres' coexistence involves a flattening and breaking down of distinctions between living and dead matter to suggest that all objects have the potential to equally impact or weigh upon an atmosphere. Attending to the standpoint of various objects does not mean simply making a list of an object's properties. Rather, a non-representational approach to atmospheres considers an object's potential as well as actual modes of relation, which are in turn dependent on the other bodies and objects present in an atmosphere. In the foregoing example, we could begin an investigation of an atmosphere from the standpoint of the exhaled air that forms the sigh of waiting patients, such as its power, reach, volume, pitch, and so on. Or we could begin with the light bulbs that shape the kind of illumination that the waiting room is bathed in. Following the non-representational conviction that "mimesis is impossible" (Vannini, this volume p. 12) attempting to occupy the standpoint of a light bulb is not to pretend to understand what it is really like to be a light bulb or a breath of air. Rather it is to focus on forms of exchange and communication that often exist beneath the thresholds of humans' conscious awareness, or indeed do not phenomenally appear to humans at all, in order to open up and question the limits and boundaries that shape the coexistence of atmospheres.

CAUSAL POWERS

It is the objects and bodies and the precise nature of the types of affective interaction that take place (or fail to take place) in a situation that determine the coexistence of atmospheres and their boundaries, limits, and consistencies. Yet atmospheres are irreducible phenomena: neither wholly separate from the relations that form them, nor wholly determined by those relations. Emphasizing the irreducibility of atmospheres directs us to their strange, ambiguous causal powers. Consider another example of the emergency waiting room and the ripple of surprise occasioned by a sudden cry.

It's around 2:40 a.m., and the room is quiet. People appear in pain. Some are worried; others doze more or less quietly. Doctors come and go; people arrive and leave. Two parents are tired, awake. Our daughter sleeps nestled into her mother's shoulder. Suddenly, she cries out. It's not a noise we've heard before. It startles and scares us. When will we get to see a doctor? Should we ask? The noise jolts other people, and they turn to us, some stealing glances at our daughter. One man says quietly, "Poor thing." Someone we presume is his partner nods.

On the one hand, the atmosphere of the room conditions how waiting happens. An atmosphere appears to have a quasi-autonomous existence, shaping actions that are themselves part of how an atmosphere settles and shifts a little, but continues to stay a while. Perhaps lacking the sense of solidity we give to other more obvious material conditions, atmospheres condition by becoming part of how situations and events happen. On the other hand, atmospheres are conditioned by the ensemble of bits and pieces from which they emanate. We might make an open-ended list of the elements that condition without determining an atmosphere, itself an act that reminds us of the (im)material heterogeneity of the “origins” for this or that atmosphere. Where an “origin” of an atmosphere is understood, following Bennett (2010, p. 33), as “a complex, mobile, and heteronomous enjoiner of forces” that mediates how an atmosphere emanates:

- ... the logistics of emergency care and systems of prioritization based on need
- ... sleeping children
- ... white walls, blood, sick
- ... practices and expressions of sympathy
- ... being with strangers
- ... a cry and the absence of cries.
- ... waves of tiredness
- ... the uncertain commonality of illness and pain

How might we attune to an atmosphere as irreducible phenomenon: at once an effect of such an ensemble but also itself a causal power alongside others in situations or events? A version of this question has been at the heart of reflections on the term atmospheres. The phenomenologist Mikel Dufrenne (1976) stresses that an atmosphere as a “total effect” cannot be decomposed into a series of separate parts. Focusing on aesthetic atmospheres (*ibid.*, p. 327), he stresses that “we cannot reduce to their elements the melancholy grace of Ravel’s *Pavana pour une enfant défunte*, the glory of Franck’s chorales, or the tender sensitivity of Debussy’s *La fille aux cheveux de lin*.” Whereas an atmosphere is composed from a set of elements, atmosphere as a singular affective quality exceeds them. There are parts of his account we disagree with, but Dufrenne’s emphasis on an atmosphere as a “total effect” is interesting because it puts in question a methodology that would reduce any particular atmosphere to a secondary, lifeless product of a network of relations that is given methodological primacy. How, then, to approach the causal powers of atmospheres?

What Harman (2010) calls linear billiard-ball causation may be useful for thinking about some of the ways in which atmospheres emanate, but an attempt to separate out the assembling of atmospheres into effects and determinants is likely to fall short precisely because atmospheres envelop; they infuse and mix with other elements. Let’s return to the scene from the

emergency waiting room. How should we separate out cause and effect, or distinguish between that which conditions and that which is conditioned? There may be occasions of what Delanda (2005), Connolly (2005), and others term “efficient causality”: where an atmospheric effect follows from a determinant and that effect proceeds in a linear fashion on a set trajectory. Methodologically, we need to be open to the possibility of such occasions in order to keep open the question of what atmospheres do. But we also need to experiment with other versions of causality that offer us alternative ways of attuning to what atmospheres do.

Perhaps we could learn from William E. Connolly’s (2011) idea of “emergent causality” when approaching what an atmosphere does. Connolly describes “emergent causality” as a process whereby causes can become effects and vice versa, which gives a good sense of how something like an atmosphere is both an effect of a gathering of elements and a mediating force that actively changes the gathering it emanates from. The causal power of an atmosphere is, however, revealed only through those changes:

Emergent causality is causal—rather than reducible to a mere web of definitional relations—in that a movement in one force-field helps to induce changes in others. But it is also emergent in that: first, some of the turbulence introduced into the second field is not always knowable in detail in itself before it arrives darkly through the effects that emerge; [and] second, the new forces may become infused to some degree into the very organisation of the emergent phenomenon so that the causal factor is not entirely separate from the latter field. (*ibid.*, p. 171)

Although not discussing atmospheres directly, what Connolly provokes us to think about is how an atmosphere is at once an effect that emanates from a gathering and a cause that may itself have some degree of weight. An atmosphere is an “emergent cause” because we cannot be sure of the character of the atmosphere before registering its effects in what bodies do—an atmosphere is revealed precisely as it is expressed in bodily feelings, and qualified in emotions and other actions. In the foregoing vignette, perhaps the atmosphere emerges in, is reflected in, and is enacted by the acts of concern that range from a hug to a word of sympathy uttered and overheard. Perhaps the atmosphere becomes infused into those and other acts. As well as being ambiguous with regard to the absence/presence and subjective/objective distinctions, atmospheres are ambiguous with regard to the distinction between causes and effects. It is in this sense that atmospheres weigh on others ambiguously. They become one casually efficacious element among others, but in a way that is uncertain precisely because of their ambiguous status as surrounds that envelop and encircle. Atmospheres are perhaps better researched as affective propositions, unfinished lures to feeling a situation, site, person, or thing in a particular way that may come to condition life.

TRANSFORMATION

Atmospheres change—that much we have seen in the examples of a cry in an emergency room, or the to and fro of conversation in the optometry department. However, the issue is to understand exactly how and why an atmosphere may change, while holding onto the touch, or weight, of an atmosphere. Recognizing the coexistence of atmospheres we can wager that extremely infectious or dominant atmospheres, such as mass panic or terror, are actually quite rare phenomena, compared to the multiple minor atmospheres that constitute the banality of everyday experience. In this case it is important to differentiate between transformations that occur through interior changes within an atmosphere as distinct from changes in atmosphere that occur when one atmosphere encounters another and overrides or defuses its potency to affect. This kind of distinction is key to a non-representational approach to atmospheres because it allows us to introduce differentiations that multiply, rather than shut down, potential ways of knowing and forms of understanding atmospheres. In turn these distinctions help bring to presence a heightened awareness, in both the researcher and eventual reader of that research, regarding the complexity of atmospheric transformation. Returning to the example of waiting rooms, the difference between internal and external transformation can be fleshed out through the following vignette.

A woman emerged from a treatment room to a waiting area in an endoscopy ward. Previous to her exit the room had been calm, with patients reading magazines and watching the flat screen television that was attached to one wall. Exiting the door, the woman looked visibly upset. A catheter tube emerged from one nostril and was bent backwards towards her ear and disappeared under the neck of her t-shirt, taped in place with medical sticking plasters. A partner, friend, or relative of the woman who had been sitting in the waiting room quickly stood up and approached the woman as if to comfort her. The woman turned away and left the room, leaving the relative to gather their belongings and hastily follow her. This event, only a few seconds in duration, palpably altered the atmosphere in the waiting room. The previous sense of calm was interrupted and replaced with a sense of unease and disquiet. Other patients, who previously had been watching television or reading a magazine, had noted the woman's hasty exit from the waiting area and the addition of the catheter tube that had not been present when she had entered the treatment room. This event perhaps began to stir the imagination of others who may have been present for the same procedure, inciting feelings of fear or apprehension. This palpable change in atmosphere was brought about by an internal change in the atmosphere emanating from the woman, which in turn clashed with the existing atmosphere and worked to override it, shaping the atmosphere of the room even after she had left.

Examining the scene again in more detail, the internal change in the atmosphere that the woman emanated may have been brought about by

the treatment she had undergone, but also the medical apparatus that she was augmented with. Her disposition and mood had clearly changed, but it was not simply the addition of these objects to the situation that had altered the atmosphere. Rather, it was the specific arrangement and configuration of these objects on the woman's body. The intrusion of a catheter tube into her nostril seemed to produce an uncomfortable and unfamiliar set of sensations that was echoed by the look on her face and body language. Regardless of her personal subjective experience of the catheter and prior treatment, the catheter's capacity to affect was both internally experienced and publicly felt by others in the waiting room. Here the catheter ignited a kind of synesthetic recognition in one of the authors, who began to imagine the sensation of the catheter, even though he had never personally experienced the sensation of wearing one himself. Indeed, this example shows that the affects a person may experience in a situation do not have to be accurately communicated or transported to another person in order to generate a coherent or powerful atmosphere. What matters is the force of transmission itself, how many bodies an object affects, and in what way. In this case, the woman leaving the room had created an atmosphere through the assemblage of entities that were very localized to her own body, but still had a powerful, transmittable affect.

As we argued earlier, atmospheres regularly coexist in the same environment without encountering or affecting one another. However, in the foregoing case the existence of one atmosphere and the introduction of another caused the new atmosphere to become the dominant one. Here, the affects present in one atmosphere meet affects in the new atmosphere. Rather than passing these affects without influence, these affects do communicate and begin to take on their own intensity, which in turn alters the boundaries between the atmospheres. If the communication between atmospheres continues, this can lead to the situation (as just described) in which the power of the existing atmosphere's capacity to affect has diminished to the point at which it is no longer accessible to the objects or bodies in that situation. From the position of the bodies and objects in that environment this means that the existing atmosphere no longer has the capacity to affect and so, for all intents and purposes, appears to become subsumed by the new atmosphere.

Methodologically this means that atmospheric change can be understood as a matter of affects meeting one another in ways that produce (or fail to produce) new relations between the entities within that atmosphere. Rather than using a quantitative vocabulary based around the addition or subtraction of elements to/from an atmosphere to understand change, it may be better to use a qualitative vocabulary of thresholds and tipping points. These two terms can be elaborated by returning to the concepts of weight and mass developed in the third section. Each object and body in an environment has a mass, which weighs upon one another and brings an atmosphere into existence. An atmosphere's threshold for internal change is

therefore shaped by the presence and distribution of the mass of objects and bodies, because it is the mass of objects and bodies and their configuration that determine an atmosphere's capacity to affect. Altering the position of a body or changing some condition within an atmosphere changes its capacity to affect and can potentially overcome a threshold that maintained the global or prevailing affect the atmosphere was generating. For example, the placement of a catheter upon a body has the potential to totally alter the comportment and behavior of that body. The calmness that initially characterized the woman's demeanor in the endoscopy ward was replaced by irritation, frustration, and seeming self-consciousness. Here the catheter and its particular placement in the woman's nose and throat introduced new, seemingly negative affects, breaking through the previous threshold that constituted her confident atmosphere to produce a new, more intense, negative atmosphere in its place.

In a similar way we could state that it is the mutual weighing between atmospheres when they selectively encounter one another that both separates them out and holds them in tension, which shapes an atmosphere's tipping point. Here a tipping point is understood to be the point at which an atmosphere stops emanating its particular affects because it is overridden or subsumed by another atmosphere external to it. In the case of the newly augmented woman in the waiting area of the endoscopy unit, an atmosphere was introduced to the situation, and momentarily coexisted with the existing atmosphere. But as people became aware of, and responded to, the negative affects emanating from the woman, the new atmosphere began to override the existing one, until it became dominant. Suffice to say, an atmosphere's tipping point is not absolute or fixed, but relative to the objects that compose the existing atmosphere, as well as the arrangement of objects and intensities of affect in the new atmosphere. Formally put, we could say that mass determines an atmosphere's threshold at which it undergoes internal change, whereas the relational weighing between atmospheres determines their tipping point, or the point at which an atmosphere is subsumed or overridden by the external change brought about by another atmosphere. In other words, atmospheres take on particular phenomenal appearances to the entities within that atmosphere as affects meet or fail to meet one another and build or fail to build intensity. The production (or lack thereof) of intensity in turn creates the phenomenal appearance of an atmospheric change happening or not happening, depending on the objects and bodies involved in an encounter.

Returning to the problematic of non-representational methods, attending to these multiple forms of transformation is not about fixing each atmosphere through a particular set of naming practices. Rather than identifying various forms of internal and external change as a way of exhaustively describing an atmosphere, we can use a qualitative vocabulary of tipping points and thresholds to focus on an atmosphere's ambiguous nature by attending to its continuing differentiation as objects weigh and fail to weigh

against one another. Representing atmospheres in language and words is a matter of following these processes of differentiation and change in order to answer a specific research question, while recognizing that these processes of differentiation are always subject to another differentiation or another form of exposure that emerges when the researcher attempts to occupy an alternative standpoint or perspective.

CONCLUSION

The chapter has worked with a double account of non-representational methods. First, non-representational methods concern objects of inquiry that are, under some description, non-representational. For us, atmospheres exemplify such an object of inquiry. In their vagueness, in their ambiguity, in their indeterminacy, in their weight, atmospheres might be seen as not simply the paradigmatic non-representational object, but also a matter of concern that heightens the challenges the non-representational supposedly poses to social scientific habits and practices of description and explanation. This does not mean that atmospheres are somehow separate from representational forms and devices—far from it. But it does mean that atmospheres cannot be treated through an exclusive emphasis on a system of signification, and it does mean that the strange reality of atmospheres poses some problems for social analysis.

This leads us to the second sense of non-representational methods we have worked with, albeit more implicitly than the first. Non-representational methods do not refer to a separate set of methods neatly distinguished from methods that are now supposedly deficient. Instead, we take non-representational methods to name a set of ways of approaching a phenomenon, of relating or not to the weight or touch of something, which intensify the problems that the object of inquiry poses for social analysis. We could say, then, that a non-representational method involves an intensification of problems and requires staying with those problems for a while.

In this spirit, what we have tried to do in this chapter is intensify the problems that emerge once atmospheres become a matter of concern in the social sciences: problematics that we see as shared between atmosphere and other non-representational conditions and concerns, problematics that all concern how to explicate the background of life and thought without presuming that the background is simply an inert “context” or that the background is a mysterious, inaccessible substance outside of all mediation.

Indeed, by answering the five questions raised in the introduction we have developed a methodology to study how atmospheres operate in practice. To conclude, then, we can return to these questions to summarize what an atmospheric methodology might do and how the case of atmospheres opens up wider questions about non-representational methods.

Firstly, how does one identify an atmosphere and what role does naming play in rendering atmospheres sensible through recognition and identification? Here we touch on problems of misrecognition, but also of naming as a pragmatic act that, rather than being bestowed with a power to stifle life, is one way in which atmospheres are rendered present. Naming is ambivalent, though. Both evocative and referential, naming speaks to the necessity of treating atmospheres as conditioned conditions that are at once singular—this atmosphere here, now—and held in common—atmospheres that repeat with variations across sites, networks, or events.

Secondly, we have argued that atmospheres are both ontologically and spatially discrete from one another, but they can also coexist within the same space or environment without necessarily affecting one another. This is an important point because it complicates a narrative in which a space or system produces a single overarching atmosphere. To account for how multiple atmospheres can exist alongside one another requires we attempt to occupy multiple standpoints to consider how a body or object may be contributing to different but contemporaneous atmospheres. In turn this encourages us to take the non-human as seriously as the human when evoking an atmosphere. Regarding non-representational methods, this means developing a standpoint ontology to emphasize the excessive and not quite graspable nature of atmospheres. Indeed, investigating an atmosphere from the perspective of a catheter tube or health poster can itself conjure a sense of strangeness or unfamiliarity in a reader. As Vannini suggests in the introduction to this volume, generating a sense of wonder through the ways phenomena are accounted for is something like an ethos shared across non-representational theories. As such, these standpoints do not attempt to occupy an impossible position—the reality of existence for a catheter tube or health poster—but they do allow us to avoid an impulse to begin and end accounts of atmosphere with the human. By holding the question of what exactly constitutes an atmosphere open, a gap is created in which a broader range of non-human things can occupy a researcher's concern, at least for a while.

Thirdly, how might we build the irreducibility of atmospheres into our methodological practices? Atmospheres are conditioned by relations, but are neither reducible to them nor completely separate from them. This means experimenting in analysis with ways of approaching the causal powers of atmospheres: how atmospheres envelop and surround, infusing practices and becoming part of the background of sites. To name an atmosphere, to return to our first point, is to evoke their casual role. But to do so requires that we work with complex versions of causality, including ideas of emergent causality, that are attuned to in-distinctions between causes and effects and are able to hold onto how an affective condition takes place.

Fourthly, we have argued that changes in atmospheres take place via two processes: an atmosphere can change via the differentiation of objects or affects internal to an atmosphere, and an atmosphere can also change when

it meets another atmosphere that overrides or alters its capacity to affect in a fundamental way. In this regard changes in atmosphere can be gradual, as entities that constitute it are changed or are taken or added to that atmosphere, or change can be sudden, such as when one very potent atmosphere meets another and overrides it, cancelling the less potent atmosphere's capacity to affect. Studying atmospheric change, then, requires researchers to become sensitized to differences between internal and external atmospheric shifts. On one hand, this involves identifying all the entities in a situation and what parts or aspects of these entities are interacting or relating to other entities in ways that amplify or reinforce an existing atmosphere. On the other hand, this involves recognizing when a new set of affects emerge from outside the current atmosphere. Becoming sensitive to an atmosphere's weight and touch does not mean throwing away or discarding preexisting research methods. Rather it is a matter of style, a way of recording, analyzing, and writing that stays with the multiplicity of things that form an atmosphere and shape its capacity to change, instead of trying to immediately name an object or body as the central cause of affective transformation. Objects and bodies are, then, to be analyzed from not one perspective but several. The catheter does not have one single affect, but a catheter-nose affect, a catheter-face affect, a catheter-stranger affect, and so on.

Finally, then, we hope that the concepts and strategies developed here will help sensitize researchers to the complexities of atmosphere and in doing so expand and inform future non-representational work on this ephemeral yet constitutive phenomenon.

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4 Against Method

Erin Manning

Some of the major disasters of mankind have been produced by the narrowness of men with a good methodology.

(Whitehead, 1929, p. 12)

The question of inter- and transdisciplinarity has recently opened up in academic circles to what we in Canada call “research-creation.” Research-creation, also called “art-based research,” was adopted into academic language through the very question of methodology. Starting out as a funding category that would enable artists teaching in universities who didn’t have PhDs to apply for large academic grants,¹ the apparition of research-creation was instrumental more than it was inventive, for weren’t artists always involved in research, at the level of art-making itself? The issue was not, it seems to me, one of simply acknowledging that artists were also researchers, but an institutional tweaking of that already-existent research category into modes of knowledge more easily recognized by the academic institution. To be an artist-researcher would now mean to be able to organize the delineations between art practice and research methodology for the purposes of a grant that would then, inasmuch as grants ordinarily function this way, orient the research towards “academic” aims.

The issue here is complex. It not only touches on the question of how art itself activates and constitutes new forms of knowledge *in its own right* but also, perhaps most importantly, incites us to inquire into the very question of how practices produce knowledge, and whether those forms of knowledge can engagingly be captured within the strictures of methodological ordering. Although I believe that this is a question that could be posed to all forms of knowledge (following philosophers like Henri Bergson, William James, and Alfred North Whitehead, who all, in their own ways, inquire into the methodological frameworks of science, psychology, and philosophy), for the purposes of this chapter I would like to focus on the question of research-creation, and particularly on the transversality of its proposition.

Unlike the definition used by funding agencies and propagated in many of our institutions, which see the research component as extra to the artistic practice, thereby emphasizing what has come to be known as a theory-practice

split,² I would like to take seriously the idea that research-creation proposes new forms of knowledge, many of which are not intelligible within current understandings of what knowledge might look like. Taking as my inspiration the myriad colleagues and students whose work has moved me to rethink how knowledge is crafted, and taking also my own practice as a starting point, I would like to suggest that research-creation does much more than what the funding agencies had in store for it: it generates new forms of experience; it situates what often seem like disparate practices, giving them a conduit for collective expression; it hesitantly acknowledges that normative modes of inquiry and containment often are incapable of assessing its value; it generates forms of knowledge that are extralinguistic; it creates operative strategies for a mobile positioning that take these new forms of knowledge into account; it proposes concrete assemblages for rethinking the very question of what is at stake in pedagogy, in practice, and in collective experimentation.

New forms of knowledge require new forms of evaluation, and even more so, new ways of valuing the work we do. In the case of research-creation, which inevitably involves a transversal engagement with different disciplines, this incites a rethinking of how artistic practice reopens the question of what these disciplines—anthropology, philosophy, art history, cinema, communications, biology, physics, engineering—can do. Here my focus will be on philosophy, which has a history of launching its speculative apparatus in relation to artistic practice. How, I will ask, can the rethinking of how knowledge is created in the context of artistic practice become an opening to thinking of philosophy itself as a practice of research-creation? How, following Gilles Deleuze, might a resituating of research-creation as *a practice that thinks* provide us with the vocabulary to take seriously that “philosophical theory is itself a practice, just as much as its object. It is no more abstract than its object. It is a practice of concepts, and we must judge it in light of the other practices with which it interferes”? (1989, p. 280, translation modified).³

To make this move requires both a reorienting of the concept of art and a rethinking of the concept of thought itself. It will be necessary, as I have argued elsewhere, to turn to the medieval definition of art—defined as “the way,” “the manner”—locating art not at the level of the finished object but in its trajectory (see Manning, in press). As regards thought, it will be necessary to reorient it to the incipency of the occasion, undoing it of its dependence on the human subject. This will mean opening thought beyond its articulation in language towards “the movement of thought,”⁴ engaging it at the immanent limit where it is still fully in the act.

Four propositions to begin:

1. If “art” is understood as a “way” it is not yet about an object, a form, or content.
2. Making is a thinking in its own right, and conceptualization a practice in its own right.

3. Research-creation is not about objects. It is a mode of activity that is at its most interesting when it is constitutive of new processes. This can happen only if its potential is tapped in advance of its alignments with existing disciplinary methods and institutional structures (this includes creative capital).
4. New processes will likely create new forms of knowledge that may have no means of evaluation within current disciplinary models.

IMMANENT CRITIQUE—ON MATTER

In *Modes of Thought*, Alfred North Whitehead protests what he calls “the bifurcation of nature” (1938, p. 30). The tendency to separate out the concept of matter from its perception or to make a constitutive difference between “nature apprehended in awareness and the nature which is the cause of awareness” leads to a splintering of experience (1938, p. 30). What emerges is an account of experience that separates out the human subject from the ecologies of encounter: “the problem is to discuss the relations inter se of things known, abstracted from the bare fact that they are known” (1938, p. 30). To posit two systems—one “within the mind” and one “without the mind”—is a methodological posture still very much alive in the critical apparatus of the disciplinary model. What we know is what can be abstracted from experience into a system of understanding that is decipherable precisely because its operations are muted by their having been taken out of their operational context. As Whitehead explains,

The reason why the bifurcation of nature is always creeping back into scientific philosophy is the extreme difficulty of exhibiting the perceived redness and warmth of the fire in one system of relations with the agitated molecules of carbon and oxygen, with the radiant energy from them, and with the various functionings of the material body. Unless we produce the all-embracing relations, we are faced with a bifurcated nature; namely, warmth and redness on one side, and molecules, electrons and ether on the other side. (1938, p. 32)

The unquantifiable within experience can be taken into account only if we begin with a mode of inquiry that refutes initial categorization. Positing the terms of the account before the exploration of what the account can do results only in stultifying its potential and relegating it to that which already fits within preexisting schemata of knowledge. Instead of holding knowledge to what can already be ascertained (and measured), we must, as William James suggests, find ways to account not only for the terms of the analysis but also for all that transversally weaves between them. James (2003) calls this “radical empiricism.”

The challenge of radical empiricism is that it begins in the midst, in the mess of relations not yet organized into terms such as “subject” and “object.” James calls this field of relations “pure experience,” pure understood not in the sense of “purity” but in the sense of immanent to actual relations. Pure experience is on the cusp of the virtual and the actual: in the experiential register of the not-quite-yet. It is *of* experience in the sense that it affectively contributes to how experience settles into what James calls “knower-known” relations. As with Deleuze’s actual-virtual distinction, pure experience is the in-folding of potential that keeps actual experience open to its more-than. The virtual is never the opposite of the actual—it is how the actual resonates beyond the limits of its actualization. It is the redness and warmth in the foregoing example.

Radical empiricism refutes the opposition between real and unreal, suggesting that the quality of experience—its redness and warmth—is as real as its molecular composition. James writes, “Nothing shall be admitted as fact [. . .] except what can be experienced at some definite time by some experient; and for every feature of fact ever so experienced, a definite place must be found somewhere in the final system of reality. In other words: Everything real must be experienceable somewhere, and every kind of thing experienced must somewhere be real” (1996, p. 160). To reorient the real to include that which can be experienced (rather than known as such) is to profoundly challenge the notion that knowledge is based on quantification, for what is real in James’ account cannot, in all cases, be quantified. What is real is the field of relations through which an experience comes to act, comes to be felt as such. What is real is as much the in-act of experience unfolding as what has come to be.

James calls the in-act of experience “something doing” (1996, p. 161; also see Massumi, 2011). When something does, new relational fields are forming, and with them, new modes of existence. A new mode of existence brings with it modalities of knowledge. But these modalities of knowledge are not yet circumscribed—they are transversal to the modes of operation active in the relational field. They are still an in-act. This is the force of radical empiricism: it gives us a technique to work with the in-act at the heart of experience, providing subtle ways of composing with the shifting relations between the knower and the known, keeping in mind, of course, that the knower is not the human subject, but the way relations open themselves towards systems of subjectification.⁵

Similar to Whitehead’s (1978) notion of the “superject”—which emphasizes that the occasion of experience is itself what proposes its own knower-known relations, resulting in a subject that is *the subject of the experience* rather than a subject *external* to the experience—radical empiricism refutes the notion that experience is constituted before all else of *human* relations. To understand experience this way places us, as humans, in a more nuanced relationship to knowledge. An occasion of experience—or what I called a field of relations earlier—produces the means by which it

will eventually define itself as this or that. In Whitehead's terms, "An actual entity is at once the subject experiencing and the superject of its experiences" (1978, p. 43). This means that it is an occasion of experience that creates the conditions for subjectivity, a subjectivity that can never be disentangled from how the event came to fruition. A radically empirical approach takes this as its starting point, giving us the means to consider how relations themselves field experience.

Subjectivity is how the occasion accounts for itself. As such, the superject—or the subjectivity of an occasion—is less about a final delimitation than it is about the tendencies proposed by the occasion, its aim. This does not make subjectivity a substance, or a starting point. Quite the opposite: the superject is the fleeting proposition of an account of experience that has already been interpolated into new compositions, which in turn will create their own superjects.

To reorient the question of knowledge away from the idea of subject/object is to rethink the place of matter within experience. It is to challenge the idea that what is not known as such is not knowable, emphasizing that knowability may take us off the path of the methodological disciplinary account of experience, propelling us into the midst.

IMMANENT CRITIQUE 2—ON REASON

The question of knowledge—of its role in experience, of its value, and of its accountability—is, in our philosophical age, still a question of reason. Despite decades of engagement in transdisciplinary thought, disciplines still order knowledge according to specific understandings of what constitute proper methods and police these methods through long-standing systems of peer and institutional review, even tending, in many cases, to suggest that interdisciplinary research is by nature weak because of its inattention to method. Method, here, is aligned to a making-reasonable of experience, fashioning knowledge as a static organization of preformed categories.

But what if the question is tuned towards the issue of what knowledge *does*? This, it seems to me, is how Whitehead approaches the question of reason in his 1929 book *The Function of Reason*. What at first reads as a very strange account of reason, critical at its core of Kant's notion of reason and indebted both to Plato and Ulysses—"the one shares Reason with the Gods, the other shares it with the foxes"—*The Function of Reason* is an extraordinary feat of recontextualizing reason beyond the easy issue of how it superficially orders knowledge (1929, p. 10).

Two kinds of reason are at stake in Whitehead's account: pragmatic and speculative. Drawing out the bold lines of his analysis, what emerges is a call for what might be called a speculative pragmatism, speculative in the sense that a process remains open to its potential, and pragmatic in the sense that it is rooted in the in-act of its "something doing."

Whitehead begins by defining the function of reason as the promotion of “the art of life” (1929, p. 4). The art of life, as he defines it, is “first to be alive, secondly to be alive in a satisfactory way, and thirdly to acquire an increase in satisfaction” (1929, p. 8). To acquire an increase in satisfaction cannot, as Whitehead argues, be limited to a doctrine of the “survival of the fittest”.⁶

In fact life itself is comparatively deficient in survival value. The art of persistence is to be dead. Only inorganic things persist for great lengths of time. A rock survives for eight hundred million years; whereas the limit for a tree is about a thousand years, for a man or an elephant about fifty or one hundred years, for a dog about twelve years, for an insect about one year. (1929, pp. 5–6)

“Why,” he asks, “has the trend of evolution been upwards? The fact that organic species have been produced from inorganic distributions of matter, and the fact that in the lapse of time organic species of higher and higher types have evolved are not in the least explained by any doctrine of adaptation to the environment, or of struggle” (1929, p. 7). Reason, he suggests, may be one way to account for the upward evolution, and, in particular, for the increase of satisfaction occasioned by the art of living, for reason, as Whitehead defines it, directs the field of relations towards its actualization, without which the world would be “anarchic” (1929, p. 1). It is that which “realizes the possibility of some complex form of definiteness, and concurrently understands the world as, in one of its factors, exemplifying that form of definiteness” (1929, p. 9).

The *function* of reason is different from a *definition* of reason. Earlier accounts of reason, many of which are still operative today, account not for its function within ecologies of existence so much as for its role in the very definition of what constitutes knowledge. Here, reason is usually understood as “the godlike faculty which surveys, judges and understands” (1929, p. 9). For Whitehead, however, what is at stake in the operations of reason is not its ability to judge from without but its function as that which is implicated in creating a self-discipline within “the welter of the process” (1929, p. 9).

Reason, understood in the Kantian sense, is at the heart of our contemporary definitions of method, though method is rarely outspokenly aligned today with reason as its core organizing force. The framing of knowledge by method is nonetheless an accounting of how stakes are organized, and this organizing tends to be delimited by existing forms of understanding of the problem at hand. This delimitation functions as an apparatus of capture: it diagnoses, it situates, it organizes, and ultimately it surveys, judges, and understands. Methods, we hear, are ever-changing, and this is surely the case. But any ordering agenda that organizes from without is still active in the exclusion of various processes too unintelligible within current

understandings of knowledge to be recognized, let alone studied. Methods thus become the safeguard against the ineffable: if something cannot be categorized, it cannot be made to account for itself, and therefore it does not exist. The consequences are many: not only is all knowledge relegated to the realm of “conscious knowledge,” but also the force of change that animates a process is deadened, leaving the analysis with a still-born concept. The question of method is therefore not simply an organizational one. Method is not only that which relegates knowledge to disciplinary knowledge, placing it within the local stakes of a circumscribed community. It is also that which defines knowledge to its core, disciplining the very question of what constitutes knowledge. As Whitehead writes,

Each methodology has its own life history. It starts as a dodge facilitating the accomplishment of some nascent urge of life. In its prime, it represents some wide coordination of thought and action whereby this urge expresses itself as a major satisfaction of existence. Finally it enters upon the lassitude of old age, its second childhood. The larger contrasts attainable within the scope of the method have been explored and familiarized. The satisfaction from repetition has faded away. Life then faces the last alternatives in which its fate depends. [. . .] When any methodology of life has exhausted the novelties within its scope and played upon them up to the incoming of fatigue, one final decision determines the fate of a species. It can stabilize itself, and relapse so as to live; or it can shake itself free, and enter upon the adventure of living better. (1929, pp. 18–19)

Beyond the academic institution, beyond the discipline, the question of method as Whitehead defines it is aligned to modes of existence. Whitehead asks (1929, p. 19), what is it that creates the conditions for “the adventure of living better”? What is it that can produce a creative alignment between anarchic forces and the generative potential of a cut that stops the flow? This is the definition of process for Whitehead: the nuanced interplay between potential and activity, between the in-act of the occasion of experience and the flow of its relational interplay. For something to exist, for it to have been felt as such, there had to have been a cut, for it is the cut that brings the occasion to experience, making it known in itself. Reason is this cut for Whitehead, but it is a cut that remains operative, whereas method is a cut that stills. A method stops potential on its way, cutting into the process before it has a chance to fully engage with the complex relational fields the process itself calls forth.

“The birth of a methodology,” by this account, “is in its essence the discovery of a dodge to live” (1929, p. 18).⁷ Any attempt to know in advance how the interplay between potential and the cut can be orchestrated is positing a subject as purveyor of experience—a human subject, no less. This renders experience still-born, for an event accounted for outside its own

evolution is an event that has already been taken out of its liveness and organized within the bounds of preexisting forms of knowledge.

What is most interesting about Whitehead's account of reason is that he provides an alternative to method's role in the accounting of the interplay between the potential and the cut of experience. It's not that we must altogether refrain from organizing experience, he suggests. It's that in the organizing of experience for academic study we must become more attuned to how we are contributing to the creation of new orthodoxies in relation to what we understand experience to do. Otherwise, as Whitehead says, "varied freshness has been lost, and the species lives upon the blind appetitions of old usages" (1929, p. 19).

In the end, as I've done in the past (Manning, 2013), I will want to substitute "appetition"⁸ for reason, as reason still holds for me too strongly the connotation of judgment.⁹ Appetition, it seems to me, immediately gives a sense of event-urgency, emphasizing the way the occasion of experience itself seeks to come to fruition, the way it activates its own passage to becoming-superject. Appetition also speaks well to the novelty Whitehead sees in a livelier concept of reason, novelty in the sense of the event's capacity to open itself to the productive potential of cocomposition that, for Whitehead, happens in the nexus of occasions.¹⁰ Order is part of the account, but only insofar as it creates the conditions for the occasion to become stable enough to have an effect within the realm of the actual.

On the continuum of appetite we find another key concept of Whitehead's: mentality. Mentality is defined within his process philosophy as the force that propels the physical beyond its mere life towards a quality of existence that remains, to some degree, ineffable. Each occasion, for Whitehead, is both physical and mental. What is crucial is to understand that the mental and the physical are not mind/body but differential aspects of one complex process. The physical is that which persists in conformity with past forms. The mental is what undoes the conformity, opening it to its more-than. "Mental experience," he writes, "is the experience of forms of definiteness in respect to their disconnection from any particular physical experience, but with abstract evaluation of what they can contribute to such experience" (1929, p. 32). Mentality is not dependent on consciousness. There are different grades of mentality, some of them conscious, many of them not: "the lowest form of mental experience is blind urge towards a *form* of experience, that is to say, an urge towards a *form* for realization" (1929, p. 32).

Mentality, understood here as the function of reason (in the most productive sense), is the "urge towards some vacuous definiteness" (1929, p. 32), towards a taking-into-account of what otherwise will likely remain unaccounted for. In Whitehead's terms, this is where appetite comes in: "This urge is appetite. It is emotional purpose: it is agency" (1929, p. 32). Appetite is the drive that propels the cut, the force that activates the ineffable within a process where, as James would say, everything is real. And with it

comes, as the function of reason, an appetite for new forms of knowledge, new ways of coming-to-be, new urges for more life, as Nietzsche might say.

Whitehead's process philosophy never privileges the human realm. Experience is experience, and different kinds of experience have different effects. When exploring what an occasion of experience can do, appetite is a productive place to begin, for it reminds us that the urge is part of the process, and the urge has an effect on where the analysis can take us. Whitehead sees reason both as the appetite that creates the initial opening onto the process and as the decision that cuts into it to align it towards a certain direction. Where mentality can open a process to anarchy, revealing the open-endedness of its appetite, appetite of a second order can lend the process a sense of organization. This is not the same kind of organization as method, for it doesn't seek to deny the anarchic share of the process. It acknowledges it while also acknowledging that pure anarchy "means the nothingness of experience" (1929, p. 33). Appetite as the force of reason works instead to tune the occasion to a contrast that contains the anarchy but reflects also a directionality, "canalysing" it into order (1929, p. 33). With mentality as its guide, appetite allows the occasion to become self-regulative, inducing "a higher appetite which discriminates among its own anarchic productions" (1929, p. 34).

Reason is the process's appetite for difference. It is what pushes occasions of experience to distinguish themselves from the welter of activity; it is the "counter-agency which saves the world" from mere life (1929, p. 34). This leads us back to speculative pragmatism. Whitehead's account of reason as appetite, it seems to me, provides us with the tools to engage speculatively in a pragmatic process. And it does so not at the level of a human account abstracted from the event, but within the field of relation occasioned by the experience itself.

IMMANENT CRITIQUE 3—ON THOUGHT

A speculative pragmatism understands thought to be an operative constraint at the level of the in-act. Thought is not what organizes the event post-facto, nor is it what articulates an event in language. Thought, instead, is a key aspect of the appetite that drives an occasion to express itself as this or that in experience. Like the difference between a definition of knowledge that situates knowledge as a matrix for experience to fit into, and knowledge as immanent to experience in the making, a thinking-in-the-act suggests that thought is a key aspect of the creativity of an occasion in its coming to expression. This is what, to return to an earlier distinction of Whitehead's, allows us to sidestep the bifurcation of nature.

In the final pages of his account of the function of reason, Whitehead writes, "The quality of an act of experience is largely determined by the factor of the thinking which it contains" (1929, p. 80). Challenging the

habit of situating facts above thinking—"the basis of all authority is the supremacy of fact over thought"—Whitehead inquires into the tendency to place thought outside experience, suggesting that this is precisely what is wrong with any concept of method (1929, p. 80). How might the fact of this occasion—what it does, how it feels, where it moves—be separated out by its thinking when thought itself "is a factor in the fact of experience" (1929, p. 80)? To place thinking *in the event* is to once more challenge the idea that the precomposed subject is extra to the event, and that the thinking happens from outside-in. Thinking-in-the-event suggests, on the other hand, that the machinations of appetite are at work, and that they have thoroughgoing effects. Thought is a generative momentum, a movement towards both the activation and the resolution of processes.

Elsewhere in his work, Whitehead talks about feeling this way, emphasizing, as Brian Massumi (2011) might say, that a thinking-feeling is what is at stake in the evolution of an occasion of experience, for feeling, like thought, is very much at the heart of how an occasion participates in the world of its self-formation. Whitehead explains: the occasion of experience prehends the world through a process "of feeling the many data, so as to absorb them into the unity of one individual 'satisfaction'" (1978, p. 65). Feeling here suggests an operation that moves incipient experience from the objectivity of data to the subjectivity of the actual occasion, data understood here not as packets of information but as the traces of past events that can be taken up and be prehended to form a new occasion of experience. "Feelings," he writes, "are variously specialized operations, effecting a transition into subjectivity" (1978, p. 65). It is essential, of course, to remember here that the subjectivity they effect is not that of a preexisting human subject but the subjectivity of the occasion as such—its superject. Like Bergson's intuition, which is the art in which the very conditions of experience are felt, feeling opens the event to the as-yet-unthought within thought itself.¹¹

Thought taken out of consciousness reminds us that conscious thought is but the pinnacle of an experience that has divested itself of much of its open-endedness. As Nietzsche writes, "The logic of our conscious thinking is only a crude and facilitated form of the thinking needed by our organism, indeed by the particular organs of our organism. For example, a thinking-at-the-same-time is needed of which we have hardly an inkling" (2003, p. 8). A thought that has little inkling of itself is a thought in the act, a thinking in the making of an occasion of experience. It is an incipient activity that summons intensities towards a coming-to-expression, a thinking directly imbued with rhythm, with feeling. Marking a difference between recognizing and knowing—*erkennen* and *kennen*—Nietzsche plays with the strange untimeliness of thought in-forming, reminding us that there is often a sense of recognition despite a lack of knowing in the strong sense (2003, p. 14). Knowing is incipient to the experience at hand, sometimes known as such, sometimes actively felt but indecipherable in linguistic terms, alive only in its rhythms, in its hesitations, in its stuttering.

And all of this is not in the preexisting subject. “I don’t concede,” Nietzsche writes, “that the I is what thinks. I take the *I itself to be a construction of thinking*, of the same rank as ‘matter,’ ‘thing,’ ‘substance,’ ‘individual,’ ‘purpose,’ ‘number’: in other words to be only a regulative fiction with the help of which a kind of constancy and thus ‘knowability’ is inserted into, *invented into*, a world of becoming” (Nietzsche, 2003, pp. 20–21). I is the movement of thought destabilized by the act, the coming-into-itself of a capacity to regulate experience, but only for long enough to be destabilized again.

This does not, of course, mean that there is no “I.” It just means that the I cannot be located in advance of the event, that the I is always in the midst, active in the relational field as one of the vectors of the in-act of experience. “I am” is always, to a large degree, “was that me?”

IMMANENT CRITIQUE 4—ON TECHNIQUE

I began with research-creation and with the question of what art can do. Although I think method everywhere needs to be rethought in relation to its capacity to produce knowledge (rather than simply reproduce it), this rethinking is perhaps most productive in areas that are still by their very nature under redefinition. Research-creation is one of those areas, coming as it does out of a long and rich discussion of transdisciplinarity.

It’s probably fair to say that method has never managed to gain a stronghold in transdisciplinary research, though there have been many attempts to couple the inter- or trans- with method. These attempts, usually organized around introducing students to their “field” through the academic proseminar, have largely focused on bringing together texts from different disciplines to explore a variety of accounts of how a disciplinary problem has been addressed. The supposition behind such courses is that they enliven cultural debate by situating the thinker in a community of thought, thereby opening up discussion to a plurality of modes of doing and thinking. In the best cases, this would then lead to an understanding of how a field or two have dealt with interdisciplinarity, giving the student a sense of the limits of inquiry. When this works, the student has not felt pressure to adopt one approach over others or to cradle the analysis with an already-existing framework.

Still, the question begs: do these approaches to learning accomplish much beyond teaching us to think in terms of disciplinary or scholarly limits? What is made unthinkable by an approach to learning that begins by delimiting, by sequestering modes of knowing from modes of making, including the making of concepts?

A speculative pragmatism takes as its starting point a rigor of experimentation. It is interested in the anarchy at the heart of all process, and is engaged with the techniques that tune the anarchical into new modes of

knowledge. It is also interested in what escapes the order, and especially in what this excess can do. And it implicitly recognizes that knowledge is invented in the escape, in the excess.

What organizes the rigor of a speculative pragmatism can therefore not be a method imposed on the process from without. It must emerge from within the occasion of experience, and cast out from within its formation the stakes of its coming-to-be. Technique is key to this. In philosophy, one technique is close reading. Take this proposition of Bertrand Russell's as a starting point: "In studying a philosopher, the right attitude is neither reverence nor contempt, but first a kind of hypothetical sympathy, until it is possible to know what it feels like to believe in his [or her] theories, and only then a revival of the critical attitude, which should resemble, as far as possible, the state of mind of a person abandoning opinions which he has hitherto held" (1996, p. 47).

A process of close reading involves a technique that opens it to what Russell (1996) calls "a hypothetical sympathy." This sympathy, aligned as it might be with Bergson's notion of intuition (which understands sympathy to be the vector through which the intuition productively resolves itself within a process), involves turning to what the work does and asking the work to open itself to its own field of relations. How are these relations posited? What do they do? How does the rhythm, the cadence, the intensity of the text open up questions that align thought to content? Where does thought-feeling escape existing forms of knowledge? All of this unfolds before even beginning to explore the question of "where I stand," which arguably is probably the least interesting question of all, for "where I stand" in the common academic mode of positioning is the question that stops the process, that takes the writing out of the act, that situates it within this or that family of knowledge, that aligns it to disciplinary method and to institutional power. We all do this, of course, to a certain degree, but it seems to me that we must bear in mind that this "taking a stand" too often becomes the death-knell of creative acts of reading (and, of course, of making). Another kind of stand must be taken, one that erupts from the midst, one that engages sympathetically with the unknowable at the heart of difference, one that heeds the uneasiness of an experience that cannot yet be categorized. Otherwise we find ourselves right back where we started, outside looking in at what is already recognizable, at what is already known.

Taking a stand in the midst is a messy proposition—the image that comes to mind is of us barefoot in a pile of grapes, assisting them in their process of fermentation. Here, the process is directly felt, if not quite understood in its minutiae, and, to push the image further, it will no doubt leave stains. Reading or making are as messy, as uneasy-making, as exciting as pounding the grapes, provided that we take this situatedness seriously, for it is in the midst of the field of relations they call forth that practices are at their most inventive, at their most intense. This is also, of course, the place of risk. All that work, and the wine may still turn, or just never be any good. The same

goes for the sympathetic reading that creates a concept, or the artistic process that activates an object. These may go nowhere. But what they will do, no matter what, is create a process, and it is this process that will have made a difference, for it will have made felt the urge of appetite.

Speculative pragmatism means taking the urge of appetite at face value, asking what thought-feeling does *in this instance*, and how it does it. It means inquiring into the modes of existence generated by the act of “hypothetical sympathy” and seeing where these may lead, in transversal maneuvering. It is about balancing several books, or several passages, or several ideas, or several textures, at the edge of the desk, on the wall of the studio, and wondering how else they might come together, and what, together, they might do. It is about asking, as Russell does, “what it would feel like to believe in his [or her] theories,” a task speculative at best, and taking this speculation to its pragmatic limit: what can you *do* with this, what can it do to thought, to a thinking in action?

This is immanent critique, and it is what I believe is at the heart of a process of research-creation.

IMMANENT CRITIQUE 5—ON RESEARCH-CREATION

Technique touches on how a process reveals itself as such. Dance technique engages not only modes of responding to repetitive movements but also collective engagements for creating choreographic thinking. Painting involves not only techniques of color, texture, and form but also modalities of exhibition, techniques of vision, of touch. This is not method: it is more dynamic than method, open to the shift caused by repetition, engaged by the ways in which bodies change, environments are modulated and modulating, and ecologies are composed. The painter-paint-canvas ecology is an ever-changing one, from sitting to standing to looking to feeling to touching to seeing. The writer-keyboard-book ecology also inventively alters its technique from the necessity to get another cup of tea to the rereading of the passage that gets things going to the habit of starting with a citation, to the terror and excitement of the writing itself.

Technique is necessary to the art of thought—to thought in the act—but it is not art in itself. Elsewhere, I have proposed that technicity may be one way to talk about what art can do in its outdoing of technique (Manning, 2013). Technicity would be the experience of the work’s opening itself to its excess, to its more-than. This quality of the more-than that is technicity is ineffable—it can be felt, but is very difficult to articulate in language.

What research-creation can do is make technicity palpable across registers. It can work, as radical empiricism does, in the complex field of conjunctions opened up by the transitions in experience. James writes, “Against [the] rationalistic tendency to treat experience as chopped up into discontinuous static objects, radical empiricism protests. It insists on taking

conjunctions at their ‘face-value,’ just as they come. Consider, for example, such conjunctions as ‘and,’ ‘with,’ ‘near,’ ‘plus,’ ‘towards.’ While we live in such conjunctions our state is one of *transition* in the most literal sense” (1996, p. 236).

Transition doesn’t mean pure unconstrained process. In fact, it means just the opposite—it means flow and cut, discontinuity and difference. Process grows from discontinuity, emerging always in relation to how an occasion of experience has defined itself as such. This is what appetite does, with the force of mentality. James speaks about the need for discontinuity this way, emphasizing how an actual occasion becomes a vector for deflection: “One more will continue, another more will arrest or deflect the direction, in which our experience is moving even now. We cannot, it is true, *name* our different living ‘ands’ or ‘withs’ except by naming the different terms towards which they are moving us, but we *live* their specifications and differences before those terms explicitly arrive” (1996, p. 238).

What the conjunction between research and creation does is make apparent how modes of knowledge are always at crosscurrents with one another, actively reorienting themselves in transversal operations of difference, emphasizing the deflection at the heart of each conjunction. The conjunction is at work, actively adjusting the always-immanent coupling of research and creation, asking how the thinking in the act can be articulated, and what kind of analogous experience it can be coupled with, asking how a making is a thinking in its own right, asking what that thinking might be able *to do*.

The analogous experience that perhaps most strongly connects to the way in which making and thinking combine in research-creation is philosophy, philosophy taken as a force of appetite, as a “hypothetical sympathy” in the intuitive making—but only if philosophy is first acknowledged as a practice of making and thinking in its own right, and art is understood not as an object-making proposition but as a manner, a way, a trajectory alive with the making in the thinking.

In these cases, what philosophy can do is begin to attend to the appetitions activated by the artistic process, taking the thinking-in-the-act not as directly philosophical but as speculative, rigorous on its own terms. Philosophy can then begin to cocompose with the urge at the heart of this incipient thought-in-the-doing. No method will ever assist philosophy in this enterprise, nor will any method take the artist closer to the philosophical concept, for philosophy and art do not fit together in any preordered way. Only technique will help, as long as technique remains immanent to the process at hand.

This transversal activation of the relational fields of thinking and doing is what I am calling research-creation. Here there is no question, it seems to me, that what is at stake is the very redefinition of knowledge, for what research-creation does is ask us to engage directly with a process that, in many cases, will not be or cannot be articulated in language. Philosophically,

the effects of this are an opening towards a speculative pragmatism that defies existing understandings of where knowledge is situated and what it can do. Innate knowledge, for instance, intuition, speculation—all of these are frowned upon within any methodological approach, unless they can somehow be quantified. We need look no further than our own PhD programs in research-creation to see that our emphasis on the written document is about situating incipency, locating intuition, managing speculation.

Research-creation does not need new methods. What it needs is a re-counting of what writing can do in the process of thinking-doing. At its best, writing is an act, alive with the rhythms of uncertainty and the openings of a speculative pragmatism that engages with the force of the milieu where transversality is at its most acute. These, however, are not generally speaking, the documents we require from students of research-creation. What we require are documents that facilitate the task of evaluation, writing that describes, orients, defends. This is the paradox: we are excited by the openings research-creation provides and yet remain largely unwilling to take them on their own terms and experiment with them as new modes of existence and new forms of knowledge. We remain held by existing methods, it seems to me, because we remain incapable (or unwilling) to evaluate knowledge on its own incipient terms or, better, to engage productively with new concepts of valuation.

The challenge that research-creation poses is one that touches on the very core of what the university has come to recognize as knowledge. By inadvertently acknowledging that non-linguistic practices are forms of knowledge in their own right, we face the hurdle that's been with us all along: how do we evaluate process? Certainly, we have developed models of evaluation, and with them methods of inquiry, but have these methods really been successful in producing the most exciting thought, the most inventive practices?

IMMANENT CRITIQUE 6—ON METAMODELING

Several decades ago, Felix Guattari faced similar questions. Having gone through a lengthy analysis with Jacques Lacan and having himself entered the field of psychiatry, he began to ask himself whether the models at hand would be capable of supporting (let alone creating) new modes of existence. "From the start, psychoanalysis tried to make sure that its categories were in agreement with the normative models of the period," he writes (1984, p. 85). Everywhere around him, the emphasis was on language, and on neurosis. What of the modes of articulation, he wondered, that precede or exceed language? What about modes of subjectivity that cannot be defined through the split between subject and object, analyst and analysand? What of modes of existence that defy neurosis (and its oedipal tendencies), that open up new kinds of encounters with experience? And how might we get beyond models when transference is itself such a powerful model? As

Guattari writes, “Regardless of the particular psychoanalytic curriculum, a reference to a pre-determined model of normality remains implicit within its framework. The analyst, of course, does not in principle expect that this normalization is the product of a pure and simple identification of the analysand with the analyst, but it works no less, and even despite him [. . .] as a process of identification of the analysand with a human profile that is compatible with the existing social order” (Guattari, 1996, pp. 65–66).

Schizoanalysis was Guattari’s antimodel proposition. He called it a “metamodel.” A metamodel, for Guattari, was a proposition that would upset existing formations of power and knowledge, challenging the tendency of models to “operate largely by exclusion and reduction, tightly circumscribing their applications and contact with heterogeneity” (Murphie & Genosko, 2008, n.p.). Metamodeling would make felt lines of formation, not starting from one model in particular but actively taking into account the plurality of models vying for fulfillment. Metamodeling is against method, active in its refutation of preexisting modes of existence, “meta in the sense of mapping abstract formative conjunctions, in continuing variation, across varying deflections” (Manning & Massumi, in press). As Andrew Murphie and Gary Genosko write,

Metamodeling de-links modeling with both its representational foundation and its mimetic reproduction. It softens signification by admitting a-signifying forces into a model’s territory; that is, the centrality and stability of meaningfulness is displaced for the sake of singularity’s unpredictability and indistinctness. What was hitherto inaccessible is given room to manifest and project itself into new and creative ways and combinations. Metamodeling is in these respects much more precarious than modeling, less and less attached to homogeneity, standard constraints, and the blinkers of apprehension. (2008, n.p.)

Whether we call it metamodeling, or whether we simply attend to the complex deflections and conjunctions of a radical empiricism, it is the question of how knowledge is crafted that is key. An engaged encounter with the very constitutive nature of knowledge—be it at the level of new forms of subjectivity broached by schizoanalysis, or in the reorientation of how thinking and doing coexist—is necessarily a disruptive operation that risks the dismantling of the strong lines drawn at the edges of disciplines and modes of existence. Of course, we’ve been saying this, in one way or another, for decades, and disciplinarity does tend to win out, again and again.¹² But perhaps ours is another moment, a moment in which the very fact of the academic institution and its role in society are being questioned. Perhaps by emphasizing the transversality of research-creation what is made possible is a rethinking of how knowledge can and does escape instrumentality, bringing back an aesthetics of experience where it is needed most: in the field of learning.

In the context of schizoanalysis, Guattari writes,

With respect to schizoanalysis [. . .] it is clear that it cannot pose itself as a general method which would embrace the ensemble of problems and new social practices. [. . .] Without pretending to promote a didactic program, it is a matter of constituting networks and rhizomes in order to escape the systems of modelization in which we are entangled and which are in the process of completely polluting us, heart and mind [. . .] At base, schizoanalysis only poses one question: “how does one model oneself?” [. . .] Schizoanalysis [. . .] is not an alternative modelization. It is a metamodelization. It tries to understand how it is that you got where you are. “What is your model to you?” It does not work?—Then, I don’t know, one tries to work together [. . .] There is no question of posing a standard model. And the criterion of truth in this comes precisely when the metamodeling transforms itself into self-modeling [automodalization], or self-management [auto-gestion], if you prefer. (1996, p. 133, translation modified)

Against method is not simply an academic stance. Much more is at stake here. How you get where you are is an operative question. What models model you? What else can be created, sympathetically, in the encounter? What kind of modeling is possible, in the event? These questions cannot be abstracted from the question of value as it is defined by current capitalist practices, practices that take knowledge as an instrumental aspect of added value or, in the artistic realm, prestige-value. How do we operate transversally to such capitalist capture? What new processes of valuation can be experimented and what will be the effect, for knowledge, of such experimentations?

New modes of valuation will make apparent the cleft in the very question of what constitutes knowledge, making felt the share of unknowability within knowing. To attend to the cleft in creative and generative ways, we must engage not only the register of conscious knowing, but also that of the in-act of intuition that takes as its project the complexity that is the event’s middling into experience. A leap must be made, and it is a leap that is undoubtedly disorienting.

He who throws himself into the water, having known only the resistance of the solid earth, will immediately be drowned if he does not struggle against the fluidity of the new environment: he must perforce still cling to that solidity, so to speak, which even water presents. Only on this condition can he get used to the fluid’s fluidity. So of our thought, when it has decided to make the leap. (Bergson, 1998, p. 193)

Research-creation embraces the leap, and radical empiricism proposes a technique to compose with it across transversal fields of inquiry. What

emerges across this cleft cannot be mapped in advance. “Thousands and thousands of variations on the theme of walking will never yield a rule for swimming: come, enter the water, and when you know how to swim, you will understand how the mechanism of swimming is connected with that of walking” (Bergson, 1998, p. 193). Making and thinking, art and philosophy, will never resolve their differences, telling us in advance how to compose across their incipient deviations. Each step will be a renewal of how this event, this time, this problem, proposes this mode of inquiry, in this voice, in these materials, this way. At times, in retrospect, the process developed might seem like a method. But repeating it will never bring it back, for techniques must be reinvented at every turn and thought must always leap.

NOTES

1. The Canadian agency for government funding for the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSHRC) implemented research-creation as a funding category in 2003. Since then, it has continued to honor its commitment to artists, now making it possible to apply for any large grant with a research-creation project. This has on the one hand been very productive for artists within the academy, but it has also segregated forms of knowledge—“research”—to specific categories, foregrounding methodological knowledge on the one hand and industry-oriented knowledge-transfer on the other. What it hasn’t been able to engage is the kind of speculative knowledge art is best at producing.
2. I am thinking here of two scenarios, both of which I see in the university setting. The first is the general distrust, within studio departments, of practices that have a strong philosophical component. Here, the fear seems to be that the art will be stifled, which does tend to happen when a theoretical model is simply imposed (from outside) onto the art object. Another example of the theory-practice split happens in the wider arena of the humanities, particularly where there are interdisciplinary research-creation programs. Here, I observe professors lamenting the lack of clear articulation of a project, wishing it had a stronger theoretical backbone, which too often means putting the practice aside in lieu of a more art-historical approach. Neither of these tendencies is productive, it seems to me. What I am proposing here is quite different: an approach that takes the art process as generative of thought, and that transversally connects that thought-in-the act to a writing practice.
3. The SenseLab (www.senselab.ca) has been a creative incubator for this kind of thinking, engaging, as it has, with the question of how events can be created that open themselves to new forms of collaboration not only between different people but also between different kinds of practices.
4. The movement of thought is a concept that is often used with reference to Bergson’s work, particularly in Deleuze’s work on Bergson.
5. For more on the question of subjectivity understood as generative (active in an ecology of practices), see Guattari (2012).
6. Whitehead writes, “The range of species of living things is very large. It stretches from mankind throughout all the vertebrates, and the insects, and the barely organized animals which seem like societies of cells, and throughout the varieties of vegetable life, and down to the minutest microscopic forms of life. At the lower end of the scale, it is hazardous to draw any sharp distinction between living things and inorganic matter. There are two ways of surveying

this range of species. One way abstracts from time, and considers the variety of species as illustrating various levels of life. The other way emphasizes time, by considering the genetic relations of the species one to another. The latter way embraces the doctrine of evolution, and interprets the vanishing of species and of sporadically variant individuals, as being due to maladjustment to the environment. This explanation has its measure of truth: it is one of the great generalizations of science. But enthusiasts have so strained its interpretation as to make it explain nothing, by reason of the fact that it explains everything. We hardly ever know the definite character of the struggle which occasioned the disappearance. [. . .] The importance of the doctrine of the struggle for existence depends on the assumption that living beings reproduce themselves in sufficient numbers of healthy offspring, and that adaptation to the environment is therefore the only decisive factor. This double assumption of prolificness and of healthiness is obviously not always true in particular instances” (1929, pp. 5–7).

7. The use of “methodology” here raises the issue of the difference between method and methodology. I concur with Whitehead that the line between them is very fine. One need only consider the normative use of the term “methodology” as part of dissertations and grant applications to become aware that the term is generally conceived not as the reflection on the value of method but as the placeholder of certain disciplinary criteria. I am not saying, of course, that it is not possible to open method to its potential, but my preferred term for this would be technique, as technique better emphasizes the necessity for a process to itself define the limits of its actualization.
8. Appetition in Whitehead is similar to Spinoza’s definition of it. In *The Ethics*, Spinoza speaks of appetite as “appetite together with consciousness of the appetite” (in *Deleuze, 1988*, p. 20). What is key in Spinozist thought, as in Whitehead, is that “consciousness adds nothing to appetite (‘we neither strive for, nor will, neither want, nor desire anything because we judge it to be good; on the contrary, we judge something to be good because we strive for it, will it, want it, and desire it’)” (*Ethics III*, 2 schol., cited in *Deleuze, 1988*, pp. 20–21).
9. I do this despite the fact that for Whitehead reason is “the appetite of appetite,” a second-order process of mentality. Whitehead writes, “The higher forms of intellectual experience only arise when there are complex integrations, and reintegrations, of mental and physical experience. Reason then appears as a criticism of appetitions. It is a second-order type of mentality. It is the appetite of appetitions. [. . .] Reason is the special embodiment in us of the disciplined counter-agency which saves the world” (1929, pp. 33–34).
10. For a more detailed account of Whitehead’s concept of the nexus, see Portanova, Scliar, and Prevost (2009).
11. Whitehead also refers to Descartes here. He writes, “But the word ‘feeling,’ as used in these lectures, is even more reminiscent of Descartes. For example: ‘Let it be so; still it is at least quite certain that it seems to me that I see light, that I hear noise and that I feel heat. That cannot be false; properly speaking it is what is in me called feeling (sentire); and used in this precise sense that is no other thing than thinking’” (1978, p. 65).
12. This is apparent in both the art market context and in the academic institution. Artistic trajectories that do not map well on existing “disciplinary” trends are often overlooked, as are scholars whose practices are truly transversal. In my experience, it is quite common in a job interview, for instance, to look upon a scholar’s work with admiration, even while casting aside his or her application because he or she is seen not to have the means to adequately fulfill the needs of a given discipline. This always strikes me as odd, given the fact

that transdisciplinary thinkers are generally very creative and intelligent, and extremely capable of reorienting themselves where the need surfaces. Teaching an undergraduate course in a given discipline is often a task we relegate to the lesser-paid (and lesser valued) part-time academic staff rather than risk having it taught by someone who might make unexpected links, opening the discipline to new areas of investigation.

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5 Listening to Fish

More-Than-Human Politics of Food

Elspeth Probyn

Why a buffalo song? Because the fish missed the buffalo. When the buffalo came to the lakes and rivers on hot summer days, they shed their tasty fat ticks for the fish to eat, and their dung drew other insects that the fish liked too. They wished the buffalo would come back.

(Erdrich, 2012, p. 181)

In *The Round House*, Chippewa writer Louise Erdrich's (2012) latest novel, fish swim to the surface of the tales that the old man, Mooshum, recounts in his sleep. The complex structure of Erdrich's novel about rape, relationships between generations, and the vagaries of everyday life on a North Dakota reservation pushes at the limits of representation. How could it be otherwise given the layers and generations of pain? But it is the fish that come in and out—if only a couple of times—that nibble at the boundary between the extraordinary and the ordinary. In her deft treatment, we catch what happens when the world is seen as fluid, and where, as Stefan Helmreich writes, “things—refugees, nomads, weapons, drugs, fish—challenge borders because they are imagined to ‘flow’ across them” (2010, p. 137).

In his review of Nigel Thrift's 2008 book on non-representational theory, Phillip Vannini describes how

nonrepresentational theory is a mosaic of ideas borrowed from fields as different as performance studies, material culture studies, contemporary social and cultural theory, political economics, ecological anthropology, biological philosophy, cultural studies, the sociology of the body and emotions, and the sociology and anthropology of the senses. Theoretically, nonrepresentational theory stands as a synthesizing effort to amalgamate diverse but interrelated theoretical perspectives such as actor-network theory, biological philosophy, neomaterialism, social ecology, performance theory, post-structuralist feminism, critical theory, and interactionism and pragmatism. (2009, p. 282)

From this account, there seems to be very little that the term doesn't cover. Having lived through the often bloody debates about poststructuralism, postmodernism, queer, cultural studies, etc.—what they mean, why they are bad/good, political/not political, etc.—I can't get terribly excited about a new term. As Vannini indicates in his review, so much time is spent on defending a patch of theory that little actual research gets done. And potentially much gets thrown out—as in Thrift's championing of the antiautobiographical and the implicit disregard and miscomprehension of much of feminist writing inspired by the "personal" or rather by the lived fabric of the everyday.¹ In this regard, I much prefer Hayden Lorimer's figuring of "work that seeks better to cope with our self-evidently more-than-human, more-than-textual, multisensual worlds" (2005, p. 83), which he characterizes as framed by "a cultural-feminist programme that has nudged the more-than representational debate out of a predominantly white, western orbit" (*ibid.*, p. 89).

We need to ask: what we want theories to do? As Vannini states in the introduction to this book, should we abandon our obsession with representation? And what exactly would that mean for research? Of course, it depends on what one is researching, and why. It also necessitates thinking about representation as not merely the textual and figural. As Kathleen Stewart argues,

To think theory through stories, or try, through descriptive detours, to pull academic attunements into tricky alignment with the amazing, sometimes eventful, sometimes buoyant, sometimes endured, sometimes so sad, always commonplace labor of becoming sentient to a world's work, bodies, rhythms, and ways of being in noise and light and space. (2011, p. 445)

Across several detours and through a mosaic of ideas and stories, in this chapter I detail some of my frustration and attempts to intervene in the arena of sustainable fishing, which I frame as fish-human communities. Contrary to much of the focus within environmental campaigns on protecting fish species, I want to think about the assemblage of fish, environment, and human and marine ecosystems as sustainable. Across several sites such as Slow Fish (www.slowfood.com/slowfish/), it is becoming clear that the dominant representation of environmental issues in terms of "us versus them" (e.g., fishers versus "greenies," forestry versus "tree-huggers," etc.) is seriously limited. In the area that this chapter addresses, the complex entanglements of issues around the oceans, fish, and humans cannot be understood in simplistic and antagonistic binary relations. A more complex ontology also requires a more subtle way of going about researching these issues. In my project on human-fish communities I draw on several different methods, which together might be framed as a more-than-human methodology. Led by a careful ear, I attempt to follow lines of connection

to build a more intricate understanding. This involves an embodied and dialogic ethnography attuned to listening to stories and relaying them, to trying to capture affective spaces through various forms of description, and to reaching for the depth of history that informs tacit knowledge embodied in individuals' ways of being and ways of recounting. My hope is that the ensemble of methods used produces a kind of allopoiesis—a way of capturing the morphing movement of the entanglement continually remade as fish and humans swim across and render mutable various scales of borders.

FOOD FIGHT

In general, “food” (production and consumption) tends to be caught within a structure of antipathy. In public and academic debate, food continues to be a powerful if confused site of representations—forms of state policy, as well as economic, cultural, and affective investment. It is certainly not a new area, and questions about how we are to feed humanity and with what have been ongoing for decades if not millennia. For the sake of argument, we can say that the newest formulation erupted with the publication of numerous liberal journalistic works in the last decade: best-selling books like Barbara Kingsolver's homesteading memoir *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* (2007), Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma* (2006), and Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation* (2002) have raised awareness of how food impacts our health and the environment, as have films like *Food, Inc.* (2008) (see Marcher, 2013).

The question of what this type of representation does within a larger politics of food sustainability is much more difficult to discern. Emily Marcher is blunt about Pollan's unreflexive dictum that we should to return to the practices of our great-great-grandmothers when she asks, “Is Michael Pollan a sexist pig?”:

These narratives appeal to our collective sense of nostalgia: pink-cheeked farmwomen kneading homemade bread, mothers and daughters shelling sun-warmed peas on country porches, and multigenerational families gathered happily around the dinner table to tuck into Grandma's hand-plucked roasted chicken. (Marcher, 2013)

As the title of one of Julie Guthman's articles memorably puts it, “Michael Pollan *et al* [make] me want to eat Cheetos” (2007).

Those like Guthman rallying against the simplistic and class- and color-blind representation of “foodie nostalgia” are highly conscious of the fact that there is a problem with food today, or more precisely there are several interconnected structural problems. Scholars such as E. Melanie DuPuis, David Goodman, and Michael Goodman (2012) and many others have long theorized the deep structural reasons why food production and

consumption in the USA and globally have been organized in such a way to reproduce inequalities. What and how food is grown, by whom, and where it is eaten continue to be deeply correlated with questions of capital, gender, class, ethnicity, and geopolitics. As Rachel Slocum and Arun Saldana's collection on the *Geographies of Race and Food* (2013) demonstrates, race figures and is figured in every aspect of food production and consumption. From the labor processes that have historically rendered certain crops possible and at times served to race-code particular foods (from avocado and bananas to grits and kangaroo), to the forms of enslavement and invasion circulated by global economies, food and feeding continue to be integral to regimes of surveillance and punishment.

There is certainly no lack of recognition that food is a problem: in security or safety, or in terms of the food-related diseases that now ravage the developed and developing world (Goodman & Maye, 2010). The problem is how to address the multiple aspects of what food sustainability might entail. As Lesley Head and Chris Gibson argue about the representation of climate change (obviously deeply connected to the food problem), "To the extent that humanity is responding, it is by and large doing so within the terms of the modernist project. Many of us have an urge to 'fix', 'manage' or 'reverse' dangerous climate change" (2012, p. 700).

These terms do indeed capture what passes for much of a public politics of food. In order to shake up this framing and to add more elements that might be entailed in the (non)representation of eating, in this chapter I am going to turn away from the terrestrial (the locus of much of the debate about food production and consumption). I want to look at the ways in which these questions are differently articulated from another perspective that forefronts the multisensual and that pushes at forms of representation. I want to extend well-rehearsed questions about food politics by asking what would happen if we shifted our eyes to the sea as the site of more-than-human food production and consumption? How would this change our conceptual and methodological orientation? What becomes "seen" as the sea breaks over a habitual *landscape*? What, as Foucault asks, will emerge when "man [is] erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea" (1970, pp. 386–387)?

As I will recount here, my interest in the politics of food (shorthand for sustainable practices of production and consumption) has turned to the forms of attachments, entanglements, and affectations that animate the more-than-human realm of the ocean, fish, fishing, and fishers. I argue that that we need to render questions of sustainability within a broader category of what and how we should care about food. Several scholars within science and technology studies, especially those concerned with integrating feminist traditions of ethics, argue that we urgently need a new ethics of care. But as Maria Puig de la Bellacasa asks, "what sort?" (2010, p. 152). In her project on "the eating body," Annemarie Mol brings her previous work on care within health practices (2008) into the realm of eating (Yates-Doerr, 2012).

Mara Miele has done much both at a conceptual level and in practice to foster a wider sense of what caring for what we eat would mean. Through her involvement in the EU study for better guidelines about the welfare of farmed animals, Miele has researched how to understand “the happiness of chickens” (2011), and with her colleague Adrian Evans she contemplates the wide dimensions of an “ethics and responsibility in care-*full* practices of consumption” (2010). Miele and Evans advocate a way of thinking about eating that includes a push towards the more-than-representational, which they call “foodsensing”: “the hybrid processes through which consumers simultaneously sense and make sense of food” (2010, p. 300). In this they conjoin with what Jennifer and Allison Hayes-Conroy call the “visceral geographies” of eating. Extending ideas about non-representation, they argue that we need “to pay attention to how matter and discourse combine in the visceral body” (2010, p. 1280). This captures a central point that Deleuze and Guattari frame as the ways in which “we constantly pass from order-words to the silent order of things” (1988, p. 87, cited in Miele & Evans, 2012, p. 302). In this we cannot but hear Foucault’s refrain that “words and things” (*Les mots et les choses*) are always drenched in a heavy materiality, that we cannot separate discourse and matter.

This is exemplified by important changes in how food is retailed. For middle-class consumers in the Western world, and increasingly for the numerically numerous (if small in percentage) consumers in Asian countries, happy chickens and free-range eggs are now widely accepted as the norm, and even promoted by multinational food retail and fast food chains, such as Walmart and McDonald’s. This not unremarkable feat has been brought about by a combination of high-profile media chefs, years of grass-roots activism, social media mobs, and the realization by big retail that a happy chicken equals a consumer happy to pay more. But concern of welfare is only gradually moving beyond chickens, pigs, and cows. Is it easier to care about terrestrial food than seafood? The land rather than the oceans? Farmers rather than fishers? Obviously we care for some species more than others simply on their good looks and good luck to be anthropomorphically cute. It’s hard (though not impossible) to cuddle a fish. But in shifting out of the realm of the arbitrary hierarchies of what is good/not good to eat, can we engender a more wide-ranging cultural politics of sustainable food production and consumption? Perhaps a more detailed methodological attention to assemblages, informed by an ethics of care, might stimulate greater sensibility to issues of sustainability—in which sensibility is understood as the ability to embody sustainability in a “durable” way over time (informed by the French expression for sustainable fish as *le poisson durable*; Probyn, 2013).

Of late social science and humanities academics are beginning to return to the question of the ocean, which from the Industrial Revolution onwards gradually began to disappear from the public view in former maritime imperial powers, such as Britain. Philip Steinberg’s historical geography of the

ocean charts understandings of marine space from the thoughts of Strabo, the Greek geographer. Writing some two thousand years ago, Strabo saw in the ocean a space of comingling with human being: “We are in a certain sense amphibious, not exclusively connected with the land but with the sea as well” (cited in Steinberg, 1999b, p. 368; also see Helmreich, 2010). Steinberg’s project is to chart flows of capital across time and space, and it is in this regard that he identifies how the maritime became associated with fixity and with stasis. From the mid-eighteenth century on with the focus on terrestrial industrial development, “the ocean became discursively constructed as removed from society and the terrestrial places of progress, civilisation and development” (Steinberg, 1999a, p. 409). Tracing the emergence of modern forms of regulation—quite surprisingly recent when one considers that UNCLOS (the United Nations Convention and Law of the Sea) wasn’t ratified in international law until 1994—Steinberg argues that the dominant understanding of the ocean is as “annihilated space,” “a site of alterity,” and as the domain over which capital is projected in its search for resources. Of course, the ocean remains a constant, and, as Kimberly Peters reminds us, “seventy percent of the Earth is sea, and ninety-five percent of trade is still by ship” (2010, p. 1260), although it is strange to recall how slow the progress (and interest) in hydrodynamics is. Steinberg writes that cargo ships still travel at the same speed as they did at the end of WWI. (I pondered this as I waited for over forty days for my belongings to come by sea from Quebec to Australia. This is about the same amount time it took my great-uncle’s ship in 1915 to travel from Britain to Australia, bringing home wounded soldiers.)

Steinberg is particularly damning of the nostalgic representation of the maritime as featured in countless harbor reconstructions around the world formulated for tourists’ tastes and not for working boats and men, now relegated as objects of tourism. He is also concerned that any fledging discourse on the sustainability of the oceans is stymied by Hollywood “images of the ocean as devoid of nature, or as something to move through” (1999a, p. 406). His research was conducted before the phenomenal success of *Finding Nemo* (2003), apparently one outcome of which was to momentarily stop kids from eating fish fingers. As a mother recounts on the Mamamia blog, following the film her children were convinced that “fish are friends not food” (Hudson, 2013). Contrary to Steinberg’s pessimism, Peters argues that “maritime worlds open up new experimental dimensions and forms of representation” (2010, p. 1262). Of course, Paul Gilroy’s brilliant book *The Black Atlantic* broke new ground in refiguring routes of human (slave) trade as well as the movement of Black literary representation across the Atlantic, reminding us that “ships are living, micro-cultural, micro political systems” (1993, p. 15). In Gilroy’s invocation, we can sense the full conceptual force of Foucault’s heterotopia. Although Foucault’s use of the heterotopia was to foreground space as opposed to the nineteenth century’s preoccupation with time and history, as I have argued elsewhere it seems to me that it also

offers us a methodological insight into the workings of our current time of the more-than-human (Probyn, 2014). As we know, for Foucault the ship has “been simultaneously the greatest reserve of the imagination. . . . In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up” (1986, p. 27). And certainly we are in desperate need of imagination if we are to figure a way out of the man-made crisis of the Anthropocene. But it is particularly in terms of formulating an adequate methodology that we should pay heed to the architecture that Foucault bequeaths us: “The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible” (*ibid.*, p. 25). To grasp or even to glimpse how we might make sense of the relations between humans, oceans, and fish we will have to bring together several seemingly incompatible ways of knowing, and indeed be open to those that have been discounted or have yet to be recognized.

FEELING THE SEA

In this section, I turn to the question of the multisensual forms of representation and of their affective qualities we might mine for ways in which to render the ocean, its fish, and its workers more care-able in public discourse. I am driven by many concerns, but I also continue to hear the plaintive voice of a fisher at a seafood trade convention as he asked, “How can we convince the public that commercial fishers are human, that we have families?” I gather images of oceanic affects to unsettle common distinctions between land and sea, human and divine, fish and man, mind and body. Although the concept of embodiment has been well rehearsed in several disciplines, we need it now to bring together the spatial and the temporal to insist upon the durability of conjoined life. This challenge also underlines the need for an interdisciplinary articulation of the problematic of how to conceptualize “the ‘Anthropos’ in the Anthropocene”? It is becoming painfully obvious that “Given human activities’ scale and impact, as well as the overly narrow perspectives of environmental research’s dominant natural sciences, a major effort is necessary to place the perspectives and insights of the humanities’ and social sciences’ perspectives and insights at the forefront” (Pálsson et al., 2013, p. 3).

How do we orient ourselves in this unhinged world? I’d suggest the ocean provides us with a powerful horizon—and I use horizon both in the common sense understanding as the line formed between sky and earth and in the more specialized one provided by the philosopher of hermeneutics, Hans-Georg Gadamer. For Gadamer, the identification of horizon is integral to the processes of describing and interpreting:

The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point [. . .] A person who has no horizon is a man who does not see far enough and hence overvalues

what is nearest to him. On the other hand, “to have an horizon” means not being limited to what is nearby, but to being able to see beyond it. (1997, p. 302)

Gadamer’s central point is that we need to be reflexive about what constitutes the horizon at any given moment. In this sense, much of contemporary cultural thought has, consciously or not, related to the ground beneath our feet. Looking to the ocean as horizon promises to reorient our ideas. Of course, the ocean has long been a source of fascination for humans, but this has been in part because it seems so sublimely indifferent to our wishes. As Gaston Bachelard recognized, “Water is truly the transitory element. It is the essential ontological metamorphosis between heaven and earth” (cited in Connery, 1996, p. 291). But equally the sea “is inhuman water, in that it fails in the first duty of every revered element, which is to serve man directly” (Bachelard, cited in Connery, 1996, p. 291). I think this framing of the oceans as supremely disinterested in human life is what Barthes was getting at when in a cryptic footnote in *Mythologies* he wrote, “Here I am, before the sea; it is true that it bears no message” (1972, 163, n. 2). Yet for Barthes and many in cultural studies, the beach brims with semiotic material. For example, as John Hartley writes, “for [Australian] cultural studies the beach was the symbol of cultural and national identity” (2003, p. 123). From the study of bodies on the beach and surfing rituals to the role of the beach in many national cultures as the embodiment of hedonism and freedom, the beach does indeed provide the backdrop for so many facets of human life. Against the manmade significance of *la plage*, the ocean itself seems so unworldly, so foreign to us landlubbers that we cannot turn it into facile meaning. In his exploration of the oceanic, Christopher Connery counters Barthes’ denial of signification to the sea: “Yet signify it does, although in a manner beyond resolve. Is it the void that activates the terrestrial symbolic system? Is it the real beneath the floating discontinuousness of land; a symbolic system?” (1996, p. 290).

In a fascinating account of the role of the sea in early modern English literature, Steven Mentz reminds us of how long-standing is the sense of the “the sea as pure alterity” (2009, p. 1001). He argues that with air travel and space exploration, our connections with the oceans have diminished. And moreover our domestication of marine littoral spaces has “turned the sea from a vision of chaos into a playground [and] the modern world has lost part of its cultural history” (ibid., p. 998). In Mentz’s presentation of early modern views we have a sense of early modern imaginings of “oceanic freedom,” of “ceaseless change and instability,” which are contrasted with the orderly realm of land (ibid., p. 1001). This “bifurcation” goes deep into privileged roots of Western thinking. Mentz cites Plato in the *Laws*: “the sea, while agreeable, is a dangerous companion and a highway of strange morals and manners as well as of commerce” (in Mentz, 2009, p. 998).

Of course one cannot talk sea without citing Rachel Carson, who brought marine worlds to the attention of the public ten years before she took on pesticides. Carson seemingly embodied the wonder of the ocean. Amanda Hagood describes her as totally contingent to her marine surroundings: “Neck craned, eyes and ears attentive, feet readily carrying her to the next object of contemplation . . . her attitude attuned to the wonder of the sea” (2013, p. 72). In Carson’s words, “As never on land, [man] knows the truth that his world is a water world, a planet dominated by its covering mantle of ocean, in which the continents are but transient intrusions of land above the surface of the all-encircling sea” (1951, p. 19).

SEASICK

If the ocean has provided a powerful horizon in reflecting on human relationships to our environment, there are associated affects that may provide new crucial methodological directions for more-than-human research. Carson’s sense of awe somehow seems more honest than the recent calls to inject the social sciences with more wonder. Her advice to parents in the 1950s holds true for us now: “wonder rather than a ‘diet of facts’ [is] the most important ingredient in the education of young scientists” (cited in Hagood, 2013, p. 58). As I’ve argued elsewhere, interest and wonder are powerful forms of embodiment; they are dependent and direct our bodies to be open to the world. As such, they are crucial to doing research. And germane to non-representational research, the ocean summons up diffuse affects for which we do not always have the words.

Pálsson’s use of the Icelandic understanding of seasickness captures the physical and connotative upheavals that being on the sea can occasion. He writes,

Icelanders implicitly recognise the relationship between knowledge and practice, and the unity of emotion and cognition, body and mind. For them, “seasickness” (*sjoveiki*) not only recalls the bodily state of nausea sometimes caused by the lack of practical knowledge, the unexpected rocking movements of the world, but it is also used as a metaphor for learning in the company of others. (1994, p. 901)

This moment of fundamental queasiness in the world—he himself experienced seasickness on the ship conducting his research—provides an embodied lens through which we can consider the different layers of ontological disordering of any posited distinct and separate entity: emotion and cognition, body and mind, human and fish. Although not an obvious affect, being seasick alerts us to the viscosity of being embodied and entangled in human and non-human nets of materiality and meaning (Probyn, 2013). The sea, its movements; *techné* as learning within the pressures of the folds

of human-technology, the type of boat, the fishing gear; the tacit levels through which the past is reproduced in present practices—all caught in the prism of the rocking boat and the moving horizon.

This scene is also one where we learn with the elements and through the affect that awakens us to our sheer lack of mastery before the might of the ocean. The form this learning takes is what Pálsson calls “enskilment,” “a necessarily collective enterprise—involving whole persons, social relations, and communities of practice” (1994, p. 901). For those who work on the sea as fishers, enskilment is learned in the presence of others, both human and most importantly non-human. This is embodied learning within the folds of the ocean, which brings together various forms of knowledge—past, present, cellular, felt, smelled, moved with, etc. To give this ensemble of modes of learning its proper name, this is the realm of the tacit. This knowledge is unsaid; it is the undidactic, the learning from feeling. It is an embodied disposition. It is not surprising that Pálsson also sees “enskilment in fieldwork, [which] inevitably involves psychosomatic processes, if not veritable ‘gut reactions’” (*ibid.*, p. 902; see also Probyn, 2004).

LISTENING

I have trawled the sea, or rather the human descriptions of the awe that it can inspire. In part this is just for the sheer pleasure of feeling the stories as people try to convey the sea. But more pragmatically it is also to alert us to another milieu, one that is far better felt and known by fishers. In doing so I hope to lay a way to frame the tacit knowledge of the humans more closely involved in the more-than-human environment that is fishing. For J. K. Gibson-Graham, “trying to adopt an experimental orientation is simply to approach the world with the question ‘What can we learn from things that are happening on the ground?’” This is very different from the question of “what is good or bad” about these things that informs so many investigations. The experimental orientation is another way of making (transformative) connections; “it is a willingness to ‘take in’ the world in the act of learning” (2011, p. 22). This type of researching tries to extend the senses: careful listening engages a McLuhanesque extension of the tactile, the visual, the aural, and the olfactory.

One of the productive aspects of the idea of entanglement is that it captures the present and the past forms of attachment that forge human-non-human assemblages. Michael Callon and Vololona Rabeharisoa (2004) argue that biosocial entanglement is at the heart of what constitutes us in our humanity. At one level it is a straightforward matter: we are entangled if my action affects you, and vice versa. “Being affected” defines you and me as distinct and entangled entities (Callon & Rabeharisoa, 2004, p. 17). At another level, this figuration is the prompt and the ground of “good” sociological engagement and of moral behavior (or an ethics of research),

which they define as “the single imperative [of] allowing ourselves to be moved [. . .] by the entities to which we are attached” (ibid., p. 16). Thus far I have pursued images that attest to deep affective connections, and which mire any hard division of human-ocean-fish. But what of those bodies who are increasingly caught within the baffling nets of international, national, and state forms of governance that have the overt claim to protect marine resources? What of the entanglement of fisher, fish, markets, and consumers that must be the ground of any effective politics of sustainability?

In *Friction*, Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing (2005) argues for an ethnography of global connection. She does so from the middle of the Indonesian forests. As she says, “There is no reason to begin a retelling of global connections in imagined world centers such as New York, Tokyo, or Geneva” (ibid., p. 271). In piecing together a more complex view of water, fish, fisheries, and humans, I too want to “start in the middle” of somewhere that seems very marginal to global concerns. Tsing works through what she calls “ethnographic fragments,” bits and pieces of stories she listens to and retells. Focusing on detail can shift us away from where we think we should be going, and detail interrupts narratives that want to sum up local particularities into universal claims. Methodologically this requires us to do several things at once: be single-minded in our focus on the particular and detail, and be open corporeally to the richness of the context. To recall my discussion of the heterotopic, this is to practice several methodological stances or styles, and several seemingly incompatible ways of researching to grasp the spaces and times of human-non-human relations.

FRAMING FISH

To shift gears, let me take you on the road. In Australia, as elsewhere, there is now a concerted push to protect dwindling fish stock and the damaged marine environments. The two main ways through which this is being implemented are through fishing quotas and through regulating the enclosure of parts of the coast and waters into marine parks. A couple of years ago I was lucky enough to have a private tutorial on fisheries management from Rob, a deeply interesting and engaged man who has served on nearly every board and committee related to fish, including the research group of AFMA, the Australian Fisheries Management Authority.

Rob and I met on a warm evening at an old pub, where we talked late into the night. Or rather, I listened and took notes. He saw his role, and that of others in fisheries management, to be government custodians of fish for future generations. Fish, he said, “are the principal clients.” But fish “have tails, and don’t recognize jurisdictional lines.” At the heart of complex scientific efforts, the two main ways in which fish have been protected are through “input and output control.” Input tends to focus on regulating the size of nets, the size of fish that can be kept, and attempts to control

the numbers of dead (caught) fish. Output control tries to regulate and put a check on competition, primarily through quotas. The conceptual basis behind ITQs, individual transferable quotas, is widely debated in relation to how it intersects with the ocean as Commons,² and the ways in which it privatizes what could be seen as belonging to everyone within other state-imposed delimitations—such as the EEZs, the exclusive economic zones (Pálsson, 1994; Pálsson & Helgason, 1995). Rob, on the other hand, sees it as the only way we have at present to check competition among fishers. The basic idea is that you limit the number of fish of a species that can be caught within a certain time frame. Of course humans being humans, there are many ways to confound this. What has happened in many fish industries is that the larger and more aggressive players have bought out the smaller outfits and their quotas.

Depending on who you talk to, the quota system either works or doesn't. Many governments are now touting enclosure, not quota, as the way to ensure sustainability. In Australia the massive project to enclose parts of the ocean away from commercial and recreational fishers as well as other leisure users of the seas was first raised in 1998 by the then minister for the environment, under the Howard government: "a planning system with these oceanic 'national parks' was to cover most of our enormous 8-million-square-kilometre marine Exclusive Economic Zone" (Darby, 2011). This ambitious plan came from a conservative government not normally considered as conservationist, and indeed the impetus may have been to protect the economics of the fish industries and to accommodate proposed oil and gas explorations. But it's hard to blame one particular political party given that political sides no longer coincide with environmental protectionism, if they ever did. The environment minister under the current Labor government recently announced the intention to push ahead with marine parks, starting in the southwest of Australia with a park that will be biggest system "in the world, running from west of Augusta to near Esperance and covering a staggering 322,380 square kilometres of ocean" (Coghlan, 2011). This will mean that 38 percent of the world's existing marine parks are in Australian waters.

My research in the small sea communities that will be most effected by these measures has deeply instilled a desire to know more about how humans and fish cohabit, and about how to ensure the sustainability of human and fish communities. Sustainability is, of course, a favored buzzword, often used interchangeably with resilience. In science, resilience is about elasticity, a characteristic that informs our ideas about humans being able to bounce back after being tested and stressed. But in many quarters, there's little elasticity left in communities that seem to be stretched in too many directions. Later when I return to my fieldwork sites on the Eyre Peninsula, places like Cowell and Port Lincoln seem a bit flat. I ask fishers and storeowners, and they agree. The main reason given is worry about the impending marine park. To find out more I went to meetings of the Lower Eyre Marine Park

LAG (Local Advisory Group). The objective of the LAGs is to convey the consultation that the South Australian Department of Energy and Natural Resources (DENR) had conducted. Walking into the room at the community sports center, it was clear that no one was feeling very conciliatory. A local city councilor chaired the LAG, and the group consisted of a number of local people involved in various parts of the fishing industries, tourism business, such as fishing and camping stores, and a lone “greenie.” We were told that this group was not representative of “stakeholders” who would be consulted later. It was unclear who exactly these all-important stakeholders would be. The city councilor set out the terms of the meeting: “the approach I am taking today is communication between government and community.”

He didn’t hold high hopes, baldly stating, “We are not expecting consensus.” It soon became apparent that this was an understatement. Sitting in the public gallery, I could feel the heat mounting. There were about twenty people present, and we were not to speak or ask questions. The burly fishers standing at the back ignored that directive. A young scientist from DNER had the unpalatable job of outlining the suggestions that had so far been received from the public. As he read out the responses he would shift the lines on a computer projection about where the park would be situated. We were not told who had made the suggestions or anything about their possible expertise in the matter. As he read them out the guys at the back provided the commentary, none of it complimentary to the scientist or the councilor. As the scientist drew a line about protecting a particular shelf, the guys roared out, “That’ll be the Chinese bloke who always fishes there.”

Different theories, some verging on conspiracy, raged around the room. Some tried to counter the scientific views. An older man called out from the floor: “the bio-diversity has been beaten up for a hundred years and it’s still there.” Then there was the bartering, a sort of deal-or-no-deal game show routine in terms of various suggested zoning areas. One recreational fisher seemed to be bidding with the somewhat taken aback scientist, who obviously wasn’t used to this: “if we give you that bit, can we have more of this bit with the kingfish?” And another offered, “You can have that bit because the sewerage from the caravan park goes there.”

Although there was occasional amusement, the tenor was one of frustration, anger, and fear over their divergent futures as recreational fishers, small tourism operators, townspeople, or members of different fisheries. Steve, a respected fish processor, summed up some of the problems of the process: that it was conducted in a cynical manner; that there was little communication of the size of the problem; that fishers are inherently conservationist and that in South Australia fisheries management had been successful; that they were mindful that they didn’t want to end up “like the Mediterranean.” Steve seemed to speak for many when he said that “it seems like we’re doing the marine park for the marine park’s sake.”

On my way back to Adelaide I stopped in at the Cowell Area School. The previous December I had involved the school in a symposium called

“The Scientist, the Cook and the Grower,” where we invited growers from different areas to bring their produce and to talk with social scientists and agricultural scientists, and cooks and chefs.³ The school had provided the oysters, which went down a treat. It was good to hear from the principal, Jan, that they were now routinely asked to provide oysters to food and wine events throughout the state. People overseas interested in implementing similar school programs in Norway and New Zealand also increasingly contact them. This school certainly seems to provide hope for the future—of the small town, of the oyster industry, and of the next generation, as well as of their families, who hopefully won’t lose their children to the city. However, whether it was just a bad day or whether she was worn down by what she called “the machine of the Education Department,” the oomph seemed to go out of Jan, momentarily at least. She worried out loud about the lack of aspiration in the school and in the community. I mentioned the passion and drive that I saw in the school. “But how,” she wondered, “do you transform passion into something that works?”

How indeed can we harness the energies and the different forms of knowledge that these people who live and work by the sea possess in spades? It may be here that there is a role for social science and humanities research that is deeply attentive to the passions and pulsations of fish and human communities. Tsing’s argument is directly relevant:

Conservation inspires collaborations among scientists, business, forest dwellers, state regulators, the public, and nonhumans. [. . .] Collaboration is not a simple sharing of information. There is no reason to assume that collaborators share common goals. (2005, p. 13)

In this sense sustainability can be achieved only by real collaboration among very different players: schools, recreational and commercial fishers within sometimes competing industries, small tourism businesses, mining interests, different kinds of scientists, fisheries management, and poets, philosophers, and writers. Their interests do not neatly converge, and in fact, as Tsing says, what they want may be entirely incompatible. The role of gathering and telling stories, of trying to see from multiple perspectives, which extend to those of the nonhuman, is not to erase incompatibility. Rather, “we need to find out where it makes a difference” (Tsing, 2005, p. 259).

There are so many different players in the gathering that I call fish-human communities, all with different histories. People like Rob have spent their lives trying to render the fisheries sustainable and sometimes have received death threats. And then there are the fishers who bring years and most often generations of experience and knowledge about “their” fish and “their” patch of ocean. All these players, and more, are bound to bring incompatible ideas and hopes to the question of how to sustain the fish, and the people who care about and for them. Of course, for some, it is the sustainability of the marine environment, for others the sustainability of different species of

fish, and for yet others the question of how to sustain their communities that will be uppermost. Even the term “community” breaks apart into smaller groups for whom the resilience of school programs will fill the day-to-day hopes, or the goal of keeping a fishing business afloat will define the horizon of sustainability.

So what is the role for us—the listeners, relayers, and tellers of stories? And how to bridge the gulf that still divides the seeming indifference for the ocean and her human and more-than-human inhabitants that I cited at the outset? How to do get people to care: to care about other people, to care about our more-than-human entanglement in sustaining marine lifeworlds and lives? I am mindful that my argument here awkwardly bridges two spheres of academic tradition, both of which are deeply mired in questions of representation. On the one hand is the analysis of forms of cultural representations understood as textual and/or literary, and on the other there is the gathering together of ethnographic flotsam and jetsam. But to call them two spheres is to forget that they are but ways of storytelling, although I realize that they work at times on different registers. However, if we are to formulate new ways of portraying the wondrous challenges of rendering the sustainability of human-fish worlds more readily understandable for a diverse set of audiences and constituencies, we may need to work on several levels all at once. I hold out for a modest chance that we can help draw out the lines of connection as well as those of disconnection. To follow stories that seem to come to abrupt endings, seemingly mired in incompatibility. To listen as carefully as possible to the humans, to garner as closely as possible what we can learn from the perspective of the non-humans. The idea that we can judge in advance what the different human actors want let alone the more-than-human vastness of the sea and its marine life is complete hubris. But bringing them together will at least ensure that we will keep our eyes down and our ears open. If we don’t try to listen to fish more carefully, or at least to the concerns of human-fish entanglements, they will swim out of our lives, only to live on in the tales of old men and women.

NOTES

1. Although there is not the space here, I want to flag how much early feminist work on questions of representation, argument, and style is now routinely ignored. This crosses not only academic feminist work but also film. For instance, as soon as I wrote the phrase “the lived fabric of the everyday” I thought of Chantal Akerman’s (1975) extraordinary film *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai de Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*, where for 201 minutes we watch a woman wash the dishes, prepare food, have an orgasm, and kill a client, all in real time. As B. Ruby Rich wrote of it, “Never before was the materiality of woman’s time in the home rendered so viscerally . . . She invents a new language capable of transmitting truths previously unspoken.” www.razorrobotics.com/knowledge/?title=Jeanne_Dielman,_23_quai_du_Commerce,_1080_Bruxelles, accessed May 20, 2013.

2. The oceans are a visceral reminder of “the tragedy of the commons.” In 1968 Garrett Hardin, a genetic biologist, debated the consequences of population growth in terms that are instructive and provocative: “It is fair to say that most people who anguish over the population problem are trying to find a way to avoid the evils of over-population without relinquishing any of the privileges they now enjoy. They think that farming the seas or developing new strains of wheat will solve the problem—technically” (1968, p. 1243).
3. The aim of this international symposium was to advance debate about the production and consumption of food beyond its safe confines as “feel-good politics,” and it brought together a dozen producers as well as speakers, such as Julie Guthman, Stewart Lockie, and Mara Miele. www.unisa.edu.au/hawkeinstitute/events/producing-regions.asp.

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6 Devices for Doing Atmospheric Things

Derek P. McCormack

“Sometimes the shape I’m in won’t let me go.”

Townes Van Zandt

I take this volume to be primarily about the question of “how”: about *how* non-representational theories respond to the call of the worlds in which they find themselves, worlds that oblige, force, or cause thinking to take place in ways that are not always given in advance. As Isabelle Stengers (2005, p. 192) has written, “The ‘how’ is a question which exposes, which puts at risk those who are obliged” to think, because the nature of this obligation, and of the process of its emergence, always remains an open question. For non-representational theories, then, the question of how to think with/in the world—*this* time, on *this* occasion, under *these* circumstances—is never settled in advance, but must be worked out, per-formed, as it were, through a process, as Stengers following Deleuze also puts it, of thinking “par le milieu.” This is also what makes non-representational theories of necessity experimental, albeit in a modest, case-by-case way that will never add up to a general set of approaches or tenets. Non-representational theories are geared instead towards the cultivation of a minor experimental empiricism taking the form of what Alfred North Whitehead calls “novel togetherness” (1978, p. 21).

A useful “tool for thinking” about non-representational theories in this sense is also provided by Stengers—ecology of practices (2005). Stengers’ use of this term relates largely to her thinking about the organization and experience of sciences such as physics, but it can help us think of what it might mean to talk about and foster non-representational theories as sets of ways of going on in the world. Part of any process of thinking about an ecology of practices, as Stengers notes, is the challenge of making present “what causes practitioners to think and feel and act” (*ibid.*, p. 195). On one level, and in the context of this volume, this is a matter of making explicit the forces and circumstances under which certain genres and techniques of non-representational thinking emerge. This is not quite the same as autobiography, but involves a kind multibiographical account—mixing both the



Figure 6.1 (Photo credit: D. McCormack, 2013)

ethnographic and ethological—of the diverse forces and participants that shape matters of collective interest as they register in various habits and bodies. The wider goal here is therefore not simply to produce a form of confessional self-disclosure, nor is it to provide a map of the current state of play of any given set of methodologies. It is, rather, to multiply possibilities for action, to pose the question once again, and again, of what non-representational theories might become. Thus, following Stengers, thinking of non-representational theories via an ecology of practices “may produce also an experimental togetherness among practices, a dynamics of pragmatic learning of what works and how. This is the kind of active, fostering ‘milieu’ that practices need in order to be able to answer challenges and experiment changes, that is to unfold their own force” (ibid., p. 195).

There are many possible ways of contributing to the ongoing elaboration of this ecology and, equally, to respond to the promise of a modest and minor form of experimentalism in which thinking is a process of generating forms of worldly togetherness anew. In this chapter I’d like to think about how attending to the properties and qualities of *things* can be part of the practice and devising of non-representational styles of thinking. More particularly I’d like to dwell upon the possibilities of thinking with, and doing, *atmospheric things*. By atmospheric things I mean sometimes relatively discrete presences with the potential to be grasped as shaped forms, but that emerge from and can also contribute to the generation of diffuse yet palpably affective, atmospheric spacetimes. And I would like to think with the balloon as a device for pursuing a kind of atmospheric fieldwork: that is, a device, by virtue of the cloud of constitutive affective relations in which it is immersed, which participates in the generation of an atmospheric sensing of something happening that can be felt.

SPLITTING DIFFERENCES, LIGHTENING METHOD

First, however, an extended confession, of sorts: I have long thought method too heavy a term to describe the work of non-representational theories. I suspect this has something to do with the way in which method—as an epistemological order-word—is too often loaded with assumptions about the necessity of tethering thought as a precondition for worldly engagement, and too often weighted with claims about the imperative to anchor the apparently airily speculative work of conceptual thinking in the earthiness of the empirical. And it also has something to do with how the stricture of method is often rather too easily invoked, with a chiding tone, as a kind of reminder that theory is something existing above or outside the world, and, moreover, that those who use it need a way of getting back down to that world or getting back into its midst in order to be credible, impactful, relevant. And it has something to do with a sense that it might not be such a bad thing to have one’s head in the clouds, or to dream of rainbows, not

least because clouds and rainbows (see, e.g., Anderson cited in Ward et al., 2011) are very interesting kinds of atmospheric things. So, my reservations about the term non-representational methods stem from the fact that the second part of this term can all too easily be used in a way that qualifies, or grounds, the former as if it were an unearthly deviation from the properly empirical. And my reservations stem from a conviction that we need to find more and better ways of being abstract rather than somehow divesting ourselves of abstraction as a bad habit of thinking.

Perhaps because of these various reasons, like some of the other contributors to this volume I have tended to prefer technique as a way of giving shape and a degree of coherence to the doing of non-representational thinking, although I have by no means been consistent in this. I like the light precision of technique. I like the way it suggests a form of doing that needs to be honed through skillful practice, without necessarily crystallizing as a well-policed set of methodological protocols. And I like the way it is invoked to name both a way of working on the process of thinking and, always simultaneously, on the worldly relations in which thinking participates. Non-representational styles of thought have foregrounded the importance of “techniques of thinking” that open well-formed habits of thinking to the novel possibilities that subsist within the more-or-less than cognitive processes that sustain these habits in order to produce possibilities for thinking anew (Connolly, 2002; Thrift, 2008). This, of course, is nothing especially novel. Rather, it is the resounding of a refrain that has animated the thinking of a range of aesthetic and philosophical traditions, disciplines, and approaches.

Equally, non-representational approaches have sought to practice and perform ways of working (with) worldly relations—relations in which thinking is already entangled—in order to transform or recompose these relations anew (Manning, 2009; Massumi, 2011). In short, although sometimes deploying method as an organizing term in writing and teaching, my inclination has usually tended to be to prefer technique because it seems to better complement the ethos and enactment of non-representational styles of thinking as a kind of “weak theory in an unfinished world” (Stewart, 2008).

I have begun to qualify this inclination, however. And this is because of a certain alluring use of the term method in the thinking of various figures whose work variously overlaps with, inspires, and exemplifies non-representational approaches in a range of ways. So, in Jane Bennett’s work (2010) there is a figuring of method as a way of deliberately modifying critical habits of thinking in the hope this will allow the more-than-human forces abroad in the world, and in ourselves, to more readily participate in the shaping of thinking. Method, in this context, is about turning things around: defamiliarizing them; placing them in generative juxtapositionings that allow thinking to grasp a sense of liveliness of the worlds of things anew, however modestly.

Elsewhere, in Lauren Berlant's (2011) work, the methodological question is one of finding ways of thinking and writing that track the surge and transmission of affective processes via which the singular becomes general. I like the way in which method for Berlant is both a matter of attending to cases or scenes of the ordinary, and where possible, a manner of inventing new *genres* of thinking and writing that make the structuring force of affect in the ordinary more palpable. So, the scene becomes a way of gathering the sense of worlds that matter while also posing the question of how the force of these worlds might become part of their stories. Similarly, a kind of scenographic method informs Kathleen Stewart's (2007) writing about ordinary affects as a series of happenings that might be gathered or collected in the form and genre of a story but can also remain relatively discrete and free—"floating" (see also Fannin et al., 2010). These various invocations of method soften and lighten it somewhat, without necessarily sacrificing the kind of precision required to produce accounts of the world that are palpably empirical. Here, method is less a way of articulating a set of practices that are forced to stand up in a particular epistemological theatre of proof, and more a way of going on in the world that allows its different modes of making difference potentially sensed. Method names an exacting craft, the aim of which is to draw out something of the world that remains vague but still matters. And this craft is no less empirical for being less obviously framed by the epistemological imperatives of the social sciences.

So, my relative positioning on the question of method has begun to shift somewhat. Notwithstanding my initial reservations, it seems to me that the overlaps between technique and method are such that there is not always a clear-cut distinction between the two. Yes, both terms can be used in ways that are variously policing or generative. The injunction to decide on a method or set of methods can be about rehearsing and reinforcing a certain set of epistemological imperatives, but it can also be about attending to things as they happen in a more responsive, risky way. The same applies to technique, albeit perhaps less so. Given this, I am reasonably content here to split the difference by affirming methodological techniques to name a dimension of the work of non-representational thinking.

In truth, although the difference between these two terms is one around which important issues of value and disciplinary boundary-work are at stake, the key question for me is not really which of these terms is preferable. Nor indeed do I think that the key question is which of these terms better names the moment at which the work of non-representational thinking *becomes* empirical. And this is because thinking—and non-representational thinking especially so—is already empirical. One of the distinctive but frequently ignored things about non-representational thinking is that it owns up to the matter of its own empiricism before questions of method ever arise. It does not assume thinking needs to *become* empirical. But it pursues the radically empirical promise that thinking can be and indeed should be empirical in different ways. There is nothing of this world, really, that

the term empirical excludes. There is, of course, something “more-than-empirical”: a necessarily abstract excess named sometimes in terms of the virtual or, in a slightly different tradition, the spectral. In this kind of empiricism, thinking—even conceptual thinking—is never extraempirical. And because of this, the empirical question posed by non-representational theory is not primarily an epistemological problem: the difficulty is not one of *getting at* the world from which we have been alienated, nor one of extracting something from this world. Rather it is an ontological or ontogenetic difficulty: our difficulty is how to be empirical in different ways such that we make more of the worlds in which we move available for thinking—how we draw difference out, how we make it palpable (May, 2005).

The empirical problem posed by non-representational styles of work might therefore be framed as follows: how to devise loosely aligned yet often exacting ways of enacting thinking that involve cultivating attentiveness to the empirical as a field, or fields, of variation, with the important reminder that thinking is already and always a variation in this field. This is a question of finding ways of moving about or within worlds rather than figuring out how to get at them from without. It is less a matter of collecting or extracting something from the world than of making the variations of the world palpable and potentially actionable, and perhaps making variations in the world. It’s about trying to figure out the best way of being with and within the set of circumstances that define, albeit vaguely, the problem that animates thinking. It’s about figuring out if what we are doing, or what we need to be doing, is amplifying, attuning, defamiliarizing, drawing out, following, foregrounding, gathering, holding in place, providing some constraint, tracing and tracking, scattering.

Giving shape to this cluster of ways of doing might involve articulating a series of speculative propositions for research-creation (Manning, 2009, this volume; Sheller, this volume), or it might involve offering a series of injunctions for performative methods (Dewsbury, 2009). Or it might involve presenting a research story in a manner exemplifying something distinctive about non-representational styles of thinking and writing (Vannini, this volume). Another way, and the one I pursue briefly here, is to detail the emergence of a way of thinking with things. And, more specifically, I’d like to detail the emergence of three ways of thinking with and doing atmospheric things as part of the pursuit of non-representational styles of work. And I do so with the balloon as a device for doing atmospheric things.

The term device is chosen deliberately. As Celia Lury and Nina Wakeford (2012) note, device can obviously refer to something instrumental: a technical artifact for articulating some difference between world and thinking. As they also note, the term captures the sense that methodological techniques and whatever they are working with are in some degree mutually constitutive of problems as they emerge for thinking. So, by thinking of things as devices for tracing and participating in the happening of affective space-times, I signal something relatively simple but whose use in different ways

can become part of the enactment of non-representational styles of thinking. At the same time, I want to show how the balloon is a device for making something happen. In the process, thing continues to name both a discrete entity and the processual, relational happening of atmospheric spacetimes that fringe this entity with the sense of difference in the making.

THINGS

At first glance, emphasizing things, and very particular kinds of things at that, might well seem counterintuitive. In certain respects, non-representational theories could be seen to affirm processuality and relationality above all else (see, e.g., Anderson & Wylie, 2009; Latham & McCormack, 2004; Manning, 2009; Thrift, 2008; Whatmore, 2006). Although the welcome effect of this emphasis has been to displace any misplaced sense of the concrete as a touchstone for materiality, for certain strands of thinking interested in the metaphysical status of objects, the upshot is the relegation of objects to second-order phenomena. This, indeed, is a charge levelled by thinkers such as Graham Harman (2008, 2011) against philosophical approaches he claims work to under- or “over-mine” objects by affirming more basic or fundamental forces and processes. To be sure, such claims pose important provocations to some of the strands of philosophical thinking that have influenced non-representational theories. Even then, however, there are certain sympathies between the kind of “alien phenomenology” (Bogost, 2012) developed by Harman and others (e.g., Bryant, 2011), and some varieties of non-representational theories. For instance, like non-representational theories, the speculative realism of object-oriented approaches suggests that there is something of worlds inaccessible to and always excessive of representation. Equally, it is fair to say that there is shared emphasis, expressed in various styles of writing and presenting, on the performative force of different kinds of accounts of the world.

Consider, for instance, lists. In *Alien Phenomenology*, Ian Bogost (2012) suggests that lists are effective techniques for drawing attention to the strange life of non-humans. Lists are valuable because they afford a way of going beyond the conventions of certain kinds of representations by refusing the demand of narrative resolution. More than this, they are reminders that some kind of absolute gap exists between individual items, each of which remains, in the end, “utterly isolated, mutual aliens” (ibid., n.p.). For Bogost, lists emphasize the disjunction of being rather than the relationality or processuality of becoming. So, although for Bogost lists are performative devices for non-representational thinking, they are ultimately non-relational.

Clearly, lists are great at providing a sense of the discrete, the partitioned. Yet although lists separate, they also gather. So, although lists suggest some mutual alienation in the gap between individual items, they can move us to

speculate on what lies between (Bennett, 2001). Equally, whatever skin or membrane it is that surrounds items on a list is not absolutely impermeable. There is always some seepage, some leakage, some emission. The items on a list are not hermetically sealed. They generate an excessive in-between. And whatever lies between the items on a list does not have to be turned once again into another object.

So, although the object-turn offers much, not least in drawing attention to the independent life of non-humans and to their powerful entanglements in diverse spacetimes (see, e.g., Meehan, Shaw, & Marston, 2013; Shaw & Meehan, 2013), I am reluctant to follow the speculative and metaphysical move of those thinkers for whom everything is resolved ultimately into an object, albeit not necessarily an object in the physical, concrete sense. And this is because I am not convinced that accounts of the kinds of spacetimes in which non-representational styles of thinking are interested are necessarily well served by being resolved thus.

Atmospheres are one of these spacetimes. Indeed, in some respects it is in the concept of atmosphere that the distinctive spatiotemporality of non-representational theories has been expressed and elaborated most forcefully (see, e.g., Anderson, 2009; Bissell, 2010; McCormack, 2008; Stewart, 2007, 2011). Atmosphere provides a way of foregrounding the fact that affective spacetimes of variable reach and intensity can be and are felt as forceful gatherings without necessarily being formed. Atmospheres gesture towards the sense of affective excess between and across bodies. Although atmospheres can be grasped as the sense of something happening, I find it difficult and not especially helpful to think of atmospheres as objects. Equally, I am reluctant to think of the relation between an atmosphere and something more discrete as itself resolvable into an object. This may simply be my inability to cast off the associations of the term object, or to embrace a looser sense of the term as something merely available for thought.

My inclination is therefore not to follow the objectifying tendencies of some flavors of this speculative turn while also tactically affirming the value of different degrees of thing-like discretion as part of the craft of thinking and doing non-representational styles of work (see also Ashmore, 2013). My inclination is to work somewhere between a sense of the thing as discrete and diffuse, entity and event. To remain open to tactically affirming the force and power of things is an important way of drawing together and drawing out the relations and associations of which worldly arrangements are composed. As Jane Bennett's (2010) work demonstrates, to attend periodically to something discrete is not to *ground* thinking in objects but to cultivate attention to the properties and qualities of things through selective constraint in a world whose ecologies always contain more than we can imagine. To foreground things, in this sense, is a technique for drawing out forces and relations as part of the elaboration of an ethical sensibility. At same time, I am drawn to the value of thinking of things as the gathering of something diffuse without anything becoming discrete. This

is Kathleen Stewart's (2007, 2011) sense of things: much less discrete, far more atmospheric. Things happening are diffuse yet palpable gatherings of force becoming sensed in scenes of the ordinary. And for Stewart (2011), attunement is a mode of sensing these forceful gatherings as part of the process of writing accounts of ordinary worlds that retain their vagueness while acknowledging the fact they make a difference.

What interests me here is the question of how to find a way of thinking somewhere between the atmospheric as it is grasped as *something happening* (with Stewart) and the kind of selective attention to specific things as part of the elaboration of ecologies of lively matter (with Bennett). What interests me is how to hold together both a sense of atmospheres as diffuse yet palpable spacetimes and the force of relatively discrete presences as they participate in the generation of those spacetimes.

ATMOSPHERIC FIELDWORK

I pursue answers to these questions by thinking with the shaping of things as they move in, generate, and in some sense emerge from the atmospheres in which they are affective participants. Attending to things as a way of telling stories of spacetimes in this way is nothing new, of course: it is a technique used by various scholars interested in producing accounts of the movement and mutability of material artifacts (see Cook, 2004; deSilvey, 2006). Sometimes this is understood in terms of following the thing (Cook, 2004). Following is not quite the name what I am doing here, not least because in a strange way, we need to be able to imagine that things in some sense follow us without the sense of intentionality that this implies. More importantly, the process of thinking with things involves an ongoing emergence of something happening between think and thinking. Equally importantly, the atmospheric things with which I wish to think move somewhere between discrete presences and vague, swirling affects. And, moreover, by atmospheric things I wish to designate something whose affective qualities are also meteorological or, perhaps more precisely, gaseous. I take atmospheric things in this sense to consist of and be composed of different and sometimes turbulent mixtures of elements in different degrees of motion that can be and sometimes are sensed as intensities of feeling (see Ingold, 2006, 2012; McCormack, 2008).

In this context the question is how to find devices for doing atmospheric things in ways that hold open these multiple senses of the atmospheric. The balloon is one such device. For a while now I have been thinking about and with the balloon as a device for exploring atmospheres in both an affective and a gaseous sense (McCormack, 2009). Clearly, using the balloon as a technology for moving through atmospheres is anything but novel. The emergence of balloon flight in the late eighteenth century generated all kinds of reflections by aeronauts on the affective experience of moving through

the atmosphere, experiments that often paralleled efforts to render explicit the physical properties of the atmosphere through measurement devices of various kinds. In an important sense, balloon travel afforded an opportunity for experimenting with atmospheric experience, offering occasions to reflect upon the body's capacity to be affected by this experience as part of the generation of new kinds of elemental geographies (see Martin, 2011). For instance, writing in *Aeronautica, or Sketches Illustrative of the Theory and Practice of Aerostation* (1838), Monck Mason reflected on the experience of being aloft, an aspect of which was the peculiar feeling, or more accurately the absence of feeling, attendant on the stillness that characterized balloon flight. For Mason, understanding this experience, and the "new field of enquiry" of which it was part, required delving into the nature of the body as an array of capacities to sense and be sensed. As he put it,

It is necessary to be observed, that the human body is composed of a variety of different materials, of different specific gravities, and endowed with different degrees of sensibility to pressure, or other disturbing causes, to which they may happen to be subject. When these are set in motion all together, by one and the same impelling force, a very considerable disarrangement of their relative positions must ensue. (1838, p. 119)

The balloon aloft, then, is something that can be used to undertake a form of atmospheric fieldwork in an aerial sense (McCormack, 2010a). Although it shares Mason's interest in the different capacities of different bodies to affect and be affected, the sense of atmospheric fieldwork pursued here differs somewhat, not least because it does not rely solely upon the balloon as a vehicle for travel by humans. Rather, it extends to attentiveness to the various ways in which the presence of the balloon as a simple-shaped thing in ordinary worlds marks the passing of time, the absence of a loved one, the promise of an event. It extends to attentiveness to how the balloon, with or without passengers, has and continues to be used to generate affective atmospheres of all kinds in a range of different contexts: political, scientific, aesthetic. Here my concerns are more constrained, however: I merely sketch, in list form, the outlines of three moments in this atmospheric fieldwork as it has and continues to emerge, and as it might be practiced as part of how non-representational styles of thinking come to take place in relation to a specific set of relations, obligations, and attachments. This sketch is, of necessity, deliberately unfinished.

1. On Sensing Anew¹

For me it didn't begin with the balloon. It began, as it often does, with the question of bringing problems for thinking into being. And it began with something in the world making a difference. It began with the yet-to-be

determined value of a determinate encounter as it generated affects—affects that agitated thinking in a way that continued to resound long after the coordinates of that encounter. It began with the allure of particular combinations of material, image, and text.

That is image I saw in a museum in the late summer of 2005 in Bodø, in northern Norway: the image of a half-deflated balloon on the ice with two figures staring at its collapsing shape. The encounter with that image set me thinking about the affects of disappearance, about what happened, about what remained of the 1897 Andrée balloon expedition to the North Pole. It told the story of how the expedition was a failure in every sense, however, and about how that set me thinking about what failure generates. It documented how, after a few days drifting in various directions, the balloon landed on the ice, and the three members of the expedition eventually perished during their effort to return to Svalbard, from where they had departed.

* * *

Sometimes beginnings cannot be dated and located with anything like this kind of specificity. Sometimes they are about the slow phasing of an interest coming into being. About that nagging, pulling, tugging sense of an emerging happening that has not yet taken shape. About hope borne of feeling that something more might be there. About a kind of circling around a worldly calling forth whose outlines cannot yet and, indeed, might never be discerned. Something fragile, fleeting, sometimes failing. Something unshaped.

So it is about working with this sense of something before it can even be posed as a question, an argument, a line of thought, or a problem. About continuing with that slow thinking through a barely sensed interest that returns again and again, and to which we become obliged. And it's about persisting: persisting in the moving midst of that which is coming into being. This might sound willfully mystical. It's not. It's about the difficult work of sustaining and supporting this emerging sense of something happening in a way that is both rigorous yet open. And it is about shaping: about giving shape to something that can be sensed without necessarily reducing whatever this might become to an object of and for thought.

* * *

It's never about just taking something off the shelf, about rehearsing something that has already been devised. It's about making techniques anew, albeit partially, as part of the emergence of the problem. This is part of what makes non-representational styles of thinking experimental—they are experiments with devising techniques for worldly participation as part of the process of doing research. They are ways of thinking in which the question of how one is to proceed is up for grabs every time thinking begins again. This is not quite the same as claiming that the question is one of

not knowing which of a suite of already available techniques is to be used. Should I talk, draw, photograph, video? These are not really the questions. It is about not knowing in advance what kind of technique will allow you to go on, and not really knowing what the technique will help you do. It is about realizing that the technique that will eventually help you go on, that will allow you enter into a relation with an emerging problem, might not yet have been devised. Perhaps this sounds heroic, setting the bar too high. And perhaps it sounds too dismissive of a repertoire of perfectly workable ways of going on that always have much to offer. The point here is not that you cannot or should not talk to people or take photographs, but that these ways of doing things are generative preludes and supportive supplements to the inventive devising of something else, something that will be distinctive to the problem as it is being drawn out.

With luck—with a lot of luck—this might involve devising a new technique for thinking, a novel way of going on. It is more likely to involve taking a familiar technique from one context and showing how it can do a qualitatively different kind of work in another, and in a way that remakes that technique, or inventively inflects it, or transforms it such that both it and the world in which it is situated are rendered strange. Or, again, this might involve working with a technique germane to a circumstantial context in order to defamiliarize it, to turn it against itself, and in a way that allows you to make some of this context available for thought. It is about working within the terms and techniques of the problem as the conditions from which ways of going on might emerge. Thinking with concepts is always part of this process. For non-representational styles of thinking, concepts are not applied to the world, no more than methods are. Concepts are recreated every time they are thought with. Concepts are put to work in a way that makes a difference to worlds but also, importantly, in a way that reshapes the concept, edging it with other kinds of potential. And we could also say the same about techniques.

* * *

It was about following the aftereffects of the expedition northward, interested neither in adding to the knowledge about the expedition nor in merely rehearsing the story, however gripping the tale. But interested, yes, in what remained of the expedition, in trying to understand of what its afterlife consisted, of what might be made of scattered texts, images, artifacts. But doing so with no name for what was being done. Eventually, however, the expedition itself presented a solution of sorts, in the guise of one of the techniques that provided its organizational rationale: remote sensing. In simple terms, remote sensing is the capture of some kind of data about an object usually from a sensing device at a distant or elevated viewing point. Balloons were the prototypical devices for remote sensing. They allowed the world to be seen from above, map-like. And for the *Andrée* expedition, the intention

was to use a carefully calibrated series of photographs to generate as complete a map of the area overflow as possible.

Facilitated by the balloon as a platform of aerial observation, this kind of remote sensing is a technique for elevated image-capture, distanced apprehension. It is a technique for visual, unearthly abstraction in the worst sense of that term. But it can be modified. It can be reworked to grasp the process through which the affects of what remains are sensed. Unlike remote sensing as airborne survey, this kind of remote sensing is not so much about generating a visual image of some of the qualities or properties of a distant object. Rather, as a technique for non-representational thinking, this modified remote sensing is about cultivating responsive sensitivity to the affects generated by gatherings and scatterings of artifacts and texts (McCormack, 2010b). It is about attentiveness to a multispectral array of affects. To pursue possibilities for remote sensing in this way is about the simple promise of reinventing a technique such that it is put to use in a way that both acknowledges the original intention of the technique while also going beyond that intention.

2. Doing Like a Thing²

For a while I didn't pay enough attention to the thing at the center of the story. It remained a vehicle for thinking of something else, for pursuing other, weightier agendas, heavier lines of thought. But if you are open to them, things have a way of grabbing your intention. And things change when you become responsive to each instance of their appearance. Things change when

- Your eye is drawn to an orange balloon lifting into the mist one morning on Parks Road;
- Your gaze is arrested by the massive, inflated light diffuser suspended above Radcliffe Square in Oxford one misty evening a few years ago as they shot a scene from the film *The Golden Compass*;
- The red balloons showed up in the same square (see figure 6.2). They were tethered to the railings. You stopped to photograph them, wondering what their showing up was all about. You hoped that whatever it was would be worthy of the sense of occasion promised by this strange gathering of familiar things. As things turned out, you were disappointed: the date printed on the note attached to each balloon advertised a series of TED talks in Oxford. But it was the sense of something happening that mattered and persisted;
- You notice how often you buy them on birthdays in order to generate some kind of sense that something is happening.

It is about attending to something again and again, about making a note of every time an example of it is encountered, in what context, and to what



Figure 6.2 (Photo credit: D. McCormack, 2013)

effect, often in the most unremarkable of circumstances. It is about responding to the gently interruptive, intrusive becoming present of the thing as it moves through and generates perturbations (Ash, 2013) that might generate the feeling of atmospheres.

This is not just about going with the flow, secure in knowing that something more is always guaranteed, about the comfort of worldly plenitude from which something else will always show up. It's about a sense that somehow, through repeated, responsive attentiveness, something might take off, take flight—a trajectory, a line of creative variation between things. And it's about maximizing the possibility that this might happen through gathering, assembling, reassembling, arranging, rearranging, juxtaposing. It's about effort: effort perhaps to be active, perhaps to move, but just as likely the effort to be passive, still, responsive, open. It's about generating, in the process, that sense of thought thinking itself: the durational mattering of what Bergson calls an intuitive “impulsion,” which sets thinking “off on a road where it finds both the information it had gathered and other details as well; it develops, analyses itself in terms whose enumeration follows on without limits” (2007, p. 168). It's about how movement and thought think you: about how ideas have you; about how things work you out.

In the process what begins emerging is a way of moving with the qualities and properties of the thing as it affects and is affected by other things and you. Central to this is the realization that verticality is only part of what makes the balloon matter as a generator of spacetimes. True, from the ground, the balloon seems to be all about elevation, about the view from above, about unearthly transcendence and all the problems with which this

is tinged. But as a mobile, moving device, the balloon also poses another important problem: the problem of dirigibility, of finding a way of giving direction. More specifically, it poses the question of how to give something a sense of direction when it is fully immersed in the medium through which it moves. It poses the question of how to inflect the trajectory of something contiguous, coterminous with its atmospheric surround, save for a thin skin of difference. Again, as far as the balloon goes, the realization that the balloon is at one, so to speak, with its atmospheric surround is nothing new. As Mason wrote,

To all intents and purposes [. . .] a balloon freely poised in the atmosphere may be considered as absolutely inclosed or imbedded [sic] in a box of air; so completely so, that (for example) were it possible to distinguish, by tinging it with some particular colour, that portion of the atmosphere immediately surrounding the balloon, and in that guise commit her to the discretion of the elements, she would, apart from all fluctuations in the level of her course, continue to bear the same tinted medium along with her. (1838, p. 132)

For the aeronaut, then, this is about the problem of disagreeing with the medium in which you are immersed in order to generate some variation—how to give yourself over to the wind while also modifying your altitude in a way that allows the balloon to take advantage of winds moving in different directions, at different speeds. This is about devising a mode of what is only ever at best a kind of partial dirigibility. About working within the medium and what it affords, while responding to its obligations.

The leap that might be made here is that what works for balloons might also work for thinking and writing with their capacities and properties. Thinking with the balloon as an atmospheric thing might become a way of giving oneself over to different trajectories of thinking. It might become about giving oneself over to deviations generated by forces and currents beyond any individual body. It might become about cultivating forms of writing that are tensed between the necessity of a partial sense of direction and the impossibility of determining in advance the direction of a movement of thought.

* * *

But thinking cannot only ever be about the ongoing act of release, about lines of wandering. For thinking to take place, there has to be some kind of episodic gathering, in both the material and spatiotemporal sense. Michel Serres has a way of describing this sense of whatever gathers around, whatever surrounds a thing while also, of course, constituting that thing. He calls this circumstance. According to Serres, circumstances have a meteorological, almost atmospheric quality. Serres writes,

Circumstance describes three things superlatively: the imprecise surroundings of subjects, objects or substances, even more remote than accidental, highly unpredictable chance occurrences; a tricky history of stasis and equilibrium, disturbances and returns to the original state, deviations towards the fluctuating environment. Thus the lime tree and its thick foliage, the profound darkness when evening comes, the clouds, wind, weather, the sudden breeze knocking the vase over, the gesticulating of hands and arms between bodies, the pattering of the rain, the voice of someone getting excited, conventional silence. (2008, p. 297)

The circumstances of things are the atmospheric surrounds through which the relations between that thing and whatever it is tinged by are registered. Circumstances are whatever gathers around while also being generative of something that may be prehended as a relatively discrete form. Among other things, a balloon can be understood in this way. It is a shaped form nevertheless fringed by a cloud of solicitations that might generate all kinds of minor deviations in its direction of travel.

* * *

So thinking with the balloon is also about finding a way of writing circumstances as part of the process of affirming the thing as a gathering. It is about cultivating a mode of circumstantial writing that attends to things and the qualities of their halo of solicitations. As far as the balloon is concerned, there are exemplars. The opening pages of Ian McEwan's (1997) novel *Enduring Love*, for instance, exemplify a kind of circumstantial writing, in which there is an account of the sudden appearance of a balloon and of all the other things drawn towards it by the force of its elemental capacities, and an account of the affective variations in which it is a participant. Everything else in that book revolves around the circumstantial qualities of the event. Or, rather differently, consider Donald Barthelme's *The Balloon* (2003): a short story that details the sudden appearance of a large balloon over Manhattan and the range of responses to the thing, responses that never add up to a single narrative.

And so, what the balloon gives is the possibility of a modest form of circumstantial writing: a mode of writing attentive to the different ways in which things make a difference through deviation. This involves attending to and trying to write the particular ways in which this thing participates in atmospheric gatherings of different kinds. It involves cultivating a certain way of moving that takes seriously the qualities of the thinking as an only ever partially dirigible object. It is about learning how to write between the promising problem of dirigibility and the generative constraint of circumstances. It is about thinking about how the properties of how things move might inflect the qualities of the accounts you produce.

* * *

It is about how, after you had received feedback on the first draft of this piece, I took you to a birthday party. As I walked with you there you spotted the yellow balloon tied to the bike, and I took a picture (see Figure 6.1). Your friend, the birthday boy, was three. And he had been given a large, helium-filled, purple balloon in the shape of a three as a kind of floating centerpiece. It had been weighted, but not securely enough. A little later, as you gathered in the garden to eat cake, someone cried out. Something happened. It was about how you all looked up at the three as it floated out of the garden. About how you thought it might not get very far, about how it seemed to hesitate over the trees. And about how you were surprised at how long you were able to track its ascent. About how you lost it momentarily, but how someone else found its shape again: a dot ascending along a perfect diagonal into the distance. And it is about how you wondered where such things end up, eventually: about who or what finds them.

3. Forms of Association³

Where next? Where might this be going? At most what I am offering here is my sense of a loose direction of travel towards the possibility of thinking with things. Jill Bennett (2012) has written that “practical aesthetics is the study of (art as a) means of apprehending the world via sense-based and affective processes—processes that touch bodies intimately and directly but that also underpin the emotions, sentiments and passions of public life” (p. 3). We can think of non-representational styles of work as being concerned with a modified form of practical aesthetics insofar as they are engaged in thinking about and devising modes of sensory and affective apprehensions of the world. Such styles of work have, unsurprisingly, engaged with all kinds of artistic and performance-based practices. And, in doing so, their aim has not been so much to generate a critique of aesthetics, but to produce new collaborative spacetimes of experimental togetherness, new forms of association.

* * *

Simple things can be devices for facilitating this collaboration. And the balloon is one such device. Of course, the balloon and inflatable things more generally have long figured in artistic concerns and practices (Dessauc, 1999; Topham, 2002). But the properties and qualities of the balloon allow it to work as an especially providential device for thinking and working through non-representational spacetimes and for devising modest experiments with the experience of these affective spacetimes—and especially so in relation to atmospheres. The balloon makes atmosphere explicit in a distinctive way, enveloping it but also generating it through its associations. And unsurprisingly, the balloon can and has been employed in quite specific ways as part of the practical aesthetics of apprehending the properties and qualities of atmospheres in both an affective and gaseous sense.

For instance, the balloon offers a device for experimenting with volume. And it does so in a way that shows how the voluminous qualities of atmospheric spacetimes are not reducible to the volumetric. They are also about felt senses of intensity and extent: about a sense of the depth of spacetime, albeit one that is often facilitated by the technical infrastructure of spheres of inhabitation (Sloterdijk, 2011). We can point to a number of reasonably well-known examples of works that use balloons as things to draw attention to the voluminous qualities of atmospheric spacetimes:

- In his work *Half the Air in a Given Space*, first exhibited in 1998, the Scottish artist Martin Creed employs the balloon as a simple device with which to transform architectural spaces. He offers the following instructions: “Choose a space. Calculate the volume of the space. Using air, blow up white 12in balloons until they occupy half the volume of the space. As usual the space should be full of air, but half of it should be inside balloons.” see www.martincreed.com
- In *Scattered Crowd*, first installed in 2002, the Frankfurt-based choreographer William Forsythe suspends hundreds of balloons in a large gallery space “in a billowing wash of sound.” The balloons create an “an air-borne landscape of relationship, of distance, of humans and emptiness, of coalescence and decision.”¹ (see Manning, 2013)
- In 2013 the artist Christo installed *Big Air Package* in the Oberhausen Gasometer, in Germany. Housed inside the former gas storage tank, the sculpture is 90 meters high, 50 meters wide, and consists of 20,350 square meters of semi-transparent polyester fabric with 4,500 meters of rope. It has a volume of 177,000 cubic meters. Entrance is via an airlock, and two fans keep the sculpture inflated.²

Admittedly, these are very brief examples, merely listed here to gesture to the possible ways in which the balloon can function as a device for a form of practical aesthetics in which different qualities of atmospheric spacetimes can be experimented with. In each case the balloon is both a thing in the sense of a discrete presence and a device for doing things, where things are atmospheres sensed in the process of their coming together. In each case the balloon is a device for generating a space of relational experimentation in which to move between the discrete and the diffuse, and in which to hold in tension the different spatial tendencies—scattering and gathering—characteristic of atmospheres (see Anderson, 2009). In each case, the balloon works as what Serres (2008, p. 281) calls an “exchanger”: a device that allows the diffuse to pass into, and give volume to, the circumstantial qualities of the body of the atmospheric thing as a sensing, sensed, feeling, felt actuality. As part of a practical aesthetics oriented towards generating senses of collective belonging and immersion, the affective-material spacetimes of each of these works provide possible sites for experimenting with experience. They point towards possible ways of enacting a form

of atmospheric fieldwork through the production of modest spacetimes of novel togetherness.

* * *

I want to do more than point, however, but have not yet had the chance: so, when I had eight thousand or so words of this piece written I drove you all the way from Oxford to West Bromwich, to the soon to be closed “Public”³: a flagship arts center and gallery. I had promised you some fun. There would be balloons, supplied by Martin Creed. And you could play in a room full of them, or so I thought. But you were disappointed—not because there were no balloons. They were there: beautiful, warm, orange, taking up half the air in the given space. But they were housed behind bars, or cables (see Figure 6.3). You tried to reach inside to touch them. But they remained at a distance. This is not what you had come for: this was not the experimental cloud of empirical associations in which you had hoped to move.

You played instead with the interactive galleries: with Telepresent Embrace, Flypad, Animo, Sound Canvas. And you loved the Public so much that you told me you wished you lived in West Bromwich. I told you we would never come here again, because the Public was closing, probably forever. This space, its possibilities, its promises, would disappear. Its vague, sensory atmospheric were simply too much to sustain, unaffordable.

POP

I had promised you this trip in part because when I had written 7,302 words of an earlier version of this chapter, you presented me with two uninflated

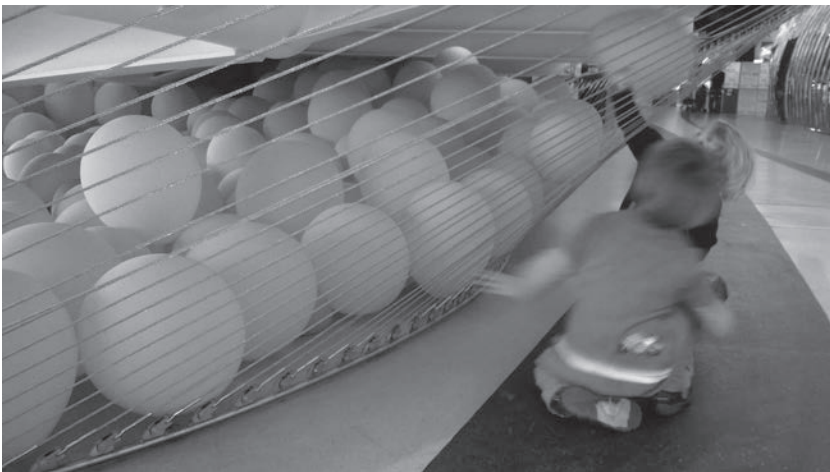


Figure 6.3 (Photo credit: D. McCormack, 2013)

balloons in the kitchen. Birthday leftovers rummaged. One red. One yellow. The refrain of favorite colors. Blow them up. Please! Please! Please! Red first. Then yellow. You threw them around the room. You played with the difficulty of grasping something so light, with the ease of keeping things aloft.

And then the explosive affects of the larger one popping into nothing but a yellow shred. You were inconsolable at the sudden loss, about the finality of the disappearance of the thing. I had given it too much air, perhaps. I had over inflated it. I told you I would blow up another if you took care of it. And you have.

* * *

As a device with which to think, the balloon provides a way of holding together a sense of the tension between the diffuse and the discrete. As a device with which to move, it provides a way of holding on to the tension between the directional and the circumstantial. As a device for practical aesthetics, it provides a way of generating spacetimes for experimenting with the experience of atmospheres. The balloon is only one device, of course, and is by no means privileged. There may be any number of devices for doing atmospheric things. For instance, as James Ash (2013) has written, the screen offers another particularly important interface at and through which to explore and experiment with atmospheres as affective spacetimes. As part of the ongoing elaboration of ecologies of non-representational practices, experiments with such things might provide a way of foregrounding how atmospheres become matters of concern for a range of techniques and technologies for generating aesthetic, political, cultural, and economic value.

But I'd prefer not to end by sounding like I thought I knew where this kind of fieldwork might be going. This chapter is not a series of object lessons, and that's because not everything of the world in which non-representational theories are immersed is an object. Or more precisely, something of these worlds is sometimes always more or less than an object. Serres writes that a "cloud is a cloud, it is not solely an object. A river is not just an object, neither is an island nor a lake. Likewise the noise of the sea" (1995, p. 112). And likewise the sense of an atmosphere: of a soft day, of a close day, of things pressing in, of something moving in the wind, of the presence of those red and yellow balloons in the corner of the room, presence that continues to diminish day by day as I draw this to a close. And I wonder why it is we always leave them to shrink. We never pop.

I'd prefer to end, unfinished, by returning to a sense of the "how." To the problem and promise of "how" to make explicit the processes by which things and their spacetimes oblige us to think: how they oblige us to think with and within them in a series of ways that may not have been clear from the outset and that might still be emerging. To the "how" of things that can

be sensed as discrete presences but that don't always need to be turned into objects. The atmospheric things that figure here: those sometimes shaped forms whose apparently discrete presence draws our attention to the relations of which they are composed. Those things always fringed, and in some sense constituted by, the atmospheric processes and relations in which they participate. Those things "immersed in a turbulent cloud of solicitations that we'd have to call meteorological" (Serres, 2008, p. 299). Those things that in all sorts of ways, gentle or violent, oblige us to think again, anew.

NOTES

1. See www.williamforsythe.de/installations.html?no_cache=1&detail=1&uid=22.
2. See www.gasometer.de/en/exhibitions/current-exhibition.
3. See www.thepublic.com/exhibitions/martin-creed. Designed by architect Will Alsop, the Public is a publicly funded gallery, art, and education space that at the time of writing was scheduled to close by the end of November 2013.

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7 Enlivening Ethnography Through the Irrealis Mood

In Search of a More-Than-Representational Style

Phillip Vannini

PREFACE

This chapter is a quest. I write in search of an ethnographic style that strives to do more than just *represent* field experiences and encounters. I do not pretend to have found an ultimate solution to the crisis of representation that has vexed ethnographers for three decades (see Clifford & Marcus, 1986). Neither do I believe that these strategies will appeal to every non-representational researcher. Nor am I entirely convinced that the following rhetorical choices will be appropriate for all research topics. But I hope, ambitiously, to have enlivened my fieldwork writing enough to make it interesting to read and perhaps somewhat inspiring, and it is in this vein that I share it.

I begin the chapter with a sample of my writing style: a three-thousand-word narrative drawn from my fieldwork on off-grid living in Canada (Vannini & Taggart, 2014). Over the last two years my multisite ethnography has taken me and Jonathan Taggart across all of Canada's provinces and territories to document the ways of life of people whose homes are disconnected from large socio-technical networks of heat and electricity. These Canadians are also often (relatively) self-reliant in many other ways. The following writing is the story of an unusual field journey: a trip to an off-grid cabin in the Arctic tundra. I tell the story of our travel and subsequently reflect on the choices I made in telling it, focusing on the partiality, immediacy, proximity, potentiality, ineffability, fluidity, and reflexivity of my writing.

CAMPING, OUT ON THE LAND

It never fails. You're out camping and right in the middle of the night you feel an irresistible urge to go pee. The outhouse is only a few steps away but you dread losing sleep momentum by scavenging for your shoes and headlamp. It's nippy outside and getting dressed is a hassle. But the urge is too strong and you must eventually surrender.

It's -30°C on the Arctic tundra. You have been cautioned to be on the lookout for polar bears, especially at night. So you try to step up urination pressure a notch or two—however a futile physiological effort that may be. You anxiously scan the immense horizon, glistening in the precocious premorning dawn. And then it happens, just like you feared it would. The light cast by your headlamp hits two beady, fluorescent eyes gazing hungrily at you fifty meters afar. Your entire life flashes before your slumbry eyes.

Iqalugaaqjuit—a “place of many little fish,” in the Inuktitut language—is one of a handful of outpost camps scattered around the southern shore of Baffin Island, in Canada's Nunavut territory. Most of these outposts were built in the mid-1980s, when the Canadian government thought it behooved it to encourage—after decades of systematic eradication of traditional nomadic lifestyles—hunting and fishing and the intergenerational language and skill transfer that goes along with them.

Our *illugalaq* is a newer edifice. Built seventeen years ago by Timmun and Kristiina, just like all the neighboring cabins, it serves the function of hosting its owners, family, friends, and occasional guests for short weekend or weeklong getaways. “It's for our mental health,” in Kristiina's words, “we come here to get away.”

We arrived in the late afternoon of a cold April day. We had left Canada's West Coast with borrowed parkas and untested gloves two days before and departed Cape Dorset by snowmobile four hours earlier. Due to the unwise gear choice the first few minutes of driving had turned out to be atrocious. My right hand had more or less frozen stuck on the accelerator handle, gripping it steady at such an angle that it worked like a human-mediated cruise control, set at precisely twenty-one miles per hour. Thankfully, at the first cigarette break, local knowledge saved me. Beaver fur-covered mitts had been kindly provided by Kristiina, who introduced me in a motherly way to their superiority over polyester gloves, while Timmun inconspicuously switched on the heat on my snowmobile handlebar—a mix of old- and new-world solutions.

After leaving Cape Dorset we rode over lakes, ponds, rivers, creeks, and the ocean. At times we steered away from frozen waters to conquer overland trails, often none the wiser of the topographical substitutions. Other than a few stretches of pavement within tiny hamlets' boundaries, there are no roads in Canada's Eastern Arctic. Snow and ice make snowmobile travel possible during the colder months: from November to June. Boats are used to navigate the ocean separating Nunavut communities from one another and from outpost camps during July, August, and September. During the shoulder seasons, when ice is breaking or freezing up, no one other than airplanes dares to move about.

Snowmobiling is an acquired taste, much like getting lashed in the buttocks with a leather whip: once you see past the sore lower back and the bruises you actually realize that it's just another way of getting around and that in fact, for some people, it's the normal way of doing it. Given its

widespread and enthusiastic uptake it makes you wonder how rougher dog-sled transport must have been.

“Going out on the land,” the locals’ favorite expression to indicate going camping, is a bit of a misnomer. The “land” is actually snow—some of it frozen solid, some fluffier but dry, some slushy, some icy and translucent, some resplendently turquoise even under the most timid of suns. The actual “land” is a different entity altogether, and an evanescent one for most of the year. I imagined it as a myriad of soggy colorful meadows and shallow mosquito-stocked lakes underneath all the white stuff, but only actually witnessed it as lifeless, cold granite dots littering the unimaginatively bitonous—tritonous at best on a sunny day—icescape.

Our speedometer snuck past the thirty miles-per-hour tack once or twice, but it was a short-lived thrill. Though wintery Arctic landscapes are generally easily amenable to speedy gliding, tidal forces dancing underneath the ocean constantly push and pull trails up and down, creating ridges and walls requiring twists and turns not unlike Formula 1 chicanes. Among them the most spectacular, though immensely vexing, are two-ton popsicles known as pressure ice. Near shores—where these small communities of Lilliputian locked-in icebergs appear, grow, shrink, and then almost vanish twice daily with the ebbing and flooding of tides—snowmobile travel is rendered labyrinthine, requiring detours, low speed, patience, and a peripheral attention to distances that is parallel in nature to the task of merging onto a gridlocked parkway.

Jon and I had been pursuing the opportunity to go camping in the Arctic since we had discovered its popularity on an earlier trip to the Mackenzie Delta, in Canada’s Northwest Territories. For the thermally unadventurous Arctic camping seems like an unconscionable thing to do, but for residents of Northern Canada it is the typically preferred way to escape the hustle and bustle of growingly busy and conspicuously loud (snowmobile engines aren’t as quiet as you might think) communities.

With everyone coming and going all the time even sealift—the once-a-year resupply of Arctic communities by cargo ship—“isn’t what it used to be,” according to Timmun. Take Iqaluit, for example, the territory’s capital city. Pizza Hut, KFC, and not one but three coffee-and-donut shops of the quintessentially Canadian Tim Horton’s franchise chain compete for attention with shawarma eateries, hotels, restaurants, flower shops, and crowded four-way intersections begging for the arrival of the eastern Arctic’s first stoplight. No wonder then that local women and men—like our friend Niviasqi put it—really “need a break” every now and then.

After unloading the two enormous trailer-sheds of all the camping gear—no station wagon or SUV trunk can compete with the cargo space of a *qamutiik*—we hurried to the lake to lay down our fishing net before night-fall. Though Timmun is said to have pulled it off by himself in his younger years, ice-fishing with a net is no one-*inuk* job.

You start by excavating a hole, approximately two meters wide, in the snow. With as many as two or three feet of snow cleared off the icy lake surface, you begin drilling two holes immediately next to one another. You then merge the two together with a six-foot ice chisel. Next, you shove an ice crawler into the hole and send it floating under the ice. This is the tricky part; you must listen for the crawler's metal hook rubbing against the ice from underneath and determine, from the snow-muffled sound transmitted above, where it lies. That is the precise spot where you want to dig and drill two more holes through the ice. If you guessed right, the crawler should be there, so you fish it out and grab on to the rope that it carried from the first hole. That is the rope to which the fishing net will be tied, after being stretched from the first to the second hole and secured in both places with a simple knot around a shovel or an ice chisel. That's it. Overnight the char will magically fill the net, as if to reward you for your good effort.

Kristiina and Timmun's cabin is unpretentious and small—at sixteen by twelve feet it is just big enough to accommodate cooking space, a bunk bed, and a foldout couch tucked behind the dining table. Any larger or more comfortable space would be vulgar and unfitting. Heat is provided by a combination of a propane-fueled camping stove and an electric space heater powered by a generator. The temperature inside can get as high as 21°C. The contrast with the outside requires ventilation by way of two air exchangers: simple plastic-covered openings through the wall that almost manage to arrest the unrelenting condensation. All of this makes for a visually arresting explosion of steam every time the door is opened, so that stepping outside not only feels but also spectacularly looks just as if you walked into a meat locker.

Kristiina is a goldmine of information. Listening to her camping stories made every evening fly fast, and games of Scrabble helped when the stories ran out. Camping out on the land is a mix of relaxation and busyness, but even the busyness—directed at securing basic comforts and sheer survival—is playful enough to be a diversion from the daily rituals of life in town. Timmun and Niviaqsi, like two grown children seemingly incapable of sitting down, would spin their wheels outside the cabin as if keen on corroborating Kristiina's observations with bodily evidence.

When you camp you carry on as if you were playing house. Playing is marked by few rules. You must imagine the camp to be the human race's last self-reliant outpost and must endeavor to make your temporary dwelling as comfortable as a permanent one, but different enough from a normal home to be challenging and exciting. Good campers play the game ostentatiously, as if their skill display was subject to the scrutiny of scrupulous judges. Those new to camping, or those, like me and Jon, who have played the game on faraway territory, mostly just listen, learn, and try not to get in the way.

The first clear night gave way to a scrimmage of early morning clouds, which then quickly dissipated as the winds rose. Temperatures hovered in the minus-twenties with the wind chill. After a hearty breakfast of bannock

and raspberry jam it was time to check the net. It was a simple enough job that even two clumsy southerners like us were allowed to help with. It was fun too. After ensuring that the first hole was free of any edge, the net was pulled out of the ice in its entirety while Timmun recorded the outcome with his iPad. The fish were still alive but visibly fatigued from a long night of wrangling with the nylon net, and then shocked by the sudden exposure to the cold air. We untangled sixteen the first morning, and then more at night-time and in the following days, until we reached the contented conclusion that five dozen took enough space on our *qamutiik*.

I have camped on beaches, in forests, the desert, on volcanos, and now on the Arctic tundra, but regardless of geographical features I have always found that the success of a camping trip comes down to one key variable: good food. Arctic char tastes like a genial pastiche of Pacific salmon's delicately sweet flesh and lake trout's juicy and tender meat. It is at its best when eaten raw, chunked into steaks cut sideways or into long fillets cut lengthwise and salted overnight. Kristiina taught us to make the rubbery skin optional, carve each bite sashimi-style, and then dip the pieces into lemon pepper or soy sauce.

Though no more than 200 meters away from a small cluster of cabins, six in total, no *illugalaq* other than ours received visitors during the time we were there. Alleviated of the responsibility to exchange a salvo of small talk with neighbors, hunt for a wireless signal, or catch the six o'clock news, Iqalugaaqjuut felt—and the more so as times went on—like a lunar substation where one could stand still and silent, or at least be gratified by simply whispering through the ice.

The Arctic tundra has a strange way of acting. Its few visible traces—the odd raven, wolf, walrus, white ptarmigan, or fox—go about the land reservedly, looking disconcertedly surprised every time you spot them. But the Arctic tundra is not as inhospitable as it's reputed to be. Far from being a bleak, desolate, or barren wasteland, it is more like a very large pond in which it is remarkably easy to be a big fish. It is as if the tundra wished to cast a spotlight on every little animal, plant, and human life that manages to find its way there. As if it wanted to say, "Here you are the main feature—this is your chance to be a star."

One afternoon, as we shadowed Timmun's snowmobile-powered zigzags in a fruitless search for caribou tracks, I came to the realization that I had been wrong along about the "land." The granite rocks that I proclaimed guilty of rendering the icescape featureless with their redundant shapes and unimaginative traits turned out to be much richer upon close inspection. As Timmun exploited their patterns in the course of wayfinding through the island's interior, I began to appreciate the rocks' diverse characters: the black-brown ones, darkened by a fungus named tripe; the green-brown ones, vegetated by a lichen capable of keeping caribou alive in the winter; and the red-covered beige ones, shrouded in a blood-like splattering of a microscopic plant whose identity I questioned ignorantly. And more than

just eye candy for my color-starved sight, the rocks also held enough solar warmth to serve as temporary stools in an otherwise seat-deprived place. I nodded dreamingly to the rocks, as if to apologize—they too played their part eloquently here.

Though we caught no caribou, we netted plenty of fish. Eight- and ten-pound char came orderly to the surface not only by way of the holes dug for our nets but also via smaller bores pierced for the leisurely pursuit of jigging. “Some people can jig from morning to night when they go camping,” Kristiina pointed out after I admitted defeat, in puzzlement at the whole thing.

The excitement I was told I would have had all lies in seeing the fish. To make eye contact with the scaly beasts you must be comfortable enough with shoving your head down the ice hole in order to shield away the glare. Neither I nor Jon were able to lie down for too long on the snow, stomach first, and seduce the poor things with morsels of orange peel. Overcome by claustrophobia and by empathy for the Vitamin C-starved vertebrates, I would spend my time wandering about the site, fascinated by the dedication of my supine fellow campers as much as by the arrival onstage of an unexpected star: an overhead jet.

The Arctic is a busy place these days. Many of us have indeed travelled above it, at thirty-six thousand feet of altitude, en route to Europe or North America. I spotted my first plane the second afternoon at the lake. “Taken aback” does a half-decent job at capturing my bewildering feeling. Curiously, as it zoomed by, I began wondering whether anyone from the cabin of the wide-bodied jet could see me. I knew they couldn’t, but I badly wanted them to notice me. Then something eerie happened: I saw myself.

From down there I spotted myself on that very plane: pausing the movie playing on my personal monitor to lift the curtain to see where I was. And from up there I laid eyes on myself, staring from all the way below.

“What are you doing?” I asked.

“Why did you step out of the plane—don’t you know you’re not supposed to?”

“Why are you there, instead of home with your family?”

“What are you trying to prove?”

“Who are you showing off to?”

In my defense I mumbled away a few accounts. I said I wasn’t there to show off. I said I wasn’t even there because I found this place particularly comforting, at least in comparison to the cozy, private hideouts afforded by my home island’s shadowy forests. I explained that maybe I too needed to be in the open, out on the land, off the grid, away from the tank farms, North Marts, and busy co-op stores of northern towns. And as I rambled on I finally found my line.

“I’m just here for the quiet.”

It's loud in Cape Dorset, with its snowmobiles. It's loud in Iqaluit with all its airplanes. It's loud everywhere, with cars, ferry boats, people, dogs, and everything else clamoring for attention: "Me, me, me, watch out for me!"—everyone screams, all the time, everywhere. But instead it was comfortingly quiet there, I explained to myself: a sonic emptiness, an explosion of quiet deadened by snow, choked by ice, walled in by rock, and finally wrapped in down and beaver fur.

As the jet quietly streaked away and the sky eventually muted its engines, I was once again in possession of the power to make overwhelming noise. It was a power I regretted having to share with my camp mates, and I wished that I were the only sovereign holder of silence. The only one with the sonorous might to make snow crackle, to chisel ice, and to let out a loud sneeze. I wished it were only me: the main star of a stage whose ears were all mine, the biggest fish in the largest, but most unscripted, pond on this planet. I felt the urge to bellow out a scream and witness its echo. Yet, it seemed, it would have been unfitting and I chose to hush. There and then, while camping out on the land, I had found respite from the noise of words and the cacophony of sights of our busy world.

Like all good things camping must end—for the essence of camping resides in its very temporary and transitory nature. Camping would not be fun if it never ended. Its conclusion is consecrated, for me, in a ritualistic cleansing bath of warm water and barista-prepared espresso. Camping is meaningful because it eventually stops being meaningful.

The morning we left was—as all camping departures are—dripping in mixed feelings. Niviaqsi was missing his family. Timmun and Kristiina seemed to crave the daily routines they had swept under the condensation for a while. And Jon and I longed for our homes, which we eventually found after travelling through a blinding white out.

And that famous night—the night I almost wetted myself—the beady eyes turned out to belong to a gorgeous fox, not a menacing bear.

So, yes, it never fails. You show up in the Arctic, thinking hungry bears are the most fearsome thing in the Arctic. But the fear is really all in you: flying overhead, skittishly sneaking by, holding yourself back from coming down to camp and play.

IRREALIS MOOD: BEYOND REPRESENTATION

Ethnographic representation is a unique literary style. Though it has many elements common to all non-fiction genres, it shares with creative writing several rhetorical features, such as narrativity, performativity, sensuality, reflexivity, intimacy, and much more (Gans, 2010; Tedlock, 2005). Not all ethnographic styles are particularly "creative," of course. Traditional, realist, and (some) analytical ethnographers may indeed reject and even abhor impressionist devices (see Adler & Adler, 2008); however, recent years have witnessed a

notable growth of interest in and acceptance of postrealist, postmodern, embodied, sensuous, autoethnographic, narrative, arts-inspired, and emotional approaches, to mention only a few (Denzin & Lincoln, 2012). For all but the most conservative and positivist ethnographers, therefore, the “writing up” of fieldwork has as of late taken on new dimensions, scopes, and challenges. Chief among these new concerns is how to deal with enlivening representation.

By “enlivening representation” I refer to a series of rhetorical options, strategies, and practices directed at making ethnographic representation less concerned with faithfully and detachedly reporting facts, experiences, actions, and situations and more interested instead in making them come to life, in allowing them to take on new and unpredictable meanings, in violating expectations, in rendering them (on paper and other media) through a spirited verve and an élan that reverberates differently among each different reader, listener, viewer, and spectator. In other words, by enlivening ethnographic representation I refer to an attempt at composing fieldwork as an artistic endeavor that is not overly preoccupied with mimesis: an endeavor that is open to the potential of creation, animation, and regeneration. But I need to be clear about something before I proceed any further: I do not wish to deny the importance of mimetic representation. I do not want to convey the idea that daydreaming or speculation can replace honest fieldwork. I am instead simply suggesting that the work of producing non-fiction and the willful engagement of creativity and the imagination are neither mutually exclusive practices nor binary oppositions.

So, how do we make representation and imagination coexist? If we understand the “writing up” of ethnography as an approximate duplication of what occurred during fieldwork, then we ought to think of ethnographic composition as characterized by what linguists call the *realis mood*. The *realis mood* is a communicative mood used to indicate that something is the case. Declarative sentences are the epitome of the *realis mood* (e.g., “The Inuit of Canada’s Eastern Arctic traditionally subsisted on hunting, fishing, and trapping”). The *realis mood* lies at the core of scientific communication as it allows it to be persuasive and authoritative, as well as logical and definitive. My suggestion in this chapter is to combine the all-too-important *realis mood* with another, less typically scientific mood: the *irrealis mood*. The *irrealis mood* indicates that something may not be the case, or that it may not have happened, or that it may not happen at all. The *irrealis mood*, in other words, is a rhetorical formula used to openly create a sense of the unreal and the surreal, a sense of possibility, of condition, of wish, of fear, and of hope. There are several ways in which we can use the *irrealis mood*. I will describe a few.

PARTIALITY AND THE CONDITIONAL MOOD

Non-representational ethnography does not aim at comprehensiveness in the same way that traditional qualitative research does. In order

to achieve comprehensiveness realist research strategies slice data horizontally—subdividing datasets into categories, identifying themes and subthemes within them, and selecting representative tokens as illustrative quotations. On the other hand, non-representational ethnography aims at evoking through provocative fragments, rather than just reporting and illustrating through representative units, cases, and samples. Therefore data are tackled diagonally, not in order to squeeze out representative meanings or trends, but in order to create a sense of action and—whenever possible—a narrative thread. Rather than the logic of a grid made of branches intersecting through a central foundational axis, non-representational data organization and animation may very well follow instead the stage aesthetics of a lightshow—staging characters, foreshadowing events, adumbrating possibilities, beaming ideas, and all the while bedazzling and enlightening while remaining aware of what it simultaneously, inevitably, casts in the background.

A common way to achieve a sense of partiality in non-representational writing is by employing the conditional mood—one of many types of the irrealis mood. The conditional mood is a common mode of expression used to indicate a possibility that is generally dependent on a condition. Conditional actions or sentiments hinge explicitly or implicitly on uncertain events, states of affairs, circumstances, and outcomes. In English conditional sentences are generally constructed through the use of “would” or “could” and the word “if.” Utilizing the conditional mood is an important deviation from the traditional realist mood as it takes attention away from established fact, previously unfolded events, and current state of affairs and opens up instead a sense of what could happen, what might become, what could be. The conditional also creates a sense of uncertainty whenever it is used to indicate how else things could be unfolding, how else characters could be involved, or how else processes could be interpreted.

Consider, for example, how I used the conditional in my writing. I employed it explicitly in at least two sentences: “Any larger or more comfortable space would be vulgar and unfitting,” and “The excitement I was told I would have had all lies in seeing the fish.” Both of these statements open up a possibility that is indirectly revealing of an important “reality” (and absence thereof) in the field. The first one pushes us to wonder how else something could have been, thus implicitly allowing us to reflect on the appropriateness and fitness of how things actually are. The second sentence instead brings attention to an unfulfilled potential and therefore to a failure on my part to achieve a result that others might take for granted. In both of these cases the use of the conditional allows us to imagine something that does not quite exist or did not quite occur, but it does so without being too explicit or literal. Adumbrating a possibility is important in non-representational ethnographic writing because it allows us to hint, to foreshadow, and to outline partially, without quite telling in full. Good ethnographers, of course, want to show, not tell. And good non-representational

ethnographers may want to occasionally intimate, instead of showing everything all the time.

POTENTIALITY AND THE POTENTIAL MOOD

Non-representational theory and research neither follow axiomatic theoretical laws nor attempt to exercise control over their research subjects or over reasoning by way of deductive models. Rather, non-representationalists find inspiration in the generative, poietic, expressive power of the arts and humanities and endeavor to emulate their creative potential. Ambitious in its experimental drive and irreverent in its spirit to stimulate the cultural imagination and provoke change, non-representational ethnography wills to be playful, energetic, and vibrant. Rejecting the values of prediction and replicability, non-representational ethnographers are captivated by—and aim to captivate with—a transformative sense of wonder. Thus, rather than abide by traditional methodological rules, non-representational ethnographers ask themselves how to best utilize the creative and promissory potential of innovation, strangeness, and performative aliveness. Their methodological orientation, in other words, is not “am I doing this right?” but rather “how else can I do this?” and “why not?”

The potentiality of ethnographic knowledge is best expressed through the use of the potential mood. In grammar the potential mood refers to tentativeness and probability. A simple way to employ the potential mood is by hedging one’s statements. But there are risks with doing so. Tentative writing can be weak, falsely modest, and annoyingly full of apologies, limitations, and disclaimers. Alternatively, a writer could, for example, state that something is simply “likely” to be the case. Although there is nothing wrong with that strategy, it is important to remember that statisticians have made the probability of guessing right their business and that as a result the word “likely” carries quite a burdensome baggage. Indeed there is an important difference between the potentiality pursued by non-representational ethnographers and that pursued by realist researchers. Whereas the latter strive to minimize the possibility of being wrong, the former pursue possibility for its very revelatory potential.

A good non-representational way to deploy a potential mood is by way of building rhetorical possibilities—possibilities that may or may not be fulfilled in the end. The building of a possibility enlivens writing by opening up a potential scenario that reveals the unique characteristics of a situation and elicits a sense of wonder. Building possibilities also animates description by creating dramatic tension and stimulating suspense. For example, the narrative description of our camping journey to Baffin Island opens precisely with a potential mood. By giving the impression that I am about to come face-to-face with a polar bear, the writing builds on the very possibility of that encounter. The writing’s very first sentence—“it never

fails”—is also a probabilistic statement as it depends for its very modality (i.e., the probability of being true) on the recognizability of the described situation. There is, at the end of the story, no polar bear. But there could have been, and most certainly the very fear of that dangerous encounter permeates more Arctic trips than our own; it is therefore an important affective dimension of the experience of that place that my writing aimed to highlight.

INEFFABILITY AND THE DUBITATIVE, PRESUMPTIVE, AND HYPOTHETICAL MOODS

Representational research seeks to mimic the world through realistic description. There is nothing wrong in the ethos of realistic description as long as we keep in mind that the lifeworld always escapes our quest for authentic reproduction. Our fallibility, in other words, is not a limitation but a normal and even welcomed condition that enables us to generate new realities. Ethnographers keen on going beyond representation therefore view description not only as a mimetic act but also as an opportunity to evoke multiple and contradictory impressions of the lifeworld in all its mysterious characteristics.

The lifeworld is ineffable; its fleeting dynamics, its “never-quite-so” features, its hard-to-pin-down textures constantly interrogate us. They make us wonder; they surprise us, confuse us, and enchant us. After all, the lifeworld’s ineffability is the very reason why we got into the business of understanding it, and the main stimulus of our continued fascination with it. How boring would our work be otherwise, how dull would our imagination be if the lifeworld were perfectly transparent and amenable to description and explanation!

Representational writing, however, often glosses over the ineffability of life and our fascination with it. The struggle for authoritative certainty precludes and excludes admissions of ignorance, doubt, and confusion. Writing steamrolls forward as if our very questions were all answered by the time the pen touches the paper. Non-representational ethnographic writing aims to return to the immanence of enchantment, however. It wants to ask as much as to answer. It strives to wonder as much as to respond. It relishes curiosity as much as explanation.

Three expressions of the irrealis mood allow us to evoke the ineffability of the lifeworld: the dubitative, the presumptive, and the hypothetical mood. The dubitative mood expresses doubt and uncertainty. The presumptive mood similarly connotes doubt, but also curiosity, concern, ignorance, and wonder. The hypothetical mood is an explorative tone that poses possible situations, events, or interpretations. The word “if” is employed in all three of these moods. Indeed the word “if” and its various combinations—for example, “as if” and “even if”—might very well be thought of as the

epitome of ineffable writing. “If” is to the non-representational what “just like” is to the mimetic and representational.

My own writing attempted to be mimetic, to be sure, as much as it sought to evoke the ineffability of my field experiences. For example, I did not shy away from admitting my initial mistake about the meaningfulness of Arctic rocks, or my ignorance over geological matters. Also, throughout my writing I never ceased to wonder. I wondered about how uncomfortable dog sled travel might have been. I imagined what the land under the ice looks and feels like. And I never pretended to appear too confident in such an unfamiliar environment, so I mumbled accounts and I failed to display skill and to feel at home. And by employing a presumptive “as if” (e.g., “It is as if the tundra wished to cast a spotlight on every little animal, plant, and human life that manages to find its way there”) I introduced a metaphor that allowed me to make my writing more performative and even somewhat surreal.

IMMEDIACY AND THE JUSSIVE MOOD

Non-representational theories of time stress the multidimensionality of the present. The present time consists of repetition and difference, anticipation and transformation of the future, and the virtual unfolding of multiple happenings. Non-representational ethnography is therefore keenly sensitive to enlivening the diverse and intersecting temporalities of the present. The immediacy of the ethnographer’s experiences and their evocations are informed by temporalities, such as rhythmical recurrences (e.g., minutes, hours, days, weeks, seasons, years), the duration of events, the speed of various processes, the elusiveness and unpredictability of happenings, and the contested, contradictory, and conflicted practices through which virtual futures are actualized. In simpler words, a concern with the immediacy of ethnographic animation is a concern with its embodied and emplaced “live” nature—for example, the here and now of field experience—as much as with the intricacies of that present moment.

A keen concern with immediacy translates into a conscious preoccupation with the tenses of ethnographic writing. There are no easy solutions to this challenge; each project demands that we choose the most appropriate option. The present tense, for instance, is more open-ended and fluid. It allows us to write as if we were caught in the moment, as if happenings, doings, and experiences were unfolding right before us without a definitive direction or resolution. The past tense, in contrast, denotes events that have already come to an end, connoting a sense of closure and realization that may be very appropriate—and indeed ideal—for narration. Less used in ethnographic writing is the future tense, though ethnographers interested in evoking hope, possibility, and wish—but also hopelessness and destiny—may find it suitable for their purpose.

The choice of a tense is an important one, but we must realize that the immediacy of all tenses can be expressed through a jussive mood capable of evoking the linear and unlinear temporal dynamics of desire, intent, purpose, necessity, command, and consequence. Employment of the jussive mood can therefore assist in highlighting the narrative components of the fieldwork process. For example, my narration highlighted the narrative origin of our research purpose (e.g., “Jon and I had been pursuing the opportunity to go camping in the Arctic since we had discovered its popularity on an earlier trip”) and singled out that curiosity as our reason to travel there. The jussive mood is also evident in the inevitability pervading some of the situations I described (e.g., “But the urge is too strong and you must eventually surrender” and “snowmobile travel is rendered labyrinthine, requiring detours, low speed, patience”), as well as in passages when the reader was exhorted to relate to an experience (e.g., “You must imagine the camp to be the human race’s last self-reliant outpost”). Describing practices through the jussive mood also helps in making writing more interpellative and less declarative. Compare, for instance, the subtle immediacy of writing “you start by excavating a hole” with the alternative definitive declaration “Timmun and Niviaqsi began by excavating a hole.”

PROXIMITY AND THE ADMIRATIVE MOOD

Non-representational ethnography is embedded not only in time but also in place. Emplaced ethnographies pay attention to how embodied experiences of the field are colored by the many properties—the sights, sounds, textures, smells, tastes, temperatures, movements—of place. These and other spatialities of the field must be tended to, reflected upon, cultivated, and carefully evoked by non-representational ethnographers regardless of whether their research focuses on geographical issues. Ethnographic representation, therefore, deeply relies on proximity. The proximity of the ethnographer to people, places, weather, events, animals, inanimate objects, practices, and assemblages allows ethnographic writing to be close-at-hand, intimate, involved, and momentous. Proximity allows for reverberations to be compelling, personable, eventful, and idiosyncratic.

There are many ways to express proximity. One of the most obvious is the admirative mood, a mood that is constantly present throughout much non-representational ethnographic writing. The admirative mood is chiefly used to express surprise, wonder, and enchantment. It is a mood often found in writing that details experiences of discovery and exploration. In my writing the admirative mood is evident in several passages, such as my description of pressure ice movements, as well as my wonderings about the character of the tundra (e.g., “The Arctic tundra has a strange way of acting” and “I began to appreciate the rocks’ diverse characters”).

It is easy to fall prey to romanticism while using the admiring mood. Fieldwork, after all, is travel, and travel lends itself quite well to the lyrical contemplation of an overenthusiastic explorer. At times such admiring proximity is appropriate and appreciated, but at times admiring ethnographic composition can slip into corny travel writing (something of which we—in the eyes of the beholder—are all invariably guilty at times). A possible way to free oneself from the trap of romanticism is by using another few dimensions of the admiring mood: irony, paradox, and sarcasm. My writing, for instance, employed an admiring mood towards quite a few paradoxes, such as Timmun using an iPad to record the outcome of a traditional practice. I also employed a diffused sense of irony to remark on the unfamiliar character of the place.

Thus, a way to employ the admiring mood without engaging in excessive romanticism is by employing humor. Humorous situations are pervasive in everyday life and fieldwork alike, and they are especially poignant when one comes face-to-face with new places, new situations, and new acquaintances. Yet humor is conspicuously absent from too much ethnographic writing. Conveying humor through irony, paradox, and sarcasm can allow ethnographic composition to be admiring without being obsequious, reverential, or much too easily enthralled or amused. Humor can help in making one's self and informants less superhuman, more "real," and easier to relate to. And it can serve the purpose of conveying the quintessential ethnographic stance towards making the familiar extraordinary, and the extraordinary familiar. In sum, admiring moods can help ethnographic audiences to feel as if they were there too, as proximate to the field and as full of wonder, surprise, and exploratory spirit as the ethnographer him- or herself.

FLUIDITY AND THE SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD

Fluidity refers to the property of being easily subject to change, to being in a constant state of process. Rather than through frozen and static models, non-representational theory and research view subjects of their inquiry through the lenses of transformation as a regular—not an exceptional—feature of life. Therefore, the focus is kept on adaptation, alteration, malleability, diversity, versatility, variability, and evolution. Ethnographic research in particular does not unfold in linear ways, and it allows itself to be capricious, inconsistent, mercurial, skittish, unsettled, unpredictable, dicey, haphazard, ambivalent, desultory, and skittish. As a result, ethnographic compositions should avoid conveying impressions of an overly linear undertaking and should instead aim to enliven various forms of change.

Some of the greatest obstacles to the expression of fluidity are the expectations associated with journal article writing. Editors and reviewers expect

introductions that lay out in no uncertain terms an argument, a background, and a clear research scope as foundations for the rest of the writing. Yet such typical organization imposes an instrumental and linear structure that makes the research process feel like the execution of an infallible, intelligent design. Non-representational ethnographers need to struggle to defeat this template and the expectations that underwrite it by composing research that reflects the emergent, processual, and mercurial character of fieldwork.

Fluidity is achieved through organization but also through a style of writing that enlivens the alterations and adaptations of fieldwork. A kind of irrealis mood that can be used to animate a sense of fluidity is the subjunctive mood. The subjunctive mood expresses emotion, wish, judgment, opinion, or the need for outcomes that have not yet occurred. When used in subordinate clauses (e.g., “I suggest that we leave before sunset”) it can be used to convey the expression of past or present desires without actually referring to whether these were fulfilled. When used in counterfactual dependent clauses the subjunctive can have an even more powerful effect by highlighting doubt and uncertainty (e.g., “if it had been sunny we might have been able to reach our destination faster”).

Using the subjunctive mood can help ethnographers shed light on the constant malleability and open-endedness of their work. It can serve the purpose, in other words, of highlighting how realities are not determined in advance by blueprints, cognitive schemata, and preplanned outcomes. It can animate how people change their minds, how they do—or choose not to do—something they could have done. For example, my writing uses the subjunctive to denote how I acted towards the silence of the tundra: “I wished that I were the only sovereign holder of silence” and “I wished it were only me: the main star of a stage whose ears were all mine, the biggest fish in the largest, but most unscripted, pond on this planet. I felt the urge to bellow out a scream and witness its echo. Yet, it seemed, it would have been unfitting and I chose to hush.” Through such rhetorical choices I aimed to enliven the fluidity of the moment, how things could have been.

REFLEXIVITY AND THE DESIDERATIVE AND VOLITIVE MOODS

Non-representational ethnography shares with other poststructuralist research a strong disinterest in absolutist, universal knowledge. Because no research is value-free, the knowledge generated by non-representational ethnographers is personal and situated. Without becoming self-obsessed or indulgent, reflexive ethnographers position themselves squarely in their own research, sharing their work as both a personal narrative and an emotional, embodied, and intellectual perspective informed and shaped (and not “biased”) by experiences, dispositions, objectives, sensations, moods, feelings, goals, and skill. By being reflexive on how their presence colors

the object of the inquiry, researchers' interpretations become more, not less, robust in light of their open-endedness.

Volumes upon methodological volumes have been written on researcher subjectivity, reflexivity, situatedness, and positionality, and there is neither reason nor space to rehash those arguments here. What is more compelling here is a discussion of how reflexivity can be stylized through the use of the irrealis mood. Among others, there are two types of irrealis moods that can be utilized to animate reflexivity: the desiderative and the volitive mood. The desiderative mood expresses wishes and desire. Typically employed verbs are to want, wish, long for, ache, crave, fancy, prefer, yearn, and related synonyms. For instance, in my writing I conveyed how towards the end of our camping trip "Niviaqsi was missing his family. Timmun and Kristiina seemed to crave the daily routines they had swept under the condensation for a while. And Jon and I longed for our homes." And I also conveyed how I craved peace and quiet—a desire that was quite revealing of the significance of camping for both myself and the others. A closely related form of the desiderative mood is the volitive mood, which is similarly used to express wish and desire, as well as fear.

Reflexivity can be used to add context and perspective to an interpretation. A unique way of exercising reflexivity in a typically irrealis and non-representational mood is by doing so through wish. The act of wishing colors an interpretation through an emotional and affective tinge which lessens the cognitive weight of analysis. Take, for example, how I wished to have been spotted by airplane passengers. Though I knew this was unlikely, that very wish allowed me to see myself from another position and another emotional and intellectual state. Of course, I never saw myself from that airplane, nor did I question myself the way I wrote that I did, but through that wish I introduced a reflexive perspective marked by the mood of the moment.

Non-representational theory is becoming more and more accepted and its principles are growingly clear and popular. Yet non-representational writing continues to be much too often an expression of disembodied minds overly focused with developing theoretical ideas and ontological abstractions. Non-representational ethnographic writing, by invoking the power of volitive and desiderative reflection, can help in countering these trends. A volitive and desiderative mood can animate writing by highlighting the uniqueness of each writer's fears, wishes, and desires and can make each of our writing styles more unique, less derivative, less mimetic of one another's work.

SEARCHING FOR A STYLE

Like most ethnographers I have never been trained in creative writing. My "talent" for writing is not particularly notable. And I highly doubt I'd make

it as a professional “author.” But like many other ethnographers I enjoy writing and I constantly strive to reflect on my shortcomings, challenges, and whatever little I do that ends up pleasing me. This chapter has been a reflexive exercise on the rhetorical characteristics of my writing and the characteristics that—I believe—hopefully lend it a more than simply mimetic and descriptive nature. I am not confident I have mastered a difficult art, and I’d be hard-pressed to argue that my suggestions are entirely original. Yet I hope to have contributed to the existing dialogue on the development of ethnographic representation and non-representational research.

Because of limited space I have not discussed other dimensions of non-representational ethnographic work, such as its embodied, sensuous, and affective dimensions (see Vannini, 2014) and visual manifestations (Taggart & Vannini, in press). However, I hope to have generated sufficient interest in a little known and often poorly understood style of social scientific writing—the irrealis mood. The irrealis mood is crucial for the development of non-representational ethnographic writing, yet it cannot stand on its own as it must develop in parallel with the realis mood (which indicates the “how and what is”) and the deontic mood (which indicates the “how and what should be”), because ethnographic writing is never truly non-representational but instead always *more than* representational. So I continue to work on my style, I continue to try to fail better (Dewsbury, 2009), and I incite others to fail alongside me.

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8

Vital Methodologies**Live Methods, Mobile Art,
and Research-Creation**

Mimi Sheller

We need, in other words, to invent an art of experiment which can up the methodological ante. I am looking, then, for a social science which promotes a rewoven empirics which, most particularly, generates the quality of provocative awareness. That means an experimentalist orientation must be in-built which can start and restart association.

(Thrift, 2011, pp. 7–8)

How can an “experimentalist orientation” be rewoven into the social sciences? A creative wave of social science has recently been crashing onto the shores of methodological tradition, casting free a flotilla of methods described as mobile, relational, live, interactive, and vital. Because such non-representational theories within the social sciences are concerned with events, performances, ongoing happenings, and relations, as described in Phillip Vannini’s introduction to this volume, they have begun to intersect and interact with practices in contemporary art that are also concerned with the happening, the event, with performance, relations, and affect. As these two fields of practice (non-representational social science and “relational” art) lean towards each other, they suggest new methodological crossovers at the intersection of social research and creative practice. At this crossroads there is an ongoing effort to reweave relational interactions between people, places, environments, and technologies that might alter, or create anew, our sense of place, presence, embodiment, spatiality, and temporality, while enacting a critical consciousness of a politics of the everyday, both analog and digital.

My aims in this chapter are first to outline the methodological reflexivity that is currently coursing through some edges of sociology, cultural geography, and mobilities research, while signaling some of its overlooked antecedents in feminist epistemologies. Secondly, I gesture towards some of the ways in which contemporary mobile locative media artists are brushing up against similar concerns. Artists and social researchers are sometimes collaborating or actually merging their work into a single set of practices,

which can help us to better understand non-representational theory and its potentials. Nigel Thrift, for one, has advocated a “new experimental social science,” drawing on concepts such as “a theatre for events and operations” and methods as “cultural probes.” Focusing especially on “experimentalist” methods at the intersection of mobilities research and mobile media, I will exemplify this kind of practice through two artistic projects: the acoustic landscape work of Teri Rueb, and a mobile locative piece called “iParade” by the artists LoVid. Finally, I will explore how these various cross-disciplinary practices are beginning to converge around an emergent field of “research-creation,” enacting both social science and participatory art as simultaneous and mutually reinforcing experimental methods for generating provocative awareness.

LIVE METHODS AND VITALIST EPISTEMOLOGIES

Is there a methodological crisis across the social sciences, as some have claimed (in the face of endless streams of real-time data unleashed by continuous processing into “big data”), or are we in the midst of a new genesis? Within sociology, Les Back and Nirmal Puwar suggest that we need a recovery of methodological experiments that have a long history in combined art and science in order to generate “live methods” that will “make sociological craft more artful and crafty” (Back & Puwar, 2012, p. 9). Back argues that “live sociology requires researchers to work on the move in order to attend to the ‘newly coordinated’ nature of social reality. One of our current challenges is to re-invent forms of attentiveness that are mobile and can respond precisely to admit the fleeting, the tacit, the mobile, chaotic and complex” (Back, 2012, p. 29). From various forms of “ambulant sociology,” using walking and digital recording as methods, to Nina Wakeford’s “art-sociology” and Bruno Latour’s “curatorial sociology” projects (ibid., p. 32), Back suggests that sociologists are incorporating more artful methods into their research and that “sociology might develop new ways of telling and showing its empirical evidence and arguments through using techniques established in sculpture, curatorial practice, theatre, music and television drama” (p. 33).

This sense of working on the move, and more creatively, has been taken up in more diverse methodologies that seek to engage with the mobile, fleeting moments that make up the everyday. There has been a widening exploration of “mobile methods” within the field of mobilities research (Büscher et al., 2011; Fincham et al., 2010; Sheller & Urry, 2006), including methods such as go-alongs, live video recording-in-motion, simultaneous motion and eye-movement capture, various kinds of GPS tracking, interactive digital mapping, and time-space diaries, etc. This has generated a debate around modes of being “mobile” that may also resolve into modalities of stillness, waiting, pausing, or slowing (Bissell & Fuller, 2011); it also elicits

consideration of methods that may apprehend mobility without necessarily being mobile, such as archival research or narrative (Merriman, 2011). Yet many approaches within mobilities research still depend on a representational epistemology, oriented towards gathering data from the field and bringing them into some form of written analysis published as a traditional journal article.

Other sociologists have called for “inventive methods” (Lury & Wakeford, 2012) and “amphibious sociology” (Lury, 2012). Celia Lury, drawing on theories emerging out of feminist science and technology studies, suggests that “live methods must be satisfied with an engagement with relations and with parts, with differentiation, and be involved in making middles, in dividing without end(s), in mingling, bundling and coming together. The objects of such methods—being live—are without unity, un-whole-some; put another way, they are partial and un-divisible, distributed and distributing” (ibid., p. 191). The antecedents for such engagements with partial and situated knowledge have a long history in feminist epistemologies (Harding, 1991), including forms of action-research, grounded theory, and materialist ethnomethodology, such as Dorothy E. Smith’s important work *Researching the Everyday World as Problematic* (Smith, 1987). Yet feminist epistemologies are largely ignored in the recent resurgence of vitalist approaches.

In cultural geography the non-representational turn also emphasizes intersections with the creative arts. In a 2010 review of the field of cultural geography John Wylie noted a “stress [. . .] on the affective, emotive and praxis-based aspects of life”; a “desire for different types of writing, methods, formats and ‘outputs’”; and an interest in developing the kinds of “creative writing, [. . .] photography and video, [. . .] site-specific art, etc.” that could help to improve “the relatively low profile of the [wider] discipline” (Wylie, 2010, p. 213). Work by Nigel Thrift and Derek McCormack, in particular, has come to define the field of “non-representational theory,” building on elements of Henri Lefebvre, William James, John Dewey, Gregory Bateson, Félix Guattari, and Gilles Deleuze. It remains notable, and remarked on by many, that this version of the non-representational turn has erased or silenced the important feminist antecedents to its philosophical moves, as well as current feminist work on affect theory and critical philosophies of race. Feminist philosophers such as Sara Ahmed and critical geographers such as Divya Tolia-Kelly have made significant contributions to thinking around bodies, affect, difference, and spatial relations (e.g., Ahmed, 2000, 2006; Rose & Tolia-Kelly, 2012; Tolia-Kelly, 2006, 2010, 2013); Tolia-Kelly has also worked extensively with creative artists and many forms of public engagement.

Many self-generative analogies of creation/creativity inform the field: the “work of the social scientist, then, is to produce cultural probes that can help people to rework the world by suggesting new unorientations rather than correctives [. . .] a mode of investigation which can create the medium of its own existence” (Thrift, 2011, p. 19). Conradson and McCormack

(n.d.) invoke method as a way of going on *in* the world, rather than reporting back *from* the world; this includes performance, participation, and moving forms of fieldwork that produce spaces of encounter. McCormack describes this processual practice in an unintentionally vaginal metaphor of participating in the folds of “thinking-space”:

This is a vision of worlds in composition through a multiplicity of processually resonant space-times. [. . .] Rather than space as a passive background for the dynamism of time, space-time becomes an ongoing process of heterogeneous, generative creativity without a transcendent creator. And in this vision, the world participates creatively in the folds of which thinking-space consists before individual agency or intentionality gets to work. (McCormack, 2008b, p. 3)

Non-representational methods here are conceived of as precognitive, prior to intentionality, experimenting with the dynamism of spacetime itself as a matrix for “generative creativity,” moving them closer to the (feminine-coded) irrationality of affect and the expressive creativity of the arts rather than the (masculine-coded) individualism and objective data-gathering of the “hard” social sciences.

In addition to such gynomorphic “movement-space,” cultural geography after actor-network theory furthermore includes a posthumanist turn that allows for greater agency of non-humans and environments. Geographer Peter Merriman notes that “writings on mobility and non-representational theory” have begun to trace “the more-than-representational, performative, expressive improvisations of bodies-in-movement-in-spaces” by describing “the production of complex entwined performativities, materialities, mobilities and affects of *both* human embodied subjects *and* the spaces/places/landscapes/environments which are inhabited, traversed, and perceived” (Merriman, 2011, p. 99). Hayden Lorimer also points out the work of McCormack (2006), who “argues that affective dimensions of life are morethanhuman—or trans-human, or post-human—in provenance and occurrence. Affect is distributed between, and can happen outside, bodies which are not exclusively human, and might incorporate technologies, things, non-human living matter, discourses or even, say, a swathe of noise or swarm of creatures” (Lorimer, 2008, p. 552). Perhaps this is a Deleuzian move from “becoming-woman” to “becoming-animal”; in either case, it is certainly creatively generative.

These theoretical and methodological happenings suggest new ways of approaching social science research and developing its methods, many of which draw on the creative arts. Lorimer himself works with artists, a growing trend in the field. Geographer Mike Crang works closely with photography as part of his research on waste and salvage; artist Trevor Paglen became a practicing geographer while maintaining a high-profile art career; and geographer Tim Cresswell became a practicing poet. Geographers, in

other words, are no longer bringing data back from “the field” for analysis and presentation, but are staying there and creating other kinds of work. Amphibious sociologists, non-representational cultural geographers, mobilities researchers, and artists using mobile media are each engaged with evoking properties, energies, attunements, arrangements, and intensities in a renewed exploration of embodiment, spatiality, and sociality. Rather than trying to collect data or represent an objective reality, each field of practice instead seeks to intervene, disturb, intensify, or provoke a heightened sense of the potentiality of the present. Intercourse is an apt metaphor for such “unorientation,” but so too is art.

HAPPENINGS, SOUND WALKS, AND MOBILE ART

The point is to design and animate spaces so that they can function as edifices which can concentrate and work on processes of association—spaces which are able to transmit differential traits. (Thrift, 2011, p. 19)

Although the antithesis of representational art is sometimes understood to be abstract art, or perhaps conceptual art, within the modern arts we might also trace another lineage of non-representational methods that begins with the art of the everyday. With links to Dadaism and Surrealism, art came to be practiced outside the gallery and museum by the Situationist International in 1960s Paris, by Alan Kaprow’s theory of “the happening” and the Fluxus movement in 1960s New York, and by the international avant-garde theater of this period, which broke down the distinction between performers and audience, stage and reality. The music of John Cage was also influential on the structured but open-ended happening, as were an entire generation of avant-garde choreographers. I do not want to review these well-known movements here, but simply point out that all of these trends have been picked up again more recently in the development of dialogical or participatory art.

In the 1990s there was a turn towards what Nicolas Bourriaud (1997) defined as “relational aesthetics”: a kind of “open-ended” artwork that requires viewer participation. “Rather than a discrete, portable, autonomous work of art that transcends its context,” art historian Claire Bishop notes, “relational art is entirely beholden to the contingencies of its environment and audience” (Bishop, 2004, p. 54). “This idea of considering the work of art as a potential trigger for participation is hardly new”—continues Bishop—“think of Happenings, Fluxus instructions, 1970s performance art, and Joseph Beuys’s declaration that ‘everyone is an artist’” (ibid., p. 61). Although less than enamored of such participatory art, Bishop has been influential in defining it; certainly there has been an explosion of recent projects that adopt psychogeography and Guy Debord’s idea of the “dérive” as a kind of indeterminate and serendipitous drift through the city.

There are also strong connections with land art, such as Robert Smithson's, involving participants' movement through a shaped landscape.

Building on this heritage, there is a wide range of practices around mobile participatory art today, which might involve acoustic walks, psychogeographic drifts, site-specific storytelling, public annotation, digital graffiti, collaborative cartography, mobile gaming, balloon surveillance and grassroots mapping projects, bike-riding experimental theater, "augmented reality," or more complex "mixed-reality" interactions. In my series of collaborations with Philadelphia-based artist Hana Iverson, including a double session on "Mobile Art and the Aesthetics of Place-Making" at the 2012 College Arts Association conference, a cocurated exhibition called LA Re.Play (www.lareplay.net), and a special issue of *Leonardo Electronic Almanac* (Sheller, Iverson, Hight, & Aceti, in press), we suggest that mobile media art is one of the key arenas in which emergent interactions with sensory dimensions of place, time, cities, and presence are being explored. Mobile media artists challenge and equip us to activate new social practices and performances via "hybrid spaces" that blur the distinction between physical and digital, bodily and virtual, artwork and everyday space, creator and audience.

Many recent theoretical works on mobile locative media acknowledge the importance of experimental arts in advancing theory and practice in this field, as well as the potential for techniques drawing on mobile locative gaming and mobile locative interfaces to be incorporated into situated social research in various ways (de Souza e Silva & Gordon, 2009; de Souza e Silva & Sutko, 2009; Farman, 2012). Thrift, too, links his call for new social science methodologies specifically to arts-based practice: "More recently, artists and performers have been experimenting with how to produce ambulatory places," Thrift explains, "places that are able to be linked up into sometimes planned and sometimes meandering chains of action which can straddle the globe, usually using a combination of physical props and information technology [. . .] it has a questing spirit which is surely vital" (Thrift, 2011, p. 20). Mobile media artists are exploring how to create or move within these hybrid spaces of augmented or digitally amplified reality via new modes of open (yet critically attuned) engagement with embodied experience, with urban and natural landscapes, and with digitally mediated public space.

Artist Teri Rueb explores in her mobile auditory works a thinking and doing landscape "in which emergence, embodiment, and the affective come together in the experience of the sensory-sensual body as it moves through and produces variously politically and culturally charged landscapes" (Rueb, 2014, p. 243). Experiencing her work, she hopes, lets participants "feel a reconfigured relationship of the body in space as mediated by mobile technologies... the transformation of perception, cognition, and consciousness as technologies reshape our sense of place, identity, and embodied interaction" (ibid., p. 249). Rueb's *Trace* (1999) was one of the first geo-annotated mobile art projects, using GPS coordinates embedded in the

landscape to access a sound installation, and her later work *Drift* (2004) created a site-specific, responsive sound environment that moved with the tides. Later projects, such as *Elsewhere: Anderswo* (2009) and *No Places with Names: A Critical Acoustic Archaeology* (2012), worked with ideas of displacement, cultural disorientations, and disjunctions. Rueb describes her own work and other mobile experiential artworks:

Authorship, like meaning, becomes emergent and contextual, and *kin-esthetically* inflected, especially in locative media works that tend to exploit the indeterminate conditions of moving bodies in hybrid spaces. In all mobile experience, whether acknowledged or not, displacements of bodies and meanings unfold like constantly shifting horizons of context, meaning and interpretation. In locative media such displacements are embraced and indeed emerge as unique qualities of this new form, medium and genre. ... holding the potential for a kind of generative displacement. (Rueb, 2014, p. 242)

Drawing on process philosophy and affect theory, feminist philosopher Elizabeth Grosz's work, and Sabine Breitsameter's notion of "hybrid space", Rueb directs participants to "literally bring the work into being through the physical action of walking, bicycling or driving, etc." (ibid., p. 241). She describes (and experiments with) how "technologies, bodies, and subjectivities are inseparably intertwined in everyday experience, and mobile technologies further intensify these entanglements" (ibid., p. 242).

We could think of such mobile locative works, especially those that work through sound and the sensed movement of the body across landscapes, as enactments of non-representational theories, instigating participants to not just think differently but also feel otherwise through particular kinds of moving encounters with place and sensory experience. This is reminiscent of Lorimer's description of "affects," which he says are "properties, competencies, modalities, energies, attunements, arrangements and intensities of differing texture, temporality, velocity and spatiality, that act on bodies, are produced through bodies and transmitted by bodies" (Lorimer, 2008, p. 552). Playing upon phenomenologies of "unorientation" and "atmosphere," Thrift notes, artists help us to extend the work of Merleau-Ponty on "the confluence of body and world which is simultaneously a being's own orientation," and the work of Sloterdijk on "the evolution of technologies of surrounding in which new atmospheres can be explicitated" (Thrift, 2011, p. 20). Most practical examples of what he calls localization "come from the arts, from performance, from installation art, from site-specific art, and so on (see Bishop, 2005). They depend upon devising responsive processes that are able to be instantiated through the design of places that produce experiences of immersion, which in turn produce new associations and project them outward" (ibid.). This is precisely what Rueb's work achieves.

Furthermore, we can think of this kind of creative work as a form of research: research about sound, movement, sensation, landscape, and many of the elements of affect described by Lorimer. Some of the artists working in this vein are also theorists and academics, including Rueb herself, who holds a doctorate in design from Harvard University and is a professor at State University of New York at Buffalo. Rueb notes that she works across

the extended fields of mobile media art and landscape studies, where I create installations and scholarly writings that variously traverse the terrains of digital media, fine and performing arts, environmental art and design, architecture, landscape and urbanism [. . .]. In my practice I seek an ecological approach to interface art and design that emphasizes the deeply intertwined nature of bodies, subjectivities and materialities. (Rueb, n.d., para. 1)

Thus we see in her work a blurring of the boundaries between arts practice, scholarly research, and experimental design, another field that has taken a participatory and relational turn. A similar trajectory can be found in the work of artist/sociologist Jen Southern, whose work on “comobility” combines participatory mobile locative arts projects with mobilities theory and interactive design (Southern, 2013). Southern writes that “Across the disciplines of art, design and anthropology, then, the detailed study of everyday life exhibits the situational, practically achieved and socially organised nature of action, and it is this form of revealing engagement that I attempt to produce within both my research methods and participatory art practice” (ibid., p. 65).

In the next section I want to consider a somewhat different approach to mobile arts practice, one that additionally elicits histories, memories, and fragments of the past, and sets them in motion through new conduits into the present. Here I want to make palpable not only the feminist epistemologies underlying the non-representational turn, but also its colonial entanglements in histories of mobile geographies of race and nation-building. In other words, there are larger scales and politics that non-representational methods might also address.

AN ENCOUNTER WITH ALEXANDER HAMILTON'S MOVING HOMES

The aim is precisely to produce frames that can produce uncertain outcomes, to be able to incorporate surprise. This is what Gaver (2002) calls the construction of a “provocative awareness,” which takes what is often thought of as an artistic impulse—to imagine new things—and harnesses it to the practices and protocols of social science so as to be able to be prepared for and able to take

in the vagaries of a fleeting but decidedly nonsuperficial glimpse/
glance as a key means of orientation. (Thrift, 2011, p. 18)

The artist duo LoVid, made up of Tali Hinkis and Kyle Lapidus, experiment with mobile locative media (using smart phones and GPS location) to create frames that engage participants in a provocative awareness of their own body, their physical location, the digital interface they are using, and their potential social relations both near and distant. In this case participation in their work intersected with my own research interests, and got me thinking about an arts-based research process. They created a project called iParade, accessed through an iPhone app, which I tried out in Hamilton Heights, in Harlem, NY, during a visit to meet research collaborators at City College of New York on a project relating to the Caribbean. As I found locations on the iParade's GPS-located map interface, which happened to start at the CCNY campus, navigated to the marked points, listened to the music and short narratives that they had recorded, and watched small video clips that had been recorded at each location, I momentarily became unsure of whether I was watching prerecorded video or using an augmented reality app that could pick up my surroundings through the camera and screen. This "real-time" phenomenon added a strange, hyper-real intensity to the surrounding streets, sidewalks, buildings, and even people. In such a moment, the status of "representation" becomes unstable, as the anchor of "the real" is cast adrift.

As I paused to try to orient myself to the streets around me, to the video fragments, and to the map on my iPhone, I found myself standing underneath a historical marker. A stranger approached me, said he lived right there, and told me that Alexander Hamilton ("founding father" and first US secretary of the treasury under President George Washington) had lived on this very block. We started to chat, and he soon pulled out an iPad to show me a video that he recently shot of Hamilton's childhood home in Nevis, in the British West Indies, where he himself came from. Only now did I realize why this area was called Hamilton Heights, even as I understood for the first time that this important national figure had murky creole origins in the Caribbean. Hamilton was born "out of wedlock" in Nevis to Rachel Faucette, a French Huguenot woman of uncertain lineage who had run away from her Danish-Jewish husband, and taken up with James A. Hamilton, the fourth son of a Scottish laird. Could Hamilton's creole mother have been non-White? What did his social ascent say about American social mobility? The stranger and I had a fascinating discussion about cross-cultural friendships, travel, and cosmopolitanism, as well as Hamilton, and I told this St. Kittian about my interest in Caribbean history, and mentioned that I was visiting the *Caribbean Crossroads* exhibition at the Studio Museum of Harlem and several other locations. I also asked if he knew about the mobile digital art project iParade, which had led me to his street, but he did not.

When I finally said good-bye and continued the rest of the iParade route mapped out on my phone's screen, I was shocked to find that it culminated around the corner . . . at Alexander Hamilton's actual house, which had been moved twice, coming to rest in a nearby park (see Figure 8.1). It looked decidedly colonial, with white shutters, a broad stairway sweeping up to a yellow facade, and open-air porches on either side—a little bit reminiscent of his childhood home in Nevis, almost as if it had been moved from there. I harbored a strong suspicion that the Caribbean encounter had somehow been part of the mobile artwork—a St. Kittian shows me video of Hamilton's house in Nevis, and the iParade guides me to Hamilton's house around the corner—yet I also knew that was impossible because the timing of my encounter with him was entirely unpredictable. Surely there was some planned connection between these moving houses, mobile digital screens, and ambulant participants meeting on a street to discuss Caribbean-American histories? Our intersecting presences were so uncanny that I could not tell if this was a chance encounter or somehow a fabrication or performance connected to the iParade.

This disorienting coincidence of “real encounter” and “digital art” pervaded the rest of my day, and the next day, when I went to the Museum of the City of New York's *Capital of Capital* show and found myself face-to-face with a portrait of Alexander Hamilton, the caption explained his



Figure 8.1 Alexander Hamilton's Home in Hamilton Heights, Harlem, NY (Photo credit: M. Sheller, 2012)

connection to banking in New York, but said nothing of his Caribbean origins. Then I went next door to El Museo del Barrio to see the *Caribbean Crossroads* exhibit, where again I faced a portrait of Hamilton, accompanied with no information about his link to the Caribbean or to New York. By this time I text-messaged the artists to find out if they knew the person I met or at least knew of Hamilton's Caribbean connections, and they knew nothing. They didn't even know Hamilton was from Nevis. I found myself pondering the submerged networks of historical realities, of unseen currents of connectivity between Caribbean creole histories and contemporary Manhattan, and a strange serendipitous encounter with a stranger as we looked at our screens and at Hamilton's homes, tying us momentarily together at a crossroads that was somehow in motion, and reminding me of New York's mixed histories of Caribbean migration, transatlantic capital flows, and creole cultural networks that wove through the Americas. The meaning of Manhattan for me was rewoven by this encounter.

These historical remixtures were definitely amphibious, vital, live; they were also spooked, imaginary, fleeting, uncanny. They remind me of Back and Puwar's manifesto for a "live sociology," which asks us to "avoid the 'trap of the now' and be attentive to the larger scale and longer historical time frame" (Back & Puwar, 2012, p. 8). Digital methods do not have to be presentist; I was doing iParade in the "now," but I was experiencing some other scale of time that opened up potential avenues of archival research around Caribbean mobilities, personal memories, and histories of place-making. It was the "frame" of LoVid's iParade experience that led to this uncanny encounter with histories of place, but I do not think my experience was unique; each person experiences his or her own iParade. Other participants in iParade might awaken or stumble upon other kinds of submerged histories, and a "provocative awareness" of hybrid spaces that are at once present and absent, physical and imaginary, material and digital, past and future. Every urban space is in fact infused with layers of moving histories, differently embodied people, and material objects passing through these spaces and leaving traces of their being, of being there.

By engaging with surrounding public spaces and chance encounters, such works potentially enable people to experience mediated spatiality and augmented landscapes in unexpected ways—generating new forms of public experience, open-ended interaction, and heightened perception, all of which open up questions that are very pertinent to social science. LoVid's most recent work is called U R QR, which "aims to start a dialogue among a broad cross-section of people on the topics of identity, community, and creative process in the digital age" (LoVid, n.d.). In addition to creating a living QR code collaged together from photographs of many people's faces painted with black and white markings, it will also be a socially networked project with interactive Facebook and Twitter dimensions. Other artists, like Esther Polak and Ivar van Bekkum, also work with technologies such as Google Earth and Google StreetView to create globally networked participatory

projects interrogating mobility, technology, and the personal appropriation of surveillance technologies. Thus artwork becomes an opportunity to instigate a dialogue or conversation, which begins to resemble sociological research that also seeks out wider publics, dialogues, and understandings of identity and community in the digital age, or what Thrift (2011) calls “Lifeworld Inc.” What can we learn from such participatory, relational, and sometimes ambulatory art? At the very least we can learn other methods for invoking, or provoking, the non-representational, ones that are haunted by the past as much as the present, and oriented towards histories as much as futures.

CONCLUSION: RESEARCH-CREATION IN NEW MEDIA ENVIRONMENTS

Although many artists work independently outside of any academic framework, the kind of work described in this chapter becomes especially pertinent in the context of new initiatives and institution-building around the practice known as “research-creation.” The newly recognized format of research-creation has enabled various forms of collaboration and colearning not simply between artists and researchers but also between artist-researchers and participating publics. In Canada, for example, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council started funding a pilot program in research-creation in 2010, which it defined as

any research activity or approach to research that forms an essential part of a creative process or artistic discipline and that directly fosters the creation of literary/artistic works. The research must address clear research questions, offer theoretical contextualization within the relevant field or fields of literary/artistic inquiry, and present a well considered methodological approach. Both the research and the resulting literary/artistic works must meet peer standards of excellence and be suitable for publication, public performance or viewing. (SSHRC, 2010)

Research-creation programs can be spread over three years and can be carried out by an individual artist-researcher, or a group. Research-creation has also developed into academic programs, such as the Hexagram-Concordia Centre for Research-Creation in Media Arts and Technologies, described as “a leading centre for new media research and creation located within Concordia University’s Faculty of Fine Arts. Its state-of-the-art labs and equipment provide a rich collaborative environment for the interdisciplinary work of faculty members and graduate students in new media art, design, and interactive performance and technologies” (Concordia University, n.d.).

Similar practices exist in music, such as the *Institute de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique* at the Center Pompidou in Paris, which has a *Research/Creation Interfaces* department “to create connections between scientific research and artistic creation at IRCAM” (IRCAM, n.d.). At my own institution, Drexel University in Philadelphia, I am a member of the *Expressive and Creative Interaction Technologies Center (ExCITe)*, which develops new technologies and interfaces for music creation and performance, including robotics, motion detection, smart textiles, and bodily sensors, among other things. The emerging generation of location-based mobile media, haptic technologies, immersive and pervasive media, and reactive textiles, sensors, surfaces, and environments has the potential to engage the mobile (and not-so-mobile, paused, stilled, or waiting) subject in enlivened and re-animated body-practices, choreographies of movement, and acoustic ecologies. To research these emerging environments and their potentialities will require an amalgamation of sociology, cultural geography, mobilities research, and various research-creation practices to generate comobile methodologies of “live” social science.

Thrift describes five socio-technical characteristics of the contemporary moment: (1) “a structured continuity which always privileges the appearance of movement” (Thrift, 2011, p. 8); (2) gesture-awareness and interactive surfaces; (3) “awhereness” in which “the continuity of motion becomes locative as the world is tagged with an informational overlay” (p. 9); (4) constant feedback, enabling “interactive composition” in real-time (p. 10); and (5) the idea that “cognition becomes even more of a joint experience between persons and things” (p. 11). In this chapter I have begun to sketch a convergence happening between non-representational social science methodologies and creative arts practices (especially in the context of new mobile media, but also relating to choreography, architecture, and design). Research-creation is one of the most effective ways to intervene in, engage with, and make ripples in this contemporary context.

In some cases these works of creative research connect participants to sensory engagement with environments, locations, and social networks in newly mediated ways, while raising awareness about issues of technology, mediation, surveillance, and connection. Many utilize movement, gesture, interactivity, locational information, feedback, and human-thing assemblages to culturally probe the present moment of existence, while also, I have suggested, potentially tapping into past histories and future trajectories to reframe, unorient, and remix the present in “strange encounters” (Ahmed, 2000, p. 40), in which “strange bodies [and we could add strange histories] are produced through tactile encounters” (p. 17). Paying greater attention to the feminist epistemologies and critical philosophies of race that underlie contemporary phenomenologies of embodiment and spatialized difference might help us to develop such methods towards a wider range of social and political inquiries.

This revitalization of live methods also suggests important changes in pedagogy, for all of these methods can bring students out of the classroom and into the living lab of life. Working at Drexel with Hana Iverson and choreographers from the Center for Creative Research while coteaching a course called “Urban Vitality and the Arts,” I have found that artist-led research can be especially effective in implementing such disruptions of the normative classroom, breaking out of the jail of classroom space and of expected roles of both teachers and students. Research-creation can begin in the learning and teaching exchange; we can revitalize the classroom by literally moving it, moving our bodies, and unorienting ourselves.

Research-creation also has further implications for how we present the “outcomes” of our work. Although publications may still be necessary, the crisis of print publication in the face of digital media and the associated rise of online, open-access journals have already thrown existing models into disarray. Many researchers, but especially those who use non-representational or “live” methods, are rethinking the form their work takes (how can text capture performance?), the linear temporality of traditional data-collection/data-analysis/output models (how can “outcome” capture process?), and the new contexts and genres available for presenting live performance-as-research (how can conference presentations be reconfigured to encompass creative or interactive media?). The fourth annual conference of the Pan-American Mobilities Network, “Differential Mobilities: Movement and Mediation in Networked Societies,” organized by the Mobile Media Lab at Concordia University in Montreal in May 2013, for example, included extensive art installations, participatory mobile locative media performances, networked social media, and keynote addresses that involved significant performative dimensions. In such messy and “un-wholesome” atmospheres there is a welcome breakdown of disciplinary boundaries, a “mingling, bundling and coming together,” as Lury put it, and truly a sense that the amphibious sociologists, becoming-animal geographers, and hybrid artist-researchers are finally beginning to spawn.

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9

The Datalogical Turn

Patricia Ticineto Clough, Karen Gregory, Benjamin Haber, and R. Joshua Scannell

In 2013, the chief technology officer (CTO) of the US Central Intelligence Agency, Ira “Gus” Hunt, addressed a crowd of software developers, coders, and programmers at the “Structure:Data” conference in New York City (Sledge, 2013). In a fast-paced and nearly winded PowerPoint presentation, Hunt tried to articulate both the challenges and possibilities that “big data”¹ present to the agency. Suggesting that the world has already become a “big data world,” the CTO charted a simultaneously frightening and captivating vision in which social media, mobile technologies, and cloud computing have been married to the “unbounded, promiscuous, and indiscriminate” capacities of nanotechnology, biotechnology, and sensor technology. Given this queer bundling of capacities or this capacity to bundle, as we would put it, Hunt proclaimed, “it is nearly within our grasp to compute all human generated information” and that human beings are now “walking sensor platforms” generating endless seas of data. How to find “a signal” amid all this “noise,” suggested Hunt, is only one of the challenges posed by such a world.

Although the scale of data is often simply referred to as “big,” it is not necessarily the scale that troubles and excites. Rather, it is the speed with which data can now be collected and the adaptive algorithmic architectures that organize these data in ways beyond simple instructions leading to optimized solutions. Algorithmic architectures are no longer aiming exclusively to predict or calculate probabilities but rather operate so that “any set of instructions is conditioned by what cannot be calculated,” the incomputable quantities of data that are “included in sequential calculation . . . so as to add novelty in the actual architecture of things” (Parisi, 2013, p. 9). Adaptive algorithmic architectures point to what Luciana Parisi describes as “the residual power of algorithms, the processing of rules and the indeterminacies of programming, which are able to unleash novelty in biological, physical and mathematical forms” (ibid., p. 13). As adaptive algorithmic architectures come to play a greater role in the parsing of big data, technology is felt to move faster and differently than institutions and humans. Algorithmic architectures are offering not only epistemological resources but also ontological sources, allowing, as Hunt suggested, for the “inanimate to become sentient” (Sledge, 2013).

In this chapter, we explore how the coupling of large-scale databases and adaptive algorithms are calling forth a new onto-logic of sociality or the social itself. We propose that this onto-logic, or what we refer to as the “datalogical,” is especially challenging to the discipline of sociology, which, as the study of social systems of human behavior, has provided a modern frame for configuring bodies, subjects, contexts, or environments in relationship to the political and the economic. Focusing especially on the entanglement of what George Steinmetz has called sociology’s “epistemological unconscious” (2005) with the systems theory of cybernetics in the post-World War II years, we rethink sociality as moving from an operational logic of closed systems and its statistically predictable populations to algorithmic architectures that override the possibilities of a closed system and predictable populations, opening sociality to the postprobabilistic. Characteristic of what we are calling the datalogical turn, the postprobabilistic is transforming the epistemological foundations of sociology and challenging the positivism, empiricism, and scientism that form the unconscious drive of sociological methodology and its ontology.

We further argue that the datalogical turn is resonant with the move from representation to non-representation, often thought to herald the end of the modern or the becoming of the postmodern (Thrift, 2008). Instead, we argue that the move to non-representation unconsciously has driven sociological methodology all along. Here, then, we take non-representation to differ from representation. In representation, there is a present absence of what is represented. But for us, the present absence in representation is displaced in non-representation; rather, non-representation points to the real presence of incomputable data operative in algorithmic architectures parsing big data. As we will discuss ahead, these architectures have automated the selection of incomputable data, allowing for indeterminacies in the capacities of programs to reprogram their parameters in real time. We are proposing that what has been hailed as big data and the algorithmic architectures that sort it serve less as a fundamental break with the unconscious of sociology than as an intensification of sociological methods of measuring populations, where individual persons primarily serve as human figures of these populations (Clough, 1998, 2010). Taking this claim further, we see the algorithms currently being built to parse big data in the sciences, finance, marketing, education, urban development, and military and policing policy and training as a more fully developed realization of the unconscious drive of sociological methodology, which are nonetheless outflanking sociology’s capacity to measure. That is to say, adaptive algorithmic data processing is forcing fundamental questions of the social, challenging our understanding of the relationship of measure to number taken as mere representation authorized by an observer/self-observer of social systems of human behavior. Big data is not simply a matter of the generalized deployment of new technologies of measure but the performative “coming out” of an unconscious drive that has long haunted sociology and is now animating an emergent conception

of sociality for which bodies, selves, contexts, or environments are being reconfigured in relationship to politics and economy.

In the first section of this chapter we trace the entanglement of cybernetics and sociology to show how sociology's unconscious drive has always been datalogical. Although sociology has been driven to go beyond the human and to become a science that could run only on statistical data, it has been hindered by the very speeds of its technologies of collection and analysis and has had to fall back on the supplementary figure of the observing/self-observing human subject. But once again sociology's unconscious drive is being stirred and drawn out to meet new technologies that have given rise to non-representational forms that run at the speed of contemporary capital. In the second section we chart the arrival of big data, which we identify as the performative celebration of capital's queer captures and modulations. New technologies such as parametric adaptive algorithmic architectures have given rise to a mathematics reaching beyond number to the incalculable and are no longer slowed by the process or practice of translating back to human consciousness. The concern is not so much that these technologies are being deployed in the academy, but rather that there is a usurpation of social science by instruments of capital markets, beyond the state, leading to what Mike Savage and Roger Burrows have termed the "crisis of empirical sociology" (2007). Although some in sociology have responded to this crisis by trying to move faster (e.g., by learning to data mine), the turn to datalogics is fundamentally a more profound challenge to the underlying epistemology and ontology of sociological thought that has yet to be seriously grappled with in the discipline, even as its foundational dualisms, like structure/individual, system/agent, human/world, and even lively/inert, increasingly are untenable.

Finally, in the third section we look to the social logic of the derivative to chart the global disintegration of the human form under non-human spatiotemporalities. At a time when the spread of datalogics creates new profits through novel derivative modulations of liquidity, we suggest that sociology has doubled down on the human phenomenological project—on slowness, the bounded body, and the human figure. This representational retrenchment misses or ignores the new sociality being created and revealed by the performativity of the datalogical. We end then by suggesting that non-representational theory and other philosophical moves towards becoming and movement might provide new space for critical inquiry on the social.

CYBERNETICS AND THE SOCIOLOGICAL UNCONSCIOUS

This emergence that we are calling the datalogical is contingent on contemporary availability of processor speeds capable of rapidly accumulating and sifting petabytes of data, but the datalogical has always haunted (Derrida, 2006) the sociological project. The redistribution of the human

body and the figure of the human subject into datafied terrains has underlined the discipline from its inception (Foucault, 2007) and points to some of the interesting resonances and entanglements between orders of cybernetic study and sociological methodology. Cybernetics, of course, has been focused on the disintegration of the biophysical into the informational, and in turn, has articulated a complex informatics of sociality. Sociology has, then, since its post–World War II reconstitution as the premier science of the state’s reckoning with the social, unsurprisingly held a deep fascination with cybernetics.

Although there is not strictly a causal relationship between cybernetics and sociology, we aim to sketch the entanglement of the disciplines with one another through the production of a data-driven human subject, a subject imbricated with data. In the case of sociology, the process of slowing down the information-intake in order to make sense of relationships (statistical correlations, etc.) always was a methodological requirement of translating data into meaning befitting social systems of human behavior. Sociology has tied this slowing down of data to the figure of an observing/self-observing human subject. Our investigation of the entanglement of sociology and cybernetics shows that liquefying this congealed human figure always has been the unconscious drive of a discipline that nonetheless is, in the current moment, defensively blocking the becoming conscious of that drive.

The epistemological unconscious of sociology arises in the post–World War II years with the presumption that the social world can be objectively studied. As positivism, empiricism, and scientism became its center of gravity, sociology aimed to be a usable, predictive state science. According to the basic premises of sociological methodology, data collected was only as good as the researcher’s ability to assemble it and present it back to an invested public. At the most basic level, this meant that the methodologies of sociology were designed to modulate the speed and scale of the accumulation and circulation of data in order to fulfill the representational requirements of social systems of human behavior. It meant a marriage of phenomenology or the epistemology of the conscious/self-conscious human knower with the technical demands of the state, enabling institutions to agglutinate population data to systems of human behavior, on the one hand, and to rationalize the figure of the human subject for state instrumentality, on the other. A mode of inquiry of statistical models and replicable experiments “made it increasingly plausible that social practices really were repeatable . . . a wide range of human practices could be construed as constant conjunctions of events while ignoring the historical conditions of possibility of this patterning” (Steinmetz, 2005, p. 129). If the historical, in all its contingency and uncertainty, was not the reference for statistical models and replicable experiments, it was because the historical was displaced by the more powerful concept of “system.”

By the 1950s, the notion of a generalized system had come to refer to interdependent components or parts and the principles by which interactions

and interconnections of parts are to function in reproducing the system as a whole while maintaining its functionality. In terms of sociality, to maintain a system and its functionality is to reference the capacity for social reproduction in terms of a boundary—that which marks the “outside” of a system. This boundary, combined with a regularity in the interactions or interconnections that constitute the system, allows it to be modeled so that its behavior becomes predictable usually at statistical-population levels. Aspects of sociality outside of the system are “made static” and turned into control variables in order to see the patterned movements of the experimental variables. This movement, if repeatable, could be translated into durable predictions about behavioral dynamics that are technically expressed as the statistical probabilities of populations.

Statistical modeling can generate useful correlations only if a relatively closed system can be presumed such that the introduction of dynamic forces can have an impact that will be observable. In the social sciences, systems theory led to the development of evolutionary models of human behavior (most prominently in the work of Talcott Parsons) that viewed sociality as a hierarchically organized series of subsystems, each of which is by necessity discrete and relatively closed to outside information. Thus for Parsons both the biophysical or the organic and the sociocultural are self-contained systems driven to evolutionary reproduction. It is breaking up sociality into discrete systems that can be held static in relationship to an outside that allows for populations capturable by statistical models.

For this model of inquiry to proceed, it had to depend on an epistemological stance similar to first-order cybernetics. As in sociological research, first-order cybernetics is predicated on a homeostatic, equilibrium-seeking model that presumes a certain durability of reactions to observed stimuli that allow for a probabilistic prediction of future patterns (Hayles, 1999). In first order cybernetics, the researcher stands to some degree *outside* of the system that is being observed and applies technical apparatuses to convert incoming data from shifts in a stabilized system into repeatable and decipherable patterns. First-order cybernetics maintains a duality between the systems to be observed and the apparatuses of observation (in the case of sociology, the apparatuses are the method of the research project). The apparatuses extend through but are not of the systems that produce an implied dis-identification of researcher and researched. In this, first-order cybernetics and post-World War II sociology mirror each other as essentially positivistic, empirical imaginaries that presume a distinction between the observer and the observed. Ontologically there remains a separation between a stable researcher on the one hand and a systematized research environment of human behavior on the other.

If both first-order cybernetics and a positivistic, empirical, scientific sociological unconscious presume a distinction between the observer and the observed, in second-order cybernetics and the critical social theories and methodologies that would arise in the 1970s and 1980s,

reflexive interventions would be imagined that were meant to “correct” the dis-identification of the observer with data, resulting in the human subject being figured not only as observing but also as self-observing. Of particular concern to second-order cyberneticists and social scientists who sought to apply second-order cybernetics to research is the notion of “autopoiesis.” Coined by Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, an autopoietic system is

a machine organized [. . .] as a network of processes of production (transformation and destruction) of components which: (i) through their interaction and transformations continuously regenerate and realize the network of processes (relations) that produced them; and (ii) constitute it (the machine) as a concrete unity in space in which they (the components) exist by specifying the topological realization of such a network. (1980, p. 78)

In other words, autopoiesis suggests that the internal construction and networking of a machine, organism, or system reproduce themselves in novel iterations as a response to—and through interaction with—the outside environment. Most famously translated into sociology through Nikolas Luhmann’s systems theories (1996), the concept was more broadly used as a theoretical and methodological guide among so-called postmodern or critical theorists and researchers of the 1970s and 1980s. For them, an autopoietic framework made the dis-identification of the researcher with the researched an untenable ontological position. Methodologies such as autoethnography and textual analysis would demonstrate that, in an autopoietic system, the researcher cannot stand outside the system and observe its feedback loops (as in first-order). Instead, the researcher is a part of the system’s feedback loop. No observer can be outside of the system observed, because under autopoietic conditions, the system self-organizes around and within inputs, including the observer as input. The autopoietic system nonetheless maintains the boundedness of the system as the observer serves as a double for the boundary. That is to say, the boundary between system and environment is taken as an effect of the observer observing, including observing him- or herself observing, as second-order cyberneticists would have it.

Such a stance has commonly come under fire for sliding into solipsism. If the system is constantly reorganizing against an “outside,” then the system is totally enclosed and detached from any external “reality.” A common discourse in debates over theory and methodology in the social sciences comes down to a conflict between those who would argue for a more positivist empiricist and scientist social science and those who argue for a more reflexive one that includes taking account of the observer or insisting on his or her embodied self-consciousness being made visible. These debates have been tiresome for some time, given the archaeologically deep links between the two positions. They both rely on the figure of the human subject, and the

insular, thermodynamic system. In both cases, the role of the observer is one of calculated disturbance and translation. In sociology, the lessons of the second order have been taken up primarily as a simultaneous acknowledgment of one's presence in the field of observation via "reflexivity" and then the dismissal of this presence's importance to the overall project of drawing and articulating human relations. In the wake of critique, the championing of reflexivity often has taken the form of a defensive insistence on the capacity and obligation of the researcher to "speak for" the researched.

The sociological adoption of second-order cybernetics has, then, if anything, retrenched the discipline firmly in an insistence that it is articulating a human, phenomenological project, and denying its unconscious datalogical drive. Poised between first-order and second-order cybernetic logics, but without acknowledging in either case the underlying datalogical drive of the discipline, sociological reasoning has stagnated. The constant resuscitation of the false dichotomy of observed and observing, along with that between quantitative and qualitative, and micro and macro levels, has hamstrung much of sociology from rethinking its assumptions at a pace with the development of new modes of computation closely associated with postcybernetic computational technologies. We now turn to these new modes of computation, or what is being called "big data," in order to illustrate how their very logics, speeds, and capacities are troubling these long-standing dichotomies.

THE DATALOGICAL TURN

According to IBM, "Every day, we create 2.5 quintillion bytes of data—so much that 90% of the data in the world today has been created in the last two years alone. This data comes from everywhere: sensors used to gather climate information, posts to social media sites, digital pictures and videos, purchase transaction records, and cell phone GPS signals to name a few. This data is big data" (IBM, n.d.). Descriptions like this one have rapidly proliferated across increasingly widely distributed media. The big data scientist has been billed as the "sexiest job of the 21st century"—and sociology is only one of the many disciplines trying to "get in on the action" (Davenport & Patil, 2012). But sociology always has been part of this action, unconsciously driven by the datalogical with its capacity to escape the capture of apparatuses of arrest, such as regulation, the law, and, indeed, the biopolitics of the human figure—putting the datalogical beyond the representational without necessarily being inherently attached to the resistant or the liberatory.

However, the coming out of the datalogical means a redistribution of the technologies of collection and analysis of "social" data away from the academy, challenging empirical sociology, if not putting it into crisis. Sociology no longer has a monopoly on "social" data collection and analysis; rather,

human lives continually pass through datafied terrains. Even though data collection processes are unevenly distributed throughout the world, many quotidian behaviors, such as making a call from a cell phone, using a mobile device to access the Internet, clicking through web links, swiping a credit card to make a purchase, or even visiting a hospital or accruing a speeding ticket, have now become dynamic sites of data collection.

The movement within these sites, however, is not unidirectional. Data fields pass in and out of bodies, feeding on novel and emergent connections within and between bodies. Indeed, the ability of data to smoothly travel away from their original site of collection is highly valued within ecologies of big data. The translation between behavior and data point is often less than clear and subjected to numerous third- and fourth-party interventions that multiply the networks through which data will travel. For example, salary and pay stub data that is collected by employers will become part of the data that is bought and sold by credit-reporting companies and data brokers that work to compile these reports along with other “public” information in order to buy and sell data profiles. Another example is gamified marketing strategies that require an individual to go through a series of clicks in order to make a simple purchase or that require a bit of “free labor” before a transaction can be completed (Terranova, 2000)—producing data that is only tangentially related to the express purpose of the individual’s behavior.

In other words, data—or what comes to populate a database—is no mere representation of the social activities that produce it, as sociology and first- and second-orders of cybernetics have suggested. The “point” of the datalogical is not to describe a stabilized system or to follow a representational trail, but instead to collect information that would typically be discarded as noise. Indeed, it is those data that are most typically bracketed out as noise in sociological methods—that is, affect, or the dynamism of non-conscious or even non-human capacity—that are central to the datalogical turn. The adaptable algorithmic architectures that parse such data are not merely representational; rather, they are non-representational in that they seek toprehend² incomputable data and thereby modulate the emergent forms of sociality in their emergence. Put otherwise, the datalogical turn moves away from representation and its reliance on sociological correlation and correlative datasets and moves towards the incomputable conditioning of parametric practices in algorithmic production. In contrast to these practices, the rules of operation for serial algorithms state that one sequence after another must complete itself to arrive at relationships (e.g., in the case of cross-tabs and linear regressions—i.e., stochastic approaches) where datasets are to be pitted against one another in order to uncover durable relationships between sets of numbers. The postcybernetic analysis of big data is oriented away from this sort of seriality towards an analytic not of numbers, per se, but of parameters, leaning towards the non-representational.

What is crucial in postcybernetic logic is not the reliable relationship between input and output but rather the capacity to generate new and

interesting sets of relationships given certain inputs and rules (Terranova, 2004). In order to achieve this productive novelty, the analysis of big data relies on adaptive algorithmic architectures that add pattern-less quantities of data that allow parameters to change in real time (Burry & Burry, 2012). Instead of establishing an order of rules that must be followed to result in a relational number, adaptable algorithmic architectures allow rules and parameters to adapt to one another without necessarily operating in keeping with a progressive or teleological sequence. These adaptations do not lead “to the evolution of one algorithm or the other but to a new algorithmic behavior” (Parisi, 2009, p. 357). For example, the US Air Force is creating an auto-generating virus that builds itself out of snippets of code snapped up from various “gadgets” (short texts of pedestrian code) distributed across a number of programs in a computing network. The virus builds itself based on certain parameters that define the rules of the algorithm, and adjusts those parameters as needed in order to develop more interesting, complex, and dynamic networks of relations (Aron, 2012).

The operative mathematics underlying big data analytics is functionally a mathematics reaching beyond numbers—a mathematics reaching to the incomputable, calling into question the opposition of quantitative and qualitative methods of measure. The unfathomably huge and diverse clouds of data that are generated from the ubiquity of digital surveillance effectively render them beyond number, and it is only in the context of adaptive algorithms that the noise of the data cloud can be rendered (Han, Kamber, & Pei, 2012). In the case of personal data, it is not the details of that data or a single digital trail that is important, but rather the relationship of the emergent attributes of digital trails en masse that allows for both the broadly sweeping and the particularized modes of affective measure and control. Big data doesn’t care about “you” so much as the bits of seemingly random information that bodies generate or that they leave as a data trail; the aim is to affect orprehend novelty.

This is precisely how big data calls into question relationships of individual and structure, actor and system, particular and general, and quantitative and qualitative. For Bruno Latour and his followers, the trails and trajectories of ubiquitous digital data collection allow for a more fully realized actor-network theory where, instead of the two “levels” of micro and macro, big data gives us visualized tracings of “individual entities taken severally” (Latour, Jensen, Venturini, Grauwin, & Boullier, 2012, p. 7), where entities can be a person or a city, attributes of a person or characteristics of a city, etc. With the datalogical turn, therefore, not only is there a decentering of the human subject but also the definition of the bodily broadens beyond the human body or the body as autopoietic organism, and as such bodily practices themselves instantiate as data, which in turn produces a surplus of bodily practices. So too the difference between the inside and the outside of the system is undone and a question is raised as to what environment is.

All this is to suggest that it is especially important that we not filter our understanding of the social through representational frames that are understood to supplement reductive quantitative measures, when instead, through complex processes of calculation, computing technologies cannot be thought merely to be reductive: they neither quantify biophysical and cultural capacities nor are calculations or information understood simply to be grounded in such capacities (Parisi, 2013, pp. 13–14; see also Miyazaki, 2012). In other words, digital computing has its own capacity to be adaptable and “creative” in ways that challenge the assumption that the “artificial” nature of computational intelligence is inherently limiting; rather, big data is revealing digital computation’s immanent potential for indetermination in incomputable probabilities (Lury, Parisi, & Terranova, 2012). Computational shifts in the algorithm-driven analysis of big data have allowed a form of qualitative computing that has been considered exclusive to human cognition and the self-conscious observer. Digital computation is flattening the opposition of quantitative and qualitative methods of measure. In doing so, digital computation or architectural algorithms are problematizing the observing/self-observing human subject of social systems where the environment can be represented or registered only in the limiting terms of the ongoing functioning or autopoiesis of the system.

Whereas the self-conscious observer of critical theory and second-order cybernetics implies an autopoietic feedback that reproduced the whole or the system, albeit while increasing its complexity with the ever-returning epistemological excess of a blind spot, the architectural algorithms of big data make use of the unknowable or the incomputable in a non-conscious manner that points to the further decentering of human cognition, consciousness, and preconsciousness. Here, parts are not reducible to the whole or the system because parts can be large, quantitatively incompressible, and as such bigger than the whole. Algorithmic architectures work with parts that are divorced from a whole. Indeed, the incomputable or the incompressible information that would necessarily be excluded or bracketed in cybernetic logics is folded into algorithmic architectures such that at any time the incomputable may deracinate the whole. This moves representation beyond systems and the observing/self-observing subject in the enactment of a non-representational theoretical orientation.

FROM SOCIAL SYSTEM TO DERIVATIVE SOCIALITY

Although it has been claimed that big data represents the “end of theory” (Anderson, 2008), we are suggesting that the datalogical turn is, rather, the end of the illusion of a human and systems-oriented sociology. Sociology’s statistical production of populations in relation to systems of human behavior is being disassembled and distributed in derivative and recombinable forms operating in the multiple time-spaces of capital. This is to say, the

sociological production of populations for governance, while being the central mechanism through which securitized power's taxonomies have coagulated, has found itself in the odd position of being outflanked by measuring technologies beyond the discipline, which are running at the hyper speed of capital.

Sociology's insistence on durable, delimited, repeatably observable populations as a *prima facie* for measurement has situated it as a quasi-positivist, empiricist, between first-order and second-order cybernetic discipline. Its assumptions about the nature of information and noise, such that the sociological mission is to cleanse the former of the latter, fundamentally miss the point that, under contemporary regimes of big data and its algorithmic architectures, noise and information are ontologically inseparable. The noise of the incomputable is always already valuable information because it allows for resetting parameters. Not only do big data technologies seek to parse, translate, and value noise, but also they enhance its production by taking volatility as their horizon of opportunity. Such volatility can be felt tingling, agitating, or, to use a rather commonplace market term, "disrupting" knowledge formations across numerous disciplines, but is particularly challenging stable sociological articulations of the demos. Given the datalogical's challenge to sociological methods of measure, the very project of tracing or tracking populations presumed to be held static through statistical analysis is put under pressure, if not undone entirely.

Traditionally, statistical and demographic data accumulations are performed at complementary but cross-purposes. Demographics tend to accumulate the raw material from which statistical analyses (plotted, generally, on x/y axes) can be conducted. That is to say, demographics produce the populations that can be held still or made visible in order to measure relations in a statistical (i.e., predictive) manner. Demographics, in sociological modeling, function as the condition of possibility for statistical relationships. Of course, the relation is recursive (or topological) in that statistical models fold back into future accumulation of demographic information, and project backwards in time to complicate historical demographic calculations. Yet the relationship between statistical and demographic data is still logically distinguishable.

However, the distinction effectively disintegrates with the datalogical turn by allowing instant geospatial realization of histories of environmental, consumer, criminal, domestic, and municipal datasets reconciled in real time. Here coded bodily practices—walking, sitting, waiting, smoking, cell phone use, for example—get read through ubiquitous distributed methods of digital surveillance and fed back through big data sorting that is designed to collate seemingly unrelated sets with the intention of producing novel relations. The temporal and spatial differentiations upheld by the distinction of statistical analysis and demographic data break down. We are suggesting that the datalogical leads less towards an articulable demographic than towards an ecology of Whiteheadian "occasions" (Whitehead, 1978).

Occasions, although temporally and spatially discrete, are in actuality a movement, which itself traces multitudes of becoming in which the social itself continually formulates or reformulates as do the boundaries of any population. This blending of demography and statistics is part and parcel of the process of smoothing that big data accomplishes.

Here, the ongoing formulation of the social replaces what historically have been considered social formations. The latter are smoothed out or flattened into derivative circulations in a digitally mapped/mapping universe that means to stretch to folded information or the incomputable. The deployment of folded information or the incomputable is the deployment of indeterminacy, and it remains unclear how this indeterminacy will affect ongoing calculation and its ongoing performativity of measuring the social. What, however, is enabled is that flattened structural categories, like social formations or racial, sexual, ethnic, or class identity, can be mobilized statistically in instantaneous, computationally driven assemblages with indeterminacy at work. It is our contention that this is a measuring that is always adaptive and, indeed, a self-measuring dynamic immanent to ongoing formulations of the social. Under datalogical conditions, measurement is always a singularity—a productive, affective materialization of dynamics and relations of recombinable forces, bundling parts, or attributes. Rather than a reductive process, calculation remains computationally open and the digital is no longer easily contrasted with a putatively thicker, qualitative computation. As such, big data allows for a new, prehensive mode of thought that collapses emergence into the changing parameters of computational arrangements.

It would seem then that the datalogical turn is drawing together a form of Whiteheadian process theory of occasions and a social logic, that of the derivative,³ both of which share an interest in the deployment of excess—an excess that is necessarily bracketed out by the two orders of cybernetics and sociology in their quest for replication and repeatability. In a system that seeks to cleanse noise from information, what cannot be rigorously and falsifiably repeated or what seems qualitatively beyond the scope of probabilistic calculation (affect, or the dynamism of non-conscious or even non-human capacity) is necessarily bracketed out. But what is beyond the scope of probabilistic measure is relevant not only to the algorithmic architectures of big data but also to the queering of economy, what Randy Martin has called the “after economy” in his elaboration of the derivative (2013). Calculation beyond the probabilistic is especially central to the pricing of derivatives, which, as Elie Ayache argues, is the very process of “market-making” (2007). The market is made with every trade in that “trading (this process supposed to record a value, as of today and day after day, for the derivative that was once written and sentenced to have no value until a future date . . .) will never be the reiteration and the replication of the values that were initially planned for the derivative by the theoretical stochastic process and its prescribed dynamics” (*ibid.*, p. 42). To put it another way, pricing through

trading is an occasion, a radically contingent one where pricing makes no reference to any preceding trends, tendencies, or causes. These are better grasped as retro-productive aspects of market making.

The pricing of the derivative through trade “extends beyond probability.” The derivative “trades after probability is done with and (the context) saturated” (Ayache, 2007, p. 41). When the context is saturated with all its possibilities it opens up to what Ayache calls “capacity” that allows for the context to be changed (*ibid.*, p. 42). Pricing through trading “is a revision of the whole range of possibilities, not just of the probability distribution overlying them”: not changing possibilities, but changing context, the whole range of possibilities of a context (*ibid.*, p. 44). For Ayache this means “putting in play of the parameter (or parameters) whose fixity was the guarantee of fixity of the context and of the corresponding dynamic replication” (*ibid.*, p. 42). There is an excess, an incomputable affective capacity that takes flight in the vectors of the derivative. As Martin puts it, “Here is an excess that is released but never fully absorbed, noise that need not be stilled, a debt registered yet impossible to repay” (Martin, 2013, p. 97). Excess, debt, and noise all point to that drive for liquidity upon which the derivative sits “at once producer and parasite” (Seigworth & Tiessen, 2012, p. 69).⁴ In this way, derivatives, as Gregory Seigworth and Matthew Tiessen argue, “work to construct a plane of global relative equivalence through processes of continual recalculation on sloping vectors of differentiation” (*ibid.*, p. 69). Pricing derivatives through trade is a process of “forever calculating and instantaneously recalculating value based on monetary value’s latest valuation” (*ibid.*, p. 70).

Extrapolating from its common perception as a mere financial instrument that bundles investments against potential risks, Martin points to changes in sociality informed by the derivative that also are indicated by the algorithmic architectures of big data: undermining the conceit of the system or the taken-for-granted reduction of parts to the whole. For Martin, “as opposed to the fixed relation between part and whole that informs the system metaphysic, the derivative acts as movement between these polarities that are rendered unstable through its very contestation of accurate price and fundamental value” (2013, p. 91). Indeed, derivatives “turn the *contestability* of fundamental value into a tradable commodity”—“a market benchmark for unknowable value”: an incomputable value that is nonetheless deployed in measure (*ibid.*). The way the derivative bundles suggests a “lateral orientation,” as Martin puts it, that displaces the relatively recent descriptors of a postmodern sociality:

A transmission of some value from a source to something else, an attribute of that original expression that can be combined with like characteristics, a variable factor that can move in harmony or dissonance with others [. . .] derivative logic speaks to what is otherwise balefully named as fragmentation, dispersion, isolation by allowing us to recognize ways

in which the concrete particularities, the specific engagements, commitments, interventions we tender and expend might be interconnected without first or ultimately needing to appear as a single whole or unity of practice or perspective. (2013, pp. 85–87)

The very act of cutting the commodity into aspects of a derivative freed not only the commodity from its ontological status as “a thing” but also the vectors of time and space contained within the commodity. A house is no longer a home, but rather a forecast of possible futures, understood as risks to be hedged or profited from. Big data follows this forecasting logic as it seeks not only to gather infinite data points but also to put these points into motion as datasets aim to generate unique patterns. In this way, big data is moving data. It cannot be captured or held static or it would lose its very value, both socially and monetarily. As such, big data serves the derivative logic that is running on perpetual debt- or credit-based liquidity.

Here again are ties to a Whiteheadian theory of process in which discrete occasions of experience both come into being and dissipate back into a continuum of generative excess. Because working with the notion of occasion requires a conceptual attunement to a world pulsing with change, we argue that such an attunement is essential if we are truly to grasp the breadth of social shift currently afoot in computational world. This basic move allows not only that things—both human and non-human—are in continual process of becoming, but also that they do not necessarily require a human, cognitive subject to act as their interpreter. In fact, we might ask if the computational itself is beginning to reach towards the notion of the continuum—possibly coming to stand in for what we will perceive is a life-generating flux of information, capable of again and again forming the social just as the market is made again and again in the information-driven pricing of the derivative where liquidity is the flux.

If we can concede that datalogical is drawing thought beyond stable and static objects of statistical analysis, we might then conclude that the datalogical is delivering to us a version of non-representational theory and a “radical empiricism” that Thrift aligns with a lineage running from William James to Alfred North Whitehead (Thrift, 2007). Radical empiricism moves past a sense- or observation-based empiricism to look to the processes and practices by which discrete events or occasions come into being. In other words, this empiricism recognizes the reality of that which is preindividual, other, or below human perception, cognition, or consciousness, which, as we have seen, are key to datalogical production. Non-representational theory therefore also proposes that methods of study be rethought in terms of performativity, or what Thrift refers to as “play” (*ibid.*, p. 7) or “experimentation” (p. 12). For Thrift, performativity brings into play all kinds of bodies, human and non-human, along with their varying temporalities, thereby forcing sociological thought, method, and research to break away from the oppositions of nature and technology, body and machine, the living and the

inert. However, this drawing together of computational flux and radical empiricism is not necessarily a project of celebrating the discovery of excess. Rather, as we have suggested earlier, we do not wish to carry resistant or liberatory hues into the datalogical turn. Indeed, the comfortable fit between the datalogical turn, new computational logics, and non-representational theory may need to be pressured in order to ask new and difficult questions, not only about the status or effects of actors beyond the human now traveling or circulating their affective capacities, giving rise to what Thrift has called an “expressive infrastructure” (2012) and materializing a sociality in which thought itself must open to the mathematical.

CONCLUSION

We have followed Michel Foucault in claiming that sociology has functioned to produce statistical populations for governance (2007). Furthermore, we concur with his sense that these statistical populations have never been ontologically reducible to humans; populations instead are articulated by sociology such that they are epistemologically grafted onto a human figure, and locked into place representationally by a reflexive sociological practice. To move Foucault’s critique into the realm of contemporary practices of big data and algorithm architectures requires a politically uncomfortable but disciplinarily inevitable move from critique of governance and economy based on a humanist sociology towards a critical sociology of a mathematically open sociality that can recognize the aftereconomy of the derivative, where the political, usually excluded from economy in liberalism, instead has been fully included as the political effectiveness of governance is subjected to market measures, here treated in terms of big data and algorithmic architectures.

A critical sociology recognizes a postcybernetic logic of computation that de-systematizes the methods of collating and analyzing statistical and demographic data while decentering the human subject; the observing/self-observing human subject collapses as the basis for a data-driven project of understanding sociality. The oppositions of individual and structure, micro and macro levels, embodiment and information, nature and culture, and the living and the inert are called into question. We follow Latour et al., who refuse the presumption of these oppositions and argue that the consequence of their presumption “is that almost all the questions raised by sociological theory have been framed as the search for the right pathway” between these opposed terms—how to explain the relationship between them (2012, p. 2). For Latour and his collaborators, these oppositions are the result of the very technology that has been employed in the sociological method of data collection and data analysis. As they write, “‘Specific’ and ‘general’, ‘individual’ and ‘collective’, ‘actor’ and ‘system’ are not essential realities but provisional terms [. . .] a consequence of the type of technology

used for navigating inside datasets” (ibid.). However, as data becomes big and analyzed through algorithmic architectures, the oppositions by which sociological correlations have been made have become “flattened.”

Although we agree with Latour that the methods of measure that sociology has deployed are inadequate, we insist that the critique of sociology must be taken further. What faces sociology is not a question of how better to use a dataset. The growing focus on data mining in relationship to slow sociological methods of measure is less a matter of catching up with algorithmic architectures of measure in order to reclaim a dominant position as the science of society. Rather, it is necessary to face the technical realization of sociology’s unconscious drive to articulate and disassemble populations in real time and how the nature of sociality has radically changed. There also is the question of the subjectivity of this sociality where the subject is no longer an ideologically interpellated subject of a system.

What is at issue, however, is not an ideological failure in constituting the subject. Seigworth and Tiessen suggest instead that the appetite for liquidity—by no means simply a human appetite but substantially a technical one—precedes ideology (2012, p. 68). They argue that ideological discourses of privatization, neoliberalization, corporatization, and securitization are “*effects of, or responses to, credit money’s appetite for liquidity*” (ibid.). Drawing on Latour’s conceptualization of “plasma” and Thrift’s of “a moving frame that is not a frame at all but a fabric,” Seigworth and Tiessen argue that liquidity might well be what Latour describes as the “in between the meshes [. . .] of a flat networky topography” (ibid., pp. 62–63). As such, the methods of measuring big data and derivative pricing and trading—meant to sustain liquidity and deploy the incomputable—are central to today’s sociality.⁵ They also may be central for rethinking the subject of this sociality, the subject without reference to a system.

Given that the algorithmic production of big data has no reference to human consciousness, or even the human behavior from which data arises, the subject cannot be the conscious subject of modern thought. Recently Mark Hansen has argued that the subject must now be of a consciousness that is after the fact of the presentation of data because there is no possible subjectification of big data; instead, big data is “fed forward into consciousness *not* as the material basis for an emergent mental state but, quite literally, *as an intrusion from the outside*” (2013). As such “consciousness comes to learn that it lags behind its own efficacy” (ibid.). This is not to argue that there has been a reduction of the conscious subject to technical processes that are themselves reductive; after all in pointing to incomputable probabilities, we are arguing that algorithmic architectures are not reductive in this way. Rather we want to suggest that the subject Hansen describes might be thought of as one that is tracking tendencies, maintaining liquidity of capacity. This is not, therefore, a subject who is reducible to “a mere calculus of interests” (Feher, 2009). Instead Michel Feher has described this subject as invested in the self not merely for monetary return

but also to manage the appreciation of the self lest there be depreciation (ibid.). The self-appreciating subject is given over to practices at a distance from knowing the self or self-reflection⁶ in relation to a system; it is a non-representational subject. Feher refers to the “speculative subject,” who, we would suggest, is engaged in practices to sustain a liquidity of capacity and thereby a subject who finds politics in debates over what practices of self-appreciation are wanted and what kinds of alliances and collectives are necessary for practices to be fruitful to ongoing speculation on capacity.

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We take the idea of the datalogical turn from R. Joshua Scannell.

NOTES

1. Big data is a loosely defined term that is generally applied to massive amounts of data (on the order of peta and exabytes) that accrue over time. The size of the data is such that it cannot be parsed using common databased tools, requiring specialized methods such as parallel computing to glean meaningful information.
2. We are drawing on Whitehead’s notion of prehension: “Each actual entity is ‘divisible’ in an indefinite number of ways and each way of division yields its definite quota of prehensions. A prehension reproduces itself in the general characteristics of an actual entity: it is referent to an external world, and in this sense will be said to have a ‘vector character’; it involves emotion, and purpose, valuation, and causation. In fact, any characteristic of an actual entity is reproduced in a prehension” (1978, p. 19). Or as Steven Shaviro would read Whitehead, prehension is any non-sensuous sensing or perception of one entity by another involving “a particular selection—an ‘objectification’ and an ‘abstraction,’ of the ‘data’ that are being prehended. Something will always be missing, or left out” (2009, pp. 49–50).
3. A derivative is a financial instrument whose value is based on one or more underlying assets. In practice, it is a contract between two parties that specifies conditions (especially the dates, resulting values of the underlying variables, and notional amounts) under which payments are to be made between the parties. The most common types of derivatives are forwards, futures, options, and swaps. The most common underlying assets include commodities, stocks, bonds, interest rates, and currencies (*Wikipedia*, 2014).
4. Seigworth and Tiessen describe liquidity as referring “more broadly to the globally integrated financial system’s need to meet its future obligations (for nominal monetary growth or ‘profit’ and for ongoing economic expansion, in part by keeping the funds flowing through the perpetual outlay/creation of more ‘credit’ and, correspondingly, more debt” (2012, p. 64).
5. In our tracing the move away from system, we, however, have not developed a position on network. But surely the datalogical turn touches on thinking about networking. So *flat networky topography* is good enough language for us for now. What is more important here is the thinking about liquidity in relationship to what no longer is to be thought of as system.
6. We are thinking here of Foucault’s treatment of practice in his *Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981–1982* (2005).

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10 Irrevocable Loss

Alphonso Lingis

We awaken, open our eyes and the environment presents itself, spreading on all sides unto the horizons. Light silently fills our home, awakening the density and support of reality. Light summons us outside, to fields of swaying leaves and intricate wiry branches, flakes of silvery water juddering over the surface of lakes, clouds drifting in the moonlit sky. Our eyes, our ears, our extended touch opens upon the present and upon the future. In everything that presents itself to us we see what it is and what it may become.

Our perception retains what had presented itself and passed on, re-presenting it in this retention, and, envisioning the possible in what it sees, anticipates what is coming. We employ language to invoke the distant and the absent, and we employ language to compose the narrative, progress, destiny, tragedy, comedy, or farce of our lives. The narrative depicts and affirms the coherence of the environment about us and the cohesion of our identity across time.

The field of the future that opens before us is studded with possibles, but the possible is not the future. What is possible is possibly impossible. The path may prove impassable, the implements break in our hands. As we advance into the environment with our foresight, powers, and skills, we sense our vulnerability, our mortality. With a blow that strikes us or narrowly misses, we tremble, sensing the abyss under us. A slippery stairs step, a frayed electrical wire, a microbe can put an end to our life. All the possibilities we see in things may, somewhere, anywhere, at any moment, abruptly become impossible and the things now hovering about us in the present have no future.

We obscurely sense that death lurks everywhere about us, tracking us, coming for us. It is not a black wall on the far end of the future; it is imminent. At any moment the rail of time may be cut. Martin Heidegger says that in anxiety we sense that all that is present and possible about us may abruptly withdraw their support and leave us with nothing to hold on to, reducing our powers, our existence, to nothing. My death, he says, is the reduction of my existence to nothingness. But it is too much to say that we know what death is, that we can identify it, identify nothingness. Anxiety senses that what is coming is ungraspable, unrepresentable.

The harsh edges of things, the blows struck by others wound us, we suffer. In suffering one feels the growing inability to launch initiatives, to turn from oneself to the outside environment; one finds oneself unable to leave the pain or to back up behind one's corporeal materiality. The time of action is a progressive trajectory that retains the past actions and events, converting them into direction and momentum, and maps the future with a representation of objectives, paths, implements, and obstacles. The time of suffering is a time when the initiatives of the past lose their force and momentum and we cannot take hold of the possibles in things, the future disconnects. The time of suffering is a time of dying.

Finding, in advancing old age, our powers progressively turning into impotence and prostration or stricken with an illness that medicine judges to be terminal, we find ourselves awaiting the end. The momentum of our past falls away, our experiences and skills are helpless to deal with the death that approaches and with the time during which it is still postponed. Dying takes time; death comes when it will. We are suspended in a now that is not going anywhere, that prolongs itself until it is cut. The time of dying is a dead time, a now that endures without a future, without possibilities. For each of us perhaps there will come the time when we can hope for nothing, do nothing more, for ourselves or for others, while we have yet this to do: to die. How occupy this time that remains, what can we do that does not project a productive result in an illusory future? What lucidity remains, what can we do?

In Gabriel Garcia Márquez's (1991) *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Colonel Aureliano Buendía had risen to become commander-in-chief of the revolutionary forces and the man most feared by the government. He had launched thirty-two armed uprisings and had lost them all. He had slaughtered uncounted enemy soldiers and non-combatants and led so many of his followers to defeat and death without heroism or legacy. He had seventeen male children by seventeen different women, who, because they were his sons, were one after the other hunted down and killed. As the years passed he saw the Conservatives but also the Liberals for whom he fought had abandoned all their principles, fighting only for power. After almost twenty years of war, he signed a treaty with the government putting an end to the war.

He returns to the house in which he was born. He gives his military clothing to the orderlies, buries his weapons, and burns the poetry he had since childhood written. He destroys all traces of his passage through the world. He refuses to see anyone. Behind closed doors all day he works, making gold figurines, little fish. He links their scales, laminates gills, puts on fins, and fits tiny rubies into their eye sockets. The fish are very small, frail, but perfect. At first he sold the little fishes for gold coins and then melted down the coins to make little fish. But when he found out that people were buying them not as pieces of jewelry but as historic relics, he stopped selling them. He keeps on making two fishes a day and when he finishes twenty-five he melts them down and starts all over again. The attention, the concentration

required by the delicacy of his artistry fills the persistence of time and also neutralizes his memories and disconnects his disillusionment of the war. Each little fish is perfect and each movement and moment of making it is perfect and dissolves as each fish is melted down. He is effacing the worth and worthlessness of all his deeds, effacing his very name, in these figurines.

He is also effacing the conquest that had founded Columbia. The conquistadors were searching for *el Dorado*, the Muisca chief who filled a raft with gold figurines and covered himself with gold dust and rowed to the center of Lake Guatavita, where he descended into the waters and scattered all the gold objects among the fish of the lake. The conquistadors tortured hundreds of natives to get them to reveal where the gold was mined and stored, and several times enslaved them to drain the lake, without recovering the treasure.¹ They exterminated the Muisca, obliterated their culture and knowledge, such that today nothing remains but a small number of tiny gold figurines whose meaning is lost.

About this time Colonel Aureliano Buendía's sister Amaranta begins to weave a shroud for Rebeca. In her adolescence Amaranta had fallen in love with Pietro Crespi, who was betrothed to Rebeca. Amaranta had sworn to kill Rebeca before they could marry. But Pietro Crespi did not marry Rebeca and when he later proposed to Amaranta, she refused him. Unable to move her refusal, he put an end to his own life. Years later Colonel Gerineldo Márquez declared his love to her, but Amaranta refused him. These two refusals had marked her life, which repeated and prolonged them.

In her extreme old age and blindness her mother Úrsula came to see that Amaranta, "whose hardness of heart frightened her, whose concentrated bitterness made her bitter," was

the most tender woman who had ever existed, and she understood with pitying clarity that the unjust tortures to which she had submitted Pietro Crespi had not been dictated by a desire for vengeance, as everyone had thought, nor had the slow martyrdom with which she had frustrated the life of Colonel Gerineldo Márquez been determined by the gall of her bitterness, as everyone had thought, but that both actions had been a mortal struggle between a measureless love and an invincible cowardice, and that the irrational fear that Amaranta had always had of her own tormented heart had triumphed in the end. (Márquez, 1991, p. 250)

The hatred was a fear of the wild torments of love, and as love sometimes converts into hatred, hatred sometimes converts into love, both of them possible on the basis of a measureless understanding of solitude.

In old age Amaranta was now only waiting for Rebeca to die.

She had decided to restore Rebeca's corpse, to disguise with paraffin the damage to her face and make a wig for her from the hair of the saints.

She would manufacture a beautiful corpse, with the linen shroud and a plush-lined coffin with purple trim, and she would put it at the disposition of the worms with splendid funeral ceremonies. She worked out the plan with such hatred that it made her tremble to think about the scheme, which she would have carried out in exactly the same way if it had been done out of love (p. 278).

As she worked, the attention and concentration spent on each stitch made each of her memories more scalding.

Then one day death appeared to her in an apparition and ordered her to begin sewing her own shroud. "She was authorized to make it as complicated and as fine as she wanted but just as honestly executed as Rebeca's, and she was told that she would die without pain, fear, or bitterness at dusk on the day that she finished it" (p. 279). All her waking hours Amaranta works on her shroud, all her nights she dreams of the shroud. Sometimes after her dreams she unravels what she has woven to design it anew. It will be the most perfect, the most beautiful shroud ever woven. Over four years she works; each thread, each now absorbs her attention completely. The time span of the weaving is not like the time span of a work, making a shelter or a tool or utensil, which opens upon a future time of possibility. The time span of the weaving is the dead time of the present whose past has fallen away, that prolongs itself into another thread, another now. A time of perfection, what is accomplished neither requiring anything further nor making possible something different.

The world was reduced to the surface of her skin and her inner self was safe from all bitterness. It pained her not to have had that revelation many years before, when it would have still been possible to purify memories and reconstruct the universe under a new light and evoke without trembling Pietro Crespi's smell of lavender at dusk and rescue Rebeca from her slough of misery, not out of hatred or out of love but because of the measureless understanding of solitude (p. 279).

The shroud is not a representation of her life but the meticulous and unremitting effacement of the bitterness of her life. The shroud is not an artwork that will enshrine her in immortality; it will be buried with her.

Intensely present to us are those we love. Holding the beloved's hands, his or her substance supports us, the pulse of his or her life throbs in our body. Caressing the beloved our body trembles with the spasms of pleasure and torment in another; we feel the beloved's pleasure in our pleasure. Love is the most intense craving to know.

But denuded, abandoned in our arms, the beloved remains distant. Our caresses pass repetitively and aimlessly over the beloved, having no idea what

they are searching for. After years of love we are still fascinated to note a detail of his or her body so indescribably unlike our body, surprised by his or her impulses, interests, whims. Exhilaration surges in surprise, an encounter with the unanticipated; joy is made of surprise and exhilaration. Love attaches to a singular being. It is symbiosis with someone who remains alien and exotic.

We care for those we love; we love those we care for. Love is affection, passion, abandon, pulsing with readiness to act, protect, support, heal offenses and disillusionments. Love is wonder before the power and splendor of life in another, inseparable from concern for the frailty, the vulnerability of the beloved.

More devastating than my death, still imminent, postponed, is the death that strikes the one I love. *Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner*. But I cannot understand. None of the world's reasons—the reasons in force in machinery that crushed him or her, the reason in microbes—prevails against the reasons that generate the goodness for me and for the world that the life in my beloved elaborated. I cannot represent the reasons for his or her death and cannot represent the abyss left by his or her death.

This trauma cannot be healed. Sigmund Freud enjoined a work of mourning that transfers my libido upon other love-objects. But how is that possible without abandoning and betraying all that was good and real in the one I loved and all the goodness in my life that this love generated? I have to harbor this loss, retain the distant and uncomprehended one I loved, and retain the forces that love generated in me, and assemble what resources are possible to be able to live.

On that day Michael and Kelly had been married twenty-two months. On that day Michael was in Montreal. On that day, a hundred miles away, Kelly was the only one killed in a three-car collision. On that day Kelly was killed in a three-car collision.

Michael looked down at the coffin in the grave. Kelly was a black void. Michael's mind was a black void. His young life, sent forth to a radiant working and loving future, was a black void. The funeral rite was accomplished, one after another the people touched Michael, sometimes tried to murmur something that did not register in Michael's mind, one after another they left. Nobody ventured to try to bring Michael away—for what? To do what? To say what?

Michael became aware that the gravedigger was there, with shovels. He timidly began his work. The shovels of earth fell upon Kelly's coffin, covering her forever with darkness. The gravedigger, a stranger. Michael without thinking took a shovel and together they filled the grave with earth, with darkness.

Michael lost his mind. Thoughts pick up the layout of the world, pick up possibilities, envision goals and reasons and paths and means. Thoughts formed in Michael's mind only to shudder and blur their lines and break against one another without being able to activate Michael. Feelings churned in a maelstrom of darkness.

One day, a month later, Michael's mind was filled with hallucinations. Hallucinations of being there, with Kelly, seeing her stiffen, cry out, stomp her foot on the brake, seeing the car scream and buckle, seeing her body crushed, seeing her breath, her life escape her. Every day, all day, there was nothing in Michael's mind but the hallucinations. Michael did not seek counseling. He had never been afraid of the imagination. Then one day, three weeks later, the hallucinations were not there. They did not return.

One day Michael had gone on his bicycle to Kelly's grave. After, he did not return to his apartment. He headed east. Alone, on his bike. Two months later he reached the Atlantic Coast. Then he took a plane to Vancouver on the Pacific Coast and headed back east on his bike. Back to Kelly's grave. He biked for a year, alone, ten thousand kilometers.

To set out on a bicycle trip for weeks, for months, interrupting one's life, one's work, is not an initiative with a plan and a purpose. Young people sometimes do it, with a buddy; we fit it into our thinking in terms of purpose and goal; we say to ourselves they are building up their bodies, exploring their strengths, discovering the wider world. The adults we hear of who are crossing the continent or the world on a bike we hear they are doing it for a cause, to promote international brotherhood or peace, or to raise money for children with AIDS. The goal, the purpose always looks makeshift, added on. We who are committed to a job or a profession cannot really understand them; we can only imagine they are different, daft; we cannot imagine ourselves doing that.

Michael had no cause, no goal or purpose. It was not something he was doing for Kelly; Kelly was lost forever in the black void. To pump the bike for ten thousand kilometers makes one completely physical. Consciousness exists now in the tensions and the relaxing of the muscles, in the feeling of strength and in the fatigue. Consciousness exists on the surfaces of the body all sensitive to the sun, the wind, the cold, the rain. A consciousness that excludes thinking, remembering, envisioning works and ambitions. The road rising and descending, kilometer after kilometer. Sometimes the landscape opens upon enchanting vistas, glistening with dew and birdsong. Sometimes physical fatigue blurs the eyes, the landscape dissolves into green dust. There is no planning the day ahead; who knows what the weather will be, what the road will be. The end of the day one sinks heavily into dark sleep.

Our place is a retreat or refuge that we have appropriated; where Michael stopped for the night was a place forthwith to leave. The open road drew movement into him. During the ten thousand kilometers, nature was tunneling into him in his strong breathing, strong pushing, strong feeling, strong forcing, strong dancing, strong singing-out. He felt nature guiding his body and felt an intensity of trust that he had never known before. The sun and the breeze fueled his body. He was a body in nature, like a hare in the prairie, a bird in the sky. Unbounded nature, horizons opening endlessly onto more nature.

Nature was surfacing with its flowers and multicolored birds and soft-furred scurrying animals, surfacing in his consciousness with spreads

of incalculable splendor. Stretches of the road rose in relief, throbbing with speed or tranquility, with ardor and exhilaration. Vistas that opened vast and misty were vibrating with uncanny bliss. Groves of trees were murmuring with benevolent animal spirits and arcane mysteries. People moved with distinctive choreography of gait and gesture in the different farm roads and different towns. Michael carried a GPS that continually mapped the road with abstract intersections of longitude and latitude, but he found himself mapping the continent, a map marking places of emotional intensity.

Then one day, in Saskatchewan, he stopped in a little gas and food station far from any town for breakfast.

Hear him tell it:

I had already been riding for about three hours that morning and managed to cover about 75 miles. As I was rummaging through my gear to find my wallet for my breakfast a man about 65 years of age approached me and began asking me questions about my bicycle. He and his wife had just pulled into the Gas-Bar to have breakfast too. They were heading to Alberta from Ontario. I asked them where they were from in Ontario; they said they were from Perkinsfield. The man added that he doubted that I would have ever heard of Perkinsfield. I laughed and told him that my family's summer home was in Perkinsfield and that I was married in St. Patrick's Church, which is in the centre of the community; naturally he knew the church.

We went inside and ate our breakfast together. The gentlemen asked me if my wife minded that I was away from home for so long while riding my bike across the country. I told them that Kelly had died a year ago in an automobile accident at the intersections of highway 12 and country road 6 (incidentally located in Perkinsfield as well).

Immediately the man said to me, "You're that poor woman's husband?!"

It all came as a shock that this gentleman had made such a knowing statement to me concerning Kelly's death. I held my breath waiting for what he was going to say to me next.

He told me that he was driving home from the grocery store in Perkinsfield when he came upon the accident in which Kelly had been killed, only moments after the collision. He got out of his car to see if he could be of any assistance, but he could tell that Kelly was badly injured. In a few moments the emergency vehicle arrived and Kelly was taken to the hospital.

We were all there in tears going through this short recollection of events that had had such an effect on us each. Jake had lived in Perkinsfield his entire life. I had been going there to our cottage for thirty-five years. His home was only one kilometer from where my parents' cottage was and we had never crossed paths before this moment.

There is the linear time of geology and astronomy and the linear time of history, and there is the time of each of us that is our lifetime. It is the time of our birth, infancy, growing up, education, engaging in a work or a profession, a family. It is the time of practical life, of detaching and manipulating things. We measure the time of childhood, adolescence, and education in years; we measure the day in working hours and tasks in minutes. An automobile accident, a death throws Michael outside of this time, into the incalculable time of chance, of fate. A time that does not advance by measurable units, that is not progressive, that is a limitless stretch of duration in which events happen, themselves chance events, fateful events. This time was not outside the world, in the remote empyrean told by myths themselves remote, it was the time of nature, of dawn returning over the dark-forested hills, of the poised pause of deer, of the invisible rush of winds, the gyrating clouds of butterflies and gnats, the dull rumble of thunder and the frenzied rage of lightning, the drifting of seeds cast in the breeze by flowering fields, the time of nature tunneling into him.

The time in which Kelly was struck is not a time where what is detached is reassembled, where what is torn down is rebuilt; it is a time where loss is absolute, time of the irrevocable. The time of the bike ride is a stretch of duration without achievement or accomplishment. Yet it is a time in which, inconceivably, Michael finds Kelly again. First, in the three weeks of hallucinations of being with her in the crash. And then in a chance encounter thousands of kilometers later with Jake, who, in Michael's place, was there when Kelly died.

It happened that I was in Edmonton, where I gave some talks. At the end of my stay Michael came up to me with a thick volume of maps of regions across Canada painted in intense emotional colors, and many words written across the pages. He called the book *The Atlas* and told me it was the map of his bike ride. He said that there was no time for me to read it now, that rather he wanted to read it to me one day. He asked me to write something on the Edmonton page. I trembled over the idea of my writing something on his great map and calendar of his journey in a time flowing into rivers and lakes and mountains of emotion but could not refuse. I saw with awe that he had made this time of loss a meticulous, desperate, and ecstatic work.

My death—my death is mine. Each one of us dies alone. To give forth one's life is to give without return. Yet our death is a connection with others. To die is not to leave nothingness in our place; it is to give our place to others. And to give our goods, our possessions to others. The house or apartment we acquired and made into a home. The money we saved, resources for acquiring new skills and pleasures and resources for caring for others, is left to others. The figure of our character—considerate, loyal, generous, tender, or efficient, striving, reserved, cautious, wary—that we have shaped and the bold, audacious, reliable actions we have performed have been inscribed on our material environment and given to others. Our death is a sacrifice for others.

Our lives have continued the lives of others. We have taken up the projects, intentions, values, dreams of our parents. Our minds have taken up and made live again the intuitions and probings of thinkers dead centuries ago. Our eyes have shaped what we see with the exalted and anguished eyes of artists and seers, of Michelangelo, Van Gogh, William Blake. Our throats have sung chants of ancient bards and songs of vocalists our parents had loved and ballads of people in remote lands. We have continued the walks of Henry David Thoreau in Massachusetts and John Muir in the Sierra Nevada.

Even held in our arms, the beloved remains distant. Someone we have loved for decades remains alien and unfathomable. We do not know the one we love, and we love those we do not know.

A port exists as a passage to elsewhere. I was reading about Trieste. I had never been there but it sounded not like a place one goes to but a place one goes from. To be a native of Trieste is to have a birthplace but an unmoored home. Trieste was a free commune in the twelfth century, from 1327 the sole port of Austria, and from 1867 of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It was then annexed to Italy in 1920. Allied bombings during World War II destroyed the shipyards and the industrial section of the city. Trieste was constituted as an independent city-state under United Nations protection in 1947. In 1954 the city-state was divided and Italy and Yugoslavia each annexed a part. In 1975 Italy and Yugoslavia signed the Treaty of Osimo, officially dissolving the Free Territory of Trieste and dividing it between the two states. The city proper was predominantly Italian-speaking, the suburbs and surrounding towns predominantly Slovenian, though there were also smaller numbers of Germans, Croats, Serbs, Czechs, Istro-Romanians, and Jews.

I had been to Australia. They say there are two hundred different ethnic groups in Australia, besides the aboriginal population, now but 2.5 percent of the total. After World War II, the Australian government launched a massive immigration program, believing that having narrowly avoided a Japanese invasion, Australia must “populate or perish.” Since 1945 seven million people have immigrated to Australia. One out of four of Australia’s current 22.6 million people were born elsewhere. Mary, who lives in Sydney, is the daughter of Greek immigrant parents.

She wrote to tell me that her friend Domenico de Clario would be in Baltimore and suggested we meet. Domenico, she said, is an artist. He makes paintings, drawings, assemblages, text performances, site-specific and installation art, and piano performances. Many of these visual and musical works are made with Domenico blindfolded.

Domenico came to my home. A man of average height, in his sixties, shaven head, a handsome and very mobile face, Ozzie accent. I asked him if he had been born in Australia. It’s hard to find somebody born in Australia, he laughed. He told me he had been born in Trieste, and asked what about me. I said my parents had emigrated from Lithuania. I grew up on a farm in

Illinois, a small farm that my father worked with the tools and doggedness of a peasant.

Domenico said he was born in 1947 in Trieste, in a one-bedroom apartment that housed his parents, grandparents, and sister. In 1956 he and his family boarded a ship bound for Australia. When they arrived they were taken to a holding camp in a former military barracks. After six weeks a job was located for his father and they moved to the Italian quarter in Melbourne. Domenico said he studied architecture and town planning in Melbourne but left without completing a degree. When he was twenty he did return to Italy to study painting in Milan for a year. Over the years he was able to teach painting, drawing, sculpture, performance, and installation in Melbourne. And make his art.

I asked him what work he was doing now. He said he had translated Calvino's *Invisible Cities* into English, Triestine, and music, and, in a lane behind his house, each evening at dusk over fifty-six consecutive days, he improvised music for it and presented two stories, one recounting a journey he had made and the other describing a house somewhere in the world he wanted to live in. He presented the work for a PhD at Melbourne's Victoria University in 2001. "So I finally got a degree," he smiled.

We sat on the back deck, with glasses of Italian wine he had brought, looking out upon my big backyard, dense with bushes and trees. I said I planted all that; there had been nothing but grass when I moved here. Probably some urge to get out of the city, to go back to the country where I was a boy.

"I was nine years old when I left Trieste," he said. The ship that had somehow survived the war was very old. It was overcrowded to an extent that would not be allowed today. People were sleeping in the corridors, on the deck. They had brought sacks with all their possessions. They were leaving their homelands, their families and friends forever. Most of them had only a distant relative or friend from years ago waiting for them in Australia. We were forty-two days at sea. June and July; the summer heat, the small meals, bad food—people got in one another's way, quarreled, couldn't sleep, got sick. One guy was really losing it. Middle-aged, seemed to be alone, nobody knew who he was. He would lean over the deck moaning loudly and stomp back and forth for hours muttering. We finally arrived at Perth. Some people got off. This man pushed against the immigration officials that had come to meet the ship and shouted that he was going to Melbourne. They said the ship was going on to Melbourne. He mumbled miserably that he could not endure the ship any longer. Finally they took him to the immigration camp.

"Some months later we in the immigration camp in Melbourne learned that he had escaped and headed on foot for Melbourne. It is 3,400 kilometers from Perth to Melbourne. We learned that he had made it about a third of the way then perished of exposure."

Domenico stopped and looked out over the backyard into the distance. After some moments he looked back at me.

“Four years ago my parents had some people over who had been on that ship fifty years ago. They exchanged memories and at one point remembered that man. And I started to think of him again. A few weeks later I went to the library to search out the newspapers from that year. Finally I found a small notice in one newspaper. It mentioned the place where his body was found.”

“A few weeks after that I packed a backpack and took the bus to that place. It’s a flat empty stretch, desert all around. Then I started walking toward Melbourne. I walked for ten days.”

“Then the next year I went back to the place where I had left off, to continue the walk. Another ten days. Last year I again went back, to continue his walk.”

NOTE

1. A last authorized search was in 1965, and illegal scuba divers have since continued to search.

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Afterword

Non-Representational Theory and Me Too

Hayden Lorimer

Memoir has proven to be a winning literary form for reflecting on the twists and turns taken by non-representational theory (NRT) (Cresswell, 2012). In this afterword I adopt that same autobiographical mode, using “life writing” to channel critical remarks on an assortment of methodological matters, approaches and potentials, tendencies, travels, and travails. The skeptical reader might wish immediately to question why I have opted for this approach, particularly given that non-representational theorists have been resistant to the biographical model, troubled by the biological principle of ontological sovereignty upon which it is dependent. Allow me to place words in mouths: “What appeal lies in a view shaped between personal and professional experience?” “What dividends come from choosing a route that must revisit the past to get to the future?” My own case for the defense would note that intellectual movements get older, just as people do. Having invested in, or attached yourself to a project, you can end up living it, to a surprising degree—sometimes more so than is ideal. It’s important too that we recognize how ageing and seasoning are processes that act on the reception of ideas and how, working in the opposite direction, the maturation of ideas might alter the way you feel about self-declared areas of research interest.

In broader historiographical terms, the timing is also right for a critical retrospective. When *Non-Representational Methodologies* appears in print, a significant anniversary will be a matter of months—rather than years—away. The publication of *Spatial Formations* (Thrift, 1996) marked the founding statement for what would become a bold intellectual project. Other commentators might choose to identify different or more complex points of origin for non-representational theory. But to think that a project perennially characterized by its “now-ness”—and often so very unapologetic about its shock value and urgency—will soon enter its third decade is to significantly reframe the terms of debate. Is it possible, the devil’s advocate in me asks, to *keep on* being a paradigm-shifting “game-changer”? Is constant renewal possible, by repeatedly asking the question “Where next?” What happens when radical ideas gain a level of general acceptance, and get mainstreamed? Questions such as these, ones properly attuned to the

temporality of ideas, open a door to the specter of midlife crisis, and with only a hint of mischief.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

This initial bout of throat clearing over, I should back up. My own genesis story needs to be told. Near enough a decade has passed since I first grappled seriously with non-representational theory. The circumstances were particular: an invitation to write a series of review essays for *Progress in Human Geography* (*PiHG*). Initially, I vacillated over the offer, considering my options. Mostly this happened by way of internal dialogue: “Me?” “Really?” “Have I got the pedigree to comment on this stuff with any real authority?” “Can I manage the responsibility?” “Get the wrong end of the stick, and you’ll look an utter fool.” Truth be told, I was never an original member of the scene. That status can be conferred on a relative few. Until 2004, my role had been one of interested, passive observer, located at some distance from the cutting edge. Scotland seemed a very long way from the thick of the action. Theoretically speaking, the University of Bristol was where it was at. Everybody knew that. The School of Geographical Sciences was a crucible for experiment. Populated by a notable cohort of graduate students, operating under the supervision of Nigel Thrift, and Paul Cloke. The “project”—because a hot-housed project was exactly what it seemed from the outside—was shrouded in mystique (I should say in passing that historians of modern geography could profitably apply a traditional diffusion model of research innovation to the subsequent patterning of non-representational theory in UK universities).

Perhaps the implications arising from all this introspection were a serious enough spur to action. I mailed the acceptance message, and started amassing relevant literature, acutely aware that bringing myself up to speed would be a significant task in itself. A midsummer of binge reading followed. Incidentally, during a recent spring-clean of the attic several old shoeboxes deep-filled with journal article printouts were uncovered, the margins heavily annotated with my preparatory notes (to be perfectly honest, I didn’t feel a strong urge to delve back in there). But way back then, other formative decisions had to be taken. The shaping of a new writing identity was principal among them. “Who was I going to be?” Agent provocateur? Buccaneering partisan? Court jester? Each was of course an idle pipe dream, and none of them what the editors of *PiHG* had in mind. When it came to the crunch I played things fairly safe, taking on the role of middleman and interlocutor for the wider geographical community. Producing inclusive, explanatory accounts seemed like a useful contribution to make, in language that sought to offer a guiding hand to the curious.

The writing experience that followed I found no less intense than I had the reading. It was a drawn-out exercise too; the published trilogy of reports

ended up having its own leap year (Lorimer 2005, 2007, 2008). And the returns on all that effort expended? These have been many; welcome, surprising, and enduring. For starters, I found a voice that previously I wasn't really aware I had. Making critical interventions in conceptual debates was, at that juncture, an academic role fairly new to me. Part way between naive and gauche, I even had a crack at renaming the whole enterprise. Years later, I now find myself revisiting events, as a way to do a bit more of the same, bringing things up to date, so as then to cast forward and unfurl a map of the future. But to get there we must back up some more. Extra cultural context is necessary to put you properly in the picture. What was it that fuelled my initial anxieties about taking aim, and assuming position in the midst of this particular geographical debate? To find answers (and with advance apologies for sketchiness) it's worth rehearsing just something of the history and sociology of non-representational theory, for the benefit of newcomers and veterans alike.

Disciplinary skirmishes about the very existence of non-representational theory got kind of ugly. Quickly too. For good and for ill, argument knotted itself up in established ideological antagonisms: versus Marxism; versus feminism; versus bedrock pragmatism. "Non-rep" (the shorthand label in common conversational usage, and one I'll employ from here on) was a scene about which people felt the need to have an opinion—informed, ignorant, or otherwise. Positions were staked out in defense of intellectual turfs and traditions. Salvoes were exchanged. Fingers wagged, tongues too. Conference talk could get colorful and combustible, verging on vengeful. In large part, the confrontational dynamic seemed to come down to significant differences in *style*. By its unfamiliarity, sometimes startlingly so, the theoretical language of non-representational theory was judged unhelpful, unwelcoming even. The subject matter was a source for complaint too, mostly because it was judged not demonstrably geographical enough.

Adventures in affect? Auras and atmospheres? Affordances and assemblages? Absences and anomie? To the doubters, it all seemed dubiously abstract, impressionistic, and so hellish hard to put a finger on. Add to this the prosody of non-representational argument, apparently buoyed by preternatural levels of confidence. Self-consciously styled as performative, more emotionally candid than expected, non-rep was accorded a collective persona, one that rubbed up plenty of folk the wrong way. Then there was the fact that leading practitioners seemed so unfazed at setting inquisitive colleagues such an unfamiliar and challenging route through tangles of social theory in the search for proper understanding. Feelings of inadequacy were the unfortunate by-product, and an awkward take-home message, however unintended. The upshot? Not in a long time (and not at any point since) has human geography encountered anything as immediately polarizing and challenging.

And yet and yet. . . . Or perhaps as much *because* of these starkly defined features, non-representational theory has held an enduring draw,

getting audiences excited, opening widescreen disciplinary debates about mission and method, purpose and design, language and attitude, heart and soul. Argument and exchange about non-rep have had a habit of vaulting, or just plain ignoring subdisciplinary frontiers, in ways that were bound to attract as much as offend. At its best, non-rep writing creates a certain shimmer, as if altering the limits of perception, demanding that you burrow deeply into your own being and, paradoxically, making you lose track of yourself. The whole effect can be pulled off with some panache and charm. Maybe you had to be there, but I can recall reading experiences, conference papers, group discussions, and pub-table conversations that really felt like a trip to the ideas-buffet. There were moments that left me wondering or puzzling, in all sorts of ways. But there were also other issues at hand, concerned with disciplinary rudiments and fundamentals that raised the stakes higher still.

The non-rep mission statement—to reshape a politico-ethical agenda for human geography (never *just* cultural geography) through a revised focus on “the social,” as an endlessly emergent, porous, improvisatory, associational, and circumstantial realm—was bound to excite counteroffensives and stir up irritation. Depending on circumstance and audience, the fanfare heralding non-representational approaches could seem totalizing, the tone of argument too forcefully declarative. Chief among the complaints voiced during the early phases was a perceived reluctance to step away from the bookshelves, to move *beyond* theory-based exposition and generate satisfyingly substantive examples of research practice, derived by getting moving and going somewhere. According to such conventional (and on occasion too crude) measures of research-value, the rhetoric of non-representational geographies needed evidencing in empirics. One counterargument has since seen decent service: that the doing of theoretical exposition *is* a very real kind of academic practice (arguably just as embodied as gardening or dancing). Touché! But the cleverness of this principled point does not fully address the ongoing appeal for applicable or transferable theory, fully embedded into what regular social scientists agree upon as the sequential model of academic research. Sometimes, the gulf in approaches can come down to incommensurable standards, and opposing units of measure. A phrase such as “radical empiricism” might well be part of a shared lexicon, and yet seems to be based on sharply contrasting interpretations of the term. After first-order principles, there remain questions over non-representational methodologies—big ones. How do you render non-rep operative? According to what sort of design? What exactly are the methods? Where are they? How do you retool your research for non-rep? A barrage of questions arise that, cumulatively, bring us around from the cultural history and sociology of non-rep to where I need to go next. My comments are organized into three sections, giving consideration to the practice, the teaching, and the writing of non-representational methodologies.

PRACTICING NON-REPRESENTATIONAL RESEARCH

The practicing of non-rep in human geography and cognate subject areas can be charted cartographically. Where the atlas of active operations and associated interests might once have been mapped as an islanded academic phenomenon (its intellectual limits tidily overlapping with the terrestrial outline of the British Isles), *Non-Representational Methodologies* demonstrates the extent to which theory has travelled of late, achieving greater global reach and, in the process, opening out new continents of thought and action. Alertness to NRT has clearly become a more internationally observed habit. This being the case, what is the nature of praxis in this enlarged and expanded non-rep community? And of what does it consist? Certain features are notable.

First, there is suppleness, plasticity, and eclecticism evident in current praxis, characteristics faithful to a vision summoning non-representational theory as a multiplication machine (Thrift, 2008) that produces artful variants and offshoots of creative practice. Previously, when reviewing the field, I elected to apply the label liberally, finding instances of non-rep-friendly practice in published articles whose authors might not choose it in person or have used it in print. Now authors seem willing to borrow and bend aspects of non-rep's experimental attitude, and for variable use. And they do so without getting hung up on whether it's necessary to give the impression of having become a full convert or formal signatory to "the project." "Interested scepticism"—Tim Cresswell's (2012) resonant term of self-description—is an attitude finding wider favor, and in the healthiest of ways. Second, if there is methodological commonality to be found in manifold diversity, then it might well be in terms of research position. On the evidence of the contents of this book, and comparable case studies from a forum such as "Cultural Geographies in Practice" in the journal *cultural geographies*, non-rep praxis is socially and relationally locatable in the midst of things. Whatever the subject of study, be it motion, machines or making, care, creatures, color or chemicals, the middle is where things begin, and where they end. The midst is not then a site to be found, visited, and then left behind. Rather it is a mode. Call it middle-ness, if you will. This position is true to an ethnographic tradition where research happens when things take place, together, in real time, phenomenally. Non-rep praxis is inherently associative, an exercise *between* and *with*-.

Third, there is a wider field of praxis into which non-rep has found an excellent fit. In recent years, non-rep researchers have played a pivotal part in the 'the affect turn'. An increasingly multidisciplinary cluster, affect studies enlist skills and interests from across the social sciences and creative arts. Certain sorts of themes have bobbed to the surface. In no particular order, we might treat the following list as exemplary: hope, anxiety, care, desperation, joy, wonder, enchantment, dread, attraction, security, health, intelligence, and mobility. In search of an "umbrella title," the themes all fall

under the grammatical label of ‘abstract noun.’ Noticeably, this categorical kind has been paired up with a range of ‘concrete nouns’ (to name another illustrative handful: bodies, buildings, airports, animals, landscapes, trains, ships, hospitals, balloons, and bacteria). Now it’s little more than a hunch of mine, and in no sense backed by survey evidence, but the increased levels of comfort, familiarity, and interest appreciable in human geography might well be to do with these couplings of the abstract and concrete. When research is arranged on these terms, it feels situated, materializing through combinations of subjects, places, infrastructures, and economies. Life showing up through practices and properties, sensibilities and surfaces, attunements and aspirations, rhythms and textures, forces and base appetites? Check! At the same time, and quite evidently, all figured as inseparable from worldly socio-spatial situations. Checkmate! This is not a revanchist argument, which would seek to recreate a categorical divide between materiality and immateriality, when it has been shown that none easily exists (Anderson & Wylie, 2009). Instead it is to note where degrees of comfort are to be found in the differential alignment of theory, method and thing.

TEACHING NON-REPRESENTATIONAL RESEARCH

I need to make an occupational confession. It sits at the minor end on any spectrum of teaching sins, but seems significant to me nonetheless. Here goes. I’ve struggled to find genuinely satisfactory ways to embed non-representational research methodologies into my undergraduate teaching (specialist graduate-level research training is a different matter, but let’s put that point aside for the moment). This is no charter for defeatism, because my failure has not been for the want of trying. But I do know that I’m not alone in having come up short. Yet too little gets said, or written, about this missing pedagogic aspect of non-rep. This is an odd state of affairs, because teaching new researchers, and finding inventive ways to generate interest at the grassroots, really ought to be a pressing concern among committed faculty members. For sure there are different elements of the degree curriculum where, by rights, it ought to be possible to introduce non-rep to learning geographers. Let me elaborate, locally. At the University of Glasgow (where I’ve taught for the past decade) the main thrust of non-representational argument gets aired in a core course dedicated to charting the modern history of geographical thought—a narrative of disciplinary change that encompasses intellectual developments all the way from positivism to poststructuralism, regionalism to relationality, topography to topology.

By rights, non-rep should also see the light of day in a parallel core course designed to introduce students to geographical techniques, and the range of possible methods available for gathering data as a part of research practice—the greater logic of the degree program being that conceptual and methodological lessons learned in the lecture theatre get activated in more

advanced stages of the degree curriculum: ventilated during an overseas field-class and applied independently during dissertation research projects. That's the theory at least. But in all honesty, I do little more than dabble, even with the most conscientious of students. Generally, I find that though the rhetoric of non-rep works well enough, but it's a struggle to enable thorough conversion into student research practice. Full delivery seldom happens. So what's my problem? Here's the rub.

Friction features in three ways. First, there's the fact that for early learners, the road to non-rep enlightenment is long and winding. To teach qualitative methodology to undergraduates, foundational building blocks are unavoidable. For simplicity's sake, let's call these the geographical conventions of doing socially and culturally oriented research—namely, that an external world is constituted through social discourses, and these can be subject to the researcher's critical interrogation and authoritative, analytical reading. The same building blocks were a necessary part of the original oppositional logic of non-rep, one where a novel approach emerged in response to the deadening effect of social-cultural interpretation presented, by some, as the still prevailing legacy of the cultural turn. In the classroom, this "straw man" of normative method can be employed as a teaching prop. It can be narrated as a flawed episode in a prehistory of current disciplinary method. To paraphrase: "There once was a time when human geographers went about their research by focusing attention on the critical interrogation of texts, in search of multiple and contested meanings, which were understood to reflect knowledge discourses, social constructions, and power structures." The straw man can then be dramatically torched or disassembled, so estranging methodological orthodoxy. In its place arrives recent change: "But *now* there's a space for doing things differently, openly, contingently." Pressed into service, this is the non-rep case for more creative and sensitive means of accounting for "the social." However, taking this route is a time-consuming and circuitous business, risking pejorative evaluations of worth attributed to other methodological approaches, still taught and favored by colleagues.

Second, there are certain requirements for effective training of non-rep research methods, all entirely practical, that ought not to go overlooked. For lessons on interpretive method, "new cultural geography" was originally indebted to the history of art and to cultural studies. With relative ease, preferred approaches from these cognate fields could be facilitated and drawn into classroom settings. A double slide-projector or TV-video setup wasn't so very hard to arrange, or afford. Lower the blinds, lights off, and let the textual interpretation begin! Methodologically, non-rep approaches owe much to the lead provided by the performing and creative arts. This has all been liberating stuff for the already advanced researcher seeking to develop new expertise. But for undergraduate instruction, it's darn tricky, and potentially expensive, to design and then implement a studio-based workshop (far less an extended crash course) on, say, the *practice* of dance therapy, testimonial theatre, or ethnographic filmmaking. And this is before

reckoning with the group conservatism of the student body, or colleagues' reservations about how practice-led experimentation fits into a greater portfolio of discipline-specific skills. In short, methodological specialisms need specialist services and support.

Alternative teaching arenas do exist, of course. Being initiated into non-rep methodologies can happen quietly, in a lower key, and still offer comparable promise. Encouraging unexpected states of encounter or exposure can be rewarding. One example springs to mind: making a return to childlike curiosity, as a means to tap into our reservoirs of reverie and wonderment. Early life experiences are a universal, demanding only that you remember yourself into an earlier version of your own body. Then again, it's tricky to time-table sessions when the rhythm and tempo of "slow-research" can be wholly embraced, where skills in patient observation can be fostered, and where experiments in detachment and displacement can happen. Carving out uninterrupted time in already crowded and demanding student lifestyles might prove to be an unrealistic ideal.

Third, to date non-rep researchers have remained pretty cagey about creating instructional toolkits or textbook accounts that address questions of methodological design and practical implementation. There's a chronic market shortage of "how-to" or "step-by-step" accounts of non-rep practice. I think I know the cause of this, because I've felt it too. It's the fear that provision of such resources might lead to programmatic learning, standardized sorts of application, and formulaic outcomes. The introduction of a template-led approach is anathema to improvisatory activity or opportunist enterprise, where unpredictable, unfinished worlds are happened upon. Pre-planning is bound to dull, because spontaneous inventiveness is the quintessence of a non-rep approach. Or so the purist's argument goes. If so, it's a principle that can sound too precious, forgetful of the average student mindset, keen to learn but foxed by the prospect of venturing out alone, without a helping hand or guiding voice.

There *is* a different take on methodological teaching, learning, and training. This is one of generational change, posited on a near-future scenario where students arrive self-schooled, digital natives born of the datalogical age, conditioned with 3.0 abilities. Here, I'm envisaging a spectrum of competencies suited to sourcing, mashing, melding, narrating, and mediating "the social," and its many networked formations, accessed as big *qualitative* data sources, as well as tech-savvy students with skillsets easily outstripping those of their academic elders, who, however well attuned to affective styles, remain analogue-trained. I should know. It feels like me. And it would only be emblematic of the gap opening, if I'm proven to be already late on the uptake. Quite possibly, the new needs of our times are already being met. All three of these entreaties for greater pedagogic attention do run the risk of seeming unfashionably workaday, but they are, by my reckoning, consequential for the effective communication of methodological innovation to cohorts of potential non-representationalists. Suffice to say, when the

next bout of course restructuring comes around, I'll get my methodological thinking hat back on.

WRITING NON-REPRESENTATIONAL RESEARCH

How are non-representationalists making more geographers and fellow researchers speak their language? Several of the chapters appearing in this book are intended to be read as deeply personal statements, intense physical engagements, so evidently the product of a particular voice and the energy of a singular attention. At its best, non-rep literature can give the impression (as noted in the previous section) of a writer ensnared in the midst of life taking place, full of responsiveness and suggestiveness. This is, of course, a literary conceit, because the act of writing will seldom involve immersion in the actual scene, but its exact opposite, a detachment from it. When writing gets underway, life is exactly what gets suspended, as many a spouse, partner, or family will attest. To recreate events, and proximity to them, is an ability hard won. It is also highly treasured—mythologized even. Arguably, of all disciplinary communities, the non-rep crowd has been most up-front about ambitions to write differently and creatively, most obviously conscious of the writer as an estimable cultural figure. Influence and envy have been reflected in the use of the long-form essay, an alternative to the standard configuration of scientific article. Other compositional experiments have followed, with narrative, genre, form, register, and modes of address—some cavalier, and naturally not all of them entirely successful. What is to be made of these literary and linguistic aspects of non-rep?

First, at long last it means that writing is being treated as a skill integral to the general education of the academic, one internal to the machinery of methodology rather than an afterthought. Too often overlooked in favor of effective communication, the choice and use of language in the service of good style should be germane to all who aspire to use the label “writer.” Writing about writing can be treated as a formative learning exercise, something that Vannini’s contribution (this volume) seeks to establish, through the generous offer of applicable technique. This technical approach lifts the lid on assembly, offering a specimen essay, paired with a forensic examination of the tactics and tricks contained within—writing rendered as much act as art, where graft is the necessary counterweight to craft. Methodologically speaking, it is helpful to expose the fact that as a creative exercise, writing is not in the least bit glamorous. It needs to be equated more often with day-to-day effort (if not pain and frustration), where words get reworked, over and over. The actions required are as simple as the furnishings: chair, desk, notebook, keyboard, thoughts in the mind, and fingers getting it onto the screen-framed page. And chronic aches and pains (rotator cuff stiffness or other muscular complaints) caused by the characteristic hunch of effort over the laptop. If anything ranks as a methodological truth, then surely this is one.

Second, there remains a vexed question over the presence that deep theory should be afforded, or retain, in non-representational writing. This quandary might be treated as a matter of basic measure, judged by depth or degree: enough of it to provide intellectual ballast, but not too much to sink a piece. Sometimes, lengthy extrapolations of philosophical affinity or value are entirely appropriate and enlightening. But other models are available. To illustrate, it is easiest to be directly self-referential. Some of my own efforts to craft creative geographical writing required non-rep for inspiration and during construction (Lorimer, 2012; Lorimer & Wylie, 2010), although this may not necessarily show up in the work's final published form. An architectural analogy might be helpful. During construction stages, a building is dependent on the existence of a blueprint and scaffolding, but by its finished form little of this (perhaps none of it at all) is immediately evident to the observing eye. On some occasions, the armature is what should be allowed to fall away. There are tricky implications that arise, it must be conceded. Hybrid writing that aims simultaneously to satisfy academic standards and literary styles can run into difficulties. How should authors acknowledge intellectual debts without citation? What kind of welcome should such writing be given by journal editors who find that it fails to observe the house style required for article submission, or arrives with a special case for consideration appended? What course of action is to be followed by a reviewer who, however receptive to experiment, struggles to know how to treat unconventionality fairly and squarely, *and* according to the established rules of the game?

Third, and wholly welcome, are the ways that non-rep writing is giving varied expression to a state of vigilance, at once recognizably ethnographic and altogether estranged. How to put this? It is a heightened awareness, for seeing and feeling. It is an attunement to the shape-shifting quality of senses and the properties of distributed agencies, where the researcher is ready to stare with the ear, as much as the eye, to notice differently, by listening out for the ways that smell, color, or taste is given voice. It is an attentiveness to the small dramas formed by fragments of speech, or the expressive force of sounds and vocalizations that aren't words, but that make up so much of our regularized communication and everyday associations, and on which we are dependent for non-verbal forms of togetherness, sympathy, or frustration. It is about knowing what or who *makes* a silence, as opposed to treating it like an emptiness in need of filling. This kind of writing, subtly attuned to the complexity of the social, cannot be subject to the critics' charge of being the product of a disembodied mind, nor, for that matter, of a "dis-enminded body."

A REALIZED IDEAL

In so far as thinking, associating, learning, moving, and writing can be agreed upon as modes of methodological operation for non-rep research,

I have sought here to subject them to critical scrutiny. My intention in using my own biographical history of engagement, and raiding my memory banks for resources, has not been to draw up a charter for nostalgia, telling the story as one full of better yesterdays. Non-rep would not entertain such retrospective indulgence. As a body of work, it insists instead on the refrain of “What next?,” treating intellectual existence not as a destination but as process. There will continue to be doings and misdoings along the way, the to-ing and fro-ing of trafficked ideas, the further multiplication of voices and styles. And there will be the unmistakable fact that for many researchers the practicing of non-rep is something that has become second nature. Status confirmed: a realized ideal.

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