RETHINKING PRESENCE AS A THINKING BODY:
INTRA-ACTIVE RELATIONALITY AND ANIMATE FORM

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE,

YORK UNIVERSITY

TORONTO, ONTARIO

July 2021

ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates presence as a guarantee or promise for enabling shared meaningfulness. Prompted by Jacques Derrida's argument that the last two millennia of Western philosophy constitute a metaphysics of presence, this careful working-through rethinks presence as a transversal concept from a multidisciplinary perspective. Following Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's contention that philosophy, science, and art constitute three distinct ways of thinking, the study integrates insights from phenomenology, neuroscience and performance art to untangle the human tendency to treat body and consciousness as distinct and mutually alien entities. Consciousness and thought are explored as phenomena that encompass percept, affect, and concept as expressions of a thinking body's animate form. When we understand our being as thinking bodies, presence no longer poses the problem of representing materiality to an immaterial consciousness. Redefined as the enacting and enacted agency of intra-active relationality, presence is refigured as the facilitator of a mutual intelligibility among entities and agencies that are co-determined through their knotted involvement. The concept of relationality replaces the conundrum of metaphoricity. Three philosophers who guided Derrida's early inquiries—Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Emmanuel Levinas—are revisited by reading some of their key ideas against three notional instantiations of presence—self, world, and other—as manifested in works by three contemporary performance artists. Marilyn Arsem's *Meridian*, Adina Bar-On's *Disposition*, and Elvira Santamaría's *Everyday life words in progress* are approached as instances of enacted philosophy, framed as practice in the flesh of theory. Three additional interlocutors provide essential concepts for this rethinking of presence: Maxine Sheets-Johnston, whose careful explorations of how we think through movement extend Husserl's phenomenological insights and challenge the artificial divide between materiality and immateriality; Karen Barad, whose agential realist ontology provides a model for the reimagining of presence as the enacting and enacted agency of intra-active relationality; and Hannah Arendt, whose schema of the *vita activa* is employed as an apparatus for considering the notions of self, world and others. Twelve emergent propositions offer a new framework for approaching the agencies we as thinking bodies bring to our own and the world's becoming.

DEDICATION

The being-in-itself toward which research [...] is directed is relative to the way being is posited in its manner of inquiry.

Hans-Georg Gadamer

This dissertation is dedicated with deep love and respect
to three teachers who have deeply enriched the texture of my life
by helping me to discover and believe in shared meaningfulness through live performance:

Rachel Rosenthal, Dennis Tourbin and Linda Putnam

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

      This dissertation investigates notions of presence—what I will come to describe as rethinking presence as a thinking body—through a multidisciplinary inquiry that draws insights from philosophy, science and art.[1] My approach and interest in this topic are grounded in extensive experience as a performance art practitioner over the past 35 years, both as a creator of solo and collaborative works and as an organizer, producer and curator of performance art. The particular issues that drive practitioners can move theoretical inquiries into fresh terrain and contribute different inflections—if not entirely novel questions—to the debates undertaken by philosophers, scientists, and cultural theorists. The results of artistic inquiry often manifest as ephemeral events or aesthetic artefacts that provide objects of contemplation or reflection by other disciplines,[2] but it is less common to encounter theory that is written directly from or out of artistic practice. My performance practice is heavily invested in an exploration of the guarantees or promises that presence appears to offer. Thirty-five years working as a performance artist have

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[1] Readers may find this text's early references to "philosophy," "science," and "art" in such broad terms—as opposed to a more rigorous identification of particular branches, disciplines or periods within these metacategories; e.g. continental philosophy or Newtonian physics—somewhat distracting. I am following here a general schema put forth by Deleuze and Guattari (1994) in their book *What is Philosophy?* to sketch out three general approaches to human understanding that will be more closely refined in terms of this dissertation's aims in the latter part of this introduction.

[2] Philosophers in particular have found the analysis of art to be enormously productive, despite the admonishments of Plato (360 BCE) in Book X of the *Republic*, in which Socrates identifies artists as thrice removed from truth— that is, "third in descent from nature"—and therefore trading in illusion. *Republic* suggests that the arts, from poetry to painting, are imitative and removed from understanding, and should therefore be banned from the State. More contemporary attention on the fine arts as a key object of inquiry for philosophy can be traced to Emmanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, which turns from a contemplation of nature to a consideration of fine arts, including an argument for genius as a nonconceptual capacity to produce beauty. Kant "sees the role of aesthetic ideas as mediating between rational ideas on the one hand, and sensibility and imagination on the other" (Ginsborg, 2014). In the twentieth century, continental philosophers—from Heidegger, who took sustained inspiration from the poet Hölderlin, to Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1993/1945), whose essay on the painting of Paul Cézanne is an early sketch of his phenomenological approach, to Michel Foucault (2002/1966), who opened his book *The Order of Things* with an extended reading of Diego Velázquez's painting Las Meninas, to Jacques Derrida (1987/1978), who devoted an entire book to *The Truth in Painting*, to Gilles Deleuze, who wrote extensively about cinema, literature and the work of the painter Francis Bacon—have all found fine art of particular value to the explication and advancement of their philosophical projects.

reinforced my conviction and commitment to the idea that there is something extremely valuable and necessary about engaging in intimate communal experiences that attend to the development of a shared consensus of meaningfulness. Put more poetically, coming together to breathe the same air matters, and is integral to the possibility of a "we." Here and throughout the dissertation, the concept of meaningfulness refers to more than just the notion of being impactful or of personal significance. The issue being explored is one of whether meaning can be shared. Does experience break down into irreconcilably atomized and subjective translations of random and personalized signification, or can localized conditions (here and now) contribute to a correspondence that binds understandings in a more collective coherence?

The early writings of Jacques Derrida, which so assiduously challenge the idea of an unmediated and shared certainty called presence that corresponds faithfully and uniformly to our individual experiences, offer a troubling challenge to my convictions. From a semiotic perspective, presence is less a guarantee than a problem to be considered. I find myself compelled by diverging conceptions of the world, different ways of considering what is either valuable or illusory about the notion of presence. At the same time, it also seems important to me to take stock of how science accounts for the way that our bodies—bodies that include a brain—produce the sensation of presence. How do the sensory, kinetic and neural structures of human anatomy generate the sensation of presence, and what, if anything, can this tell us about a shared understanding of things in themselves, as they actually are?

In order to work through these questions, I will undertake an investigation that focuses on three major performance works produced during my tenure as the Performance Art Curator of Fado Performance Inc.:[3] Marilyn Arsem's *Meridian* (2001), Adina Bar-On's *Disposition* (2002), and Elvira Santamaría Torres's[4] *Everyday life words in progress* (2007). While this dissertation

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[3] Fado began in Toronto in 1993 as an ad hoc collective of five performance artists, including me. Following my 1999 *TIME TIME TIME* curatorial project (a year-long series of durational performances featuring artists from Canada, the U.S. and the U.K.) presented under the auspices of Fado, the organization managed to secure operating funding from various arts councils. Fado incorporated as a non-profit artist-run centre in 2001 with me as its single employee. My title was Performance Art Curator, although I was responsible for administrative as well as curatorial duties. Since my resignation in 1997, Fado, now operating under the trade name FADO Performance Art Centre, continues to be English Canada's only artist-run centre devoted exclusively to performance art.

[4] All subsequent references will refer to this artist as Santamaría or Elvira Santamaría, as she is commonly known.

ultimately sits within a cultural studies framework, it does not focus particularly on the literatures of performance studies and art history in which performance art practices are usually framed. Its inquiries are at least as invested in theoretical discourses circulating in technology, media, communications, language, and affect studies. My intention in writing about these particular performances is not to engage theory in order to read or analyze them as art works, nor is it to develop a socio-historical narrative that they exemplify or instantiate; rather, I attempt to cite these performances as instances of enacted philosophy, a distinction I will clarify below.

Presence—the evident and apparently unmediated manifestation of a thing or phenomenon in the here and now as meaningful—has traditionally been valued as central to performance practices. In the performing arts, presence is closely aligned with a privileging of "liveness," in which performer and audience come together at a particular time in a particular space (see, for example, Phelan 1993, Schneider 2011, and Giannachi *et al.* 2012).[5] This situatedness of a performance as an event offers an implicit claim to shared meaningfulness. In theatrical works, presence is often understood to correspond to a quality of the performer.[6] To say that a performer has presence is to suggest that she appears larger than life, emanating an affective charge and inspiring a heightened sense of awareness. The Italian theatre director Eugenio Barba (1985) sums up this privileged notion of presence in his writings on what he calls the "dilated" body of the actor: "A body-in-life dilates the actor's presence and the spectator's perception" (p. 13). In Barba's configuration, the actor's body is able to achieve an opening that amplifies the twinned qualities of presence and perception. In traditional theatre, it is generally understood that the performer's technique and charismatic force are employed to pull the viewer's

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[5] In her book *Performing Remains*, Rebecca Schneider (2011) offers a consideration of how the concept of "liveness" is often constituted in negative terms—as "not dead" or "not recorded." Schneider uses this, in part, as a springboard to think about the differences between the way material objects are understood to remain over time and her concern with the way animate gestures, transmitted bodily, can recur. She also offers a useful short history of how the notion of ephemerality, so central to performance studies discourse, was taken up Richard Schechner in the mid-1960s and influenced the approach of the New York University Department of Performance Studies as it developed in the 1980s, including the work of Phelan (pp. 87-96).

[6] This is the particular idea behind Jerzy Grotowski's (2002/1968) notion of a "poor theatre," which takes the process of acting—stripped of all effects of lighting, costume and so forth—and the actor-audience relationship, as the true core of theatre. For Grotowski,

> Theatre—through the actor's technique, his art in which the living organism strives for higher motives—provides an opportunity for what could be called integration, the discarding of masks, the revealing of the real substance: a totality of physical and mental reactions (pp. 255-256).

attention out of the lived time of the present and into a narrative space of "as if" that has the dual effect of suspending disbelief and bringing a fictional world to presence. In practices that consciously work to disrupt the expectations of spectacle and traditional narrative, including many types of performance art, presence is no less of a concern, but the emphasis is often shifted from an appreciation of the performer's presence to a focus on a sense of presence that discloses the particular time and space of the performance, and, by extension, offers an attunement to the nature of lived experience. A performance may try to direct the audience away from the notion of *looking at the performer* in order to focus attention on *what the performer is doing*,[7] or it may base its coherence not on the creation of a credible narrative, but on developing a more directed engagement with what is "happening," including a heightened awareness of the physical surroundings, the proximity of people and objects, and the demands and intensities of a particular time and space on the audience's individualized and collective bodies.[8]

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[7] For more on this, see Couillard (2010).

[8] Performance can also draw attention to what comes into appearance by virtue of our coming together as "we." Diana Taylor (2020), in her book *¡Presente! The Politics of Presence*, encourages her readers to think of presence in terms of political visibility and accountability, the need "to be ¡Presente!, to show up and stand up" (p. 1). Turning to a Spanish term that for her offers resonances that cannot be fully captured by the English word "presence," Taylor advocates the idea of ¡presente! as a call to contact and action that seeks to cross the various national, economic, racial, gender, linguistic and other boundaries that perpetuate global inequities and exploitation, advocating for a practice of "*acuerpamiento*, learning of a situation by living it in the flesh" (p. 2). Taylor mobilizes the idea of presence to think through cultural dictums and practices of absence, erasure, and disappearance: what gets marked as counting or not counting, who is seen or unseen, what lives and configurations matter or don't matter in struggles around power, quality of life, and even survival. For her, presence is less about being than becoming, an active process of ongoing interpretation and taking personal and collective responsibility that recognizes we never exist in total isolation, removed from the agency we accord or deny others. As she writes:

> ¡Presente!, with and without exclamation marks, depends on context. As much an act, a word, and an attitude, ¡presente! can be understood as a war cry in the face of nullification; an act of solidarity as in responding, showing up, and standing with; a commitment to witnessing; a joyous accompaniment; present among, with, and to, walking and talking with others; an ontological and epistemic reflection on presence and subjectivity as a process; an ongoing *becoming* as opposed to a static *being*, as participatory and relational, founded on mutual recognition; a showing or display before others; a militant attitude, gesture, or declaration of presence; the "ethical imperative," as Gayatri Spivak calls it, to stand up to and speak against injustice. ¡Presente! always engages more than one (p. 4).

For Taylor, presence is clearly something that needs to be thought relationally, in situations that reveal "between-ness, beside-ness, entanglement, and negotiation as integral components of thought and presence itself" (p. 6). Her telling also recognizes "presencing" as a practice in itself, a directed and active engagement with the world that can bring particular subjects into view or suppress their recognition, with

At the same time, contemporary considerations of presence as an aspect of performance extend beyond the concerns of either what presence points to or where it emanates from. Peggy Phelan (1993) has identified presence as an ontological imperative of performance. She suggests that a performance must exist in its own present, becoming itself only through its inevitable disappearance. Theoretical responses to Phelan's provocative stance often rely on a genealogical perspective that treats presence less as an essential or ontological given and more as an effect or intensity that must be understood historically and epistemologically in relation to current concerns around mediation, virtuality, representation, simulation, reproduction, and iteration (see, for example, Auslander 2008/1999, Schneider 2011, and Giannachi *et al.* 2012). Art historian Amelia Jones (1998), who has written incisively on the powerful representational underpinnings of body art practices, argues that the privileging of presence in performance practices mistakenly characterizes "liveness" as offering an unmediated fullness and meaningfulness. In her view, the appeal to presence unwittingly perpetuates the notion of "the Cartesian subject who is centered and fully self-knowing in his cognition" (p. 10). In her own words, she

> rejects […] metaphysical conceptions of body art or performance as delivering in an unmediated fashion the body of the artist to the viewer, engaging the works on the level of a feminist phenomenology deeply informed by a poststructuralist suspicion of discourses of presence (p. 33).

Jones's concerns will be taken up in greater detail in Chapter 4, but what should already be clear is that presence is a highly contested concept within performance art.

Scientific discourse in the modern era has been no less invested in the concept of presence, nor less rigorous in its problematization. Empirical inquiry, a pillar of modern scientific research, is deeply indebted to the notion of presence. Scientists observe phenomena in order to measure, describe, explain and represent how and why they occur in terms that can elicit a common basis of agreement. This methodology of science is founded on a conviction in the ability to know the natural world—to discover the reality of time and space—through

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profound ethical and political implications. While this dissertation takes a step back from such an approach, following instead a need to rethink what presence might *be*, might *do*, might *mean* as an idea before it can begin to be mobilized for its presumed political and social agency, I hope readers will find a resonance and solidarity with Taylor's project in my attempt to construct a renewed understanding of presence and the potential it offers for shared meaningfulness.

observation, experience and the testing of propositions. Its claim to truth is built upon a faith in the correspondence, dependability, continuity and repeatability of both phenomena and human perception.[9] This view of the natural world has been challenged since the late nineteenth century, however, as scientists discovered that many understandings framed as universal laws, in particular Newtonian mechanics, only seemed to apply within a limited set of parameters. Our common-sense apprehension of the world cannot necessarily be extrapolated to conditions across (and certainly not beyond) the universe. Theorizations of time as relative, and observations of elementary particles as exhibiting certain field or wave-like characteristics, do not conform to classical representations of what we have taken to be fundamental concepts of corporeal reality such as shape, motion in space, or causality. Quantum mechanics, for example, calls into question our ability to speak in any definitive way about what happens at atomic or subatomic levels in between our discrete observations of events.[10]

Moreover, at the same time that traditional explanations have been shaken regarding how time and space are inhabited and materialized, developments in the studies of human and animal perception—particularly in the field of neuroscience—have radically complicated our understanding of the imbricated ways in which sensation, consciousness and intention operate, leading to new explanations of how we are able to know ourselves and recognize the world

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[9] This is, of course, a somewhat cartoon sketch of one small aspect of the history of modern science that cannot do justice to the rich social and political histories of science practice and scientific values that have emerged out of the field of science and technology studies (STS) over the past several decades. Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer's (1985) case study *Leviathan and the Air-Pump*, which provides a model for considering how social and philosophical factors have affected the development of modern experimental research techniques, and Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison's (2010/2007) *Objectivity*, which examines how a particular idea of "scientific objectivity" came to be understood as an "epistemic virtue" (p. 16), offer two examples of a growing set of historical accounts of how scientific disciplines have come to construct their own versions of empirical perspective.

[10] For two very different accounts of how physicists have come to understand quantum phenomena, see Werner Heisenberg's *Physics and Philosophy* and Karen Barad's *Meeting the Universe Halfway*. Whereas Heisenberg (2007/1958) frames the action of atomic particles according to an uncertainty principle in which we can determine statistical probabilities but "the exact knowledge of one variable can exclude the exact knowledge of another" (p. 198), Barad (2007) offers an agential realist interpretation of Niels Bohr's quantum philosophy in which the apparatuses used to observe an object determine, in particular ways, what the object comes to be. "*[C]oncepts are defined by the circumstances required for their measurement*. That is, *theoretical concepts* are not ideational in character; *they are specific physical arrangements*" (p. 109). The use of emphasis corresponds to the original in this and all subsequent quotations throughout the dissertation, unless otherwise noted.

around us. Cognitive neuroscience underlines that what we are able to know is deeply influenced by how we perceive, and this insight has profound implications for the notion of presence. This dissertation draws from the popular literature of human neuroscience that has circulated over recent decades, including Antonio Damasio (1994, 1999, 2010), Chris D. Frith (2007), Michael Gazzaniga (2005, 2009, 2011), Steven Pinker (1994, 1997), and Mark Solms and Oliver Turnbull (2002). Rather than providing dense technical information that would be incomprehensible without an extensive grounding in human anatomy and cognitive neuroscience, these texts offer the layperson informed accounts of how neuroscientists understand the physical processes involved in sensory recognition, cognition, affective response and bodily homeostasis. The majority of these texts also attempt to read neural processes in relation to the way the fields of philosophy and psychology have traditionally understood how and why we think and feel. This dissertation does not involve any fieldwork in neuroscience, and it will not focus on the individual brain structures or mechanisms that these specialists identify as being responsible for particular brain functions; for technical references, readers will be directed to relevant sections in the original publications.

In Western philosophy, presence is traditionally thought to offer an unmediated and therefore authentic experience of what is. Martin Heidegger (2010/1953) traces the valuing of presence back to an Aristotelian understanding of time in relation to a present moment; that is to say, to a particular now whereby we are provided with our most direct relationship to the world and to the experience of reality. Following Heidegger, Derrida (1973) describes the entire project of philosophy over the past 2,000 years as being an engagement in the metaphysics of presence. Beginning with a deconstruction of phenomenology and particularly the writings of Edmund Husserl, Derrida offers various meditations on language that attempt to ferret out what he takes to be a sedimentation of unsubstantiable ontological claims resulting from this privileging of the concept of presence. He employs and sometimes invents various terms to help us to think beyond this metaphysics of presence: trace, *différance*, and supplement, to name a few. Derrida (1977) extends Heidegger's strategy of placing terms related to the assumed guarantee of presence *sous rature*, under an erasure meant to signal that despite their proven inadequacies in describing the dynamic, contingent, mediated and individualized nature of our knowledge, the terms nevertheless retain their necessity. After all, the very thinking that allows us to contest a

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traditional understanding of presence is heavily invested in and indebted to the foundations of thought that the notion of presence provides. While I focus here on Derrida, problematizing presence can be understood as being central to the larger project of poststructuralist thought, which frequently interrogates the notion of presence for its various insufficiencies. These tend to be characterized either in terms of lack and loss—as evidenced by Phelan's performance ontology of disappearance cited above, and perhaps most fully exemplified by the psychoanalytic framework of lack posited by Jacques Lacan (1998/1973, 2006)[11]—or, alternately and sometimes concurrently, in the terms of supplement and excess that Derrida puts forth.

If presence is understood in philosophy as a concept most often associated with time in the form of immediacy—an unmediated now—it is also important to consider how presence is imbricated with a notion of physical proximity: a contiguous here. Emmanuel Levinas (1996/1968, 1998/1967, 2006/1974) uses the term proximity in contradistinction to presence. For Levinas, presence is by definition already a representation, a phenomenon manifest to the intentionality of consciousness, that is to say thematized, or made meaningful, and therefore already irretrievably past and distant. Proximity, by contrast, is the urgency by which the Other approaches and indeed encroaches on one's senses, prior to the organizing intentionality of consciousness, but already felt as an obsession: a vulnerability, an exposure that is pure contact without the content of any meaning other than contact itself. Levinas posits proximity, in a sense, as the foundation that precedes the systematization of signification, the condition that allows for the circulation of messages. Levinas's notion of proximity is not a purely spatial one, though it relies on an understanding of closeness that is tied to a consideration of sensibility and

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[11] While this dissertation does not delve into psychoanalytic theory, I recognize that such an endeavour could provide another productive avenue to pursue the question of presence that I am outlining here. Lacan (1998/1973) reads Sigmund Freud against René Descartes in order to move from the thinking *cogito* with a trusted intellect that can be betrayed by an unreliable body to a split subject with both consciousness and an unconscious (pp. 32-37), an area of "the unrealized" (p. 30). This presents us with the image of a subject who is never fully present to herself, motivated by desires that are only incompletely understood and satisfied. In Lacan's words,

> desire is situated in dependence on demand—which, by being articulated in signifiers, leaves a metonymic remainder that runs under it, an element that is not indeterminate, which is a condition both, absolute and unapprehensible, an element necessarily lacking, unsatisfied, impossible, misconstrued (*méconnu*), an element that is called desire (p. 154).

Here we have both excess, in the form of the "metonymic remainder" of the substituted representation, and lack, felt in the unattainable and never-to-be-fully-recognized longing of desire.

sensuousness linked particularly to touch (configured as the caress) and taste (in the form of savouring). Crucially, then, proximity is rooted in tactile-kinaesthetic experience; it is a corporeal phenomenon. Levinas's search for a different way of understanding the guarantees originally ascribed to the notion of presence, which he roots in a form of sensual, precognitive apprehension, points to an ongoing human need to make sense of and find collective meaningfulness in a shared here and now. This dissertation will explore both temporal and spatial considerations of presence.

It would be difficult to argue that the concept of presence has been entirely discredited as a useful idea in our daily navigation of the world around us, despite poststructuralism's intricate arguments and Derrida's influential methods of deconstructive inquiry. Indeed, the notion of presence continues to permeate our lived experiencing and understanding of the world. If poststructuralist theory has been enormously successful in reinscribing the doubt that has so productively driven the conceptualization of human subjectivity for the past several centuries,[12] it perhaps has been less successful in highlighting the remarkable degree of certainty—that we do inhabit the same world, that we can come to understand each other, that we are able to make sense of sensation, that we share a common and communicable recognition rooted in a here and a now of what is happening—that seems a necessary backdrop to if not foundation for this questioning. The profound problematization of presence that I have sketched out above will be explored in some detail in the third chapter of this dissertation, but what should be clear from this brief initial account is that traditional notions of presence appear inadequate to our changing understandings of how we are able to recognize and know the world, even as presence as a concept continues to be valued as vital to common-sense understanding and our navigation of the world. How then, to reconcile these divergent views?

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[12] As suggested in the previous footnote, Lacan (1998/1973) is particularly explicit about the link between the Cartesian idea of doubt, and that of Freud. According to Lacan, both Descartes and Freud begin from doubt, but draw different conclusions about what that doubt guarantees. Lacan describes Descartes' formulation this way: "*By virtue of the fact that I doubt, I am sure that I think*" (p. 35). But rather than leaping to the conclusion that this doubting verifies one's existence, Freud "when he doubts [...] is assured that a thought is there, which is unconscious, which means that it reveals itself as absent" (p. 36). In other words, for Freud, the point is not that thought guarantees a thinking "I," but that doubt reveals a type of thought in excess of rational consciousness, one that he identifies as being rooted in desire. In both these cases, however, doubt as a self-evident guarantee is the first step to developing certainty.

Outlining an approach

    As a practitioner and theorist of performance art, I have always approached the genre in relation to what I consider to be its fundamental formal elements: time, space, the performer's body, and the relationship between performer and audience (Couillard 2012). Presence as an idea attempts to synthesize an understanding of how these elements work together to produce meaning—and to the extent that it is a concept whose assumptions are under challenge, I would argue that it remains an extremely productive area of inquiry within performance art. This dissertation will map out some of the ways in which the idea of presence, understood as encompassing notions of time (immediacy), space (proximity), animated bodies (liveness), and interrelationships (relationality)—and configured according to three specific four-dimensional instantiations: self, world and others—is explored, manifested and challenged in the works of three well-established and internationally recognized performance artists. Through a consideration of how these three performances attend to the notion of presence, this theoretical project will reconsider traditional representational models of perception and consciousness; it will explore the constructive role of bodies as animate forms in meaning production; and it will consider the profoundly relational and intra-active nature of presence. It will also explore the notions of *self*, *world* and *other* as three critical figurations of presence.

    Such a mapping holds out the possibility of uncovering aspects of presence that retain their robustness as meaningful despite the various ways in which the concept of presence has been problematized. It also provides a basis for a speculative consideration of how presence might be productively reformulated or recuperated as an organizing concept for considering human experience, as well as some of the social, political, ethical and spiritual implications that might follow from such a reclamation.

    This dissertation considers ideas of presence through several distinct ways of knowing: *affect*, as this concept is taken up by various cultural theorists working through questions of corporeality and performance practice; *percept*, through a consideration of the workings of human sensory experience and consciousness as they are posited in the popular literature of neuroscience; and *concept*, drawing in particular from the traditions of continental philosophy. Each of these fields offers its own formulations of the notion of presence; thus, this analysis will need to take into account the ways in which their definitions and understandings overlap and

diverge. This multidisciplinary approach reflects a layered view of performance art's varied history as an affective and aesthetic form of expression, as a method of empirical sensory and social inquiry, and as a model of enacted philosophy.

The rationale for considering the notion of presence using the distinct frameworks of percept, concept and affect extends groundwork laid by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1994) in *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari outline three distinct modes of human thought, which they equate with philosophy (corresponding to concept), science (corresponding to function and prospect), and art (corresponding to percept and affect). Each of these disciplinary modes of understanding follows its own distinct logic and has its own rigours of accountability that are, in Deleuze and Guattari's view, independent of the other two, despite their points of intersection or interference. Presence, which this dissertation argues is a fundamental idea for all three frameworks, inhabits a position across these disciplinary divides. As such, it offers a transversal focal point from which it may be possible to align these distinct modes of thought in a way that is meaningful for each of them, and that strengthens presence's foundational claims.

In order to pursue such an approach, it will be important to sketch out Deleuze and Guattari's arguments to the extent that they bear on this project. Chapter 2 will outline how Deleuze and Guattari define these distinct modes of thought, and explain their inquiry's relevance in relation to broader issues of thought and consciousness. This explication will also propose a key reconfiguration of the schema that Deleuze and Guattari have developed, moving away from the reification of particular thought forms—concept, prospect, percept and affect—as stand-alone entities in order to position them within the organic process of thinking. One of the consequences of this reconfiguration will be the assignment of what Deleuze and Guattari identify as *prospect* under the purview of the term "percept." On the surface, this move may appear confusing or contrary, as it appropriates a term that Deleuze and Guattari relegate to a completely different mode of thought. As will be argued, however, this repositioning of the notion of the percept is generated directly out of the description of prospect that supports Deleuze and Guattari's project. Redefining percept in relation to prospect makes evident aspects of their assertions about the distinctions between scientific and artistic thought that are implicit but unenunciated in the original. This dissertation will also propose an understanding of affect that is informed by but diverges from the meanings proposed by Deleuze and Guattari. Affect is a complex term with

many, often contradictory and competing meanings. The arguments presented in favour of a revised understanding of affect will be supported using the literature of affect studies and be linked to the way neuroscientists describe human processes of emotion and consciousness.

Using the foundation laid out in the first chapter, Chapter 2 of this dissertation will consider Deleuze and Guattari's schema of three forms of thought in the broader context of a consideration of thought and consciousness that will underlie this dissertation's approach to the question of presence. Framing concept, percept, and affect as imbricated ways of thinking already begins to suggest how thought, rather than signalling a distinct entity called consciousness, is a process of animate bodies. This implication of material bodies as animate forms in the manifestation of thought and consciousness will be further explored by drawing from Maxine Sheets-Johnstone's exploration of *thinking in movement*.

Chapter 3 will use Derrida's early writings as a departure point to review various debates surrounding the notion of presence, with the aim of moving from a viewpoint heavily tilted toward linguistic and cognitive perspectives to one that more fully embraces the role of animate bodies in meaning-making. Chapter 4 will explore the profoundly relational nature of presence, using the insights of Karen Barad (2007) to move away from an understanding of time, space and bodies as pre-existing entities in favour of a recognition of how their borders and meaningfulness are determined and enacted through intra-active relationality. This discussion will lay the groundwork for understanding human experience from the point of view of a *thinking body* and develop a particular understanding or definition of presence as *the enacting and enacted agency of intra-active relationality*. Following the preceding chapters' theoretical and historical overview, Chapters 5, 6 and 7 will each provide a detailed consideration of a separate performance art work, expanding upon the ideas laid out in the initial chapters and linking them to self, world, and others as three instantiations of presence—that is, ways in which presence is understood to be manifest in or to produce specific types of entities—beginning with Marilyn Arsem's *Meridian*, continuing with Adina Bar-On's *Disposition*, and concluding with Elvira Santamaría's *Everyday life words in progress*. The approach to these works will be more investigative than descriptive. My intention is less concerned with analyzing the works as objects of study than it is with using them as sources that provide their own way of thinking issues of presence. I consider the works, and my experience of them, as instances of *practice in the flesh of*

theory, a term borrowed from Natalie Loveless that will be explained in the following section. These three performances will provide an anchor for discussions that engage divergent philosophical perspectives, interwoven with understandings from neuroscience and artistic praxis. This approach requires close attention to the original contexts that have determined how distinct disciplines and genres use particular terms and ideas; thus, the validity of the scholarship rests in large part on its ability to engage in an informed way with existing debates and discourses within their respective fields. At the same time, such an inquiry also demands some interpretive flexibility in order to open up these diverse approaches and positions to shared insight. This analysis proceeds from a recognition that while knowledges are specific, their categorizations are constructed, and there can be great generative value in the migration and translation of ideas across disciplines. As Isabelle Stengers (2008) has suggested in relation to science, drawing on Alfred North Whitehead's proposals in relation to philosophy, we do not discover pre-existing truths so much as, through specific practices and processes, shape them. In this sense, my inquiry draws on two transversal configurations: the concept of presence as intra-active relationality, and the grounding of human experience in the notion of a thinking body.

My identification of presence as an organizing concept for this dissertation is structured to some extent as a response to the early writings of Derrida (1973, 1977, 1978). One of the ways that I retrace the ground of Derrida's early work is by orienting my readings of and through the works of Marilyn Arsem, Adina Bar-On and Elvira Santamaría in relation to concepts of three canonical philosophers whose writings were influential to Derrida's thinking—Husserl, Heidegger and Levinas. At the same time, I follow a trajectory that enfolds a range of other voices whose ideas I find particularly compelling and productive, and that provide a distinct alternate ground for approaching the notion of presence, most notably Hannah Arendt, Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, and Karen Barad. The chapter on Marilyn Arsem's *Meridian* is organized around the notion of self as the form of individuated presence that Husserl was unable to bracket out of his phenomenological inquiry. The chapter on Adina Bar-On's *Disposition* thinks through her work in relation to the notion of world, with reference to the Heideggerian ontological construction of being-in-the-world. The chapter on Elvira Santamaría's *Everyday life words in progress* considers our relationship to others as a distinct form of presence, beginning with Levinas's theorization of the radical alterity of the human other.

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The three performances that provide the basis for this analysis are all process-based, site-responsive works[13] whose form and content were contingent on the immediacy of their circumstances as events: reliant on a particular time and place, addressing a particular audience, and specifically designed to open themselves to local conditions. As the curator of these works,[14] I hold a privileged audience position. Since none of the artists are native to Toronto, where the works unfolded, it was my job to determine the time and location of the events, and to solicit an audience that might best serve the artists' imagined intentions. This required extensive dialogue with the artists over months or even years in advance of the actual project dates in order to develop a clear understanding of their wants and needs in relation to the works. It also entailed being physically present as a witness of the works for a longer and more continuous period than any other audience member. My intimate familiarity with these projects is a critical aspect of the analysis I will undertake. Equally important is my role as a practitioner, which also informs the basis of my work as a performance art curator; I organized and observed the works from the perspective of someone who makes performance art. Of course, when the experiential or field research of producing these performances took place, it was not done with the goal of writing a dissertation on presence. To augment my lived experience and memory of the performances, I have accessed my production notes for each of the works, as well as the existing photo and video documentation, often recorded by me. What they provide, however, is less an evidentiary recording of what took place than an *aide-mémoire* of my lived experience of the projects. Because my analysis considers the sense of presence generated by and through the projects themselves rather than the artists' intentions, I have chosen not to interview the artists or any of the original audience members about their own memories or responses to the works, although the artists are each aware of and supportive of this project.

Extending practice in the flesh of theory

Concurrent to my 35 years of practice as a performance artist and curator, I have published numerous texts and delivered various lectures about performance art as a practice;

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[13] For a detailed consideration of the idea of site-responsiveness and its relationship to the more widely recognized term site-specific, see Couillard (2006).

[14] For a discussion on the practice of "curation" in relation to performance art, see Couillard (2009).

about particular performance strategies such as site responsiveness, duration, work for intimate audiences, and manoeuvre and infiltrating practices; about particular issues associated with curating, presenting, documenting, and defining performance art; and about various individual performance artists and performance works. Writing about performance art is important labour, and there are many critical gaps in the history, theory, and practice of performance art that need to be addressed; many significant artists whose important work has not been examined; many distinct networks and communities that have not been written about. Nevertheless, in this dissertation, the object of study is not the performances that are referenced, even though bringing attention to these works, and offering insight into the practices of the artists who created them, are welcomed as potential outcomes of this inquiry. In other words, this dissertation is not intended as a performance studies text. Instead, this dissertation transposes a type of work that has been central to my work as an artist and a curator—exploring the notion of presence—to a different arena of labour. To that end, my intention is not to analyze the performance works of Arsem, Bar-On and Santamaría per se, but rather, to use the knowledge they generate, just as I use the work of various authors (philosophers, neuroscientists, cultural theorists) through citation.

Integrating performance art works into this dissertation as sources rather than objects of study is one of the more interesting challenges posed by this text.[15] Performances do not lend themselves to traditional academic citation.[16] As events, performances exceed the boundaries of text. If a picture, as the cliché suggests, is worth a thousand words, then what textual equivalent can one offer to a breath, a touch, a proximity or a duration? One of the questions this dissertation will explore is the extent to which performance works are useful to a consideration of presence precisely because they call attention to the ways in which they are not (only) texts, the ways in which they are in excess of representation. Translating this excess into text, then, is in itself a contradictory, impossible task, and is as overdetermined as the notion of presence itself. I am

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[15] For an extended discussion of the challenges posed by the urge to cite ephemeral and non-textual materials, see the paired texts "From No-ing to Knowing, from Naughts to Knots (Provocation)" (Couillard 2019), and Carolina Cambre's (2019) "Crisis of Literacies: How Does the Orchid Cite the Bee? (Response). Both are part of *Knowings and Knots: Methodologies and Ecologies in Research-Creation*, edited by Natalie Loveless.

[16] In the APA citation style I have adapted for this dissertation, for example, live performances generally are not listed in the bibliography because they are not considered "retrievable." Because of their importance for this dissertation, I have modified the reference list to include the performances I cite.

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aware of the irony inherent in setting an impossible task in order to discover what is possible. Parallel to this concern is the nature of performances as time-based events. Although various documents may be produced as a result of a performance—announcements, photographs and video recordings, reviews and audience accounts—the incident of any individual performance elapses, along with much of its verifiability. Where do we find presence in ephemerality? How can we recognize and measure its effects? How can we test its reliability and reproducibility? How can the reporting of an event be any more than merely anecdotal as a form of citational evidence? Simply by proposing to treat these performances as sources rather than objects of study, this dissertation is already deeply embroiled in the very difficulties it seeks to consider.

Peggy Phelan (1998) has written that "talking after [the event] often means 'talking over,' and in that performance one might be able to discern what consciousness overlooked during the event's unfolding" (p. 7). This passage suggests that we might consider critical analysis and writing about performance to be a kind of performance in its own right, a hopeful claim if it can be marshalled to find a point of connection or solidarity between the original performance and its always transformed—whether through lack or excess—retelling. At the same time, there is a troubling and no doubt intentional ambiguity in Phelan's carefully highlighted phrase, "talking over." To talk over something may mean simply to discuss it, but the positional preposition "over" can also suggest extending or adding to, covering or engulfing, taking an authoritative position in relation to, or even foreclosing on the original. The act of positioning becomes crucial to how and what one is able to understand; it marks one's sense of accountability, and one's response-ability.[17]

It is with this insight in mind that I propose considering the works, and my experience of them, as instances of "practice in the flesh of theory." This phrase comes from an article by Natalie S. Loveless (2012), in which she considers the development of Fine Arts PhD programs in North America and asks how "the modes of practice and engagement traditionally embedded within the discursive field we call 'art' [... can] contribute to important re-conceptualizations of

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[17] I take this neologism from Donna Haraway (2012), who succinctly defines the term, an obvious play on the word *responsibility*, as "a praxis of care and response" (p. 301). Responsibility suggests one's obligations and duties; response-ability calls attention to the work attached to one's obligations, both internal, in terms of the ethics of care that one chooses to adopt, and external, in terms of the capabilities made possible by one's situatedness.

the North American university system" (p. 94). This question points to Loveless's larger project—which she identifies as feminist and focused on pedagogy—of asking what counts as knowledge within the academy, and what terms of accountability can or should be applied to specific knowledges. The term "practice in the flesh of theory" reworks a phrase from the feminist psychoanalytic theorist Jane Gallop, in which Gallop describes "occasional, anecdotal theory" as being "theory in the flesh of practice" (as cited in Loveless, 2012, p. 93). It is worth exploring in some detail how Loveless arrives at her reworking of the phrase, and what meanings she intends and attends to with its formulation.

Loveless's (2011) interest in Gallop's writing, which she explores more fully in another article entitled "Reading with Knots: On Jane Gallop's Anecdotal Theory," stems from Gallop's intentional, considered practice of "entangling the personal and the political with the pedagogical" (p. 26). Loveless characterizes this particular practice of entanglement, which Gallop calls anecdotal theory, as a kind of ethical investment that calls attention to the localized and situated nature that is true of any knowledge practice:

> Emerging at the intersections of deconstruction, psychoanalytic theory and feminism, anecdotal theory, as a practice, is not a simple call for overtly personal over impersonally abstract theory. Rather, it calls for a complex of (what Gallop calls) "theory in the flesh of practice"—an embedded and responsive movement between the seemingly particular and the seductively generalizable, a *working-through* of a series of life events that are intimately entwined with a theory-making practice in which neither has priority or can be disentangled from the other. [...] Gallop insists on a reflexive engagement with not only the *incident* but the *occasion* of theorizing. As a specific, lived moment of theorizing (whether on the page, in the classroom or on the street) the conjunction of incident and occasion is, throughout the Gallopian text, in its sited, embedded and uncontrollable contextuality—its positional thickness—precisely where fertile thought, rich *thinking*, as invested process rather than strategic product, occurs (pp. 27-28).

There are a number of significant claims being made here. Loveless acknowledges the existing binary categorization that attempts to separate the "particular" from the "generalizable"—distinguishing between individual and universal—but at the same time she radically complicates this notion by suggesting that the two positions are already uncontrollably entangled and cannot

be accorded a hierarchical status in relation to each other. Each informs, supports, drives and is *part of* the other, and it is this "positional thickness" that constitutes "rich thinking." So, even though anecdotal theory is described as *entangling*, as if Gallop were engaged in a practice of actively intertwining two arenas—personal narrative and theoretical inquiry—that are by rights separate, Loveless's (and Gallop's) argument is that these distinctions are suspect and not borne out by the way the personal and theoretical are actually produced and experienced. Gallop is not so much actively entangling as she is paying attention to existing entanglements. She positions herself—takes response-ability—by refusing to take for granted the usually hidden labour of (attempted) disentanglement that traditional academic methods expect or demand. Anecdotal theory's phenomenological stance goes beyond simply taking a point-of-view that is physically situated within a subjective "I"; it is also concerned with the politics of subjective experience: how we experience our world not only as rational beings, but also as emotional, psychological and social beings with particular interests that focus our attention and colour our perspectives. What we are interested in cannot be separated from how we become interested in it and the circumstances through which that interest is sustained.

Loveless also notes a distinction between incident and occasion, which she characterizes as follows: "I read *incident* as invoking an unexpected and disruptive encounter, *occasion* as describing that which responsively situates knowledge production" (p. 27). *Incidents* happen all the time; they are how we come to experience time, space and matter as unfolding in dynamic and unpredictable ways. *Occasions* call attention to the agencies of attunement and positionality that are open to us in relation to that unfolding; to recognize an incident as an occasion is to engage with it in a way that acknowledges the meaningfulness of its challenge. Incidents become occasions when we identify our existing worldview and habits as being inadequate to the task of response, and a further "working-through" is demanded.

Loveless's reading of anecdotal theory, arising as it does from a Lacanian framework, acknowledges the significance of cathexis, and the importance of exploring "that unknown by which we are *compelled*" (p. 35). As a theoretical practice, anecdotal theory takes an implicitly interested and situated stance. The recognition of a theoretical response as a "working-through" as much as a "working with" signals the ethics of positionality that Loveless accords to anecdotal theory. The engagement is not with something exterior to one's being so much as with something

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that is part of one's being. Loveless (2012) takes the term "working-through" from a 1914 article by Freud entitled "Remembering, Repeating and Working Through," describing it as a process that

> allows the subject to accept repressed elements and loosen the grip of the repetition compulsion. [... U]nconscious resistance, that which emerges in the repetition compulsion, has to *be addressed by working through and with, not against or beyond.* To work through something is not to get rid of it but to reconfigure one's relation to it [....] (pp. 104-105).

Denying one's situatedness in such a context would not only be dishonest; it would also work against the very possibility of an occasion's becoming. Loveless (2011), following Lacan, employs the figuration[18] of the knot to call attention to the stakes and accountability mobilized by anecdotal theory's interested, situated stance:

> Knot theory (a branch of mathematical topology) studies the constitutive limits of a structure's ability to *be* what it is—the limit before which it can be considered to be a different "species." For Lacan, the mathematical topology of knots does not *describe* the subjective condition, but, rather, *enacts* its structural conditions of possibility. The topology of knots permits a conceptualization of individual subjectivity as both radically *individual* (an irreducible fold figured by the *sinthome*) and, yet, not *personal* (in the sense of an autobiographically endowed ownership of particularity that is used to mobilize truth claims as fact) (p. 31).[19]

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[18] The term figuration is used here to signal that representation itself is an active and politically engaging process. Rosi Braidotti (2011/1994) notes that figuration, which she defines as "a politically informed image of thought that evokes or expresses an alternative vision of subjectivity" (p. 22) has been a key strategy of many contemporary feminist theorists, from Luce Irigiray to Donna Haraway.

[19] *Sinthome* is a Lacanian term, taken from an archaic writing of the word *symptôme* (symptom), that signals Lacan's

> move from conceiving of the symptom as a message which can be deciphered by reference to the unconscious "structured like a language", to seeing it as the trace of the particular modality of the subject's *jouissance* [....] The sinthome thus designates a signifying formulation beyond analysis, a kernel of enjoyment immune to the efficacy of the symbolic (Evans, 1996, p. 191).

The idea of a signification that lies beyond analysis figures prominently in the theorizations of Emmanuel Levinas, whose ideas are discussed in some detail in Chapter 7.

Untying a knot, i.e. removing whatever material forms or constitutes the knot from its situated, interested positioning, may provide a great deal of information about what a knot is not. At the same time, untying a knot may not contribute to a full understanding of what a knot is, or reveal what and how it enacts. The lesson of the knot as a figuration is relevant to this dissertation in at least two important ways. First, it will be of some significance to consider whether presence itself might be like a knot; if so, to remove it from its situatedness may be to compromise or even destroy its being *as* "presence." Second, the figuration of the knot provides a way of thinking about the particular citational practice I propose to undertake in relation to the performance art works referenced in this dissertation. These works are, for me, *occasions* of presence, calling for a working-through from my embedded position as audience, witness and participant in their becoming. Since I am part of the material of what presence may be, I can only map its topology from a position within; thus, the knowledge I enact through my citation of these performances will reflect my subjective, "radically individual" positioning.[20] It is important to highlight here that this positioning is not meant to claim the authority of autobiography. As Loveless notes, the

> "I was there" aspect of anecdotal knowledge brings with it the force of an authority and
> the undoing of that authority in equal measure. While anecdote traffics in the authority of
> the personal witness, its undoing emerges in its lack of verification—the *singularity* of
> that witness (p. 24).

I do not claim to have the correct or definitive interpretation of these performance works by virtue of my embedded status. Rather, I employ an invested, phenomenological approach because this is both how I have been compelled and how I have come to recognize presence as an event. I am interested in the particular knowledge that corresponds to felt experience. I became a performance artist because of the value I derive from my involvement with performance as a physical, sensory,

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[20] Positioning a view from a specific somewhere is always already political. This stance acknowledges the way that experience not only comes from an individual position, but also enacts an individuation as well as marking and sometimes producing communities. Donna J. Haraway (1988) eloquently argues for such a positioning in "Situated Knowledges":

> I am arguing for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where
> partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims.
> These are claims on people's lives. I am arguing for the view from a body, always a complex,
> contradictory, structuring, and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from
> simplicity (p. 589).

and engaging practice, and it is in that interested, situated, embedded, and fleshy experiencing that I find myself capable of enacting a "working-through" of the "knot" of presence.

Perhaps it is, at least in part, my bodily situatedness and experiencing of the performances of Arsem, Bar-On and Santamaría, rather than the performances per se, that I am compelled to cite, since it is precisely this experiencing that constitutes presence in its fraught, knotted, noninnocent becoming. In thinking through how to avoid re-inscribing the essentialist, totalizing, transcendent view of presence that Derrida critiques, while also moving beyond the nihilist relativism of strong social constructionist arguments, I am deeply indebted to the theoretical imagings and imaginings of feminist scholarship. Indeed, in proposing to explore the notion of presence through a practice of situated knowledge, I hope to maintain an allegiance to the call for accountability put forth by Donna J. Haraway (1988) in her bold but carefully argued essay, "Situated Knowledges." Haraway defines the problem for which situated knowledges might offer a partial solution in this way:

> how to have *simultaneously* an account of radical historical contingency for all knowledge claims and knowing subjects, a critical practice for recognizing our own "semiotic technologies" for making meanings, *and* a no-nonsense commitment to faithful accounts of a "real" world, one that can be partially shared and that is friendly to earthwide projects of finite freedom, adequate material abundance, modest meaning in suffering, and limited happiness (p. 579).

Haraway is particularly concerned with an account of technoscience, but the urgent ethical and political stakes of her explicitly feminist project are broader. As she puts it, "We need the power of modern critical theories of how meanings and bodies get made, not in order to deny meanings and bodies, but in order to build meanings and bodies that have a chance for life" (p. 580). This statement resonates strongly with the compulsion that draws me to this inquiry of the notion of presence, where the stakes concern the meanings that we can sensibly and ethically attach to our cohabitation and partial sharing of something called a "here" and a "now."[21]

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[21] Attention to situatedness is also a call to consider how *cultural* positioning in terms of factors such as gender, class, ethnicity, and (dis)ability informs one's outlook. As Vivian Sobchack (2004) argues in *Carnal Thoughts*, "the phenomena of our experience cannot be reduced to fixed essences; rather, in existence they have provisional forms and structures and themes and thus are always open to new and other possibilities for both being and meaning" (p. 2). No doubt my understandings are deeply inflected by my

In arguing for the development of situated knowledges that avoid the dichotomous oppositions of relativism and totalization, Haraway turns to vision, attempting to recuperate a human sensory system that she acknowledges has been "much maligned [...] in feminist discourse" (p. 581). Haraway is no doubt drawn to sight in part for its rich metaphorical history and strong associations with spatiality and location.[22] In her view, the problem associated with vision is not sight per se, but one particular metaphor of sight: the disembodied, omniscient "god trick of seeing everything from nowhere" (p. 581). Her argument is for "the particularity and embodiment of all vision (although not necessarily organic embodiment and including technological mediation)" (p. 582). Haraway is concerned with this "embodied"[23] figuration of vision both for its physical specificity—e.g. the particular ranges of the electromagnetic spectrum utilized by different species or technologies; and monocular, stereoscopic or compound views— as well as its metaphorical possibilities—e.g. "perspectives" that reflect particular standpoints of gender, ethnicity, class, etc. She mobilizes this particular account of vision in the service of

various "normative" and misfit statuses as male, white, cis, Canadian, settler, urban, gay, low-income, middle-aged, Eurocentrically educated, and so forth—and these positionings are reflected here in various, likely underacknowledged ways. Most strikingly, perhaps, this dissertation posits humans as animate forms in a way that, although aspiring to transversality, is admittedly generalized and could potentially be read as essentialist. Much work remains to be done to consider the biases inherent in this approach; it is an open question whether it is possible to productively and retroactively read different and expanded awarenesses into such a project, or whether the tacit premises that allow me to imagine such a culturally undifferentiated human as animate form simply constitute an unlivable perspective.

[22] For a rich reading of sight's history as a powerful generator of knowledge metaphors in Western culture, as well as a partial reading of feminist critiques of vision and a specifically male gaze, see Martin Jay's (1994) *Downcast Eyes*. Ken Hillis (1999) provides a geographer's perspective on the ways metaphors of sight are linked to Western conceptions of space in his examination of virtual reality technologies, *Digital Sensations*.

[23] This dissertation proposes to use the concept of embodiment with some caution. As Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (2009) has pointed out,

> the term *embodied* is a lexical band-aid covering up a three-hundred-fifty-year-old wound generated and kept suppurating by a schizoid [Cartesian] metaphysics. [...] *Embodiment* deflects our attention from the task of understanding animate forms [...] by conveniently packaging beforehand something already labeled "the mental" or "mind" and something already labeled "the physical" or "body" (p. 215).

Thus, from Sheets-Johnstone's perspective, the idea of "disembodied" thought is an oxymoron. It seems to me that Haraway's use of the term here, in relation to both animate and inanimate bodies, and in contradistinction to a mythical, incorporeal and unlocatable notion of vision, maintains a specificity and clarity that justifies the term's usage. Sheets-Johnstone's consideration of animate corporeality will be examined in greater detail in the following chapters.

"partial, locatable, critical knowledges sustaining the possibility of webs of connections" (p. 584) that may provide "a *possible* allegory for feminist versions of objectivity" (p. 583).[24] Haraway's emphasis on the word *possible* carries (at least) a double meaning. First, it suggests that this is not the only available allegory —i.e. it is one of many possibilities; but second, it is an allegory that offers the pragmatic potential to be workable—i.e. it may actually prove to be serviceable in the given context.

Haraway's turn to vision as a metaphor is as concerned with the idea that vision must come from a particular, specifically physical locatedness as it is with the particular efficacy of sight as a sense since, for her, "Positioning is [...] the key practice in grounding knowledge organized around the imagery of vision" (p. 587). Indeed, one of the questions she suggests an attention to vision should lead us to ask is, "What other sensory powers do we want to cultivate besides vision?" (p. 587). In thinking through the notion and experiencing of presence, this dissertation takes up Haraway's question by moving away from sight as a privileged metaphor. In attending to the materiality of what presence may be, it seems important for practice in the flesh of theory to consider not only the ways discursive practices are materialized, but also whether materiality may be sensorially apprehended in nondiscursive, nonrepresentational ways. Is bodily understanding purely representational, or does flesh mobilize other ways of knowing? Part of this exploration will entail thinking through how the marking of vision as a discrete sensory mechanism is in itself a discursive, worlding, boundary-making practice that may be hostile to building the "meanings and bodies that have a chance for life" that this dissertation hopes to support.

What still needs to be defined, however, is just what is meant by a "practice in the flesh of theory," and how it might differ from anecdotal theory. Gallop (2002) characterizes anecdotal theory as a practice whose situatedness refuses an authoritative, closed, totalizing position, in deliberate contradistinction to abstraction. In *Anecdotal Theory*, she writes "Abstract, disembodied theory, theory in no place or time, dreams of being the last word; occasional,

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[24] Objectivity is undoubtedly a concern and stake in exploring the notion of presence, and in the particular citational practice in regard to performance that I am proposing here. The question of whether one can find a credible way of framing experience as "*individual* [...] yet not *personal*" as a situated, accountable source of knowledge will surface repeatedly, particularly around the question of what constitutes individuation.

anecdotal theory, theory in the flesh of practice, speaks with the desire for a response" (p. 164).[25]

Loveless (2012), in thinking through the way research-creation practices might trouble traditional

scholarly definitions of research,[26] provides such a response by inverting Gallop's configuration

of "theory in the flesh of practice" to "practice in the flesh of theory." Loveless's considered

repositioning calls attention to "an alignment of 'practice' and 'the flesh,' [in Gallop's original

wording, which] if taken at face value, re-enshrines a set of binaries that [Loveless is] concerned

with questioning" (p. 94). Loveless views "theory-making [...] as a messy, fleshy practice" (p.

95), drawing from Maurice Merleau-Ponty's notion of the "flesh of the world"—a figuration of

flesh that Merleau-Ponty applied not only to human bodies or even atomic matter in general, but

also to language.[27] Loveless identifies Merleau-Ponty's move as a "transversal materialist

perspective" which she employs in order to challenge "the binary split between 'theory' and

'practice'" (p. 95).

Loveless's nod to transversality shares the suspicion of asymmetrical and false

dichotomies that Haraway (1988) elucidates in "Situated Knowledges," but it is further informed

by Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin's (2012) *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies*.

In this text, the authors posit transversality as a practice that eschews binaries, because such "dual

oppositions" use negation in a way that only reinforces existing frameworks. A negation takes its

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[25] This is, of course, the same quotation that Loveless mobilizes.

[26] Research-creation is the term used within Canadian humanities and social sciences academic contexts to identify "projects [that] typically integrate a creative process, experimental aesthetic component, or an artistic work as an integral part of the study" (Chapman & Sawchuk, 2012, p. 6). For a useful overview of the history and consideration of the various uses of research-creation practices in a Canadian context, see Owen Chapman and Kim Sawchuk's article, "Research-Creation: Intervention, Analysis and 'Family Resemblances.'"

[27] Merleau-Ponty (1968) posits the flesh of the world as a connective tissue that encompasses the literal or material flesh of individual bodies and things. His notes—for he was still in the midst of developing the concept when he died—describe a flesh of the world that is not materially substantial. It is neither sentience nor representation, but rather, a being of the sensible itself that is immanent to the world. Just as Freud discovers the unconscious in the ruptures of language, Merleau-Ponty finds the flesh of the world disclosed in the previously unnamed excesses detectable within sensibility, in the way our senses give an impression of over-reaching themselves:

> Each "sense" is a "world," i.e. absolutely incommunicable for the other senses, and yet constructing a *something* which, through its structure, is from the first *open* upon the world of the other senses, and with them forms one sole Being. Sensoriality: for example, a color, yellow: it surpasses itself of itself: as soon as it becomes the color of illumination, the dominant color of the field, it ceases to be such or such a color, it has therefore of itself an ontological function (p. 217).

meaning from the parameters instantiated by the very thing it attempts to negate. Dolphijn and van der Tuin identify transversality as "intersect[ing] academic [...] disciplines [...], paradigms [...], and the linear spatiotemporalities conventionally assigned to epistemic trends" (p. 100). Transversality, a concept put forth by Félix Guattari (1972) in *Transversality and Psychoanalysis*, is concerned with troubling traditional classifications, or, as Dolphijn and van der Tuin describe it, "*de-territorializing* the academic territories, tribes, and temporalities traditionally considered central to scholarship" (p. 100). Transversality is a practice of remapping boundaries "as a means to search for the new—not by critiquing the old, but by radically questioning (or smoothening out) all the barriers that supported its logic" (p. 100). Thus, Loveless (2012) offers "the compound neologism *theorypractice* [...] in order to hold together practice and theory in a way that reminds us that the latter is, itself, a 'making practice,' one that is embodied and aesthetic" (p. 95). For Loveless, the stakes of this transversality from a pedagogical point of view in relation to the development of a Fine Arts PhD are clear. Such work "contributes to new thinking in inter- and non-disciplinary pedagogy by insisting that we ask ourselves what gets to count as legitimate knowledge production, where, when, and how" (p. 98).

This dissertation proposes to extend Loveless's conceptualization of practice in the flesh of theory to an allied but distinct project. Here, I am less concerned with calling attention to theorizing as a material, making practice (theory as practice) and more concerned with performance art's potential as a theorizing, knowledge-producing practice (practice as theory). Treating performance art works as citational sources rather than as objects of study instantiates a transversality that seeks to discover or materialize a notion of presence, in part through its insistence on positioning performance practice as a way of thinking (more on ways of thinking in the following section) already embedded in the "flesh of theory." As practice in the flesh of theory, performance works can count as iterations of theory, just as written texts may. This dissertation understands the works of Arsem, Bar-On and Santamaría to be theoretical inquiries, and also recognizes their instantiation in performance practice rather than written text as making a particular claim for the ways in which physical experience can productively contribute to thinking about presence. As performances, they are able to attend to theoretical understandings of matter's unfolding in time and space that exceed text and resist reading according to purely representational modes of understanding.

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It is not new, of course, for an academic text to draw from the knowledge or insights of artworks as sources rather than objects of study. Martin Heidegger (1977) does something of the sort in his essay "The Question Concerning Technology." He begins with a careful examination of the way in which technology, with its fundamental characteristic of instrumentality, has as its essence "a way of revealing" (p. 12) that casts all that it uses as *Bestand*, a "standing-reserve" available for use—and no longer as object (*Gegenstand* or "that which stands over against"). According to Heidegger, technology's essence is not to manufacture, but to reveal, and the truth that it reveals is an understanding of all things as resources for use. This presents "the supreme danger" (p. 26) because among the potential conclusions of such a revelation—which Heidegger characterizes as being "illusion" and even "delusion" (p. 27)—is an understanding of mankind as simply one more standing-reserve, a material to be exploited.[28] In looking for a way out of this grim assessment, and as an answer to the particular revealing of technology, Heidegger opens a space to bring the words of a poet into his argument. He finds inspiration in the lines of Friedrich Hölderlin: "But where danger is, grows / The saving power also" (p. 28), justifying his turn to the fine arts as a revelatory force comparable to technology by an appeal to the way the two distinct classifications, technology and art, are linked by the Greek notion of *techne*. In ancient Greece, according to Heidegger, art was not considered an aesthetic or cultural activity, but "a revealing that brought forth and hither, and therefore belonged within *poiesis*" (p. 34). Heidegger identifies art as "a realm that is [...] akin to the essence of technology and [...] fundamentally different from it" (p. 35), and which therefore offers the possibility of challenging technology's way of revealing. Leaving aside for a moment the impulse to uncover essences that drives Heidegger's project, his turn to Hölderlin in "The Question Concerning Technology" comes across as particularly jarring and unconvincing, because it fails to take full account of the asymmetries between the kind of worlding enacted by technology's instrumentality as it has unfolded across the planet in recent centuries and that achieved by Hölderlin's speculative observations in a single

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[28] Surely this concern for the dangers of viewing humans merely as resources reflects the devastating impact and lessons of World War II and the Holocaust. Heidegger was a member of the Nazi party from 1933 until the end of the war, a deeply troubling affiliation that has tempered the reception of his philosophical work.

poem.[29] In this dissertation's iteration of what it terms practice in the flesh of theory, attending to such asymmetries is a key requirement of such a practice's accountability and response-ability.

At the same time, if this dissertation is to take seriously the task of mapping or building knowledge in a way that is situated, and that lives up to Haraway's (1988) call for "the joining of partial views and halting voices into a collective subject position that promises a vision of the means of ongoing finite embodiment, of living within limits and contradictions—of views from somewhere" (p. 590), it must also account for how it proposes to negotiate between, on the one hand, the specificities of a core set of written texts that are often inherently Eurocentric, androcentric and anthropocentric (to call attention to three ethical and political positionings that matter; there are surely others), and, on the other hand, the very different specificities of a set of performances, posited as situated knowledge practices, that reflect a range of positions often opposing, rejecting, ignoring or bearing little common history with the concerns of those written texts. It is not enough, for example, simply to set up Heidegger as a straw man, as it may appear I have done in the example above. Michael Inwood (1999) has suggested that Heidegger's frequent use of Hölderlin points to the way that Heidegger's writing is always an act of working-through rather than an exposition of what is already known, because every inquiry into one area of philosophy calls into question the whole of thought. He writes that Heidegger's "works always end with a question, or with a quotation, say, from Hölderlin, the obscurity of which makes it as good as a question" (p. 1). With Inwood's reading, one could more generously posit the lines from

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[29] In "The Technical Body: Incorporating Technology and Flesh," James Barry Jr. provides a thoughtful reading of Heidegger's intertwining of human perception with the unfolding of history and technology as influenced or propelled by ancient Greek thought. Focusing on Heidegger's *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, Barry describes Heidegger's project as "an interrogation of the way in which appearance gets taken up historically as the fabric of perception and technology" (p. 392)—an insight that Barry also ties to the centrality of representation in modern perception and technology. Barry outlines not only how particular ways of perceiving have influenced technological innovations, but also how technological innovations have validated or solidified current ways of perceiving while also obscuring their origins in perceptual *decisions*—i.e., interpretations that could have been decided otherwise—in the face of a larger undecidability of the correspondence between what we perceive and what might actually be. As he describes it, "Modern technology, in its essence as a historical decision, is the decision concerning modern perception, because it is the determination of the 'how' of our perception and the 'what' of appearance for it" (p. 396). Given this perspective, Heidegger's turn to poetry as providing an alternative to "the supreme danger" embedded in technological revealing might have been more convincing, or at least more symmetrical, if he had chosen to offer an equally detailed consideration of fine art's perceptual decisions as a way of revealing, along with a compelling description of what essential perceptions of ourselves and the world such an alternate way of interpreting reveals.

Hölderlin as posing a question rather than as offering a definitive counter-argument to the particular revealing of technology. While Inwood's insight does not preempt a reader from calling into question a perceived asymmetry in Heidegger's argument, it does open a space to change the emphasis and consider more seriously Heidegger's appeal to *poiesis*. What force does or could this other way of revealing—which Heidegger (1977) associates with a "revealing that brings forth truth into the splendor of radiant appearing" (p. 34)—have to enact a different sort of worlding? By focusing on a set of very personalized performances that bring together small numbers of bodies into a shared time and space, this dissertation does indeed attempt to take Heidegger's question and questioning of revealing seriously.

This dissertation should also acknowledge how the appeal to a particular concept of worlding jumps over Heidegger's grounding of his arguments as an inquiry into essences.[30] Here,

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[30] In "The Question Concerning Technology," Heidegger begins with what he considers to be a standard definition of essence by referring to the quiddity of *things*, as if essence were a simple matter of categorizations concerning the qualities of objects:

> In the academic language of philosophy, "essence" means *what* something is; in Latin *quid*, *Quidditas*, whatness, provides the answer to the question concerning essence. For example, what pertains to all kinds of trees—oaks, beeches, birches, firs—is the same "treeness" (p. 29).

He seeks to reshape this object-oriented understanding, however, to a more enacting, verb-oriented approach, describing essence as a kind of determining force or "destining" (p. 31):

> If we speak of the "essence of a house" and the "essence of a state," we do not mean a generic type; rather we mean the ways in which house and state hold sway, administer themselves, develop, and decay—the way in which they "essence" (*Wesen*) (p. 30).

At the same time, Heidegger also wants to separate essence from the Platonic *eidos* or idea of a thing, which he characterizes as a permanent enduring beyond the materially manifest. Instead, Heidegger aligns the "enduring" of essence with "granting," arguing, "*Only what is granted endures. That which endures primally out of the earliest beginning is what grants*" (p. 31). Heidegger's argument attempts to align essence with a form of causality, consistent with his insistence on defining the essence of technology as a *destining of revealing* rather than as a collection of human inventions or achievements. Technology has its own agency, independent of any human maker; but the "[highest dignity of human essence] lies in keeping watch over the unconcealment […] of all coming to presence on this earth" (p. 32).

Even as Heidegger's reframing of essence attempts to disentangle itself from a dichotomy between idealized thought and impermanent materiality, his fealty to a particular notion of endurance ties him to an assertion of certainty that can only be verified in retrospect, as if what a thing turns out to have been determined its single possible unfolding. As Inwood (1999) notes,

> Heidegger associates *Wesen* with Aristotle's expression *to ti ēn einai*, 'essence, lit. the what (it) was to be,' which, like *Wesen*, has to do with the past. He explains it as meaning what a thing was, or has been, before it is actualized, and also what we understand 'earlier', already or apriori about something (p. 52).

the neologism of worlding is employed in the contemporary sense used by Haraway (2012) to signal an ongoing coming-into-being and becoming-with that may manifest through actualization or as speculative possibility.[31] In this context, worlding as a term suggests that the world that is the ground of being can never be taken for granted as fixed. Worlding is a process of contestation that engages *with*, *through*, and *as* various agents, human and nonhuman. As such, worlding is always more than simply the sum of any identifiable parts or interests it encompasses; worlding is plural, in the sense that there are always and at once multiple and contradictory worlds that are becoming, materialized,[32] or passing away; and worlding is dynamic, in the sense of attaining only temporary stabilities. Thus, Haraway writes of multiple kinds of worlding: "terran worlding" (p. 301), "multispecies worlding" (p. 303), "companion species worlding" (p. 306), and "cyborg worlding" (p. 312), calling attention to specific geographies, agencies or intentionalities—entities that are themselves only fixed as boundaried or identifiable agents to the extent that their world is already "worlded"[33]—that contribute to particular ongoing "worldings." Haraway can also refer

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In referring to the possibility of different or alternate types worlding, this dissertation assumes a kind of openness of trajectories and permeability of materialities that call into question not only any permanence in the sense of enduring, but also any fixed certainty of a thing's primordial beginning. To take worlding seriously as a concept may require a calling into question not only of what becomes, but also the certainty of what turns out to have been.

[31] This is somewhat different from Heidegger's (2012/1994) use of "worlding" as a term. In his view, only Dasein, as a "who" that cares for its being, has a world. He uses the term worlding to draw attention to the event of occurrence that grounds Dasein's being as being-in-the-world. He writes: "Being has to own its essence from the worlding of world. This points out that the worlding of world is an appropriating [*das Ereignen*]" (p. 46). According to Inwood (1999), "The most general word for an event is *Ereignis*, from *sich ereignen*, 'to happen, occur'" (p. 54). From this, I understand Mitchell's translation of *das Ereignen* as "an appropriating" to suggest an occurring that takes being into itself. Heidegger's use of the term "world" in relation to the analytic of Dasein will be taken up in greater detail in Chapter 6.

[32] One might also use terms made popular Deleuze and Guattari—"stratified" or "(re)territorialized"—to describe this materialization.

[33] Here I am taking some liberty with Haraway's use of the term "worlding," and reading it according to an idea of intra-action as outlined by Karen Barad (2007), who outlines an agential realist ontology that understands the universe as an entangled becoming. To distinguish an entity as an individual or distinct agency may be to enact an agential cut, a boundary-making activity that contributes to the configuration and production of a particular world:

> The neologism "intra-action" *signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies*. That is, in contrast to the usual "interaction," which assumes that there are separate individual agencies that precede their interaction, the notion of intra-action recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action. It is important to note that the "distinct"

more generally to "multiscalar, multitemporal, multimaterial worlding" (p. 312) to describe the multisituatedness of worlding as process. Such a thinking-through of the agencies involved in and attentive to a process of worlding attempts to move away from anthropocentric understandings of agency and being without denying human response-ability; but it also forecloses somewhat on any idea of a singular, universal or absolute and enduring nature that might be suggested by the notion of "essence." The appeal to worlding performs a textual sleight-of-hand that smooths over the appearance of a particular "knot" (the question of essences) encountered on the way to a consideration of presence. I draw the reader's attention to this sleight-of-hand in order to bring the "conspicuousness, obtrusiveness, and obstinacy" (Heidegger, 2010/1953, p. 73)[34] of the question of essences into, or back into, the reader's awareness. Essence is one of the ideas bound up in the knot of presence, and its contours will be explored in greater detail in the following chapters.

Convinced or unconvinced as the reader may be by these two varying descriptions of being-in-its-becoming—either Heidegger's dialectic of the disclosure and concealedness of essences, or Haraway's intra-active worlding—both accounts offer a philosophical framing that attempts to think through technological and cultural insights without taking either a scientific or artistic approach. Since this dissertation proposes to draw not only from philosophy but also from these other ways of knowing, it is important to consider what each entails. Worlding as a term suggests a coming-into-presence; the codefining interconnectedness of the notions of world and worlding with notions of self and other will be considered in some detail in Chapter 4.

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agencies are only distinct in a relational, not an absolute, sense, that is, agencies are only distinct in relation to their mutual entanglement; they don't exist as individual elements (p. 33).

[34] These are, of course, the terms that Heidegger (2010/1953) uses to describe how objects disclose themselves to us when they lose their "handiness," a disruption of our usually hidden totality of reference toward the world in which "the *presence* of beings is thrust to the fore" (p. 75, emphasis added).

CHAPTER 2: FORMS OF THOUGHT

Thought in its three great forms

In *What is Philosophy?* Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1994) outline what they consider to be the defining characteristics of philosophy as a particular mode of human thought. To do this, they identify three distinct ways of thinking, corresponding to philosophy, science and art. Each mode of thinking has its own way of generating understanding: "philosophy extracts *concepts* (which must not be confused with general or abstract ideas), whereas science extracts *prospects* (propositions that must not be confused with judgments), and art extracts *percepts and affects* (which must not be confused with perceptions or feelings)" (p. 24). What validates these disciplines as modes of human thought is that each offers an orientation in the face of chaos,[35] and each stands against mere opinion, which figures as thought's constant adversary.[36] As far as Deleuze and Guattari are concerned, opinion does not constitute a creative production of knowledge; rather, it is a set of operations based on simple recognition. According to them,

> Opinion is a thought that is closely molded on the form of recognition—recognition of a quality in perception (contemplation), recognition of a group in affection (reflection), and recognition of a rival in the possibility of other groups and other qualities (communication) (pp. 145-146).

To understand how damning Deleuze and Guattari mean to be here, one needs to understand the limited value they attribute to recognition: "Of all the finite movements of thought, the form of recognition is certainly the one that goes the least far and is the most impoverished and puerile" (p. 139). The chaos that these philosophers refer to can be understood to correspond closely to an idea of meaninglessness: chaos "is a void […] containing all possible particles and drawing out

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[35] They write, "Philosophy, science, and art want us to tear open the firmament and plunge into the chaos. We defeat it only at this price" (p. 202).

[36] To illustrate the mechanics of opinion, Deleuze and Guattari offer the example of a debate over cheese. An argument based on opinion begins by extracting and abstracting a particular perception (e.g., the smell or texture that corresponds to cheese) and then attempts to produce an alliance of those who share a particular affective response (e.g., those who find the smell foul and therefore detestable). These conditions form the basis for discussion and persuasion focused on bringing together supporters who share the same affective response (e.g., a consensus of cheese-haters). In the court of opinion, the majority wins. In brief, opinion "extracts an abstract quality from perception and a general power from affection" (p. 145).

all possible forms, which spring up only to disappear immediately, without consistency or reference, without consequence" (p. 118).

In positing three independent and equal modes of human thought, Deleuze and Guattari are responding to developments over the last 200 years that have placed science at the forefront of knowledge, relegating philosophy to the realm of esoteric study and fine arts to that of entertainment and decoration.[37] They are also arguing that thinking in any of its forms is an active process that creates knowledge rather than simply recognizing data and ordering information.

Deleuze and Guattari insist that thinking should not be confused with contemplation, reflection or communication. In their view, these three activities "are not disciplines, but machines for constituting Universals in every discipline" (p. 6). As acts of recognition, each fails to present an accurate account of what thinking entails.[38] At best, as "machines for constituting Universals," contemplation, reflection and communication perpetuate an illusory tautology, since "Universals explain nothing but must themselves be explained" (p. 7).[39] This is one reason why

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[37] By identifying and defining multiple forms of thought, Deleuze in particular returns to one of the enduring themes of his writing. Deleuze is interested in tracing the "image of thought" that in his view predetermines what thought is able to accomplish—in Deleuze's (1995) words, "The image of thought is what philosophy as it were presupposes; it precedes philosophy, […] a prephilosophical understanding" (p. 148). Deleuze understands an underlying change in the image of thought as being a generative and transformative force for developing new concepts. He offers various examples of changing images of thought, including the figuration of the rhizome, which attempts to supplant an arborescent image of knowledge as being like the branches of a tree. He has also written about cinematic juxtapositions of "rational" and "irrational" cuts—the latter evidenced in the work of Alain Resnais and Hans-Jürgen Syberberg—as offering "two different images of thought" (p. 149).

[38] Contemplation, reflection and communication present abstractions as certainties, obscuring the necessary creative work involved in thought as well as the conditions of a universal's coherence. Contemplation is structured by a thinking that has already preceded it and laid the groundwork of its possibility. It does not create concepts, but follows from them. In Deleuze and Guattari's terms, "contemplations are things themselves as seen in the creation of their specific concepts" (p. 6). Reflection is no different, though it shifts the perceived site of knowledge production. In contemplation, the object of thought presumably inspires the contemplator; in the latter, the subject is understood to mirror the object of thought. Reflection does not generate thought, but rather attempts to trace the contours of what has already been thought. Communication is the worst of all, for it "only works under the sway of opinions in order to create 'consensus' and not concepts" (p. 6).

[39] Deleuze and Guattari are particularly hostile to the conflation of communications theory with philosophy. They trace a history of challenges to philosophy by various rivals, including sociology, linguistics and psychoanalysis, until

> Finally, the most shameful moment came when computer science, marketing, design, and advertising, all the disciplines of communication, seized hold of the word *concept* itself and said:

an approach that seeks to define essences—which are particular types of universals—can be seen as problematic. In order to recognize an essence, one must already accept the principle of essences as a way of identifying and defining what and how things exist. A universal, far from being an ultimate concept that explains a universe, is only possible because it is supported by a particular conceptual universe that has already been carved out of chaos by thought. As Deleuze and Guattari put it, "Even so-called universals as ultimate concepts must escape the chaos by circumscribing a universe that explains them" (p. 15).

Deleuze and Guattari expend considerable effort on the task of identifying some of the things that thinking, in their view, is not. In order to do this, they offer a variety of terms that must be unpacked in relation to each other: concept, prospect, percept, and affect. Rather than work from succinct definitions of each, Deleuze and Guattari attempt to provide descriptions and examples of how each operates. Their deployment of these terms is inflected by, but sometimes contrary to, the terms' common meanings. This much should be evident from their initial assertion that there are at least three distinct modes of thinking. Consider, for example, the definition of "concept" given by Eric Margolis and Stephen Laurence (2014) in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: "Concepts are the constituents of thoughts. Consequently, they are crucial to such psychological processes as categorization, inference, memory, learning, and decision-making. This much is relatively uncontroversial" (para. 1). Deleuze and Guattari would differ with Margolis and Laurence on this point, apparently, since they identify concept not as a broad term to describe the constituents of thought (which, as already noted, they prefer to identify as being "general or abstract ideas"), but as one particular mode of thought that is unique to

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"This is our concern, we are the creative ones, we are the *ideas men!* We are the friends of the concept, we put it in our computers." (p. 10)

Deleuze and Guattari view this denigration of philosophy as one of the great obfuscations of the capitalist era, as it frames concepts as simply one more type of commodity on offer within a marketplace:

Of course, it may be tempting to see philosophy as an agreeable commerce of the mind, which, with the concept, would have its own commodity, or rather its exchange value—which, from the point of view of a lively, disinterested sociability of Western democratic conversation, is able to generate a consensus of opinion and provide communication with an ethic, as art would provide it with an aesthetic. If this is what is called philosophy, it is understandable why marketing appropriates the concept and advertising puts itself forward as the conceiver par excellence, as the poet and thinker. What is most distressing is not this shameless appropriation but the conception of philosophy that made it possible in the first place (p. 99).

philosophy. Deleuze and Guattari wish to liberate the notion of what a concept is from any associations with the way psychology, cognitive science, or linguistics might define it, and they are particularly unsympathetic to logic as a branch of philosophy, with its "infantile idea of philosophy" (p. 22) that confuses propositions with concepts.[40]

For Deleuze and Guattari, a concept is not so much a discrete entity as a marker of a much larger system with its own coherency, created and defined through the question that produces it and the problem that gives it meaning (p. 16). A concept is always a multiplicity with more than one component (p. 15). It offers a consistency that links its components and also points to other concepts that occupy a common plane, which Deleuze and Guattari describe as a "plane of immanence." The singular yet infinite topological plane that a concept occupies—however curved or folded that plane may be—carves a horizon out of chaos and allows concepts to be "fragmentary wholes" (p. 35). A concept provides a "*point of absolute survey at infinite speed*," but the whole that comprises this infinite survey is "*finite through its movement that traces the contour of its components*" (p. 21). This sense of the infinite is crucial to defining what separates philosophical concepts from scientific prospects, which Deleuze and Guattari identify as being "propositions […] with an information value" (p. 138). A concept's validity is not determined by its ability to map the limits of the known, actualized world; rather, it allows the thinker to discover inherent potentials and imagine compossible worlds through this absolute survey.

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[40] According to Deleuze and Guattari, logic, by trying to appropriate the proposition's adherence to reference, can offer only a limited model of recognition. Like a religion, logic sets up a paradigmatic figure of correspondence; in this case, a fealty to "the recognition of truth":

> From earliest times philosophy has encountered the danger of evaluating thought by reference to such uninteresting cases as saying "hello, Theodore" when Theatetus is passing by. The classical image of thought was not safe from these endeavors that value recognition of truth. It is hard to believe that the problems of thought, in science as well as in philosophy, are troubled by such cases: as the creation of thought, a problem has nothing to do with a question, which is only a suspended proposition, the bloodless double of an affirmative proposition that is supposed to serve as its answer ("Who is the author of *Waverley?*" "Is Scott the author of *Waverley?*"). Logic is always defeated by itself, that is to say, by the insignificance of the cases on which it thrives. In its desire to supplant philosophy, logic detaches the proposition from all its psychological dimensions, but clings all the more to the set of postulates that limited and subjected thought to the constraints of a recognition of truth in the proposition. And when logic ventures into a calculus of problems, it does so by modeling it, isomorphically, on the calculus of propositions. It is less like a game of chess, or a language game, than a television quiz game. But problems are never propositional (p. 139).

Deleuze and Guattari link this quality of the concept to a notion of "event," suggesting "the concept speaks the event, not the essence or the thing" (p. 21).[41] Addressing the event rather than the essence or the thing points to a particular way of framing or giving meaning to the world, in which the focus is on the patterns of change that have the capacity or agency to produce bodies or states of affairs rather than on "a relationship with a state of affairs or body and with the conditions of this relationship" (p. 22). The event, in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, allows us to look beyond the actual, to acknowledge what is real but not resolved as actual. Concepts offer the capacity to survey the generative potentials of virtuality[42] and becoming that exist across the plane of immanence: the connections that are possible among the figures that inhabit that particular plane, and the points at which a particular system offers possibilities for transformation.

The quality of "infinite speed" that defines how concepts operate is contrasted with the limits of scientific prospects or functions, which are grounded in "*a reference able to actualize the virtual*" (p. 188). Science concerns itself with the concrete, actualized states of affairs or bodies, determining a "plane of reference" that introduces finite limits. The finitude in science, which confines itself to this reference of actualized conditions—that is, bodies or states of affairs—is one of the key distinguishing characteristics that separates philosophical concepts from scientific prospects:

> *To give consistency without losing anything of the infinite* is very different from the

[41] Brent Adkins (2012) usefully compares Deleuze's understanding of "event" to that of Badiou. For both philosophers, the notion of the event is critical for the theorization of "the new." In the case of Deleuze, the event marks a change in intensities that corresponds to something new, "a point at which difference is produced" (p. 514). Adkins suggests that for Deleuze, events have key ontological significance prior to that of beings or things:

> Deleuze's ontology is not populated by subjects, objects, substances, or essences but zones of intensity in constant flux. As these zones of intensity interact with other zones of intensity a threshold may be reached and the intensity may reach a higher or lower degree. The point of change in an intensity is an event for Deleuze (p. 509).

[42] Unlike the traditional understanding of "possibility", which constructs a notion of that which has not or not yet been realized (and therefore is not yet real), Deleuze's notion of virtuality, which he developed from that of Henri Bergson (*Bergsonism*, 1966), makes a distinction between unrealized and unactualized. Bergson argued that our traditional notion of the possible is only "a retroactive extrapolation from an actual event" (Bogue 2007, p. 276); it is a hypothesis of what might have been rather than an affirmation of something that exists as a current potential. For Deleuze, the virtual is just as real as what has differentiated into actualization; it is an already real plane where differentiations can take place. As Smith and Protevi (2014) note in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:* "The Deleuzean virtual is thus not the condition of possibility of any rational experience, but the condition of genesis of real experience" (para. 12).

problem of science, which seeks to provide chaos with reference points, on condition of renouncing infinite movements and speeds and of carrying out a limitation of speed first of all (p. 42).

To help explain the distinction, Deleuze and Guattari borrow an image from Lewis Carroll:

philosophy continually extracts a consistent event from the state of affairs—a smile without the cat, as it were—whereas through functions, science continually actualizes the event in a state of affairs, thing, or body that can be referred to (p. 126).

A philosophical concept allows us to think the smile as an event that retains its meaningfulness as "a smile" even without the body of the smiling cat, whereas a scientific function or prospect must gauge this individuated smile in reference to the upturn of a set of lips that frame a row of teeth. The *concept* of a smile allows us to think the possibility of a smiling wind; the *prospect* of a smile is limited to bodies with mouths.

Deleuze (2001) clarifies the importance of what the indefinite article "a" signals—"a" smile as opposed to *this* particular smile or *the* smile of the Cheshire cat—in his essay "Immanence: A Life." His approach to empiricism, which seeks a way around what he sees as phenomenology's and psychology's aporias of self and ego, rests on the distinction between the singularized and the individualized. While every smile is singular, it is only a matter of habit that we understand each smile as rigidly and irrevocably belonging to a personal, ego-identified "I"; i.e., individuated as "my" smile or "your" smile. To give a sense of what he means, Deleuze describes a scene from Charles Dickens, in which a contemptible character appears to be dying. "Suddenly, those taking care of him manifest an eagerness, respect, even love, for his slightest sign of life" (p. 28). But not for *his* life, exactly, for upon his recovery, the character's mean behaviour and the disapproval of those who surround him returns. The eagerness and respect that is engendered among the caregivers is for life, for *a life*, singular in its manifestation in this character, but not necessarily individualized as *his*. Deleuze describes this as "a haecceity no longer of individuation but of singularization" (p. 29). On this point, Deleuze is arguing for an immanence that must be understood as being immanent only to itself, rather than being attributed to a subject that contains it.

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Although this meditation on immanence is one of his final texts, Deleuze's insistence on reading the self as only one possible mode of individuation is consistent throughout his writing. In *Negotiations*, for example, Deleuze (1995) describes the intentions of *A Thousand Plateaus*, his project with Guattari, in this way:

> What we're interested in, you see, are modes of individuation beyond those of things, persons or subjects: the individuation, say, of a time of day, of a region, a climate, a river or a wind, of an event. And maybe it's a mistake to believe in the existence of things, persons, or subjects (p. 26).

It is worth noting that distinguishing different modes of individuation is not confined to the practice of philosophy, and that forms of individuation other than the self are no less actual for science as points of reference. Deleuze and Guattari (1994) understand all thought—whether it is philosophic, scientific or artistic—as being creative and generative. They argue that the functives[43] of science do not preexist as ready-mades waiting to be discovered; rather, they must be created and validated through experimentation (p. 128). The type of experimentation that science undertakes, however, is quite specific, and requires the employment of "*partial observers* in relation to functions within systems of reference" (p. 129).

Partial observers could be described as the guarantors that populate science's planes of reference. They are, in a sense, the points of reference themselves, providing the views from somewhere that give scientific thought its verifiability and that distinguish it from the realm of opinion. They are partial because they are perspectival, but as Deleuze and Guattari caution, "we must avoid giving them the role of a limit of knowledge or of an enunciative subjectivity" (p. 129). In other words, their partiality should not be taken as a limit on knowledge; rather, science engages many partial perspectives, and the knowledge that science produces comes from the rigour of matching up these partial perspectives. The alignment of these many partial observers, of these various perspectives, is the basis of scientific coherence. At the same time, partiality should not be confused with having a subjective position, because the "observation" is tied not to the observer as subject, but to the elements of the proposition or prospect. As Deleuze and Guattari describe them, "*ideal partial observers are the perceptions or sensory affections of*

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[43] "Functive" is the term Deleuze and Guattari give to the elements that make up the propositions that constitute scientific prospects (p. 117).

functives themselves" (p. 131). Of course, if this is true, it would be equally incorrect to label prospects as *objective*. While prospects aim to observe bodies or states of affairs, the verifiability of their claims rest less on the things being observed than on the accuracy and correlation of the variables selected as constituting meaningful data.

At first glance, it may appear odd that Deleuze and Guattari refer to *perceptions* and *affections* when they might have chosen other terms such as measurements or data, but they are quite consistent in their choice of words: "The role of a partial observer is *to perceive* and *to experience*, although these perceptions and affections are not those of a man, but belong to the things being studied" (p 130). The authors use these terms to provide a bridge that will allow them to move from the first two modes of thought they discuss—philosophic and scientific—to the mode that they understand as corresponding to art, which "extracts percepts and affects." They posit partial observers as scientific sensibilia, and suggest that philosophy also has its own type of sensibilia, which they identify as conceptual personae.[44] Scientific sensibilia in particular, however, with their grounding in an actualized world, seem to maintain a close relationship to the realm of the sensory. "Rather than oppose sensory knowledge and scientific knowledge," Deleuze and Guattari suggest, "we should identify the sensibilia that populate systems of coordinates and are peculiar to science" (p. 131). While these sensibilia do not necessarily conform to the human sensorium, science can access them prosthetically, through the use of nonsubjective, scientific instrumentation—"the photographic plate, camera, or mirror that captures what no one is there to

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[44] Although conceptual personae are a key element of Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of philosophy as outlined in *What Is Philosophy?*, I have omitted them from my main account of their arguments as they relate to this dissertation. In brief, conceptual personae are figures that "carry out the movements that describe the [philosophic] author's plane of immanence, and they play a part in the very creation of the author's concepts" (p. 63). Socrates, for example, is identified as a conceptual persona of Platonism; Cartesianism relies on the conceptual persona of the idiot, the private thinker who knows nothing and therefore doubts all so-called truths. Nietzsche "worked […] with both sympathetic (Dionysus, Zarathustra) and antipathetic (Christ, the Priest, the Higher Men […]) conceptual personae" (p. 65). What is perhaps germane to note here is the recognition that conceptual personae need not take a classic subject position. While Descartes' *cogito* becomes the ego-identified conceptual persona for many philosophers, it is quite possible to lay out a plane of immanence that does not rely on the *a priori* assumption of subject-object relations. Heidegger's (2010/1953) *Being and Time* might be productively considered in this regard. If his "plane of immanence" corresponds to Being, then the conceptual persona that carries out the movements that describe this plane would be Dasein, "this being [*Seiende*] which we ourselves in each case are and which includes inquiry among the possibilities of its being" (p. 7). As Michael Inwood (1999) points out, Dasein "refers to any and every human being" (p. 42) rather than to an individual self, and this figure's non-individualized status is surely essential to Heidegger's conceptual achievements in *Being and Time*.

see and make these unsensed sensibilia blaze" (p. 131).

But what is the actualized world that provides science's plane of reference? Deleuze and Guattari contrast the scientific coordinates positioned on a plane of reference with philosophic planes of immanence.[45] A plane of immanence offers survey at infinite speed, while a plane of reference imposes limits on speed. Speed is a function of time and space: that is, a measurement of distance traveled over a period of time. When speed becomes infinite, space and time are no longer meaningful as boundaries: one can travel no distance or all of distance in no time or all of time; therefore, all of time and space become simultaneous. A plane of reference, then, which places limits on speed, is a plane for which the measurements of time and space matter. It is the world inhabited by matter,[46] and it is matter in the actualized form of "things themselves" that provides an anchor for scientific perception:

> Scientific observers […] are points of view in things themselves that presuppose a
> calibration of horizons and a succession of framings on the basis of slowing-downs and
> accelerations: affects here become energetic relationships, and perception itself becomes

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[45] They suggest that with philosophic thought, there are many planes or fragmentary wholes that exist "in a grandiose time of coexistence that does not exclude the before and after but *superimposes* them in a stratigraphic order" (p. 59). Elements from different planes may appear to overlap, but they need not correspond, since their allegiance is to the consistency of their unique plane. Deleuze and Guattari do posit a kind of philosophic metaplane, however, "immanent to every thinkable plane that does not succeed in thinking it," which they understand "as the outside and inside of thought, as the not-external outside and the not-internal inside—that which cannot be thought and yet must be thought" (pp. 59-60). This is quite different from scientific thought, whose ultimate goal is to map a single, unified plane in which every actualized element can be positioned in reference to all of the others.

[46] Everyday understandings tend to configure time and space as dimensions that act as containers which matter occupies and moves through. Other interpretations, however, understand time and space as material elements *of* matter. Karen Barad's (2007) account of agential realism, for example, uses the neologism *timespacematter* to suggest the illusoriness of distinguishing time, space and matter as individual things. She posits the actualized universe as intra-actively enacted.

> Such a dynamics is not marked by an exterior parameter called time, nor does it take place in a container called space. Rather, *iterative intra-actions are the dynamics through which temporality and spatiality are produced and iteratively reconfigured in the materialization of phenomena and the (re)making of material-discursive boundaries and their constitutive exclusions* (p. 179).

In other words, time, space and matter are all produced as the whole of intra-active materialization. This account, which emphasizes ongoing, differentializing becoming, is somewhat in keeping with that posited by Deleuze and Guattari, although Barad's focus and insistence rests with the material-discursive boundary-making processes of intra-action rather than defining a plane of immanence whose differentializing potentials are marked by varying intensities.

a quantity of information (p. 132).

Prospects can be understood therefore as propositions that correspond to the world of time, space and matter as it is experienced through perception as information.

If the sensibilia of science correspond to sense-data, or perception as information, the constructs that Deleuze and Guattari call percepts and affects are something else again. The thing common to all forms of art, the thing that art produces, "is *a bloc of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects*" (p. 164). This movement from perception to percept, from affection to affect, signals a depersonalization of sensation. The bloc or compound that is produced "must stand up on its own" (p. 164), independently of the artist that created it or of an audience that feels it. Rather, "percepts, and affects are *beings* whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds any lived" (p. 164). Deleuze and Guattari reify percepts and affects in order to call attention to what art achieves as a form of thought. Artworks are not simply resemblances that mimic aspects of real life, and art is not only a matter of eliciting autonomic responses by finding the right combination of stimuli. Percepts and affects are, in a sense, the matter of expression, a matter invented or supported by means of material (plastic, sculptural, cinematic, linguistic), but having its own existence "in itself *in the eternity that coexists with this short duration* [of a given material]" (p. 166). Like philosophic concepts and scientific prospects, artistic percepts and affects are the creative products of thought, not precursors to thought in the sense that perceptions and affections are often understood to be. They must be invented.

Positing percepts and affects as nonsubjective entities independent of either a sensing subject or a vital material is a refutation of the phenomenological stance, in accordance with Deleuze's insistence that the plane of immanence should not be related back to a subject's consciousness. In particular, Deleuze and Guattari counter Merleau-Ponty's idea of the flesh of the world where, in their reading, "transcendent functions […] traverse the lived […] and are embodied in it by constituting living sensations" (p. 178). While they recognize an involvement of flesh in sensation, ultimately, "flesh is only the developer which disappears in what it develops: the compound of sensation" (p. 183). Rather than flesh, the kind of incarnation that Deleuze and Guattari theorize, following Marcel Proust, is the notion of the art-monument that "does not actualize the virtual event but incorporates or embodies it: it gives it a body, a life, a universe" (p. 177). This opens up a new set of territories, distinct from either virtuality or

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actuality, which they identify as "possibles, the possible as aesthetic category" (p. 177). Here, possibility must be understood as non-restrictive, according to a definition that is different from the negative sense of "possible" critiqued by Henri Bergson.[47] Ronald Bogue (2007) identifies two distinct understandings of "possibility" in the writings of Deleuze: "one restrictive, in which the possible denotes the foreseeable, practicable, plausible or conceivable; the other nonrestrictive, in which the possible denotes an opening toward something new, beyond orthodox notions and expectations" (p. 277).[48] The positive, non-restrictive sense of the possible that Deleuze and Guattari (1994) find in artistic thought is closely linked to a notion of becoming. Affects and percepts entail a becoming-other, in which new differentiations are possible. "*Affects are* […] *nonhuman becomings of man*, just as percepts […] are *nonhuman landscapes of nature*" (p. 169). Deleuze and Guattari characterize this becoming-other as "a zone of indetermination, of indiscernibility" in which what we identify (by habit) as subject and object "reach that point that immediately precedes their natural differentiation" (p. 173). To know the ocean, one must, in a sense, become it.[49] At the same time, this becoming can embody unexpected forces of differentiations; percepts "make perceptible the imperceptible forces that populate the world, affect us, and make us become" (p. 182).

The distinction between virtuality and possibility can be understood in relation to the types of becoming that are proper to philosophy and art. "Conceptual becoming is heterogeneity grasped in an absolute form; sensory becoming is otherness caught in a matter of expression" (p.

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[47] See footnote 42 above.

[48] Bogue (2007) also contrasts these two distinct types of possibility as "arborescent" (reinscribing what is known to be actualized) and "rhizomatic" (giving access to the virtual) (pp. 285-286).

[49] Becoming, of course, does not imply that one ever *is* the ocean; rather, one attains a peculiar, original state of *becoming-ocean*. As Deleuze and Guattari (1987) note in *A Thousand Plateaus*:

> [I]f becoming animal does not consist in playing animal or imitating an animal, it is clear that the human being does not "really" become an animal any more than the animal "really" becomes something else. Becoming produces nothing other than itself. We fall into a false alternative if we say that you can either imitate or you are. What is real is the becoming itself, the block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which that which becomes passes. […] The becoming-animal of the human being is real, even if the animal the human being becomes is not (p. 238).

For a more extensive discussion of the concept of becoming-other, explored in relation to three of Marilyn Arsem's participatory performance art works, see Couillard (2020), " The Lightness and Darkness of Becoming-Marilyn."

177). The virtual is heterogeneous, encompassing the many real but unactualized potentials of differentiation into things and states of affairs that exist on a plane of immanence; the possible in its nonrestrictive form as a compound of percepts and affects is a material embodiment at the intersection of virtual and actual, a newly territorialized opening onto becoming. It is as if by imbuing matter, an actualized substance, with sensation (transformed into percept and affect), the artist infuses the virtual (in the form of a possible world) into the actual. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that "the peculiarity of art is to pass through the finite in order to rediscover, to restore the infinite" (p. 197).

Just as concepts populate planes of immanence and prospects are mapped onto a plane of reference, percepts and affects inhabit an aesthetic "plane of composition" that establishes foreground and background, and manifests "as image of a Universe (phenomenon)" (p. 65). Each art form has its own way of opening onto such a universe or "infinite cosmos" (p. 197), be it through music, words or materials. As a surface, the aesthetic plane of composition need not be perspectival; it may be a plane of thickness, for example, where "the 'underneath' comes through" (p. 197). This compositional plane is inseparable from the compound of sensation made up of percepts and concepts. Plane and compound maintain a "strict coexistence or complementarity, neither of them advancing except through the other" (p. 196). Deleuze and Guattari characterize the transformative potential of art as a process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, in which

> composite sensation, made up of percepts and affects, deterritorializes the system of
> opinion that brought together dominant perceptions and affections within a natural,
> historical, and social milieu. But the composite sensation is reterritorialized on the plane
> of composition […]; landscapes that have become pure percepts, and characters that
> become pure affects (pp. 196-197).

As understood by Deleuze and Guattari, the universe made perceptible by the plane of composition does not become actual, but it is realized as an aesthetic possibility, accessed through its manifestation as a bloc of sensation imbued within the material ground of the artwork.

Scientific thought: prospect *as* percept

Deleuze and Guattari equate philosophy, science, and art with three different modes of

thought, offering an intriguing schema for categorizing distinct disciplines of knowledge and for considering the generative foundations of human meaning-making. They identify each of the components of these three forms of thought—concept for philosophy, prospect for science, and compound sensation of percept and affect for art—as achievements that shape meaning and point to or generate specific potentials of becoming, each according to the aims and rigours of its own classification of knowledge. As philosophers, Deleuze and Guattari provide us with a set of concepts outlining what concept, prospect, percept and affect are. Before committing to such an account, however, it is worth considering how science and art map out their own formal understandings of what thinking is and how it is structured.

Science has taken at least two quite distinct analytical approaches to understanding thinking. Psychology offers itself as a scientific discipline devoted to the study of the human mind, while neuroscience considers the anatomical, biochemical and molecular functions of human and animal nervous systems, including the brain. Mark Solms and Oliver Turnbull (2002) note that it is only toward the end of the twentieth century that neuroscience began to seriously concern itself with "subjective" aspects of brain function such as consciousness and emotions as a result of key improvements in technologies.[50] Our growing abilities to monitor and measure brain activity "are yielding previously undreamed-of knowledge about the physiological underpinnings of the 'inner world' [of thought]" (p. 5). One of the consequences of this shift in interest has been an attempt to link behavioural, emotional, genetic and developmental life sciences with neuroscience's increasingly sophisticated mapping of brain anatomy and physiology. Luca Tommasi, Lynn Nadel, and Mary A. Peterson (2009) also note a major shift at the end of the twentieth century "when the fields of developmental psychology, comparative psychology, and the neurosciences began to share and compare data obtained using similar methodologies in animals and humans, and at different stages of developmental change" (p. 4). This shift of

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[50] One significant development was the advancement from being able to map brain *structures*—first with two-dimensional X-rays, then with computerized axial tomography (CAT) scans that are able to construct three-dimensional images, then with magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans that use radio waves—to an ability to measure *functionality* (which areas of the brain are consuming energy) using positron emission tomography (PET) and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). For a brief description of the various types of brain scan imagery, see Chris Frith's (2007) *Making Up the Mind*, pp. 7-15. For a thoughtful reading of the cultural and popular constructions of meaning surrounding PET scans, see Joseph Dumit's (2004) *Picturing Personhood*.

perspective moves away from the tendency to characterize human thought as being outside or beyond the physical realm and qualitatively different from the experiential worlds of other living creatures. As such, this revised approach is also an important reorientation away from the underlying notion of a mind/body split that has tended to dominate Western thinking at least since René Descartes.

Neither psychology nor neuroscience recognizes distinct thought processes or brain structures corresponding to the particular disciplinary approaches outlined by Deleuze and Guattari, although both identify and differentiate among various cognitive processes.[51] As previously noted, a sustained analysis of psychological and psychoanalytic frameworks will not be undertaken here, but I am interested in considering how neuroscientific understandings of cognition might contribute to this dissertation's exploration of presence.[52]

Neuroscience models the processes or phenomena that we associate with the mind—thought, consciousness, perception and emotion—by tracing their correspondence with the functions of the nervous system and the brain. Such an approach recognizes thought as an

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[51] It is useful to remember that philosophy, science, and art cannot simply be taken as essentially given disciplinary categories. Jacques Rancière (2004) has written usefully about the evolution of our notions of art in Western society, identifying a series of overlapping historical regimes of "art" that serve to define particular normative roles within a community or society. He notes, for example, that although we often look to ancient Greece for an understanding and originary definition of Western art practices, "art did not exist for [Plato] but only arts, ways of doing and making" (p. 23). The recognition that particular ways of doing and making—or, for the purposes of this discussion, ways of thinking—such as art or science can vary from culture to culture, and that they change over time, points to a more epistemological than ontological reading of their "essence" as disciplines or categories of thought.

[52] If one follows Deleuze and Guattari's schema, one might argue that psychoanalytic theory is more a philosophic than scientific way of thinking. Although a psychoanalytic approach involves empirical observation and analysis, it seems that much of its theoretical groundwork rests more on a concern with the event that reveals potentials than with actual things or states of affairs. Unlike neural patterns or brain structures, the unconscious cannot be treated as a plane of reference concerned with actualized conditions measured through partial observers. As noted in footnote 12 above, the unconscious is inferred through an absence. It does not manifest as a thing available for scrutiny. Indeed, the unconscious can be seen as offering a model for the idea of virtuality that Deleuze and Guattari espouse. The unconscious is understood as a plane of mental activity that is not actualized as a physical or bodily structure, but nonetheless has a reality and a constant potential of varying realizations through changes in intensity. In this sense, the unconscious as a ground for psychoanalytic theory functions like a plane of immanence that allows infinite survey and is populated by the conceptual personae of the id, ego and superego. It is worth noting Guattari's background and training as a psychotherapist, which no doubt informed his approach to philosophy.

emergent consequence of organic bodies as neural systems.[53] Brains are understood in evolutionary and developmental terms—what Tommasi, Nadel, and Peterson refer to as "the evo-devo approach" (p. 11)—to be organs that have developed as an adaptive strategy for ensuring homeostasis; i.e., regulating the biological processes that sustain life within a multicellular organism. What made brains possible from an evolutionary perspective was the development of a particular type of cell, the neuron, which has the capacity to influence other cells by producing electrochemical impulses that can promote or inhibit the release of chemical molecules or stimulate movement. Such a capacity offers distinct biological advantages both within an organism—e.g., in order to manage internal body chemistry—and in relation to an external environment—e.g. in order to move toward the most advantageous location—but only if that capacity is accompanied by mechanisms for determining which conditions are favourable under a given set of circumstances. Antonio Damasio (2010) understands human brain structures as "*representing* the state of the body, literally mapping the body for which they work and constituting a sort of virtual surrogate of it, a neural double" (p. 38). He observes, however, that even if brains "double" their bodies, they remain a part *of* that body; in other words, there is no mind/body split, except as we construct one by classifying and defining particular body functions and functionalities. He further suggests that brains are ultimately "*about* the body" (p. 39), which is significant to developing an understanding of how a brain comes to map its external environment, as will be explored in more detail below.

Current understanding of brain anatomy is indebted to what Steven Pinker (1997) describes as the computational theory of mind—"the idea that information processing is the fundamental activity of the brain" (p. 83). According to this model, neuronal signals are routed through various component or compartmentalized areas of the brain where they are treated and processed as information. The brain collects signals from various parts of the body, and in turn sends signals to various parts of the body. Different areas of the brain recognize and respond to various types of signals. Some of these signals pertain to stimuli that originate within the body, while others are focused on stimuli that originate outside of the body. Some signals feed directly

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[53] This does not, of course, offer an explanation of *how* it is that living awareness comes to be, or *why* qualia appear the way they do. As Steven Pinker (1997) puts it, "we have no scientific purchase on the special extra ingredient that gives rise to sentience" (p. 147).

to several different areas of the brain at once, and some signals feed to particular areas that then trigger new signals, which travel to other parts of the brain for further processing. Most processing within the brain involves composites of various signals.[54]

Sensing, or generating sensation involves not only reception systems, but also many distinct brain activities. Information must be analyzed, integrated and stored. Because the world (including one's own body) is dynamic, this information is constantly changing, which calls for translation into action. Furthermore, current information must be assessed in relation to what came before, and what is likely to occur next. In other words, information must also be programmed, regulated and verified (Solms and Turnbull).[55] What we call mind, which corresponds to a conscious awareness of our being within the context of a larger spatiotemporal environment—a world that extends beyond our being and that includes other beings—is only one output of the information gathering and processing that we identify as constituting brain activity. Much of our body's neural and sensory activity never translates into conscious awareness.

To give a sense of the complexity of brain activity, Damasio (1999) notes that even a single set of activities of our neural system, what is often referred to as the somatosensory system is, in fact,

> a combination of several subsystems, each of which conveys signals to the brain about
> the state of very different aspects of the body. […] They use different machinery in terms

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[54] Computational theories of the mind call to mind the idea of a computer as a metaphor for the brain. What is perhaps lost in this loose analogy is a fundamental complexity of brain activity, which is that it not only responds to external stimuli, but also monitors, regulates and alters its own chemical and neural structures. The analogy of computer and brain has also led to a societal fascination with the possibility of downloading human consciousness into computers. In her book *How We Became Posthuman,* N. Katherine Hayles (1999) describes this way of imagining ourselves as being posthuman, thereby signaling a shift from the liberal humanist subject point of view to a new model of subjectivity. In her view, the assumption "that consciousness in an entirely different medium would remain unchanged, as if it had no connection with embodiment" (p. 1) can be seen as an extension of Descartes' mind-body split. Posthumanism requires the abstraction of a concept of information from the materiality that produces it: "conceiving of information as a thing separate from the medium instantiating it is a prior imaginary act that constructs a holistic phenomenon as an information/matter duality" (p. 13). Thus Hayles's insistence that immanence is indeed tied to its material instantiation could be characterized as firmly anti-Deleuzean.

[55] Solms and Turnbull (2002) provide a brief introduction to understanding basic brain anatomy and physiology (pp. 1-44). They cite Alexander Luria in describing how "the posterior half of the forebrain is traditionally described as a functional unit for the reception, analysis, and storage of information, [while] the anterior half is defined as the functional unit for the *programming, regulation and verification of action*" (p. 26).

of the nerve fibers that carry the signals from the body to the central nervous system, and

they are also different in the number, type and position of the central nervous system

relays onto which they map their signals. In fact, one aspect of the somatosensory

signaling does not use neurons at all but rather chemical substances available in the

bloodstream (p. 149).

Damasio goes on to identify "three fundamental divisions [of the somatosensory system]: the internal milieu and visceral division; the vestibular and musculoskeletal division; and the fine-touch division" (p. 149). The first of these divisions uses both neural and bloodstream pathways to monitor autonomic functions that never reach conscious awareness or control, such as oxygen and pH levels as well as the contraction and dilation of the smooth muscles of the viscera, but it is also responsible for interoceptive senses such as nociception (which generates the sensation of pain). This division focuses mainly on describing or monitoring the internal state of the body. The second division deals with the kinaesthetic senses of proprioception and balance, mapping the body's position in and movement through space. As such, it has a relation to both the internal body and the external world. The third division includes the senses of touch (weight, texture, shape), temperature and vibration. This division of the somatosensory system is focused on providing information that describes the external world. While each of these areas can be classified as separate subsystems because they involve relatively independent mechanisms and brain areas, they are also cooperative and interactive in ways that produce a seemingly seamless sensation of experience. What we call haptic perception, for example, involves both touch and proprioception.

  The fine touch division is not the only body system focused on external stimuli, of course. Touch is just one of the traditional "five senses," along with sight, sound, smell and taste. While our common-sense experience leads us to think of and identify each of these as providing distinct and singular types of sensory data, neuroscience reveals that these "senses," too, are amalgamations of multiple mechanisms or subsystems. They are, to return to Karen Barad's phrase, intra-active; that is, their "distinct" agencies are only distinct in a relational, not an absolute, sense; they don't exist as individual elements except as we artificially hive them off through an agential cut. In their book *Deciphering the Senses*, Robert Rivlin and Karen Gravelle (1984) note that even vision, which is generally treated as a single, isolatable sensory structure,

"is not merely the action of the lens focusing light rays onto the retina; rods and cones are involved, two completely distinct types of cells, derived from two distinct evolutionary functions, that account for contrast and color vision" (pp. 10-11). In other words, rods and cones constitute two distinct sensory systems encompassed within sight. Stereoscopy further complicates the neural achievement that we call vision.[56]

There are, of course, far more than five human senses. In 1984, Rivlin and Gravelle noted that modern science had identified at least 17 different biological sensory systems (p. 28),[57] and

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[56] Stereopsis, or binocular vision, which allows humans (and many other animals) to see in three dimensions, is not a universal trait. I am what is known as "stereoblind," meaning that the composite visual imagery that my mind generates from the distinct information coming from my two eyes does not cohere into an image with "depth." While I see out of both eyes, my brain does not process the information in a way that overlaps the alignment of the two images. Instead, my brain registers a visual field by allowing one eye to dominate. The nonoverlapping (peripheral) portions of the information coming from the second eye are aligned at the edge of the dominant field, but information that overlaps is effectively ignored. In my case, either eye can provide the dominant field, depending on what area of the visual field draws my focus. My brain autonomically turns the nondominant eye inward, resulting in a radical misalignment as a strategy to minimize overlapping information that it cannot resolve into a coherent image. This results in the characteristic "cross-eyed" appearance known as strabismus. While my vision is apparently "flat" (since I do not experience binocular vision, I have no reliable way of knowing what 3D vision feels like), my brain does integrate perspective as well as depth cues from other sensory systems (proprioception, kinaesthesia, hearing, touch) in a way that gives me a sense of multidimensional spatiality. For a detailed account of both scientific and phenomenological understandings of stereoblindness, told from the point of view of a neuroscientist who only acquired binocular vision as an adult, see Susan R. Barry's (2009) *Fixing my gaze*. According to her account, humans have both monocular (carrying information from a single eye) and binocular (integrating information from both eyes) neurons, suggesting that the amalgamation and integration of information required to produce stereoscopy begins before the signals even reach the visual cortex of the brain. She also notes, however, that

> imaging studies of the brains of individuals who are born blind or become blind early in life indicate that they use their visual cortex for nonvisual activities [.... For example, when sighted or blind people read braille] the visual cortex [...] lights up in blind people's brains but not in the brains of people who can see (p. 163).

This speaks to neuroplasticity, and the remarkable adaptability of brain structures. It also calls into question, however, the points at which we make the cut that defines a particular sensory system as open or closed. My particular interest in the phenomenon of presence is driven in part by the way I experience vision as inextricably linked to other senses such as touch and hearing. Laura U. Marks's (2002) exploration of the idea of a "haptic visuality" is not at all surprising to me, given my phenomenological awareness of vision as a stereoblind person whose brain compensates for flatness by integrating other somatosensory information.

[57] They do not identify each one individually, so it is not clear whether they are referring only to human sensory systems, or including all of those known to exist in biology (such as infrared detection, found in some reptile and insect species but not in humans).

this list continues to expand.[58] Perhaps one of the key reasons that these five senses have achieved such widespread cultural and historical codification[59] corresponds to a physiological distinction between two different patterns of neural interaction, characterized by Solms and Turnbull (2002), following M. Marsel Masulem, as channel and state functions. Exteroceptive senses, which collect data about the world outside of our bodies, tend to follow channel-dependent pathways, meaning that

> the information processed by these systems comes in *discrete bits* and is communicated via *distinct and specific pathways*. [… A] limited number of neurons directly "speak" to a limited number of other neurons some distance away, while *the vast bulk of the brain is completely unaffected by the interactions* (p. 34).

The five traditional senses are each processed in large measure by specialized cortices or processing areas on the surface of the brain. In other words, the information we perceive about the external world through these senses is "channelled" to a limited portion of the brain and thus maintains its specificity even as our consciousness integrates that data into a coherent representation of our external environment as a whole. Channel systems provide a linear mechanism for a body comprised of many complex neural and anatomical systems to recognize, interpret and react—often consciously—to information that references something other than itself. They also work in regulated bursts, like a movie camera taking multiple still images that, when played together, give the illusion of seamless continuity. This is in fact precisely why a film or video can create the illusion of continuous motion; one need only ensure that the speed of the individual images matches or exceeds the speed at which the channel system monitors the sense information it is receiving. It is easy to recognize the evolutionary efficacy of such channel systems, which hold exteroceptive sensory information somewhat compartmentalized and distinct from sensory information about the organism itself, and which, in a sense, "sample" the world at

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[58] Recent examples include the ongoing theorizations of an avian magnetic compass, the navigation mechanism of magnetoreception that allows birds to migrate using the earth's magnetic fields. Physicists now believe that this process may involve a visually based molecular system that detects chemicals affected by electron spin, a property of quantum entanglement (Ritz *et al.*, 2009).

[59] For a brief account of the cultural construction of five distinct senses in the West spanning from Aristotelian to Medieval and Renaissance views, see Rivlin and Gravelle (p. 15). Diane Ackerman (1990) also provides a compelling sense-by-sense narrative of the affective and cultural associations of smell, touch, taste, hearing and vision.

regulated, manageable intervals.

Interoceptive systems, however, tend to follow a different pattern:

Here, the means of communication is more gross and involves *widespread and global effects* that reflect changes in the s*tate* of the organism rather than in specific information-processing channels. [… I]n these systems, there are no specific pathways (channels) but, rather, a number of overlapping "fields of influence." [… T]hey are also open to influence by chemicals other than neurotransmitters, which link the brain *directly* with the visceral body (pp. 35-36).

State function systems monitor conditions that they are also capable of influencing or directly altering; consequently, they follow a more continuous and sustained pattern of activity that involves multiple neural and anatomical systems and affects many zones of the body. Their effects are felt more as energetic intensities than as discrete and self-contained units of information. Often, state functions do not register directly in conscious awareness. When they do, they may have the generalized character of a mood or feeling.

This understanding of how different types of information are recognized and processed within a human body suggests a starting point for developing a broad neurological distinction between two types of brain activity. In layman's terms, channel systems could be characterized as perceptive, and state functions as affective. This evokes a tentative correspondence with Deleuze and Guattari's (1994) assertion, noted earlier that "*Affects are* […] *nonhuman becomings of man*, just as percepts […] are *nonhuman landscapes of nature*" (p. 169); "landscapes of nature" could be seen as pointing to an external environment, while "becomings of man" are indicative of sensations within the human body. For Deleuze and Guattari, however, a percept is not simply a perception; nor is an affect simply a feeling. They configure percept and affect as achievements of thought that, once accomplished, "must stand up on [their] own," apart from any direct relationship to the consciousness of a subject that perceives or feels, and "independent of a state of those who experience them" (p. 164). Percepts are something art has "wrest[ed…] from the perceptions of objects and the states of a perceiving subject," while affects are "wrest[ed…] from affections as the transition from one state to another" (p. 167). They are not immanent to consciousness; they exist independently, preserved as compounds of sensation grounded in the material of an artwork, be it paint, stone or words.

In other words, there is a fundamental and perhaps irreconcilable difference in approach that separates a neurological model of thinking as an activity of the brain from Deleuze and Guattari's three modes of thought. Deleuze and Guattari identify a series of entities—concept, prospect, percept, and affect—as related concepts on a plane of immanence that describes the *event of thought*—not the *activity of thinking*. These entities are not the objects or components of a thinker's thinking in the way we understand perceptions or feelings. Instead, they take on a life independently of any individual conceiver or perceiver, on a plane of infinite speed. If they sediment into the conscious products of a subject's thoughts in what we know as the actualized, material world, this is only a quirk of their becoming (flesh as "the developer which disappears in what it develops")—a becoming that produces the perceiver as much as the perception.[60] For these philosophers, a percept without a perceiver is no less imaginable than a smile without a cat. Unfortunately, what is lost in this particular bid to separate the thinker from the thought is a way to situate concept, prospect, percept and affect *within* the processes of conceptualizing, perceiving or feeling.

The scientific mode of thought, with its plane of reference in an actualized world, points in another direction, concerned as it is with the mechanics of the "developing" process within fleshy, material organisms. But that is not to say that Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualizations cannot be applied generatively to a scientific understanding of thinking.[61] Rather than focusing on a conceptualization of prospects and percepts that are removed from their mooring in a subject's sensing and thinking process, I propose to reexamine how Deleuze and Guattari describe prospects as events. Channel systems and state functions suggest a possible reshaping of the conceptual division that Deleuze and Guattari construct between prospects as a scientific form of thinking and blocs of sensation—"*that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects*" (p. 164)—

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[60] Deleuze (2001) proposes a "plane of immanence" or "transcendental field" that is not generated by or housed within consciousness, but whose reflection can be gleaned from it: "Consciousness becomes a fact only when a subject is produced at the same time as its object, both being outside the [transcendental] field and appearing as 'transcendents'" (p. 26).

[61] Brian Massumi (2002), following Deleuze and Guattari, is a champion of a concept's "positive capacity for variation." He advocates a pragmatic approach to philosophy: "A concept (any phenomenon) is what it does, and therefore can only be evaluated according to its effects. It has no inherent meaning or truth-value" (pp. 268-269). Here I attempt to work generatively with what I find useful in Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of prospect and percept when placed against a neuroscientific understanding of perception.

as an artistic form of thinking. To review, Deleuze and Guattari describe scientific prospects as being "propositions […] with an information value" (p. 138) that map the limits of actualizable states of affairs or bodies as measured by ideal partial observers that "*are the perceptions or sensory affections of functives themselves*" (p. 131). Like Haraway's (1988) "view from a body […] versus the view from […] nowhere" (p. 589), Deleuze and Guattari's (1994) partial observers need not be human, but they *are* anchored in time and space, rooted in the materiality of what can be actualized. "Scientific observers […] are points of view in things themselves that presuppose a calibration of horizons and succession of framings on the basis of slowing-downs and accelerations" (p. 132). Deleuze and Guattari distinguish scientific "sensibilia" as extending beyond the sensoria of human or other animate bodies, but they arrive at this formulation based on a terminology that comes out of the notion of "sensing," an understanding that relates closely to lived experience. When Deleuze and Guattari identify scientific prospects as operating in a propositional way, dependent on partial observers of material phenomena, the underlying model for a prospect as an event is, in fact, that of lived perception.

Perceptions are an organism's way of discerning and interpreting the structure and behaviour of phenomena, with an underlying goal—one might say proposition—of identifying and predicting the ongoing actualization of the material world. Here one might remember James Barry Jr.'s assertion that percepts are not essentially predetermined, but involve decisions in the face of a larger undecidability (see footnote 29 above). Certainly organic perceptions are subjective in the sense that these discernments and interpretations are attuned to the effects of various phenomena on the perceiving organism's body. There would be limited immediate evolutionary advantage in being able to recognize and process information that is irrelevant to one's continued existence. Yet channel systems are evolutionarily successful from a neurological perspective precisely to the extent that they are able to achieve the calibration of horizons that Deleuze and Guattari attribute to prospects. By gathering and processing information about the world through linear, discrete pathways that maintain their coherence independent of an organism's body state, channel systems can be understood as measuring phenomena "according to the functives themselves."[62] Perceptions emerge from and take advantage of the physical

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[62] There is, of course, an important caveat that should be noted here. It is perhaps not entirely accurate to suggest that perception is fully encompassed by the channel system that funnels data from a sensory organ

properties and processes of the material world. The closer an organism's perceptions correspond to or are predictive of the way phenomena are actualized or tend to actualize—and this includes recognizing many things that pose neither an advantage nor a threat in themselves, whether to filter them out or to discover their relationship to other phenomena of more pressing concern— the more equipped that organism will be to respond in an appropriate way to maximize its ability to survive and thrive. For that matter, the apparatuses such as "the photographic plate, camera, or mirror that captures what no one is there to see" that Deleuze and Guattari exemplify as the sense mechanisms of scientific prospect are *designed* to harness, mimic and extend the perceptual structures found in the organic world. If these devices have the capacity to "make these unsensed sensibilia blaze" (p. 131) and thus allow us to discern material properties that our unaided corporeal senses cannot, it is precisely by translating those sensibilia into ones that our perceptual systems *are* able to recognize and interpret. At their core, prospects are extensions of organic perceptions; and, as a corollary, organic perceptions are lived prospects.

This correspondence—between Deleuze and Guattari's description of prospects as propositions measured by partial observers that are the perceptions of functives themselves, and a scientific, "evo-devo" understanding of organic perception as oriented toward mapping the material world—suggests the possibility of reconfiguring scientific thought around the idea of perception-as-prospect, which is how this dissertation proposes to define the concept of "percept." There are several key objectives to this reconfiguration. First, returning the concept of "prospect" to percept makes evident the underlying basis on which Deleuze and Guattari are able to construct their concept of a scientific prospect, with its emphasis on partial observers positioned

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to its corresponding sensory cortex. Neuroscience is rife with cases that reveal the complexities of perception and of perception's relationship to conscious thought. Damage to different areas of the visual cortex, for example, may hinder very specific aspects of vision, such as colour, pattern, or movement recognition, each of which are recognized and processed separately before being integrated into an overall composite of what we call sight. In a particular condition known as blindsightedness, a patient is unable to see consciously, but is able to respond physically in ways that indicate that visual information is still being received and processed—for example, being able to grasp an object or accurately guess the direction of moving light that they cannot "see" (Damasio 1999; Solms and Turnbull 2002; Frith 2007, Gazzaniga 2011). Evidence that a conscious brain can intentionally use information that it cannot "know" consciously radically complicates our ability to even describe, let alone explain, what consciousness is. At the very least, it reminds us that the channel systems that support perception are only part of a larger, more complex process involved in the overall event of perception-as-thought. A dissertation concerned with the meaningfulness of presence must pay some attention to the role of consciousness; the imbrication of presence and consciousness will be taken up in Chapter 3.

within the finitude of the material world of time and space. What Deleuze and Guattari qualify as a scientific prospect in order to posit a nonsubjective observer[63] can equally be described as perception framed according to a particular ideal that shifts the focus of concern from the interests of the observer to the actualized or actualizable unfolding of the phenomenon being observed. If science is able to envision or design instruments to be nonsubjective observers, this points to an inherent tendency or direction of perception itself. In other words, percepts as a form of thought suggest the general mode of understanding that Deleuze and Guattari associate with science. Second, following Deleuze and Guattari's attempt to formulate a nonsubjective frame of reference[64] for thinking "thought," thinking through "percept" rather than perception provides an initial grounding from which to explore perceptual constructions of presence-as-meaningful without assuming that subject-object relationships must predefine our understanding of the world. Just as Deleuze (2001) claims that "consciousness becomes a fact only when a subject is produced at the same time as its object" (p. 26), a percept points to the simultaneous disclosure of perceiver and perceived. The perceiver does not generate the percept; rather, both perceiver and perceived appear together through the event of the percept.[65] Third, as with a "concept," the notion of a "percept" emphasizes that perceiving is an achievement of thought, not simply a precursor that supports thought. A percept does not spring fully formed from the contact between stimulus and sensory organ. An organism's interpretations of and responses to a stimulus are

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[63] They argue that "instruments […] presuppose the ideal partial observer situated at a good vantage point in things: the nonsubjective observer is precisely the sensory that qualifies […] a scientifically determined state of affairs, thing, or body" (p. 131).

[64] Brian Massumi (2002) finds his own "nonsubjective" way of describing the references that position "things" in the same world as an organism. He understands perceptions as properties of the actions that co-constitute organism and thing as being part of the same world rather than as properties belonging to the functives themselves. He asserts:

> A creature's perception is directly proportional to its action upon the thing. The properties of the perceived thing are properties of the action more than of the thing itself. This does not mean […] that the properties are subjective or in the perceiver. On the contrary, they are tokens of the perceiver's and the perceived's concrete inclusion in each other's world (p. 90).

For Massumi, a thing "in itself" is the sum of all of its possible connections or inclusions in a world: "The flower-thing is *all* of the thought-perceptions in which it is implicated" (p. 92). This suggests that perception shapes the possibilities of an entity's becoming.

[65] When Deleuze and Guattari suggest that percepts and affects must stand up on their own, they are also asserting an ontological claim for these entities as beings more than representations: "Sensations, percepts, and affects are *beings* whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds any lived" (p. 164).

varied and involve a complex network of analytical processes that may engage body, brain and mind (to the extent that one can undertake an agential cut that categorizes them as distinct) in myriad ways. A percept is a form and formation of thought. Additionally, if percepts are indeed the mode of thought associated with scientific understanding, then neuroscience, with its emphasis on studying the neural underpinnings of perception, cognition and emotion, seems a particularly appropriate scientific discipline for this dissertation's inquiry into the notion of presence.

Redefining affect

Aligning percept to science as a form of thought also demands a reconsideration of affect in relation to artistic thought. For Deleuze and Guattari (1994), artistic thought involves the extraction of blocs of sensation, which they define as "*a compound of percepts and affects*" (p. 164). This suggests that percepts and affects both fall under the purview of art, just as concepts belong to the purview of philosophy, and prospects, to that of science. While Deleuze and Guattari caution that percept and affect are not to be confused with perception and affection, they extrapolate artistic thought's relationship to percept and affect through direct reference to perception and affection:

> By means of the material, the aim of art is to wrest the percept from perceptions of objects and the states of a perceiving subject, to wrest the affect from affections as the transition from one state to another: to extract a bloc of sensations, a pure being of sensations (p. 167).

At the same time, however, they repeatedly refer to perceptions and affections in relation to both science and philosophy. The partial observers of science, for example, rely on nonhuman perceptions and affections to validate prospects,[66] and even the concepts of philosophy are described and developed in part through a relationship to perception and affect.[67] Indeed, it is

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[66] According to Deleuze and Guattari, "the role of a partial observer is *to perceive* and *to experience,* although these perceptions and affections are not those of a man, in the currently accepted sense, but belong to the things studied" (p. 130).

[67] Describing the differences between the functions of conceptual personae on a philosophical plane of immanence and partial observers on a scientific plane of reference, for example, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that with conceptual personae, "perception does not transmit any information […], but

useful to remember that prior to the iteration of concept, prospect, percept and affect found in *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze (1995) had insisted on the inseparability of concept, percept and affect as intrinsic components of philosophical thought: "They're [i.e., "concepts, or new ways of thinking; percepts, or new ways of seeing and hearing; and affects, or new ways of feeling"] the philosophical trinity […]: you need all three to *get things moving*" (p. 165). Deleuze's antipathy toward logic as a branch of philosophy led him to consider how propositions define scientific thought as different from philosophical thought; but it did not encourage him to recognize how the propositional mode of inquiry informs and underlies perception. Instead, he and Guattari developed a construction of sensation as integrally enfolding both percept and affect. There are compelling reasons, however, to argue that what Deleuze and Guattari describe as blocs of sensation are better understood as belonging to affect as a mode of thought.

What distinguishes art as a form of thought for Deleuze and Guattari (1994) is its ability to disclose a sense of the infinite despite and through its grounding in finite materials: "Even if the material lasts for only a few seconds it will give sensation the power to exist and be preserved in itself *in the eternity that coexists with this short duration*" (p. 166). Here they are appealing to Henri Bergson's notion of duration, which understands time not as something that can be measured in discrete moments, but as a continual and indivisible unity of becoming that must be lived.[68] Sensation enfolds or captures the virtual within itself as becoming:

> Sensory becoming is the action by which something or someone is ceaselessly becoming-other (while continuing to be what they are) [.… It] is otherness caught in a matter of expression. The [art-]monument does not actualize the virtual event but incorporates or embodies it: it gives it a body, a life, a universe (p. 177).

A few pages earlier in their text, however, this ability of sensory becoming to integrate the virtual and thereby access the infinite was identified by Deleuze and Guattari as being particular to what distinguishes an affect: "It is a zone of indetermination, of indiscernibility, as if things […] endlessly reach that point that immediately precedes their natural differentiation. This is what is

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circumscribes a (sympathetic or antipathetic) affect. [With scientific observers …] affects […] become energetic relationships, and perception itself becomes a quantity of information" (p. 132).

[68] Bergson (1998/1911) offers this description: "Duration is the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances" (p. 4). For a discussion on the Bergsonian concept of duration, see Couillard (2012).

called an *affect*" (p. 173). In other words, it is affect more than percept that gives artistic thought its distinctive character.

From a neural perspective, the concepts of becoming and duration can be read in relation to the distinctions noted earlier between channel systems and state functions. Channel systems parse perceptual data into discrete bits of information directed in a linear fashion to very specific and limited areas of the brain. This dissertation links this mode of perceiving and understanding to percept and to a scientific way of thinking, which also corresponds to what Bergson (1998/1911) identified as a "cinematographical tendency of perception and thought" (p. 326), in which we perceive time as a series of frozen moments (discrete bits of information) strung together.[69] Bergson, too, associates this with a specifically scientific way of thinking: "Modern […] science proceeds according to the cinematographical method. It cannot do otherwise; all science is subject to this law" (p. 329). Bergson suggests that duration must be "lived" rather than "thought", and he identifies becoming and duration with the sensible as opposed to intelligible: "Experience confronts us with becoming: that is *sensible* reality" (p. 314). Bergson offers a scenario that equates duration to the coincidence of "inner" states as opposed to the objectification and manipulability of surfaces as signs. Note his appeal to a particular "feeling" or emotion that he experiences—that of impatience—in his description of how duration must be inhabited:

> If I want to mix a glass of sugar and water, I must [...] wait until the sugar melts. [… T]he time I have to wait is not that mathematical time which would apply equally well to the entire history of the material world, even if that history were spread out instantaneously in space. It coincides with my impatience, that is to say, with a certain portion of my own duration, which I cannot protract or contract as I like. It is no longer something *thought*, it is something *lived* (pp. 9-10).

Duration describes the continuousness of time, which corresponds to the interoceptive and affective experiential conditions of state functions with their "overlapping and interacting *fields*"

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[69] Massumi (2002) glosses Bergson's description of this linear view of time as "a retrospective spatialization of transition" (p. 167). I would suggest that Massumi's description shows just how great Descartes' influence really is; the account's reference to "spatialization" only makes sense if one already understands space to manifest itself in accordance with an imaginary grid of coordinates or defined, static points.

(Solms and Turnbull 2002, p. 35) that monitor and regulate the transitions from one state to another. As they diffuse impulses across various areas of the brain, state functions inform according to terms of movement, flow and intensity, attuned to shifting balances and tendencies—what is emerging and subsiding—rather than to the precise conditions of a single moment. At the same time, they respond to the states that they register, influenced by and influencing various bodily systems' potentials.

Brian Massumi (2002) theorizes a difference between perception and sensation in similar terms. He understands perception as referring to "object-oriented experience," whereas sensation corresponds to "self-referential experience":

> Perception pertains to the stoppage- and stasis-tending dimension of reality [….]
> Sensation pertains to the dimension of passage, or the continuity of immediate experience (and thus to a direct registering of potential). Perception is segmenting and capable of precision; sensation is unfolding and constitutively vague [….] Perception enables quantification; sensation is only ever qualitative. Perception is exo-referential (extensive); sensation is endo-referential or self-referential (intensive) (pp. 258-259).

This places both Bergson's and Massumi's understandings of sensation and the sensible in much closer alignment with affect than with percept, following the same tendencies found in Deleuze and Guattari's descriptions of sensation.

It is important here to consider a more precise definition of what is meant by the term affect. While there has been a large body of writing within cultural studies that has focused on affect since the 1990s—a so-called "affective turn"—the parameters of what constitutes affect have varied considerably. Patricia Clough (2008) notes a broad difference between those who have used the term to consider what she identifies as "the circuit from affect to subjectively felt emotional states" (p. 2), and a separate group of "theorists who, indebted to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Baruch Spinoza and Henri Bergson, conceptualize affect as pre-individual bodily forces augmenting or diminishing a body's capacity to act" (pp. 1-2). Massumi would, of course, also be considered part of this second group of theorists.

In his translation notes for *A Thousand Plateaus*, Massumi (1987) provides a concise and useful reading of the use of the term affect in Deleuze and Guattari's writing:

> *L'affect* (Spinoza's *affectus*) is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal

intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another

and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act (p. xvii).

The suggestion here is that affect can be understood as an intensity that is both a nonconscious registering and a nonsubjective capacity for action. Massumi (2002) understands emotion, which emerges when affect actualizes as a particular, conscious state, as a limit case of affect's "capture," serving as both a closure and a reopening:

Formed, qualified, situated perceptions and cognitions fulfilling functions of actual

connection or blockage are the capture and closure of affect. Emotion is the most intense

(most contracted) expression of that *capture*—and of the fact that something has always

and again escaped. Something remains unactualized, inseparable from but unassimilable

to any *particular*, functionally anchored perspective (p. 35).

In this reading, affect can be understood as a virtual field or plane of potentials. What emerges as a recognizable sensation is an actualization of one potential event on the material plane of a material body; but emotion itself has a remainder, a disorienting excess that maintains a connection to the virtual. It should also be clear from this description that for Massumi, sensation is not purely affective, but also plays an important role in percept and concept as "the first glimmer of a determinate experience, in the act of registering itself as itself across its own event" (p. 16).

Neuroscientists recognize a broad range of affective body states related to neural activity. From a biological perspective, the characteristics of emotions, conscious or not, are an identifiable set of chemical and neural responses. Antonio Damasio (1999) describes a continuum of affect[70] that includes "*a state of emotion*, which can be triggered and executed nonconsciously; *a state of feeling*, which can be represented nonconsciously; and *a state of feeling made conscious*" (p. 37). He distinguishes feeling as "the private, mental experience of an emotion" and

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[70] Damasio generally uses the terms "emotions" and "feelings" rather than "affect," though he acknowledges in a footnote that affect "can designate the whole subject matter [... of] emotions, moods, [and] feelings" (p. 342). The term "affect" to distinguish a nonconscious state is not necessary to his description, since he is comfortable referring to both emotions and feelings as being potentially nonconscious. He does note a distinction between "pain sensation" and "pain affect," providing clinical examples that demonstrate how the awareness of pain as a sensation with recognizable qualities distinct from emotional distress can be isolated as a separate neurological event from the registering of that pain as "painful" (pp. 74-76).

emotion as the "collection of responses, many of which are publicly observable" (p. 42). He has also characterized emotions as "automated programs of *actions*" (an idea that resonates with Massumi's reference to a body's capacity to act) and feelings as "composite *perceptions* of what happens in our body and mind when we are emoting" (2010, p. 109). According to Damasio (1999), "the basic mechanisms underlying emotion do not require consciousness" (p. 43), which he theorizes as being a consequence of the evolutionary development of brains. He sees emotions as ancient evolutionary adaptations, part of the "bioregulatory devices with which we come equipped to survive" (p. 53). They are biological functions that produce specific reactions on the part of an organism in response to particular situations (as in the so-called fight or flight response), and that also regulate the internal homeostasis of the organism in order to cope with those situations (e.g. controlling blood flow to particular areas of the body and altering heart rhythms). Consciousness is only required "if feelings are to influence the subject having them beyond the immediate here and now" (p. 37). In evolutionary terms, the development of emotions precedes that of sentient self-awareness, though both are functions of brain activity. Emotions are produced using some of the same neurological structures and functions from which conscious thoughts emerge.[71] The evolutionary result is that there are links between consciousness and emotion—humans can have a conscious awareness of emotions, for example, and our thoughts and memories can also trigger emotions—but they are not identical. Much of the emotional life of our bodies as defined in terms of neural and biochemical activity takes place without ever coming to consciousness. Evidence of such activity can be measured in terms of the excitation of particular neural structures and changes in body chemistry, but it is also often visible in outward body reactions that can be read by others even when these reactions are not apparent to the individual experiencing them. Damasio suggests that this is because nonconscious emotional activity functions perfectly well to influence human behaviour (and indeed, that of other creatures with developed neural systems) without needing to come to the attention of our minds.

Even if we have an emotional life that is not fully available to consciousness—a key understanding that grounds the fields of psychology and psychiatry—Damasio is quick to note that affect plays an important role in our thinking process. We are all aware that our emotions,

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[71] For a concise outline of the brain structures and biochemistry involved in inducing emotion and generating bodily responses, see Damasio (1999), pp. 59-62.

conscious or not, can affect our decisions, of course, but there is also a strong link between human emotion and human rationality. He cites clinical evidence showing that patients whose ability to experience certain emotions has been neurologically impaired also lose "their ability to make rational decisions," even though their "ability to tackle the logic of a problem remains intact" (p. 41). His conclusion is that emotion, conscious or not, "assists reasoning, especially when it comes to personal and social matters involving risk and conflict" (pp. 41-42).

Neuroscience, then, concurs that affect may be nonconscious, and offers its own explanation as to why this might be so. There is also the question of whether neuroscience posits affect as prepersonal. Massumi does not define precisely what is meant by prepersonal, although the best-known context of the term comes from Ken Wilber, who uses prepersonal to mean "the phases preceding the stage of the adult personality" (Visser 2003, p. 74). In terms of affect, this might suggest, for example, the intensities infants clearly appear to experience long before they can be said to have developed a coherent sense of self or a rational understanding of why they are feeling what they feel. Massumi, however, is interested in defining affect in relation to the philosophies of Deleuze and Guattari, so we can surmise that he intends a meaning that is less ontogenetically oriented. There are a number of ways in which a prepersonal intensity—realized in a human body but not (yet) tied to the recognized "self" of that body—might be understood. This may include intensities that are considered outside the scope of individualization because they are instinctive rather than arising out of a unique subjectivity; intensities that are temporally prior to one's subjective sense of awareness of them as being one's own; or intensities that do not appear to arise out of one's sense of "authenticity," and have their origin outside of one's own body.

Instinct, the idea that many body behaviours are genetically hardwired prior to lived experience, is certainly a key tenet of an "evo-devo" neuroscience approach. This is clear from Damasio's explanation of how emotions and feelings can be nonconscious: all animals have neural structures that are adapted to respond in particular ways and these adaptations obviously predate one's individual psychological development and extend beyond one's lived experience. This applies not only to emotional responses, but also to the way humans interact with others and their surrounding environment. Human bodies and brains are attuned to particular phenomena that excite empathetic intensities within their bodies. One example of this predisposition that has

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attracted considerable attention in recent years is the existence of mirror neurons. Neuroscientists have discovered that when certain primates including humans see or hear movement in another body, this stimulates specific neural pathways that are also activated when one performs a similar movement oneself. In other words, the body triggers an internal response that mimics or "mirrors" the neural activity of the person being watched. This is also true of emotion (i.e. seeing a reaction of disgust in someone else stimulates some of the same neural pathways that are activated when one feels disgust oneself), and even of touch. In the case of touch, experiments have shown that the persons or objects viewed need not even be human to trigger a response; the mirror neuron system was "activated both when the participants were touched and when they observed someone or *something else* getting touched by objects" (Keysers *et al*. 2004, p. 335, emphasis added).[72] If this was a surprising discovery for neuroscience, it is because humans are not consciously aware of this neural activity within their own bodies. It is not as if one consciously imagines doing the activity or deliberately calls up a memory of doing such an activity in order to trigger this internal response; rather, one's body "thinks" what it has witnessed in order to bring an understanding of the event *to* consciousness.[73]

There is ample evidence to suggest that many of the neurological structures linked to affect are preconscious and autonomic. Many of the behaviours that we believe we have consciously willed are in fact only retrospectively given such an explanation by our consciousness. Michael Gazzaniga (2011) is one of many neuroscientists who make the point that the way brain function is "localized," the areas responsible for conscious recognition of events

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[72] See Keysers *et al*. (2004) for an account of which neural areas were activated in each scenario. In these studies, reactions were being compared for the same subjects under various conditions. The underlying premise is that brain structures and functions are comparable across of range of individuals, but it should be noted that the size, shape and position of individual brains and their respective areas, as well as their individual patterns of activity, are as variable as any other body feature. Michael Gazzaniga (2011) cautions that when comparing brain scans of different individuals, software must be used that "rotates, scales and perhaps warps the brain [image] to fit the standard template" (p. 196), and that brain activity is compared to group pattern averages, which can be misleading given the vast differences possible even among so-called "normal" or "intact" brains. This is to say nothing of the variability of scanning technology, which can be programmed and configured to a wide range of parameters (see Dumit 2004 on this point).

[73] Perhaps this is why we are sometimes astonished when, after watching a trained athlete make a gesture look easy, we discover we cannot do it ourselves; a part of our nonconscious neural systems "thought" it was performing the task perfectly well when it rehearsed what had been seen.

only provide a sense of unity to human experience *after* the body has already reacted. He offers an example from personal experience of jumping out of the way of a rattlesnake:

> If you were to have asked me why I had jumped, I would have replied that I thought I'd seen a snake. The answer certainly makes sense, but the truth is I jumped before I was conscious of the snake. I had seen it, but I didn't know I had seen it. My explanation is from post hoc information I have in my conscious system: The facts are that I jumped and that I saw a snake. The reality, however, is that I jumped way before (in the world of milliseconds) I was conscious of the snake. I did not make a conscious decision to jump and then consciously execute it. When I answered that question, I was, in a sense, confabulating: giving a fictitious account of a past event, believing it to be true. The real reason I jumped was an automatic nonconscious reaction to the fear response set into play by the amygdala. The reason I would have confabulated is that our human brains are driven to infer causality. They are driven to explain events that make sense out of the scattered facts (p. 77).

In relation to this question of time lag—the idea that intensities and actions take place within the body prior to our conscious recognition of them—Damasio (1999) cites Benjamin Libet's experiments showing that consciousness inevitably lags behind neural stimulus by approximately half a second: the time it takes "to establish the causal link between the image of an object and its possession by you" (p. 127). Our representation of events as conscious awareness is apparently never in absolute synchronicity with the way our animate body inhabits the world. This lag, which figures prominently in Massumi's (2002) theorization of the virtual, can also be read in relation to Derrida's (1973) deconstruction of Husserlian understandings of temporality, which will be considered in Chapter 3.

Although it would make no sense to a neuroscientist to suggest that affect exists as a reified "thing" outside of a body that experiences it, there is certainly an understanding that the causes of affect can originate outside of the body, and may correspond to the affects felt by other bodies. As social creatures, humans are, in the words of Chris Frith (2007), affectively "contagious" to one another. We imitate each other in ways that are not consciously directed, we synchronize our actions, and our behaviour is influenced in unconscious ways by sensory and language cues. Demonstrating just how subliminal these influences can be, Frith offers the

example of a psychology study in which subjects were asked to use a series of words, ostensibly to test for language ability. The content of the words, however, related "to stereotypes of elderly people: *worried, Florida, old, lonely, gray*, etc." The real purpose of the test was to measure the subjects' responses after exposure to the words. Those "who have been implanted with the elderly words walk more slowly. They behave like an older person. They don't even know that they are doing it" (p. 170).

The idea that affect is physically or biologically contagious, and can be transmitted from person to person, is also a central premise in the work of Teresa Brennan (2004). She considers many possible mechanisms of transference—not only those tied to our hardwired neural tendencies to mimic or react to what we witness in ways that generate an internal rehearsing of others' experience, but also, in particular, "pheromonal odors" (p. 10). Unlike sight, which is spatialized and distancing, the body's olfactory mechanisms impart a sense of intimacy; odours permeate. She argues against the Western presupposition of "a self-contained individual," and contends that "the social or psychosocial actually gets into the flesh and is apparent in our affective and hormonal dispositions" (p. 23). For Brennan, our bodies are porous, open to each other in ways that Western understandings of a hermetically sealed self do not account for, and this has implications for determining whether the emotions we experience are always our "own." Brennan's theoretical work insists on a distinction between affect and feelings, in which affects are understood not just as intensities or transitions between states, but as implicit judgments, while feelings are sensations that a body has managed to reflexively identify and interpret through language (p. 5). Even though Brennan privileges the particular directedness of language with regard to feelings, a premise that will be problematized in the following chapter, her formulation recognizes both affect and feelings as having a purchase in meaningfulness. This suggests that even if they do not originate in the self, affects are produced through a generative process that gives them a contextual meaning; they are formal interpretations and can be understood as a form of *thinking*.

Affect as artistic thought

However the term affect is interpreted, one is still left with the question of whether it is appropriate to apportion sensation and feeling to the realm of human activity that we call art. As

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was previously noted with regard to Rancière, definitions of what art is and standards of how its practice should be integrated into daily human life vary among different societies and subcultures, and they evolve over time. Deleuze and Guattari's question "What is philosophy?" does not have nearly the same popular currency as the ubiquitous catchphrase, "[But] is it art?" Contemporary art would be largely unrecognizable to Plato given his conceptualization of the arts as imitative,[74] and certainly the twentieth century produced an abundance of art movements that have continually sought to redefine the styles, materials, subjects and purposes of art as an activity. Within what has retrospectively come to constitute a history of performance art, for example,[75] one could point to Allan Kaprow's assertion that when he began to produce happenings, he "gave up the whole idea of making pictures as figurative metaphors for extensions in time and space" in order to "become attuned to the world around [him], and to participate directly in it—really as an action artist and not merely metaphorically as one" (Schechner & Kaprow 1968, p. 155). Similarly, Joseph Beuys (1993/1973) translated his understanding of sculpture as a transformational activity into a bid for social sculpture, pronouncing art to be "the only evolutionary-revolutionary power" remaining in contemporary life, joined with a vision that "every living person becomes a creator, a sculptor, or architect of the social organism" (p. 21). Such forays of Western art into the social realm of the everyday call into question what the term "art" signals. How and why is it still a useful term once it no longer operates within its previously

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[74] Jacques Rancière (2004) suggests that Plato identified three different types of art that are, in fact, highly politicized strictures on ways of doing and making that structure the ways we are able to perceive them as arts. By identifying "discursive and bodily practices [that] suggest forms of community" (p. 14), Plato critiques and concretizes three "ways that figures of community are aesthetically designed" (p. 18). First, "writing and painting were equivalent surfaces of mute signs, deprived of the breath that animates and transports living speech" (p. 16). Severed from its grounding in a human body, writing in particular was seen as dangerous for its indiscriminate and decontextualized nature:

> By stealing away to wander aimlessly without knowing who to speak to or who not to speak to, writing destroys every legitimate foundation for the circulation of words, for the relationship between the effects of language and the positions of bodies in shared space (p. 13).

Plato was similarly hostile toward theatre as a disruptive and inauthentic simulacrum: "the stage, which is simultaneously a locus of public activity and the exhibition-space for 'fantasies', disturbs the clear partition of identities, activities, and spaces" (p. 13) These first two forms were contrasted with "a third, good *form of art* […], the *choreographic* form of the community that sings and dances its own proper unity" (p. 14).

[75] Many art movements and practices from the twentieth century that predate the development of the term "performance art" have been retrospectively identified as "belonging" to this tradition. For more on this, see Couillard (2014).

established institutional frameworks?

Technological changes have undoubtedly expanded the material forms that art may take, and contemporary society has found a surprising number of ways to commodify art practices. If there remains an underlying value that our culture associates with art, however, it is surely that works of art make us *feel* something. To say with approval that something is "a work of art" is to do more than simply praise the skillfulness of its maker. The phrase also includes a tacit acknowledgment that the work itself, be it a painting, a story, or a piece of music, has *touched* or *moved* the person who has encountered it. It appeals to their senses in a meaningful way. Even if one considers a limit case such as conceptual art, in which the execution of the artwork in thought—through a description, for example, or as an abstracted set of instructions—replaces its actualization, its force as an artwork rests with its affective resonance. The thinking or imagining that the work incites provokes a feeling.

Deleuze and Guattari (2004), who could be considered modernists in terms of their insistence on the disciplinary distinctions of particular forms of thought,[76] are adamant that art cannot produce concepts. What art can produce is the sensation or affect of a concept (just as

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[76] Clement Greenberg (1960), the influential art critic, claims that what distinguishes modernism as a mindset is a drive toward a certain vision of "purity," in which the "task of self-criticism became to eliminate from the specific effects of each art any and every effect that might conceivably be borrowed from or by the medium of any other art." (n.p.) This is particularly evident in minimalism. Greenberg sees this as part of a trend that began with the philosopher Emmanuel Kant, whom he credits as being the first modernist because Kant criticized logic by means of logic. While such rigidly directed self-examination narrows the scope of what is proper to a discipline (and risks the possibility of seeming solipsistic to the uninitiated), the assertion is that the discipline is "thereby left more secure in what [remains] to it." I detect a modernist echo in Deleuze and Guattari's vigorous efforts to define what forms of thought rightfully belong to philosophy, science and art. Also on the question of modernism, Bruno Latour (1993) identifies "purification" as "the modern critical stance," but notes that this is offset by a separate practice of "translation," "which creates mixtures between entirely new types of beings, hybrids of nature and culture." In his view, once "we direct our attention simultaneously to the work of purification and the work of hybridization, we […] stop being wholly modern" because recognizing both of these processes at once forces us to acknowledge that both precede any current—or recent, if one believes that we are now postmodern—age that could be called "modern" (pp. 10-11). His meditation on (the absence of) modernity comes out of science and technology studies, where he describes a struggle between "naturalization, socialization and deconstruction" as three distinct and competing modes of criticism. Although these separate approaches appear to be irreconcilable, they nevertheless all have applications to an analysis of the networks that constitute the contemporary milieu of science. These networks are "*simultaneously real, like nature, narrated, like discourse, and collective, like society*" (pp. 5-6). While Latour's project is aimed at recognizing a middle world of hybrids that exists alongside and throughout the powerfully separated divisions of nature and society, he would presumably also support a project that attempts to identify intersection points of philosophy, science and art as ways of thinking.

philosophy can offer the concept of an affect). They characterize conceptual art, for example, as a "dematerialization through generalization" in which the plane of composition is neutralized to the extent "that everything takes on a value of sensation reproducible to infinity" (p. 198). Their argument is an intriguing one, although they are doubtful of such a project's success. In their judgment,

> the plane of composition tends to become "informative," and the sensation depends upon the simple "opinion" of a spectator who determines whether or not to "materialize" the sensation, that is to say, decides whether or not it is art. This is a lot of effort to find ordinary perceptions and affections in the infinite and to reduce the concept to a *doxa* of the social body or great American metropolis (p. 198).

This seems a rather conservative view of such a rich artistic practice. Conceptual art need not rely on opinion for its efficacy any more than philosophy does. If one applies Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of how art imbues a material with a sense of the infinite by establishing a plane of composition, it is clear that the "material" ground of conceptual art is the concept itself. This is exactly what Henry Flynt (1996/1961) asserted when he coined the term "concept art" at the beginning of the 1960s: "'Concept art' is first of all an art of which the material is 'concepts,' as the material of, for ex. music is sound" (p. 820). This is thoroughly consistent with Deleuze and Guattari's reification of concepts as entities, and suggests a rather innovative approach to discovering a "new way of feeling."

Of course, if one is adhering strictly to Deleuze and Guattari's schema, one could argue that in the particular case of Flynt, he might more properly have labeled his new type of work "proposition art" or "function art," since it originated from mathematics. Flynt's arguments about why and whether his work should be called art at all, however, do offer some intriguing resonances in the context of this inquiry. After noting a link between his work and "artistic, aesthetic activities," Flynt goes on to suggest that

> It is confusing to call things as irrelevant as the emotional enjoyment of (real) music, and the intellectual enjoyment of concepts, the same kind of enjoyment. Since concept art includes almost everything ever said to be "music," at least, which is not music for the emotions, perhaps it would be better to restrict "art" to apply to art for the emotions, and recognize my activity as an independent, new activity, irrelevant to art (and knowledge)

(p. 822).

At first glance, this may seem to confirm Deleuze and Guattari's dismay over whether conceptual art can be understood as succeeding to achieve either sensation or concept, but a deeper reading suggests otherwise. First, Flynt focuses directly on the question of affect or emotion in relation to art, showing that he is sensitive to the issue, and also indicating his agreement that emotions are the traditional purview of art. Although he uses the term "art," he is clearly not so concerned that the label be retained, given the seeming newness of what he has discovered or constructed (and over the years his relationship to the title of artist has been a conflicted one). But the novelty that Flynt points to in his work expresses itself as a complex intensity, one that he identifies in terms of an emotional quality—that of intellectual *enjoyment*. His engagement with the virtuality of enjoyment is not simply a quest to find— or represent—"ordinary perceptions and affections in the infinite"; rather, he calls attention to enjoyment's potentials as sensation in ways that make it strange and extraordinary. To echo a rhetorical turn of phrase from Viktor Shklovsky, Flynt "makes the concept *conceptual*."[77] When Flynt wrestles with the sensation of enjoyment on an intellectual plane of composition, the materialization that takes place through or in the work has nothing to do with whether public opinion recognizes the work *as* art. It would be more appropriate to say that in conceptual art, the eternity of the sensation coexists with the duration of the recognition of the *concept as an entity* (i.e. as a material) rather than with the recognition of an opinion of the work as art. What "materializes" is the concept itself, and what is expressed is the affective force of that concept. While some conceptual works may appear to be rather simple, their affective intensity can be extraordinarily complex and textured, and therefore surprisingly powerful.

Deleuze and Guattari (2004) are more generous in their assessment of abstract art, which, like conceptual art, they see as attempting to "bring art and philosophy together." In their view,

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[77] "Making strange", or defamiliarization, is an idea first developed by the Russian theorist and critic Viktor Shklovsky (1998/1917):

> [A]rt exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone *stony*. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar," to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. *Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object: the object is not important* (p. 219).

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abstract art attempts to "refine sensation [… until it becomes] a purely spiritual being, a radiant thinking and thought matter, no longer a sensation of sea or tree, but a sensation of the concept of sea or concept of tree" (p. 198). This more positive reading suggests that they find abstract art to be closer, in the sense Greenberg outlines, to a self-analysis of sensation as that which "belongs" to painting. What appears to be lacking in their analysis of forms of thought, however—and it is notable given their allegiance to the notions of deterritorialization, assemblage and becoming—is the possibility of hybridity and transformation. Why, one might ask, are they so reluctant to theorize or appreciate conceptual art as the becoming-concept of a sensation? Why, too, are they so opposed to the generative possibilities of logic as the becoming-prospect of a concept or perhaps the becoming-concept of a prospect? These questions are beyond the scope of this dissertation to examine in detail, but worth highlighting for future consideration.

So far this discussion has considered the relationship of affect and art in broad terms. Given this dissertation's commitment to focus on one particular art genre—performance art—it might be useful to briefly address the particular sensation-producing—i.e., thought-producing—strategies of performance art as they have been historically categorized. The most common approach used to define the genre of performance art, as suggested by its name, is to trace its outline in relief against the background of a previously existing discipline, either the performing arts (performance) or the plastic arts (art).[78] In identifying performance art as *distinct within* or *in relation to* the performing arts, discussions tend to place performance art at one end of a spectrum of values and techniques, with theatre—and to some extent dance and music—at the other end. Alain-Martin Richard (2014/1992) provides a thoughtful analysis that exemplifies this tendency in his article "*Les 20 jours du théâtre à risque*." He outlines a 12-point heuristic in order to position a series of live works along a scale that runs between theatre and performance, with the caveat that no work is ever likely to belong absolutely to one pole or the other. Among the continua he characterizes are the following: acting/non-acting; fictional time/real time; dramaturgy/process; finite/open; and human at the centre/human in immersion.

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[78] There are, of course, numerous subgenres subsumed in the general title "performance art", as well as bids to rename the practice altogether using different terms of reference, as with "live art" and "action art." For a discussion of history of the term and its relationship to these other names, see Couillard (2014).

In relation—or opposition, depending on one's point of view—to the plastic arts, performance art tends to be understood as reconsidering the ground and materials that are open to an artist to use in her creative process. In this iteration, the artist's body becomes a medium for expression or for the construction of images, replacing traditional materials such as paint, canvas and clay. Often, and perhaps particularly in the case of body art, this development is characterized as an attempt to eliminate external materials—which are seen as intervening or interfering—and thereby achieve a more direct relationship with the audience. There is also a tendency to emphasize the visceral qualities of flesh in many of these works. Consider, for example, this description Carolee Schneemann offers of her work *Meat Joy*:

> *Meat Joy* has the character of an erotic rite: excessive, indulgent, a celebration of flesh as material: raw fish, chickens, sausages, wet paint, transparent plastic, rope, brushes, paper scrap. Its propulsion is toward the ecstatic—shifting and turning between tenderness, wildness, precision, abandon: qualities which could at any moment be sensual, comic, joyous, repellent. Physical equivalences are enacted as a psychic and imagistic stream in which the layered elements mesh and again intensify by the energy complement of the audience. (They were seated on the floor as close to the performance area as possible, encircling, resonating.) Our proximity heightened the sense of communality, transgressing the polarity between performer and audience (p. 63).

Often, the turn toward making images through the use of live human bodies is understood as an attempt to find the most primal support or foundation—Deleuze and Guattari would use the phrase "plane of composition"—for sensation. This is evident in François Pluchart's (2000/1975) manifesto on body art:

> What [body art] is: the body is the fundamental ground. Pleasure, suffering, illness and death inscribe themselves on it and shape the socialized individual in the course of its biological evolution. In other words, they put it in readiness—hand it formal notice, as we say—to satisfy all the constraints and demands of existing forces (p. 218).

Pluchart appears to reject the position that sensation can stand on its own in a painting or a sculpture, separated from its manifestation as an experience in and of the flesh. Instead, transformation, transcendence, ritual or becoming-other are understood as having exactly one essential ground: that of the living (/being/experiencing) organism. This is sometimes formulated

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as a direct correlation between art and life, or art-as-life/life-as-art. The earlier quotations from Kaprow—eschewing metaphors of time and space for the "real" thing—and Beuys—presenting the image of "everyone an artist"—offer two permutations of this idea. Similarly, Linda Mary Montano (1996/1984) has given herself the task of making her entire life an artwork. Her concern is to imbue all of her everyday actions and experiences with the same affective charge that she associates with art as a creative practice:

> For many years I have been framing my life and calling it art, so that everything—washing dishes, making love, walking, shopping, holding children—is seen as art. Formerly, I would separate out activities—run to the studio and what was my "creative time." Gradually I found this separation unnecessary and felt that it was important for me to be attentive all of the time—not to waste a second. That became the Art/Life task that I have given myself until I die (p.780).

Often the impulse to obscure or nullify any line between art and life reflects a desire on the part of artists to enter into the social and political domains of culture.[79] Such works put the artist in direct contact with members of the public, often drawing them in as participants or agents in the work's unfolding. This was certainly a key aspect of Kaprow's vision for happenings, in which the main audiences for the work were often the nonactors enlisted to undertake his scenarios, although there was also a place for observers. In many cases, a desire to engage with a particular audience also involves activating that audience in direct ways. Mierle Laderman Ukeles, unsalaried but officially recognized artist in residence at the New York City Department of Sanitation, spent eleven months meeting with 8,500 sanitation workers and shaking their hands for her *Touch Sanitation Performance* (1979-1980). The work came out of a strong ethical desire to directly acknowledge the importance of the work these employees do. Maintaining her

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[79] One significant call for "a more participatory, socially interactive framework for art" in a Western context came in the early 1990s from artist and historian Suzi Gablik (1991), who identified "a significant shift from objects to relationships" (p. 7) in contemporary art practice. This was followed almost a decade later by Nicolas Bourriaud's (2002/1998) treatise on what he called relational aesthetics, in which he declared that "Art is a state of encounter" (p. 18). The term "relational practice" now figures prominently in many artists' descriptions of what they do, although as with performance art more generally, the concern with the issues indicated by the term long precedes its naming. For a survey of writings theorizing the movement toward participation in contemporary art practice, see also *Participation*, edited by Claire Bishop (2006). For more on the ideas in Gablik's book in relation to contemporary performance practice, see Couillard (2014).

sincerity and developing an authentic connection with each individual as she interacted with them was a key goal. Ukeles's (2000) task

> involved facing each [worker] bodily and saying, "Thank you for keeping New York City alive." It was a ritual and a discipline for myself because I intended to mean exactly that as I faced and spoke to thousands and thousands of people (p. 454).

The artist described profound personal effects from the energetic intensity of this work, both physically—"I felt that I had absorbed eighty-five hundred volts of electricity through my right hand from shaking that many hands" (p. 455)—and politically:

> it was hard to listen to people who were feeling so bad [from the difficulties of the job and the way society tends to treat and view sanitation workers]. As a result, I went through a depressed, sad stage until I reached a point where I said to myself, "this is ridiculous," and I started getting pissed. It was then that I told the sanitation workers, whenever I went to a new group, "You are getting a very raw deal" (p. 454).

Although Ukeles's work had always reflected a politicized, feminist stance,[80] the direct interaction of this particular action sensitized her to this audience and their daily experience in unexpected ways. The disclosure of the social or political value of works through the process of their enactment is frequently an important and valued aspect of socially and relationally based practices. As Kaprow asserts, "Art should be discovery—including the discovery of useful social tools. The discovery that *Fluids* was a comment on city planning didn't come to me months after planning the event; it came as I worked" (Schechner & Kaprow 1968, p. 156).

More recently Quebec artists have been at the forefront of theorizing and developing strategies for a form of socially based art that they have named the manoeuvre, sometimes referred to under the title of infiltrating practices.[81] Manoeuvres are, in the words of Alain-Martin

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[80] As evidenced by her 1969 "Manifesto for Maintenance Art," written as an exhibition proposal. Consider Item I. (B): "Two basic systems: Development and Maintenance. The sourball of every revolution: after the revolution, who's going to pick up the garbage on Monday morning?"

[81] The manoeuvre as an art form has been extensively theorized by a group of artists coming out of the artist collective Inter/Le Lieu in Quebec City, while the term "infiltrating practices" is credited to the artist-run centre 3e impérial in Granby, Quebec. Alain-Martin Richard is widely credited with being one of the most important and sustained theorizers of this practice. A selection of eight articles written by Richard over approximately two decades that systematically clarify the various strategies and intents that have developed in relation to the manoeuvre can be found in Couillard & Liva (2014).

Richard (2014/2002), "radical practices concerned with art's 'insertion into real life'" (p. 304). These are actions that are proposed by the artist, but can only take shape through the collective contribution of participants who ultimately decide how the work will unfold. This investment of participants, which can also be seen as the construction of a community, however temporary or geographically dispersed, is crucial to the work's success. Without the assent of a public willing to take up the artist's bid, the manoeuvre falls apart. As Richard puts it, the art "*takes shape at the exact moment in which the [artist's] proposal crystallizes into a shared act*" (pp. 304-306). While the terms of engagement of manoeuvres have only been articulated since the 1990s, this practice too has its antecedents. One might consider, for example, the activist gesture of running for public office as an artwork as fitting into the category of the manoeuvre.[82] Ultimately, what distinguishes a work as a manoeuvre is its ingress into social organization and social life, where the communities that form to take up the artist's proposal can be viewed as the plane of composition.

The becoming-life of art, or becoming-art of life is not always articulated in reverent terms. Willoughby Sharp (2000/1970) offers a much more mundane reason why some visual artists began using their own bodies as their primary material. He sees it as a simple matter of practicality:

> Aesthetic considerations aside, it is not surprising that under the present repressive socio-economic situation young artists have turned to their most readily available source, themselves, for sculptural material with almost unlimited potential, capable of doing exactly what the artist wants, without the obduracy of inanimate matter (p. 231).[83]

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[82] Joseph Beuys stood as a serious candidate for the Green Party in Germany in 1980, but there are numerous more playful and parodic Canadian examples. In 1974, Vancouver artist Vincent Trasov, who had assumed the persona of the product icon "Mr. Peanut" as an ongoing art project since 1969, ran for the office of mayor of Vancouver. His electioneering slogan was "elect a nut for mayor." In addition to providing good media copy, Mr. Peanut garnered 3.4% of the popular vote (see http://vincenttrasov.ca/index.cfm?pg=menu&filter=Mr.%20Peanut). In 1982, the Hummer Sisters ran a campaign for mayor of Toronto under the name A. Hummer, using Toronto art hangout the Cameron House as their campaign headquarters. The *ART vs Art Campaign*, a reference to their main rival, incumbent mayor Art Eggleton, received 12,000 votes and placed second overall (see https://vimeo.com/29689919).

[83] If Sharp saw this as an important motivating factor for North American artists in the 1970s, it is no less true of Asian and Latin American artists over the past several decades. Performance art networks have flourished in economically challenged and/or politically repressed countries like Indonesia, the Philippines,

The idea of human bodies as simply being a convenient or efficient resource for exploitation raises the spectre of Heidegger's notion of *Bestand*, where human bodies and experiences become simply another "standing-reserve" of resources to exploit. One of the classic popular tropes of performance art is a vision of nihilist, abject works in which artists undergo arduous, self-mutilating ordeals. Kristine Stiles (1996) notes that "performance by artists emerged almost simultaneously in Japan, Europe and the United States" following World War II, so that artists' "[insistence on the primacy of human subjects over objects] must be situated in the historical context of the aftermath of the Holocaust and the advent of the atomic age with their unprecedented threat of annihilation" (p. 679). In Japan, the Gutai Bijutsu Kyokai (Gutai Art Association), founded in 1954, responded to postwar reality in almost animistic terms: rather than reduce human life to the role of standing-reserve, their challenge was to discover and make apparent the unique life or spirit of nonhuman materials. Presenting their bodies in direct engagement with their materials was an opportunity to draw out the authenticity of both. In his "Gutai Manifesto," Jiro Yoshihara (1996/1956) condemned earlier art production for its artifice and insensitivity to the true nature of the materials it used, calling for a radical break with past approaches:

> Gutai art does not change the material; it brings it to life. Gutai art does not falsify the material. In Gutai art the human spirit and the material reach out their hands to each other, even though they are otherwise opposed to each other. The material is not absorbed by the spirit. The spirit does not force the material into submission. If one leaves the material as it is, presenting it just as material, then it starts to tell us something and speaks with a mighty voice. Keeping the life of the material alive also means bringing its spirit to life. And lifting up the spirit means leading the material up to the height of the spirit (p. 695).

Thailand, Myanmar, Viet Nam and China in Asia, and countries like Venezuela, Colombia and Cuba in Latin America, where many artists look to performance actions as a way to express themselves at minimal cost in a spontaneous or immediate fashion. Their work often has a strong activist stance that is critical of the economic and social effects of globalization. Many of these artists see themselves as activists more than artists, but have found it easier to criticize government policies—and to circulate internationally within the structures of performance art and other cultural networks—than they would without the cover of art.

Many other artists, however, responded to the trauma of postwar life by recreating and extending images of trauma. This was the case with the Vienna actionists.[84] In his book of translations of the writings of the Vienna actionists, Malcolm Green (1999) highlights how "the actions [of these artists] often restaged or recalled moments of uncertainty in which the body or the person is also turned into a thing" (p. 18). Otto Muehl's (1999/1964) "Material Action Manifesto" gives some sense of the ambiguity of this stance:

> a person is not treated in the material action as a person but as a body. the body, things, are not viewed as objects for our purposes, but have all purpose radically removed from them. everything is understood as form. the human being is not seen as a human being, a person, but as a body with certain properties. material action extends reality (p. 87).

There is something chilling in this description of the intensified objectification that takes place when bodies are seen not just as potential sculptural or performative objects, but as material divested of intelligence and social purpose. What Muehl intimates is a body made up of qualia— its general outline, its mass, its colouring, its hard and soft areas, its tendency to bleed when cut—

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[84] Malcolm Green (1999) introduces these artists as follows:

> "Vienna Actionism" more or less spanned the ten years of the Sixties, a period in which Günter Brus, Otto Muehl, Hermann Nitsch and Rudolf Schwarzkogler performed over 150 actions that shocked, amused, fascinated and nauseated audiences in Austria, Germany and beyond (p. 9).

During this period, these artists, working independently of one another, each produced a large body of works involving their bodies or those of other models, often presented for small, intimate audiences or for the camera. A single sequence from Rudolf Schwarzkogler's (1999/1965) description of a photo shoot of Heinz Cibulka (*Action 3: Untitled*) gives a sense of the underlying sense of abjection:

> C. sits naked on a white sphere with his legs apart. Slipped over his penis is a fish head, its mouth held open by a razor blade. Stuck above his penis is a square sticking-plaster. Beneath the fish head a dark trickle of liquid can be seen on the white sphere (p. 191).

Despite their notoriety at the time, including public prosecutions and convictions, it is only more recently that their work has been embraced as offering an important contribution to the performance art canon. Danièle Roussel (2001) describes actionism as "the most contested artistic direction of the post war period." She offers a strong rhetorical account of the reasons for the underlying brutality in their images:

> The Actionists asked themselves, as I believe many men did after the war, the following questions: if we are really men, and we are religious men, if we are men who behave correctly, if we are men for whom the idea of the body is something dirty and the mind is something good, and this produces individuals as inhumane as Fascists, then there is something wrong. It is this that the Actionists would look for in their actions. They descended into the inferno of the human being, and they unlocked the door of the unconscious. Austria being also the country of Wilhelm Reich and Sigmund Freud, who influenced them a great deal (p. 158).

but utterly disconnected from any sense of being alive or sentient. What is shocking is the refusal to place any weight on the performing body's affective sensations. In the invitation text for his *Second Total Action* with Otto Muehl, Günter Brus (1999/1966), elaborates on similar themes in his vision of "total action," including the idea that the work is not simply a representation, but a direct engagement with reality:

> anything may constitute the material: people, animals plants, food, space, movement, noises, smells, light, fire, coldness, warmth, wind, dust, steam, gas, events, sport, all art forms and all art products.
>
> all the possibilities of the material are ruthlessly exhausted as a result of the incalculable possibilities for choices that the material presents [….]
>
> old art forms attempt to reconstruct reality, total action occurs within reality itself (p. 41).

Nihilist tendencies aside, one key theme running through these writings—and shared by many performance artists—is an insistence that the artists are involved in actions, not acting: the performance takes place in real time and real space. Michael Kirby (1972) offers a practice analysis of the performance spectrum between acting and not-acting, in which he describes not-acting as a type of performance "that values the concrete as opposed to the pretended or simulated and that does not require plots or stories" (p. 14). His article is more concerned with describing a continuum of technique than with the aesthetic or philosophical ramifications of not-acting, but the implications of a non-acting stance are of note.

For many performance artists, not-acting means rejecting the sense of performance as a representation. If Chris Burden documents himself being shot in his left arm by a rifle (*Shoot*, 1971), there is no illusion involved. His arm bleeds, and he requires medical attention. This creates a different sense of culpability for both the artist and the audience than seeing a depiction of an actor being shot by another actor on a stage using props and special effects. The symbolic meanings that may be attached to Burden's action are augmented—if not superseded—by the consequences of the actualized experience as they overflow any boundary or limit of as-if.[85] The

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[85] In 2004, Chris Burden retired his position at the University of California, Los Angeles after Joseph Deutch, a student in a graduate seminar being taught by Ron Athey, presented an unannounced performance of Russian roulette in which he fired what appeared to be a real pistol armed with a bullet at his head, then left the classroom and reportedly released a firecracker that sounded like a gunshot in the hallway. The university investigated the incident but took no action against the student. Jenny Hontz (2005)

actions, the outcomes, the consequences, and the sensations produced are all exactly identical to what actually happens: it is reality. If, in such a performance, a performer breaks a law, flaunts a custom, or transgresses a taboo, then there is no as-if; the law has been broken, the custom has been flaunted, the taboo has been transgressed. This attitude can perhaps be seen as an inverse to the one expressed by Linda M. Montano. Rather than bringing the affective charge of art to everyday life, this strategy strives to bring the authenticity of reality to art.[86]

of *The New York Times* reported that Mr. Burden sent an email indicating, "By not taking immediate action against the student who brought a gun to campus, and who intimidated his fellow students by playing Russian roulette in their presence, the university has created a hostile and violent work environment." Hontz also reports that in a telephone interview, Burden

> made a distinction between his own gallery work and a performance in class: "The university is a group of people who agree to be civilized. If the student wanted to rent a studio and play Russian roulette and call it art, then art history will decide." (n.p.)

While some have criticized Burden as being hypocritical given his own earlier performance work, Burden's comments make it clear that he is sharply aware of the real context that surrounds any performance, and of the artist's responsibility to respect the "reality" of the situations they create.

[86] The insistence on recognizing a performance as a real event in real time and real space can be read as a response to the crisis of simulacra theorized by Jean Baudrillard (1993), who understands the production of simulacra not just in relation to a play of signs, but also in terms of "social relations and social power" (p. 52). Baudrillard outlines three "orders" of simulacra that correspond to different historical periods. The first-order simulacrum, or *counterfeit*, is only made possible when a society becomes fluid enough to allow a certain arbitrariness of signs (Renaissance to Industrial Revolution). The counterfeit operates in relation to a "natural" law of value, in which there is still some referential relationship between a sign and its signified, although, in Baudrillard's view, "This designatory bond […] is only a simulacrum of symbolic obligation [which had existed in the feudal period when only a limited number of signs were allowed to circulate and their correspondence to a specific signified was strictly policed], producing nothing more than neutral values which are exchanged one for the other in an objective world" (p. 51). The second-order simulacrum, under the designation *production*, occurs with the development of mass production and "indefinite reproducibility" (Industrial Revolution), when "objects become indistinct simulacra of one another," leading to "the extinction of the original reference" (p. 55). Baudrillard associates third-order simulacra, or *simulation*, with the current era. In this configuration, signs can be understood as referring to a model that never existed as an original in reality, a code infused with an imaginary capable of producing a hyperreality; the simulation actualizes an imaginary real. He offers the example of the poll, in which a public opinion is generated by means of a series of questions that already restrict and control the answers that are possible.

Baudrillard equates theatre with the counterfeit; it creates arbitrary significations that nevertheless find their reference in a notion of "real life." When performance art is situated in opposition to theatre, it is often portrayed as responding in resistance to first- and second-order simulacra. In resistance to the sense of counterfeit, performance art posits itself as authentically drawing from "real life," taking place in real time and space. In resistance to the sense of production, performance art often seeks to position itself as unique, a one-time-only event: many artists feel it is essential that performance art be unrehearsed and never repeated. In 2005, for example, Chris Burden refused to allow Marina Abramovic to reenact his

Not-acting can also be theorized in other ways, however. Contrary to the aims of body art, many performance artists choose not-acting as a strategy in order to shift attention *away* from their bodies. In such cases, the term "action art" seems particularly apt. Just as in conceptual art the concept becomes a plane of composition, in action art, the artist's actions rather than the artist's body become the plane of composition. I have previously described such works as signalling to the audience, "Don't look at me; look at *what I am doing*" (Couillard 2010). In his not-acting/acting scale, Michael Kirby (1972) places "non-matrixed" performing at one pole. In such works, the performer "is merely himself and is not embedded, as it were, in matrices of pretended or represented character, situation, place, and time" (p. 4). As with Richard's heuristic, this suggests multiple continua. Artists may or may not have a defined stage area, for example, or an announced start and finish time. They may or may not adopt a particular stance or sense of persona. They may or may not wear a costume or outfit. They may or may not employ scripted lines. Some performances privilege liminality, playing with the threshold where behaviour becomes recognizable as a performance. In others, the performers may try to maintain an appearance and demeanour that they consider neutral, though such a stance must be understood to be noninnocent, to borrow Donna Haraway's term, since neutrality can only be understood within a situated context. Performance art's neutral body must be read against, for example, an archetypal theatrical (acting) body on a stage, or a presumed nonperforming body—say, for example, a body that does not feel itself to be made strange by the scrutiny of an audience. The

performance *Trans-Fixed* (see http://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/06/arts/design/selfmutilation-is-the-sincerest-form-of-flattery.html). As Tom Marioni (2005) noted in a succinct letter to the editor of the New York Times after it published a story about the incident,

> I don't blame Mr. Burden for refusing to even discuss with Ms. Abramovic having his work recreated. The performance art of the early 1970's was concrete. We made one-time sculpture actions. If Mr. Burden's work were recreated by another artist, it would be turned into theater, one artist playing the role of another.

A more sinister reading of the attempts to blur the distinction between performance art and life, however, could position this gesture as simply a symptom of the third-order simulacrum of simulation, whereby performance artists attempt to create a hyperreality of real time and real space according to a model that never existed. The performance space becomes a simulation without an original. Why else would the artist feel it necessary to designate the "frame" of a performance art piece in this first place, rather than simply living something called life directly? My own sympathies lie closer to a reading of performance art in terms of the first two resistances, but it is hard to deny the sense of spectacle—to cite Guy Debord's (2006/1967) term that bears a close relation to Baudrillard's theorizations—that permeates many actions framed as performance art.

most common "neutral" presentation of bodies in action art involves black and/or white clothes and a seemingly affectless deportment. Neither of these characteristics could be understood to be anything approaching neutrality in a nonperformance context, any more than the white cube of an art gallery is neutral, but their ubiquity as well as their attempt to flatten out the possibility of reading the artist's inner emotional life gives the semblance of a neutral valence within the performance art milieu. What this neutrality signals, as a stance, is that the audience should pay attention to what happens as a result of what a performer does using materials that may include her own body, not to how she emotes. In this case, the ground of sensation that matters is clearly understood to be the audiences' bodies, not those of the performers.

Or, another possible interpretation, since what defines performance art by some accounts is its very contestation of definitions:[87] perhaps it is the flesh of the world that is the ground of sensation, and the "affects" of the performer are no more or less significant than those of the rock, the knife, the candle, or the carcass that she uses as a material.[88] The question of the locus of sensation—reified in materials, felt in the body, or immanent to a flesh of being that constitutes the world—will be revisited in the following chapters in relation to the problem of presence. What emerges from this abbreviated consideration of performance art's material and formal innovations, however, is that as long as one still understands performance as art, sensation and affect retain their plausibility as ways of interrogating or describing how art generates meaningful thought.

Thinking with a body

The revisions to Deleuze and Guattari's schema that this dissertation proposes in its consideration of presence support three ways to rethink presence: through concepts, through percepts, and through affects, in relation to sources drawn from the disciplines of continental

[87] I have previously characterized performance art as a contested set of practices that change over time. By this working definition, the term "performance art" indicates a work whose formal elements—time, space, the performer's body and the relationship between performer and audience—are constructed or used in a way that has not yet stratified into a recognizable genre. See Couillard (2012).

[88] Tanya Mars has developed a somewhat tongue-in-cheek "Performance art starter kit" that reads like an FAQ for the burgeoning young performance artist, and includes a small valise that features the appropriate costumes, props and materials that no performance artist should be without. The work was presented several times as a hybrid performance-lecture, and published as a text in *Live at the End of the Century*.

philosophy, neuroscience and performance art respectively. Redefining percept and affect in the ways I have suggested above appears to result in a variation on a familiar set of distinctions. A triad composed of concept, percept and affect sounds suspiciously similar to the classic schema of thought, perception and feeling. Finding recourse in a set of categories that seem to correspond to common-sense understanding should not be entirely surprising; existing ideas, categories and terms have developed out of lived experience, and often reflect hard-won truths. What is significant about the arrangement I am proposing, however, is an insistence that each of these generalized terms—concept, percept and affect—points to a particular way of *thinking*. This schema does not hive off one of these methods of discovering or constructing meaning as belonging to the mind, while relegating the other two to a separate material realm labeled the body. Concept, percept and affect are all achievements of a whole body that cannot be separated from its brain in terms of the way that body senses and makes meaningful what it experiences. Thinking is a set of bodily processes, and the mind is a reflection, if not a result, of those processes.[89] I would further note that the distinctions among concept, percept and affect, while useful, can also be misleading. Just as our senses are ultimately imbricated in ways that make their distinctness somewhat artificial, concept, percept and affect are inextricably bound together in human thinking as an intra-active process. These understandings are key to my working through the notion of presence.

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[89] Here I propose caution regarding the way a "mind" as an outcome of a process is taken to be an entity—a caution that could also be applied to concepts, percepts and affects as entities. Once "the mind" becomes a thing, configured in thought as if it had substance, the danger is that it might appear to have all of the qualities of matter. Yet this substantive quality we take as a given is only something we have attributed to it, not something that is a part of its beingness. Theodor Adorno (2001/1965) provides a useful caution regarding this kind of abstraction, which he sees as an "impoverishment" of thought. He is concerned to point out what he sees as a fundamental fallacy in "Aristotle's positing of forms and concepts as something eternal and immutable." Adorno suggests that concepts are human abstractions that, for convenience, isolate qualities from their temporal conditions: "this timelessness is mediated through abstraction; and [time] is simply omitted from the concept, so that it can be formed, and maintained as a constant." As a result of this mental operation, however, the timelessness of the concept "is now attributed as its in-itself quality, and even its 'positivity', its superiority." This, in Adorno's view, becomes pure paralogism when the "de-temporalization of the meaning of concepts, which is produced by the way in which concepts are formed […] is attributed as an inherent property to that which they subsume" (p. 71). We should similarly recognize that the "thingness" we attribute to a constructed concept called a "mind" by treating it as a noun is purely a function of language, not an attribute of what a "mind" might actually be.

This calls into question the distinction Bergson proposes between what is "thought" and what is "lived" in relation to duration.[90] The separation between these two terms relies on a notion of consciousness, but splitting one from the other requires a metaphor that masks the origins of thought. Consciousness is an emergent phenomenon of living that, if one possesses it, appropriates to itself the sense of *be-ing* what being is: "I think, therefore I *am*." But most of the processes that result in consciousness are not felt *as* conscious in the way that Descartes imagines. A host of active, purpose-directed achievements, neuronally processed and enacted in localized and interconnected ways, interpret and respond to changing conditions, supporting and contributing to what is ultimately felt, perceived and thought by a self without ever coming to the direct attention of that self's consciousness.

Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (2011) asserts that consciousness as a phenomenon must be understood as being intimately tied to, if not emergent from, animation. She argues that animate responsiveness, often identified as a key marker of life, is in fact the best place to begin an inquiry into what constitutes consciousness. For animate bodies, movement is the foundational source of knowledge: "there is no doubt but that we came to know [the world] first by moving and touching our way through it, in a word, through our tactile-kinesthetic bodies" (p. 52). Even if one holds that consciousness must begin in a brain, the way neural systems develop in human foetuses further emphasizes the link between movement and consciousness:

> The comparatively early development of neural tissue related to movement is of particular interest in conjunction with physiological studies suggesting that neural development of the motor cortex is stimulated by the body movements of the fetus itself. […] Movement influences [brain] morphology (p. 74).

Sheets-Johnstone goes further, however, insisting that even a bacterium's life-enhancing ability to discriminate between a hostile or nurturing environment "might justifiably be termed a 'meta-corporeal' consciousness" (p. 53). Sheets-Johnstone offers a brief natural history of the animal kingdom that persuasively argues for a consideration of creatures' animate nature as an expression

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[90] Looking more closely at the context of Bergson's distinction, it is clear that he is referring to a very particular and specific subsection of what constitutes "thought": thought-as-speculation. One might say, instead, that what Bergson means here is what can be "imagined."

of consciousness,[91] one radical conclusion being that the idea of an "unconscious life form" is simply an oxymoron. If so, then it follows from her perspective that if we want to discover where and how consciousness resides, rather than focusing on the material arrangement and composition of our brains—or even on their functionality, as advancing techniques of tissue scanning now allow—we should more productively look at how our tactile-kinaesthetic experience offers us a particular empirical relationship to qualia and therefore opens us up to awareness and gives each of us a world—what she calls "corporeal matters of fact."[92]

Sheets-Johnstone argues that consciousness is an organic rather than specifically human characteristic, which suggests at the very least that it does not require a human brain. She is correct in asserting that the materialist project of reducing consciousness to a composition of neural tissue and computational processes does not ultimately achieve an understanding of what consciousness *is*. At the same time, there is something obscured in Sheets-Johnstone's assertion that "Consciousness is […] not in *matter*; it is a dimension of living forms […] that move" (p. 53). We do not know of any living forms that do not manifest materially; empirically, it is difficult to assert that matter is not an essential foundation of consciousness as well.[93] What is it that "moves," if not matter? Further, I would argue that neural systems are an integral part of the particular animate form whereby humans achieve tactile-kinaesthetic experience. Neural transmissions are the building blocks of directed movement; they are what make movement

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[91] Sheets-Johnstone notes:

> It has never in fact been shown that nonhuman animals do not think, or choose, or even deliberate with respect to movement, or that they do not have a sense of speed, space, effort, and so on. On the contrary […] the evolution of such corporeal capacities and awarenesses is coincident with the evolution of animate forms. Corporeal awareness is a built-in of animate life; […] *know thyself* is incontrovertibly a fundamental biological built-in (pp. 67-68).

[92] Here she appeals to Jakob von Uexküll's notion of an *Umwelt*, along with Ernst Cassirer's "concise explanation why there are *Umwelts*: 'Every organism … has a world of his own because it has an experience of its own'" (p. 74).

[93] In thinking through the significance of the close relationship between matter and consciousness, we might return to N. Katherine Hayles's (1999) question: "how could anyone think that consciousness in an entirely different medium would remain unchanged, as if it had no connection with embodiment?" (p. 1). I read Hayles's question as gravitating around the same concerns as Sheets-Johnstone, in the sense that both seek to interrogate the misunderstandings that arise when consciousness-as-information is hived off as distinct from the holistic whole of being. Sheets-Johnstone's perceptive reflections on the oxymoronic nature of the term "embodiment" (see footnote 23 above) might be considered to offer a tacit acknowledgment that while consciousness may not be *in* matter, it must, in some way, be *of* matter.

possible in human forms, and what moves through them is also what allows consciousness to emerge. Studying neural *processes* as forms of animate expression, as well as neural *structures*—discovering for example, that there are specific areas of the brain that identify particular qualia, so that colour is recognized in distinction from movement in vision, but also conjoined into a global perception that includes both together—are useful ways of coming to know ourselves and of discovering our dispositions toward a particular *Umwelt*. If language has proven to be an essential artefact for the development of structuralist thought, offering invaluable clues to the way humans make sense of the world, it seems to me that delving more deeply into how our neural systems monitor and influence our bodies' capacities and experiences is in fact an even more direct route to uncovering the deep structures of human meaning-making.[94] While Sheets-Johnstone's remarkable paleoanthropological-hermeneutic (1990) account of cognition provides coherent ontogenetic and phylogenetic analyses of the experiential foundations that are at the roots of thinking, neuroscience provides a more complete picture of the physical structures that support and respond to those experiences. Neural responses are animate occurrences that instantiate at a material level in time and space: they are physical actions of "living" as much as they are processes of "thinking." Following Sheets-Johnstone, one might consider tweaking Descartes' famous aphorism into a decidedly different generalization: "I live, therefore I think." What is ironic in Descartes' *cogito*, of course, is its complete inversion of what it means to *be*. If there is any guarantee of existence, it is surely to be found in the animate physicality of flesh. His top-down vision of an independent mind that discovers its body is incongruous with corporeal matters of fact, which suggest that consciousness emerges and evolves, as Sheets-Johnstone (2011) suggests, "along with living, moving creatures themselves" (p. 53). Her insights into the relationship between animate forms and meaning-making, and her assertion that we think *in movement* will be explored in much greater detail in the following chapter.

It is not by chance that the path this dissertation has explored in this chapter for rethinking presence starts with a consideration of thinking and thought itself. If concepts, percepts and affects of presence are troubled in contemporary culture, they are troubled by—and as—

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[94] As F. Elizabeth Hart has noted—synthesizing a range of research in cognitive semantics and cognitive grammar—language and discourse "are *cognitively* embodied, […] and *from* this embodied condition, [acquire] the semantic and syntactic structures necessary to facilitate social construction, i.e., communication" (p. 31).

thought. If light appears to act like a particle in one set of quantum experiments and like a wave in a different set of quantum experiments, the instruments that measure the results exhibit no confusion. What was ultimately "present" is revealed by the marks that remain, and recreating similar conditions will consistently produce similar results. Matter manifests—in or as—time and space, and does not appear to doubt its presence. Thought, however, has the capacity of doubt: troubled concepts, troubled percepts, and troubled affects, which orient themselves not only toward what has happened, but also toward what is happening and what will or could happen, are thought's power. This is the same power that makes it possible to concern oneself with an idea as abstract as *meaningfulness* in relation to a phenomenon as seemingly material as *presence*. But as with quantum experiments, the apparatus that one uses is crucial to the results that can and will be produced. Thinking from the position of thought removed from a body capable of producing that thought will produce a particular set of results, a variation on Haraway's god trick: a "thinking from nowhere." Thinking with a body may produce a somewhat different result.

CHAPTER 3: PRESENCE

The enigma of presence

I am sitting in my apartment, typing on a laptop. Taking note of my surroundings, I recognize the muffled sounds of my downstairs neighbour's radio, and of cars moving on the wet pavement outside. Somewhere overhead, an airplane is passing. I feel a cool breeze coming through the window. I scan the room, and see an ensemble of furniture and objects, all exactly where I expect them to be, all conforming to the shapes, colours and surface textures I remember or anticipate. I pick up a wooden carving, small enough to fit in my hand. I run my thumb over its smooth surface, and trace its curves and crevices with my fingers. I rock the carving in one palm, gauging its weight before placing it back on the table. The air coming through the window smells fresh after a recent rainstorm, and the taste of the coffee I finished drinking a few minutes ago lingers in my mouth. I am sitting upright, and if I direct my attention, I can feel the hardness of the chair, and a slight pull of a muscle running from the bottom of my right shoulder blade to the middle of my back. Monitoring my body in this way generates a sense of restlessness: I shift position in the chair as I type. I hear the clacking sound as my fingers press against the keyboard. Words accumulate on the screen. I pause to try to focus even more intently on the sensations that inform me of my surroundings, and I notice the hum of the refrigerator in the kitchen, as well as more distant sounds of traffic from the main street a block away. I am struck by the dimness of the room compared to the glow of the computer screen. My attention shifts to the weight of my reading glasses pressing on the bridge of my nose and behind my ears. It is quiet enough to hear my own breathing, and the sound of the artificial valve in my chest as it clicks every time my heart beats. This all feels very unremarkable. Even the slight sense of uncanny that comes from extracting details usually relegated to the background of awareness is not unfamiliar. Digging into this recognizability, I try to distil what I think I know of this experience into words. And though there is no one else in the room to hear me, I acknowledge the gap between thought and its articulation in language by speaking aloud the phrase I formulate: "I am here now."

This is the vocabulary of presence. What could be simpler?

And yet, nothing about these four words—or this mundane first-person description, for that matter—is simple. If Jacques Derrida were hearing or reading my phantom sentence, he

might suggest that we put these words under erasure: crossing out each one in turn to indicate their inadequacy—or rather, in the words of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in her "Translator's Preface" to Derrida's (1997) *Of Grammatology*, so that they are marked as "inaccurate yet necessary" (p. xiv)—even as they remain visible beneath the "x" that crosses through each of them: ~~I am here now~~.[95]

Each of these words is a signifier, an attempt to stabilize and enclose experience and presence—phenomena that will always already have exceeded and supplemented their proper boundaries. Trying to express this excess entangles both writer and reader in a contradiction that Derrida has sometimes named *différance*. The rogue spelling he uses (replacing an "e" with an "a") denotes an inaudible but crucial substitution that all experience *as writing* enacts; and in this English-language text that I am producing, the italics and diacritical mark further signify the word's untranslatability from French, where it engages in a more legible play on the terms "differ" and "defer" than is perhaps evident in English. These formal gestures—the erasure of words signalled by "x"s, Derrida's replacement of the "e" with an "a," and even the convention of reproducing foreign words in italics—signal a problematization of both the experience itself and its communicability to others. They highlight an inevitable precariousness of intelligibility that arises, whether I describe my experience to someone orally when we are together in the same room, or whether one reads the written version proffered above.

But it is not only the description—the attempt to depict this experience through words—that is at stake, according to Derrida. Experience itself, encompassing an enactment of the plane of "being" that the writing so confidently assumes, is also at risk of incoherency. We have, he suggests, inherited a conception of being-as-presence that extends back to the ancient Greeks, but that carries an irreconcilable contradiction whereby it is impossible to substantiate any absolute signified that stands before its signification. All signifieds, in terms of our ability to know or think them, are already signifiers; they are only recognizable within an endless and always open

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[95] Spivak (1997) outlines Derrida's reasoning this way: "The sign must be studied 'under erasure,' always already inhabited by the trace of another sign which never appears as such" (p. xxxix). Derrida (1997) explains that his practice of erasure is borrowed from Heidegger, who, in *Zur Seisfrage* "lets the word 'being' be read only if it is crossed out (*kreusweise Durchstreichung*). […] Under [that mark of deletion's] strokes the presence of a transcendental signified is [….] destroyed while making visible the very idea of the sign" (p. 23).

system of other signifiers. Of course Derrida is not the first to tackle the conundrum of being-as-presence: his tactic of erasure is borrowed from Heidegger, and his careful unraveling of the assurance of an absolute and direct experience of a "here" and a "now" by an undivided, coherent subjective "I" who "is" starts from a close reading and critique of the writings of Husserl.

A precursor to Derrida's arguments can be found in José Ortega y Gasset's (1946) *Concord and Liberty*, which offers a consideration of the notion of presence in relation to a discussion of "cognizing" as a thought process. As with Derrida, Ortega's analysis begins from a reflection on the work of Husserl; in this case, a passage written by Husserl in *Formal and Transcendental Logic* suggesting that "we now live in a world that has become incomprehensible to us, a world in which people strive in vain to find the purpose and the meaning of their doing" (Husserl quoted in Ortega, p. 55). Ortega understands Husserl's comments as pointing to a crisis of faith in terms of the value and reliability of reason and scientific knowledge. He frames the problem in relation to being-as-essence: "We look for the being, the true essence of a thing, and what first comes to hand is unfailingly and of necessity its trappings and its masks. […] Being, the thing itself, remains essentially covered and hidden" (p. 59).

Ortega sees this crisis of uncertainty as reflecting a misunderstanding of what thinking is. We have come to understand cognition—"the attempt to solve the riddle of life by making intellectual mechanisms function in a formal way under the ultimate direction of concepts and their combinations in ratiocination" (p. 65)—as synonymous with thought. Ortega suggests, however, that cognition is simply one possible way of thinking, based on two presuppositions that cannot be proven, but must be taken as articles of faith:

> First, a belief must obtain that behind the confusion and chaos of the world as it appears to us there lies concealed a fixed and stable figure on which all changes depend and which, once revealed, gives a clue to what happens around us. This fixed and stable figure has, since the days of Greece, been called *being*. Cognition is ascertainment of the being of things in this strict sense of a "fixed and stable figure." The second implication without which conceptual pursuit of knowledge would be absurd is the belief that this *being* is of a consistency akin to the natural human gift called intellect. Only when these two conditions are fulfilled does it make sense to hope that our *intellect* may serve to penetrate reality to the point of discovering its latent *being* (pp. 65-66).

Cognition is based on "the opinion that things have being" (p. 67), and as such is simply one historical form of thinking among many, all of which must be founded on some set of assumptions or beliefs rather than incontrovertible certainty. Ortega's iteration of the Greek notion of "being" suggests a particular understanding of "presence" as denoting an eternal and immutable consistency, a perfection of form that determines existence and that is accessible to reason. Ortega further suggests that scientists, if not philosophers, no longer understand the world according to these terms of absolute truth in reality, since

> modern physics does not search for being. It contents itself with working out an imaginary, subjective pattern which allows us to take our bearings among appearances but which does not claim to be more than an approximation open at any time to corrections suggested by newly observed phenomena (p. 68).

This "imaginary" pattern that we cobble together out of "appearances" is understood to be a best guess rather than an essence or ultimate truth: a plausible explanation that takes account of all we are able to measure, but that does not constitute an incontrovertible proof. It is our contingent attempt to make sense of the world we find ourselves in. Not *aletheia*, not *logos*, but an ongoing and always potentially incomplete "approximation."[96]

Ortega equates *aletheia*, a term that is central to Heidegger's examination of being, with "discovery of hidden being which is there once and for all" (p. 71). Michael Inwood (1999) provides a useful parsing of Heidegger's attempts to recuperate the notion of *aletheia* by equating its meaning with the notion of unconcealing. Digging into the usual translation of the term, where "*Alētheia* is Greek for 'truth; truthfulness, frankness, sincerity'" (Heidegger quoted in Inwood, p. 13), Heidegger developed a description of *aletheia* as "'the essence of truth', the 'openness of the open'" in which

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[96] Ortega contrasts Greek cognizing with a Hebraic grounding (which would presumably also encompass Christian and Islamic thought, given their common historical roots) of understanding based in the will of an all-powerful deity, in which

> Praying is a form and a technique of thinking. For the believer in God, there is no other means of knowing than to entreat God that he reveal his will to him and […] to communicate God's will […] by abolishing all ideas of his own and making himself […] the mouthpiece of the Almighty. His saying has nothing in common with the *logos* of reason; it is not *aletheia*—discovery of hidden being which is there once and for all. Rather he says today what, according to God's resolve and decree, is to be tomorrow; his saying is presage inspired by God, prophecy. […] His world is in a state of constant creation; it is what God, at each moment, wills it to be (p. 71).

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> The world as a whole, not just entities within it, is unhidden—unhidden as much by
> moods as by understanding. [...] Truth is primarily a feature of reality—beings, being and
> world—not of thoughts and utterances. Beings, etc. are, of course, unhidden *to us*, and *we*
> disclose them (p. 13).[97]

According to Inwood, Heidegger joined this openness and essential truth of reality to being itself, hoping to make an end run around the thorny questions of perception, experience and representation—of "appearances," as Ortega names them—by grounding *aletheia* in an innate understanding accessible to human perception that precedes any act of either thought or representation. "*Alētheia* was originally the basic feature of *phusis* (roughly, 'nature') and thus 'essentially rejects any question about its relation to something else, such as thinking'" (p. 14). According to Inwood, Heidegger builds his argument around an attempt to reclaim a primal notion of truth that he views as having been distorted over time, beginning with Plato's advocacy of ideal forms:

> In Plato, [*alētheia*] 'comes under the yoke of the *idea*' [….] *Idea*, from the Greek *idein*,
> 'to see', refers, on Heidegger's account, to the visual 'aspect (Aussehen)' of entities. The
> ascent of the prisoners out of the cave is a progressive 'correction' of their vision and of
> this *idea* and the entity whose *idea* it is. Hence, *alētheia* is no longer primarily a
> characteristic of beings; it is 'yoked' together with the soul, and consists in a *homoiōsis*, a
> 'likeness', between them. *Homoiōsis* has since become *adequatio* and then 'agreement',
> and since Descartes, the relation between soul and beings has become the subject-object
> relation, mediated by a 'representation', the degenerate descendent of Plato's *idea*. Truth
> becomes correctness, and its 'elbow-room (Spielraum)', the open, is neglected (p. 14).[98]

Heidegger's reading of Plato's understanding of *aletheia* has been challenged,[99] and one could

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[97] This reference to "moods" suggests that Heidegger recognized a role for affect in the process of making or discovering meaning.

[98] Here and in other passages, I have replaced the square brackets used by the translator to signal the words or phrases used in the original language with regular parentheses, so that these clarifications will not be confused with my own editorial interventions.

[99] Inwood details the arguments of Paul Friedländer in this regard (pp. 14-15). Inwood also acknowledges, however, that Heidegger's arguments for the givenness of unconcealedness are nuanced by a concurrent recognition that "Truth explicitly presupposes concealment of hiddenness. DASEIN is in 'untruth (Unwahrheit)' as well as truth" (p. 13).

argue that Heidegger's reworking the notion of "truth" into the very definition of nature or reality is not a proof so much as a predetermination of what can be understood or produced by the very notions of being and presence. Nevertheless, there is a utility worth retaining in Heidegger's efforts to untangle the philosophical precedents that have led us to distinguish thought and idea as separate from the materiality of being. If we are to be cognizant of Heidegger's move of equating truth with being (to offer a vastly simplified parsing of his argument), then we should be equally cognizant of the assumptions bound up in a system of categorization that takes for granted a world of thought as *distinct* from a physical world of being. N. Katherine Hayles (1999) has characterized the historic Greek theorization of ideal forms as the "Platonic backhand." She argues that there is a basic fault to a logic that begins by extracting a generalized or "simplified abstraction" from "the world's noisy multiplicity" but then goes on "to constitute the abstraction as the originary form from which the world's multiplicity derives." In her view, such a position ignores or devalues the complexity and multiplicity that is "the world's holistic nature" in favour of "an essential reality" that is not only artificially constructed, but that also decouples meaning—in the form of information—from the material instantiation that makes it what it is (p. 12).[100] If there is an "openness of the open," it is surely that we do not only imagine the world; we are a part of the world, and our inhabitation of the world as conceiving, perceiving and feeling beings unfolds as and through our animated materiality. Thinking is a particular manifestation *of* materiality. If thinking is open to being, then it is because it comes out of and is a part of being.

Ortega (1946) extends the questioning of the notion of essence to Husserl's phenomenological project. Although Ortega's philosophical outlook owes much to phenomenology, he argues that there is an important shortcoming in the reasoning of Husserl, whom he characterizes as "the last representative" of the "idealistic philosophers"—an evaluation that Derrida largely shares.[101] In Husserl's phenomenological approach, one's "*consciousness of* (the reality of the world) has absolute reality." This suggests an enclosed "I" that is immediate to

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[100] Her arguments on the misleading nature of such an abstraction can be understood as corresponding to Adorno's critique of paralogism (see footnote 89 above).

[101] In *Speech and Phenomena*, for example, Derrida (1973) describes his examination of Husserl as an attempt "to confirm that the recourse to phenomenological critique is metaphysics itself, restored to its original purity in its historical achievement" (p. 5).

itself, thereby providing the guarantee of being-as-presence that supports the ideal of an absolute reality of being-as-essence. Ortega describes Husserl's approach in this way:

> The reality of my *consciousness of* something is relative to itself; for according to Husserl and all idealism, consciousness is conscious of itself, or in other words, it is immediate to itself. But to be relative to oneself is tantamount to being absolute (p. 81).

Ortega rejects this notion of an "I" that "exists enclosed within itself, within its mental acts and states," suggesting that "such existence in the form of *being enclosed in oneself* is the opposite of what we call *living*. Living means *reaching out of* oneself, devoted, ontologically, to what is *other*—be it called world or circumstances" (p. 81). He thereby distances himself from a strictly phenomenological understanding of a world that can only be described according to one's individual perceptions of a personal *Umwelt*, to return to von Uexküll's term, outlined in the previous chapter. Ortega advocates an approach or attitude that he calls "living reason," which begins with the observation that consciousness directs itself outward rather than remaining closed in itself; by its very nature it is open to and opens onto being within a shared world.[102] Like any other way of thinking—that is, of trying to make sense of the world by uncovering an order that governs what is otherwise only perceptible as chaos—Ortega's system of living reason begins from a set of assumptions. What distinguishes his approach from that of phenomenology, however, is the particular way he seeks to clarify and make transparent the set of givens that ground his approach.[103]

What is evident from this discussion is that at least since the time of Plato, Western philosophy has been greatly concerned with human awareness of being. Is it possible to distinguish a truth of material existence from the ways in which individual humans appear to

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[102] Ortega writes:

> To start from life as the primary and absolute fact is to recognize that *consciousness of* is solely an idea, a more or less justified and plausible one, but no more than an idea which we have discovered or invented in the process of living and for motives arising from this our living. Living reason starts from no idea and hence is not idealism (p. 82).

[103] There are those, of course, who would disagree with Ortega's characterization of phenomenology as fundamentally enclosed in this way. Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (2011) has written about Husserl's insistence on receptivity as the first active stage of experience. She reads Husserl as confirming that "we are open both inside and out to whatever arises or appears, whether from within or without, and duly affected by it" (p. 503).

experience (to feel, to perceive, to conceptualize) or "think" the sensation of "being"? Plato envisioned an ideal plane of being that was only imperfectly accessible to perception, but that could be more fully recognized and understood by enlightened thought. Descartes refined this viewpoint, formulating a thinking consciousness as the very proof of being (*cogito ergo sum*). Husserl developed a phenomenological approach, which attempts to describe essential being as it is experienced as a *lebenswelt* by a self, without seeking a noumenal being-in-itself more fundamental than our perception of it. Heidegger (2010/1953) distinguished between an ontic understanding of being (*existentia*) "using the interpretive expression *objective presence*" [*Vorhandenheit*][104] and an ontological concern with "existence (Existenz) as a determination of being only to Dasein" (p. 42). Heidegger argued that Dasein, as the type of being that is concerned *with* its own being—i.e. that is self-consciously sentient: a being that is not simply a "what," but a "who" inhabiting its material form—has a unique access to the possibility of recognizing and understanding being. Ortega framed human consciousness as manifesting a concern not only for its individual being, but also crucially oriented by and toward an imperative awareness of a world that extends beyond itself. Hayles suggests that consciousness is not simply a thing in its own right that can be separated from the material through and by which it is instantiated. In her view, our awareness of being does not simply reach out toward the world; it is *of* the world.

   This complex imbrication of being and consciousness appears to encompass conflicting understandings or valuations of at least three potential types of presence. One type of presence— what Heidegger calls objective presence, or *Vorhandenheit*—involves the physical materiality of objects. The material world as we experience it manifests particular energetic qualities and potentials, such as mass, texture, movement, and force. This type of presence can take on various forms, which we categorize in various ways (different types of matter can be classified elementally, according to their atomic patterns, for example; we also recognize different types of forces that can be exerted by and upon matter, e.g. gravitational, magnetic and electrical), but a contemporary Western perspective (unlike, say, an animistic view) does not generally recognize

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[104] One could equate the ontic plane of *existentia* with Deleuze and Guattari's scientific prospect, or Ortega's description of modern physics, both of which concern themselves with the material manifestation of objects and events that can be empirically verified or constructed.

these qualities as indicating a distinct entity of spirit that coexists within matter. We recognize a second type of presence—what we might call a living presence—that corresponds to a particular pattern of organized or intentional activity. Organic matter is understood as manifesting a kind of inhabitation: life, which is finite and animate, can exist within matter, exerting a will that is expressed through responses to its surroundings, as well as developmental, consumptive and reproductive activities.[105] An organism "lives" within and through matter for a certain amount of time, but when that organism dies (i.e. ceases to inhabit matter), the physical material through which it was constituted is conserved, even as that body decomposes and loses the particular coherency that manifested as a responsive, organic form. Consciousness—a state of awareness measured according to various continua of sentience, self-recognition and the capacity to reason—appears to be yet a third type of presence, attributed to some but not necessarily all living creatures. The various philosophical attitudes toward "being" identified above speak at least in part to a lack of agreement how these possible manifestations of presence figure in ontological terms.

In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida (1977) offers his own parsing of various ways in which what he calls "the historical determination of the meaning of being in general as *presence*" has been conceptualized:

> presence of the thing to the sight as *eidos*, presence as substance/essence/existence
> (*ouisa*), temporal presence as point (*stigmè*), of the now or of the moment (*nun*), the self-
> presence of the cogito, consciousness, subjectivity, the co-presence of the other and of the
> self, intersubjectivity as the intentional phenomenon of the ego, and so forth (p. 12).

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[105] The classification of what constitutes life is by no means settled. One obvious example of the difficulties involved in deciding whether an organism meets the qualifications to be considered alive is the class of entities known as viruses. These infective agents do not have the independent replicating structures generally identified as fundamental to life; in order to reproduce, they commandeer the replicating systems of living creatures. When they do not inhabit a living cell, viruses exist in a kind of "unalive" dormancy. For a detailed discussion on the debates surrounding the classification of viruses, see Thomas Pradeu et al. (2016). Tagny Duff (2014) offers an intriguing consideration of the links between the concepts of virality in science and popular culture to theorize how performance documents can assert their own liveliness and agency beyond that of the presence of a live performance in her unpublished dissertation, *Bioremediality: Biomedia, Imaging and Shifting Notions of Liveness across Science and Art*.

Derrida frames the question of presence within a larger analysis of what he understands as "the *problem of language*" (p. 6). In his gloss, the coherency of language rests on a distinction between the sensible—that is, what is apprehended and expressed through our senses, which is uniquely individual—and the intelligible, a human capacity for mental understanding that can be considered common across cultures, regardless of individual experiences and expressions of it. For the Greeks, this universal intelligibility was *logos*. Bound up with their fealty to a notion of *logos* as universal truth was a kind of phonocentrism, in which speech—that which can be heard—retains a purity of presence that corresponds to intelligibility. Speech, for the Greeks, was direct and immediate, addressed to a known audience within range of hearing, and occurring simultaneously, without mediation, in the hearer.[106] Socrates, as portrayed in the writings of Plato, contrasts this with writing, which is a mediation of speech, a supplement. Language as writing does not have the same directness; it can circulate within contexts no longer grounded in the immediacy of speech's production. Furthermore, the written word provides only a partial record (unable to fully capture qualities such as intonation and rhythm), and can be manipulated and fragmented in ways that cannot be verified by the reader's senses.[107] Here we have the familiar themes of supplement and loss identified in Chapter 1.

Writing, Derrida reminds us, is classically understood as "technics in the service of language, *spokesman*, interpreter of an originary speech itself shielded from interpretation" (p. 8). But as our identification of what counts as language has evolved,[108] becoming unmoored from a faith in an underlying, intelligently given and universally accessible *logos* that exists beyond the

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[106] Speech is also closely tied to the authenticity attributed to a notion of spirit. Voice is produced through breath, and breathing is tightly bound both with essential life processes and, in metaphorical terms, with an invisible but still perceptible life force. The ancient Greek word *pneuma* meant both breath and spirit; Silvia Benso (2008) provides an engaging account of the ambiguity of the term in relation to the writings of Anaximenes, exploring the tensions of the term's evolving meaning in relation to the theorization of a separation of body and soul (pp. 12-16).

[107] Plato's critique of writing is taken up in some detail by Rancière (2004)—see footnote 74 above. The opening chapter of John Durham Peters's (1999) *Speaking into the Air* also provides an extended analysis of the *Phaedrus* and its critique of the written word, identifying its role as a foundational text for communication studies in the way it approaches the question of technologies and their mediating influence.

[108] In the modern age, Derrida asserts, "one says 'language' for action, movement, thought, reflection, consciousness, unconsciousness, experience, affectivity, etc." (p. 9).

shortcomings of interpretation, the concept of writing[109] has necessarily come to be ascribed to "all that gives rise to an inscription in general, whether it is literal or not and even if what it distributes in space is alien to the order of the voice." Writing now describes or encompasses "not only the system of notation secondarily connected with these activities [of "action, movement, thought, reflection, consciousness, unconsciousness, experience, affectivity, etc."] but the essence and the content of these activities themselves" (p. 9). Writing, in other words, is no longer a supplemental recording of language; it is, rather, the very figure that reveals language's true nature as always already a secondary inscription, haunted by supplement, requiring interpretation, and incapable of guaranteeing any truth beyond an endless system of other signs. But of course, Derrida has laid down a set of stakes here that go far beyond any definition of language as a system of communication. According to Derrida, writing is the metaphor[110] that now describes practically all the activities of human experience, and certainly of "thinking" as this dissertation has framed it, whether through affect, percept or concept. And if writing is the figure that describes all of human experience, then all possibility of knowing is implicated in the conundrum of signification in which there can be no pure signified before the signifier. Such a bold move is perfectly coherent if we read Derrida's text in its context as a brilliant literary criticism of the tensions inherent in the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau,[111] and as a careful deconstruction of

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[109] Derrida identifies the metaphor of writing as informing some of our earliest extant philosophical texts. He points to a key passage of Aristotle's *De interpretatione* in particular:

> Just as all men have not the same writing so all men have not the same speech sounds, but mental experiences, of which these are the *primary symbols* (*semeīa prótos*), are the same for all, as also are those things of which our experiences are the images (*De interpretatione* as quoted in Derrida, p. 11).

[110] In a critical passage that distils the foundations of his approach, Derrida writes, "It is […] a matter […] of determining the 'literal' meaning of writing as metaphoricity itself" (p. 15). Returning to Deleuze's insight, one could argue that Derrida's entire philosophical project rests on an "image of thought" as writing and metaphoricity.

[111] Derrida explains:

> Rousseau repeats the Platonic gesture by referring to another model of presence: self-presence in the senses, in the sensible cogito, which simultaneously carries in itself the inscription of divine law. On the one hand, *representative*, fallen, secondary, instituted writing, writing in the literal and strict sense, is condemned [….] Writing in the common sense is the dead letter, it is the carrier of death. It exhausts life. On the other hand, on the other face of the same proposition, writing in the metaphoric sense, natural, divine, and living writing, is venerated; it is equal in dignity to the

what Derrida calls "the great rationalisms of the seventeenth century" (p. 16). But moving beyond Rousseau, is Derrida's equation of all thinking and experiencing with language and writing justified, or is it simply a word game that offers writing as a false signifier, using it to describe entities or processes that are not metaphorically comparable? Do his arguments affirm his assertion that "*there is nothing outside of the text* (there is no outside-text; *il n'y a pas de hors-texte*)" (p. 158)?[112]

Signification

To fully appreciate Derrida's arguments, we must first direct our attention to the field of inquiry known as semiotics. Succinctly defined as the study of signs, semiotics as a sustained area of research developed toward the end of the nineteenth century, following two distinct lineages, one established in Europe by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (*sémiologie*) and the other in North America by the U. S. philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce.[113] Their diverging approaches already give some indication of what the field as a whole seeks to explore. Saussure (1966/1913) proposed semiology as the "*science that studies the life of signs within society,*" a broad field of which "linguistics is only a part" (p. 16). As a science, Saussure aligned semiology with

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origin of value, to the voice of conscience as divine law, to the heart, to sentiment, and so forth (p. 17).

[112] Certainly Derrida is convinced that his intervention is far more than simply a literary argument. He makes it clear that his reading of Rousseau aims at describing a "symptom" in order to think through a considerably broader problem that has not been previously articulated (or articulable) "*within* […] *metaphysical closure*":

The indicative value that I attribute to ["Descartes," "Leibniz," Rousseau," "Hegel," as names of authors] is first the name of a problem. [… T]he primordial and indispensable phase, in fact and in principle, of the development of this problematic, consists in questioning the internal structure of these texts as symptoms; […] I draw my argument form them in order to isolate […] the theory of writing (p. 99).

Here I have dramatically shortened what is in fact the longest sentence in *Of Grammatology*. Joshua Kates's (1998) article "*Comme* or the last word" in *Philosophy Today* provides an extended reading of the centrality of this passage to understanding Derrida's methodology and his problematic of writing, which Kates reframes in terms of a problem of "reading."

[113] Daniel Chandler's (2007) primer *Semiotics: The Basics* (second edition) provides a useful introduction to the history and concerns of the field.

psychology.[114] Signs, in Saussure's system, have two components, a signifier (form) and a signified (content),[115] both of which are "psychological" rather than material in nature.[116] Peirce (1994/1931-35), on the other hand, understood semiotics in relation to philosophy; indeed, he characterized semiotics as synonymous with logic.[117] Peirce's explication of the sign featured three rather than two elements: a *representamen* (that "which stands to somebody for something"), an *interpretant* (what is created "in the mind of that person [as] an equivalent […] or perhaps more developed sign"), and an *object* (what the sign stands for "in reference to a sort of idea [….] to be understood in a sort of Platonic sense") (Vol. 2.228). Subsequent scholars often use the word *referent* for what Peirce named as object. Not unlike Saussure, Peirce understood signs to be entities of the mind: "We think only in signs" (Vol. 2.302). Whereas Saussure identified the relationship between signifier and signified as purely arbitrary, but also immutably fixed by convention,[118] Peirce made a distinction between three classes of signs: icons, which have some "similarity or analogy" with the objects they represent (Vol. 2.305);[119] indices, which do not resemble the objects to which they refer, but which "direct the attention to their objects by blind compulsion" and depend "upon association by contiguity" (Vol. 2.306); and symbols, which are related to their objects only by common agreement, "constituted [as] a sign merely or mainly by the fact that [they are] used and understood as such, whether the habit is natural or

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[114] For Saussure, semiology "would be a part of social psychology and consequently of general psychology" (p. 16).

[115] Umberto Eco (1976) describes the signifier as the "*sign-vehicle*" and the signified as *meaning*" (p. 14). Following Eco, Stuart Hall (2006/1980) also adopted the term "sign-vehicle."

[116] Saussure affirms, "The […] sign is […] a two-sided psychological entity" (p. 66).

[117] Peirce writes, "Logic, in its general sense, is […] only another name for **semiotic** (*sémeiötiké*), the […] formal […] doctrine of signs" (Vol. 2.227). It should be noted that for Peirce, who was an early proponent of pragmatism, logic sits in contradistinction to metaphysics: "It is not metaphysics that we are dealing with: only logic. Therefore, we do not ask what really is, but only what appears to everyone of us in every minute of our lives" (Vol. 2.84).

[118] In Saussure's (1966/1913) description, "The signifier, though to all appearances freely chosen with respect to the idea that it represents, is fixed, not free, with respect to the linguistic community that uses it" (p. 71).

[119] Chiara Ambrosio (2014) makes the point that for Peirce, relations of similarity between object and icon are not simply a matter of "a perceived or superficial resemblance between a particular representation and the states of affairs it stands for." Icons are actively created, such that "the very process of constructing and inspecting an iconic representation (a process that for Peirce involves a dynamic act of interpretation) discloses novel features of the objects or states of affairs being investigated" (p. 256).

conventional" (Vol. 2.307). With his theorization of icon and index, Peirce can be understood to integrate a "referential" quality of signification that is absent or placed outside of the Saussurian model of sign production. It should further be noted that although Peirce distinguished icon, index and symbol as three separate classes, he did not view these classes as mutually exclusive: signs could exhibit features of all three simultaneously.[120]

Saussure's and Peirce's diverging theories of signification each exerted a strong influence on twentieth century thought, and many semiotic scholars have sought ways to integrate elements of both, but Saussure in particular is heralded as a key originary figure in what came to be known as Structuralism. Saussure (1966/1913) argued that the main role of linguistics was "to determine the forces that are permanently and universally at work in all languages, and to deduce the general laws to which all specific historical phenomena can be reduced" (p. 6), thereby advocating a methodological approach that analyzes human culture in relation to overarching systems or structures. At the same time, Saussure's emphasis on structure led him to privilege the study of static "*language-states*" or what he referred to as a "*synchronic*" approach, rather than focusing on how languages evolve over time, a concern he referred to as "*diachronic* linguistics" (p. 81). Although he recognized that languages do change, Saussure understood this evolution in terms of the "*fortuitous* nature of a state" in which "a mind infiltrate[s] a given substance [i.e. an existing linguistic structure] and breathe[s] life into it" rather than viewing language as evolving from fixed state to fixed state according to rational processes in which each alteration is "destined to signal the meaning with which it [is] impregnated" (p. 85). Thus, while Saussure's method facilitates the possibility of distinguishing a set of differences at play in a somewhat artificially conceived static moment or language-state,[121] it can tell us little about how any particular

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[120] Peirce writes:

> The value of an icon consists in its exhibiting the features of a state of things regarded as if it were purely imaginary. The value of an index is that it assures us of positive fact. The value of a symbol is that it serves to make thought and conduct rational and enables us to predict the future. It is frequently desirable that a representamen should exercise one of those three functions to the exclusion of the other two, or two of them to the exclusion of the third; but the most perfect of signs are those in which the iconic, indicative, and symbolic characters are blended as equally as possible (Vol. 4.448).

[121] The abstraction of theorizing static language-states risks perpetuating the kind of paralogism that concerned Adorno with regard to Aristotle (see footnote 89 above).

meanings might come to be attached to a sign, or how a sign might achieve stability or equivalence among its various users.

For Umberto Eco (1976), who provocatively suggested that "*semiotics is in principle the discipline studying everything which can be used in order to lie*" (p. 7), one of the key shortcomings of Saussure's approach was its insistence on intentionality and artificiality as requisite conditions in order for something to be considered a sign. Eco asserted that Saussurian followers "distinguish sharply between intentional, artificial devices (which they call 'signs') and other natural or unintentional manifestations which do not, strictly speaking, deserve such a name," whereas Peirce's model "does not demand, as part of a sign's definition, the qualities of being intentionally emitted and artificially produced" (p. 15). Eco, who framed semiotics in terms of "codes" as systems of signification, placed his emphasis on the idea of a "*semiotic convention*" that allows a sign to be received, whether or not it was consciously or intentionally generated or transmitted: "There is a sign every time a human group decides to use and to recognize something as the vehicle of something else" (p. 17). While his emphasis was on human use and reception, Eco also allowed for the possibility and relevance of, for example, a study of zoosemiotics, which he suggested might contribute to a greater understanding of the "biological components of communication" or even a recognition of "patterns of signification [among animals] which can [...] be defined as cultural and social" (p. 9). By aligning the sign with the cultural or social establishment of convention, however, Eco was firm in his contention that generally, "stimuli *cannot* be regarded as signs" because at least "some behavioral responses are not elicited by convention" (p. 19). For Eco, signs were to be viewed as cultural rather than biological phenomena, and they cannot be fully understood unless they are examined within a social rather than strictly individual context.[122]

If signs operate according to systems of codes, there must be a way to account not only

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[122] It should be noted, however, that Eco (1982) also argued that the biology and mechanics of perception work through a system of "binary choices" which could be understood as a form of coding, contending

> the most natural phenomena, apparently analogical in their relationships (for example, perception), can be reduced today to digital processes [....]
>
> [E]verything which in images appears to us still as analogical, continuous, non-concrete, motivated, natural, and therefore 'irrational', is simply something which, in our present state of knowledge and operational capacities, we have not yet succeeded in reducing to the discrete, the digital, the purely differential (p. 34).

for their production, but also their reception. This was one of the key insights offered by Stuart

Hall (2006/1980) in his widely circulated essay "Encoding/decoding." Hall pointed to the

complexity of social conventions that determine meanings. Not only do language-states evolve

over time; but also, multiple competing conventions can be understood to be operating

simultaneously in determining how a sign—in Hall's lexicon, a "message form" (p. 164)—might

be received, interpreted and acted upon within a culture. All signs circulate discursively.[123]

Focusing specifically on broadcast communications, Hall identified multiple "meaning structures"

that determine both the encoding and decoding of signs, including technical infrastructure,

relations of production, and frameworks of knowledge (p. 165, figure 13.1). Crucially, the

meaning structures of encoding "may not be perfectly symmetrical" with those of decoding (p.

166), allowing for a spectrum of potential interpretations that can include those intended by the

transmitter, those hegemonically regulated by the cultures and contexts within which a message

circulates, and those generated by the various receivers of a message, whether targeted as

recipients or not. While codes may be "profoundly *naturalized*" to the point of invisibility, Hall

insisted that such "preferred readings," which "have the whole social order embedded in them as a

set of meanings, practices and beliefs," are never completely fixed, but subject to ongoing

"*interpretative work*" in which socially dominant "*performative rules*—rules of competence and

use, of logics-in-use" rather than absolute truths, "seek actively to *enforce* or *pre-fer* [*sic*] one

semantic domain over another and rule items into and out of their appropriate meaning-sets" (p.

169). There are at least two key ideas worth highlighting in Hall's analysis of how conventions of

meaning come to be established. First, while sign systems operate in relation to dominant codes

whose coherence depends on vigilant regulation at social, political and institutional levels, sign

systems are also under constant threat of transformation, reinterpretation or loss of

meaningfulness in relation to eccentric, localized and oppositional codes. Second, by emphasizing

the discursive nature of signification, Hall's method for evaluating how signs are interpreted is

rooted in identifiable actions: that is, the actions those signs provoke in their recipients. Particular

meanings can only be identified and understood in relation to verifiable responses, which is to

say, by the actions and reactions a sign provokes. According to Hall, "If the meaning is not

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[123] Hall writes, "sign-vehicles […], like any form of communication or language [are organized] through
the operation of codes within the syntagmatic chain of a discourse" (p. 163).

articulated in practice, it has no effect" (p. 164).[124] By focusing on social practices as articulated manifestations of meaning, Hall's analysis evades the question of what guarantees might tether meaning as interiorized or personalized thought to meaning as something shared by discrete consciousnesses. This is perhaps not surprising, since it is difficult to imagine the possibility of a social sphere unless one already takes as given the possibility of intersubjectivity.

Saussure (1966/1913) also understood signification as a social practice, as evidenced by his determination to study "*the life of signs within society*" (p. 16). An appeal to the social, however, does not in itself resolve the tension between, on the one hand, the intuition of a world represented to consciousness as thought and, on the other, the claim of an evident, shared existence—framed as actuality, reality, being, or "presence," whether material or ideal—to which consciousness has unmediated access. If thought is indeed best understood as a process of signification, then apodictic certainty of existence will be, at best, elusive to consciousness. But how is it that metaphors of communication and language have come to govern our understanding and description of how consciousness operates?

Derrida's (1973) meditation on signification began with neither Saussure nor Peirce, but with what he identified as a theory of signs put forth in Husserl's *Logical Investigations*.[125] In *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, Derrida provides a close

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[124] While Hall's analysis is clearly based on a transmission model of communication, the prominent role of articulation in practice as the certification of meaning also points to a distinct view of communication, described by James W. Carey, following the American pragmatist philosopher John Dewey, as a "ritual" understanding of communication that "exploits the ancient identity and common roots of the terms 'commonness,' 'communion,' 'community,' and 'communication.'" The focus of ritual communication "is directed not toward the extension of messages in space but toward the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs" (p. 18). Ritual communication emphasizes the enactment or repetition of actions, structures, and patterns of interaction in order to stabilize a sense of familiarity, commonality and shared meaning. For a more detailed consideration of ritual communication in relation to performance art, see Couillard (2010); this model will also be considered in further detail in Chapter 5.

[125] Derrida offered a limited commentary on Saussure in his essay "Difference," which is included in *Speech and Phenomena*, as well as a more detailed consideration and deconstructive mobilization of Saussure's ideas in *Of Grammatology*, particularly in his chapter on "Linguistics and Grammatology," but the insights that drive his critique are extensions of the arguments that he first developed in relation to Husserl. This focus on Husserl is key to understanding how Derrida arrived at a formulation that seems to equate both consciousness and living so closely with the processes of language and signification. The tendency to conflate these processes also suggests why Umberto Eco felt it was important to maintain a distinction between signs and biological stimuli.

reading of how language and signification were posited by Husserl.[126] Derrida argues that

Husserl's theory of signs provided the underlying justification for the philosopher's entire

phenomenological project; and further, that the way Husserl constituted the idea of a sign was

deeply invested in metaphysical assumptions and terminology. In Derrida's view, "in the

privileged example of the concept of the sign, […] the phenomenological critique of metaphysics

betray[s] itself as a moment within the history of metaphysical assurance" (p. 5). Derrida argues

that Husserl's project understood the essence of language according to the inherited terms of

metaphysics. In Derrida's reading, Husserl tied language to *logos* by asserting an expressive

quality of signification distinct from the indexicality of indication. By identifying an "intentional

or noematic sense" (p. 3) within signification that corresponds to an eidetic logic beyond

empirical observation, Husserl attempted to preserve the ideality of form through a presumed

transcendental unity of self-presence in consciousness.[127] For Husserl, "the source and guarantee

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[126] It should be noted that Derrida's reading of Husserl in *Speech and Phenomenon* has been hotly
contested. While the critiques are wide-ranging, one can get a sense of some of the ongoing stakes involved
by perusing the Summer 1998 issue of *Philosophy Today*, which gathers together a series of articles and
letters exchanged among J. Claude Evans, Leonard Lawlor, and Joshua Kates. Their engagement was
occasioned by the release of J. Claude Evans's *Strategies of Deconstruction: Derrida and the Myth of
Voice*, which argued that Derrida's reading of Husserl—as parsed by Leonard Lawlor (1993) in his review
of the book—"misinterprets, misreads, misunderstands, misplaces, and misleads" (p. 3). Both Lawlor and
Kates were highly critical of Evans's book, and, as it turns out, also somewhat skeptical of each other's
readings of Derrida. Evans proposed the interaction, which unfolded over an extended period, ostensibly to
at least clarify their positions for each other, if not to come to a shared agreement about the merits of
Derrida's reading of Husserl. The resulting dialogue as published in *Philosophy Today* is illuminating on
several fronts, revealing not only their three distinct positions, but also some of the potential fissures
involved in approaching and interpreting any text. As Evans suggests in his correspondence to Kates, they
often seem to be "talking past one another" (p. 170) rather than coming to any clear acknowledgment and
understanding of each other's approach. Setting aside the particularities of their arguments, their exchanges
can be read as symptomatic of broader difficulties with regard to securing shared understanding. It is
outside the scope of this dissertation to go into their arguments in detail, but in somewhat oversimplified
terms, Evans appeals to a certain traditional or orthodox reading of Husserl's arguments, which he believes
Derrida distorts beyond plausibility. By contrast, both Lawlor and Kates feel that Evans fails to understand
Derrida's arguments. Lawlor seeks to situate Derrida's approach within a particular development of French
philosophical thought, read as a reaction against Hegel following a groundwork laid by Jean Hyppolite,
while Kates starts from an appreciation of Derrida's strategic approach as a questioning of the very
possibility of reading. While their concerns hardly cover the whole of *Speech and Phenomenology*'s
reception, they do usefully reference many of the key voices in the debates spurred by its publication,
including Robert Bernasconi, Rudolf Bernet, Paul de Man, Rodolphe Gasché, John Llewelyn, Robert
Scholes, Richard Rorty, John Searle, Bernhard Waldenfels, Alan White, and David Wood.

[127] Interestingly, several points of Husserl's analysis correspond closely to key elements of Peirce's theory
of signs: language as logic; indexicality as only one class of signification; and the recourse to an ideal

of all value [… is] the *present* or *presence* of sense to a full and primordial intuition" (p. 5), and the "ultimate form of ideality […] is the *living present*, the self-presence of transcendental life" (p. 6).

Husserl's (2012/1931) phenomenological project makes a claim for a scientific approach to philosophy by removing any speculation on the facticity of the world that appears before us; instead, he proposes "*a science of essential Being* […] which aims exclusively at establishing 'knowledge of essences' (*Wesenserkenntnisse*) and *absolutely no 'facts'*" (p. 3). This approach reflects Husserl's background as a mathematician. Mathematics deals with abstract values and functions—more specifically, it describes *relationships* rather than things—that retain their intelligibility no matter what symbols are used to express them. An equation will produce a comparable, infinitely reproducible set of results whether it is calculated in Arabic or Roman numerals, using a decimal or digital base system, and so forth. When converted to any other representational system, the results still correspond. Although mathematical formulations can be applied to actualized material transactions, their operations are mental constructs that rely on logic rather than empirical observation for their evidence and proof. For example, no matter what material items are added together, the addition of two single items will always produce the same numerical result: $1 + 1 = 2$, whether one is counting fish or grains of sand. Furthermore, mathematical formulae allow for the possibility and use of conceptual figures that are difficult to fathom on the plane of material perception, such as imaginary numbers (numbers that, when squared, produce a negative result) or infinity. Husserl attempted to approach a description of being according to comparable "non-real (irreal)" terms (p. 4). He proposed to explore not facts, but phenomena: occurrences in an ideal, phenomenological world that manifests for a transcendental subjectivity—i.e., "a subject *for* which this world has being […] as that […] of which I am conscious in some way or other" rather than as "a human Ego *in* the universally, existentially posited universe" (p. xxxvii). In order to do so, however, he needed to posit a fundamental, eidetic plane of essences that is open to human intuition. For Husserl, "essential insight *is* intuition, and if it is […] not a mere, and possibly a vague, representation, it is a

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object or referent. Indeed, while the two philosophers' emphases are different, both posited an ideal object or referent that is infinitely repeatable and uncontaminated by the specificity of individual perception or incidence.

primordial dator Intuition, grasping the essence in its 'bodily' selfhood" (p. 13). Essences point to concepts or qualities that we can intuit as being common across various individual instances or objects.[128] To reach or recognize this eidetic plane of essences, which he then correlated with intended meaning, Husserl undertook a series of "reductions" that involved bracketing common individual or cultural assumptions about the nature and meaning of existence—which he characterized as an unexamined "natural standpoint" (p. 9). The various reductions undertaken by Husserl attempt to hold these assumptions (e.g. the existence of a physical world beyond our perception of it) in abeyance, in order to discover logical (rather than empirical) certainties of how phenomena are given forth in consciousness on the basis of "essential intuition" (p. 12). Husserl argues that essential knowledge can be accessed through the assurance of the pre-expressive stratum of direct experience. Like Descartes, Husserl finds something intuitively unassailable—immediate and primordial—in the apprehension of solitary mental life. Before all speculation that might allow us to deduce or recognize an external, material world populated with other living and even sentient beings, he argues, we first find ourselves inhabiting our own consciousness. In Derrida's reading of Husserl, this quality of consciousness—which perceives itself as present to itself and which experiences an ownness of experience—is taken as the fundamental ground and proof of being. As Derrida's phrase "the metaphysics of presence" suggests, *consciousness* of being is taken as proof of being by the way it comes to be defined *as* being (which is synonymous with presence).

Derrida (1973) offered a number of challenges to Husserl's arguments, which he saw as founded in a theory of signs that "determined the essence of language by taking the logical as its telos or norm" (p. 8). First, however, in order to arrive at a coherent description of Husserl's distinction between indicative (*Anzeichen*) signification, which conveys no "meaning" (*Bedeutung*), and expressive (*Ausdruck*) signification, which is tied to an intended sense, Derrida needed to find a work-around for a translation issue between the original German text and his French-language analysis. Derrida pointed out that in French, *Bedeutung* is generally translated as *signification*, which would render Husserl's argument incomprehensible, since the French term

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[128] According to Husserl, "*it belongs to the meaning of everything contingent that it should have essential being and therewith an Eidos to be apprehended in all its purity;* and this Eidos comes under *essential truths of varying degrees of universality*" (p. 11).

does not allow for a bifurcation between the notions of "indicating" and "meaning." *Un signe sans signification*—which can be translated in English as "a sign without meaning"—would be nonsensical in French. Perhaps it is this very problem of interpretation that sensitized Derrida to the underlying assumptions that he found haunting Husserl's work. If nothing else, problems of interpretation and translation point to the difficulties inherent in any argument that relies on a notion of universal essences open to intuition. For the sake of coherence, Derrida proposed to translate *Bedeutung* as *vouloir-dire* (wishing to say), to highlight Husserl's attention to an intended meaning (i.e., an underlying eidetic referent). Thus, for Derrida, Husserl's arguments were already modeled on an understanding that corresponds to language, where "the meaning (*Bedeutung*) is always *what* a discourse or somebody *wants to say*: what is conveyed […] is always a linguistic sense, a discursive content" (p. 18).[129]

Derrida found that the connection Husserl made between consciousness and language was even more pervasive, however. In order to exemplify the expressive capacity of the sign—to uncover the *essence* of expressivity as a distinct function of language corresponding to its logical meaning—Husserl offered the example of an interior monologue. Husserl argued that words serve no indicative or communicative function "in solitary mental life (*im einsamen Seelenleben*)," since one already knows their intended meaning and content. They retain the assurance of ideality rather than being entangled in the uncertainty of indication, where one must deduce "a content forever hidden from intuition, that is, from the lived experience of another" (p. 22). This "reduction" or bracketing of the indicative function of language allowed Husserl to assert an independent, expressive quality inherent in language. Thus, Derrida argued, "reduction

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[129] Derrida's emphasis is clearly on an analysis of language, which he understood in terms of difference and deferral. Thus, what was important for him in translating *Bedeutung* as *vouloir-dire* was to propose a link to the notion of speech and speaking (*dire*). He concluded that, for Husserl, "The voice is the being which is present to itself in the form of universality, as con-sciousness; the voice *is* consciousness" (pp. 79-80). An equally generative set of arguments might have focused on the link with intention and desire suggested by the verb *vouloir*. (Though here, again, interpretation may be what sensitizes and opens up to perception a space of contradiction: *vouloir* operates in an overlapping possibility of meanings that, at least in English, can be distinguished into separate categories of intending, wanting and wishing.) While *Speech and Phenomenology* does not focus on a psychoanalytic reading, except in a limited way in Derrida's speculation on the "trace" in his essay "Differance," Derrida did note that Husserl was aware of how Freud's notion of an unconscious could pose a potential threat to the project of transcendental phenomenology, as indicated by an explicit rejection of "unconscious" content in *The Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness* (Derrida, p. 63).

and all the conceptual differences in which it is articulated (fact/essence, worldliness/transcendentality, and all the oppositions systematically involved with it) are opened up in a *divergence* between two kinds of signs" (p. 30).

Derrida characterizes Husserl's fealty to underlying logical form as a matter of purification, in which "Husserl wants to grasp the expressive and logical purity of meaning as the possibility of *logos*" (p. 20). The essence of intentional expression as present-to-itself could only be maintained if it were safeguarded from the contamination of indication; therefore, a reduction had to be effected whereby *Anzeichen* could be bracketed and held apart from *Ausdruck*.[130] This raises the question of whether the contrast between indication and expression that Derrida uncovers in Husserl's arguments—"this separation between *de facto*"—what happens in everyday communication, where indication and expression are inseparably interwoven—"and *de jure*,"— what Husserl posited in speech as internal monologue, where nothing is communicated— "existence and essence, reality and intentional function [….] which defines the very space of phenomenology" (p. 21)—is indeed an oppositional binary. Can we read indication, as Derrida's critique appears to suggest, as a stand-in for all that sits outside of expressivity as an essence? Is indication a contaminating other that threatens the purity of expression?

The very notion of an essence has an inherently binary character, of course. To recognize a particular essence is to identify something—be it an object, characteristic, condition, or activity—according to a defining category; that is, as belonging to a certain type, kind or genus. This can only make sense within a structure of differentiation. Identifying an essential characteristic named "redness," for example, requires the possibility of a reciprocal discernment of things that are not-red, or at the very least things that are less-red or more-red. One possibility of not-red could be an essential characteristic of "blueness." Blueness can be seen as a particular iteration of not-redness, but the recognition of two distinct essences, blueness and redness, is not in itself threatened by the additional possibility of "purpleness," which has some redness, but is not purely redness. Purpleness is a not-*only*-redness, as well as a not-*only*-blueness. Redness and blueness can be identified as distinct categories of colour, but with an area of overlap, where both characteristics might appear simultaneously without jeopardizing the possibility of redness and

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[130] According to Derrida, "what separates expression from indication could be called the immediate nonself-presence of the living present" (p. 37).

blueness as distinct conceptual categories. Put another way, a so-called "pure" blue can be understood as a limit case that can be differentiated from other colours defined by different qualities. Whether or not blue actually manifests in this "absolute" or "pure" state does not of necessity contaminate the conceptual foundations of blueness as a category.

While Husserl argued that indication and expression were distinct functions of signification, he did not describe them as oppositional in quite the way suggested by Derrida's arguments. Husserl acknowledged that in everyday communication, the two were always interwoven. As has been noted, Husserl's eidetic analysis of intentional expression considered the example of solitary mental life, where, he argued, one could represent essential knowledge to oneself without the requirement of indication, so that one was not required to deduce or interpret its meaning.[131] This allowed him to affirm a notion of expression independent of indication. For Derrida, however, any notion of an idea or *Vorstellung*—Husserl's way of describing an essence extracted from a pre-expressive stratum of experience and placed before consciousness—is already implicated in a structure of representation and repeatability, and thus is already removed from the possibility of absolute presence.[132] Derrida's reading turns Husserl's analysis in on itself, by suggesting that the very possibility of solitary mental life, and of the constructed ideal of an evident, self-present "interior" perceiving a kind of "exterior" placed before it, can only be intuited *through* the already contaminated metaphor of signification. Even as Husserl attempts to reduce or suspend any consideration of an actually existing world beyond one's consciousness of it, the idea of solitary mental life is only discernible and coherent because it is already positioned in relationship to a certain outside. This "outside" can only be understood in terms of objectivity—that is, through a subject-object relationship, even when the object is characterized

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[131] In the terms outlined by Peirce, we could say that Husserl constructed an example of expression in which he believed the interpretant and the object/referent could be collapsed.

[132] Derrida argues:

> I must from the outset operate (within) a structure of repetition whose basic element can only be representative. [….] A signifier (in general) must be formally recognizable in spite of, and through, the diversity of empirical characteristics which may modify it. [… Its] identity is necessarily ideal. It thus necessarily implies representation: as *Vorstellung*, the locus of ideality in general, as *Vergegenwärtigung*, the possibility of reproductive repetition in general, and as *Repräsentation*, insofar as each signifying event is a substitute (for the signified as well as for the ideal form of the signifier) (p. 50).

as ideal. Derrida insists on the underlying visuality and therefore spatiality of all that is posited as an object, since a thing is described in spatial metaphors, as appearing before or in front of or against consciousness: "signs (*Zeichen*) always refer to *Zeigen*, to the space, visibility, field, and compass of what is ob-jected and pro-jected; they refer to phenomenality as a state of encounter (*comme vis-à-vis*) and surface, as evidence or intuition" (p. 72). Thus, although Husserl tries to bracket out the certainty of a world outside of consciousness, conceptual essences are already apparently reified as object-ifications:

> we have to ferret out the unshaken purity of expression in a language without communication […] in the completely muted voice of the "solitary mental life" (*im einsamen Seelenleben*). By a strange paradox, meaning would isolate the concentrated purity of its *ex-pressiveness* just at that moment when the relation to a certain *outside* is suspended. Only to a certain outside, because this reduction does not eliminate, but rather reveals, within pure expression, a relation to an object, namely, the intending [*visée*] of an objective ideality, which stands face to face with the meaning-intention, the *Bedeutungsintention* (p. 22).

Put another way, in Derrida's reading, signs and signification construct the very possibility of a distinction between a mental consciousness and a physical body and world. Intentional expression as the prerogative of consciousness is only conceivable against the symmetrical opposition of the mediated, indexical uncertainty of indication:

> The lived experience of another is made known to me only insofar as it is mediately indicated by signs involving a physical side. The very idea of "physical," "physical side," is conceivable in its specific difference only on the basis of this movement of indication (p. 39).

Indication, Derrida argues, cannot be separated from expression, which makes consciousness itself a kind of simulation. Indeed, Derrida goes so far as to state, "*Phenomenological reduction is a scene, a theater stage*" (p. 86).

If, in Derrida's view, Husserl's appeal to a kind of interiority and transcendent *res cogitans* cannot be securely disentangled from a spatial paradox that threatened the security of a

present-to-self "here,"[133] this is no less true of a temporally present "now." The idea of a present-now, which Derrida characterizes as the foundation of philosophical thought,[134] was understood by Husserl to be an ever-renewing point at the centre of being. This punctuality of the now, however, can only be understood in relation to a duration that encompasses a before that stretches into the past and a to-come that anticipates an ever-renewing future. When we try to pin down this "now" as if it were a snapshot, we have already lost it; now has become then. Thus, Husserl was forced to recognize acts of retention (memory) and protention (expectation) that were inextricably bound up in the experiencing of the now.[135] But, Derrida argues, this can only be read as a contamination of the pure presence of the now, since past memory and future expectation can only ever be indicating signs of something not-present.[136] Just as Derrida argued that solitary mental life requires the alterity of an outside representation of meaning to itself—what amounts to a theatre stage—in order to secure its interiority, "now" can only be constructed in relation to the alterities of past and future as traces more primordial than the present:

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[133] Derrida argues that Husserl's positing of ideal expression amounts to an effacement of the substitution function of signs that is the very nature of signification. Thus, Husserl's discovery of transcendence in consciousness is supported by an unsustainable reduction:

> *I am* originally means *I am mortal*. *I am immortal* is an impossible proposition. […] The move which leads from the *I am* to the determination of my being as *res cogitans* (thus, as an immortality) is a move by which the origin of presence and ideality is concealed in the very presence and ideality it makes possible.
> The effacement (or derivation) of signs is thereby confused with the reduction of the imagination (pp. 54-55).

[134] Derrida claims that the present-now "defines the very element of philosophical thought, it is *evidence* itself, conscious thought itself, it governs every possible concept of truth and sense" (p. 62).

[135] In Derrida's description:

> the presence of the perceived present can appear as such only inasmuch as it is *continuously compounded* with a nonpresence and nonperception, with primary memory and expectation (retention and protention). These nonperceptions are neither added to, nor do they *occasionally* accompany, the actually perceived now; they are essentially and indispensably involved in its possibility (p. 64).

[136] For Derrida,

> As soon as we admit […] continuity of the now and the not-now, perception and nonperception, in the zone of primordiality common to primordial impression and primordial retention, we admit the other [….] This alterity is in fact the condition for presence, presentation, and thus for *Vorstellung* in general (p. 65).

nonpresences—not-nows—that must inhabit it.[137]

Despite all of his arguments, however, Derrida is unable or unwilling to declare a complete break from the contradictions he finds in Husserl's arguments. The analytical achievements of deconstruction are only possible through the deployment of the very resources whose assurance they question.[138] Thus, what Derrida discovers or argues cannot contain or

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[137] Derrida did not take up the neuroscientific problem of representational lag documented by Benjamin Libet and mentioned earlier in Chapter 2. Human mental awareness involves the integration of a vast array of dynamic sensory and perceptual information about both the external world and internal bodily systems, not all of which is processed simultaneously or instantaneously throughout our nervous system. The constructed reality we think of as consciousness is apparently current but actually retrospective: while what we perceive "seems" immediate, our sense of a "now" as a coherent whole can only be constructed and organized by our brains after the fact. If ego consciousness corresponds directly to the mental awareness of a brain-based mind, this clearly poses a problem for any ontological claims that rest on the absolute evidence of a present-now.

[138] In the case of the "now," for example, Derrida can only understand retention and protention as representations that intrude on the purity of the present as essential beingness, because for him, the metaphor that describes experience is always the figuration of writing as representation. Husserl (2012/1931), however, describes past, present and future as three *simultaneous* dimensions of "an infinite unity" (p. 168). For him, "the actual *now*" is "*a form that persists through continuous change of content*" (p. 167), a "*whole, essentially unitary*, rigorously self-contained stream of temporal unities of experience" (p. 168). Although retentions and protentions as experience have the felt quality of *having been* lived or *shall be* lived rather than of *being* lived in their modes of appearance, they are, for Husserl, still part of a single lived now that encompasses them. They are not *representations* of what have been or will be experiences, but rather, different tonal or dimensional aspects of what is offered in and as a now. Derrida's critique requires the "now" to be constructed as an immediacy of a discrete present that he can then systematically extract from its situatedness as part of a unity of multiple dimensions until it loses its coherence. If Derrida's reading of *having been* and *shall be* as nonpresences that disrupt the unity of Husserl's living present is compelling, it is precisely because our commonplace experiencing of a "now"—from what Husserl would call the "natural standpoint," before phenomenological reduction and reflection—feels absolute and evidentiary in its stand-alone immediacy, whereas our experiencing of "past" and "future" feels mediated. Husserl's figuration, however, insists on an understanding of past and future orientations as being no less "lived" than the present; they are immediate to self in their orientation *as* past or *as* future, bound together in such a way that a musical note, for example, has a duration from which a beginning, middle and end can be abstractly extracted, but which remains a unified entity in experience. We do not recognize the middle of the note as a different note, but as a continuity of a single note. As Husserl (1991/1893-1917) attempts to describe this temporal unity:

> an always new tone-now continually relieves the one that has passed over into modification. But when the consciousness of the tone-now, the primal impression, passes over into retention, this retention itself is a now in turn, something actually existing. While it is actually present itself (but not an actually present tone), it is retention *of* the tone that has been. A ray of meaning can be directed towards the now: towards the retention; but can also be directed towards what is retentionally intended: towards the past tone (p. 31).

Retentional consciousness is not memory, which Husserl treats as a separate phenomenon, but rather, is as much an aspect *of* living consciousness as *impressional* consciousness. In this sense, *having been* and *shall*

communicate itself in a new set of self-assured, stand-alone terms. After all, if expressivity cannot be extracted as a pure, primordial essence, then it is equally certain that there can be no pure indexicality unless it can be held up against its chimerical other of a pure being as presence. What Derrida means to say cannot be said; it can only be indicated as a kind of play that insubstantially inhabits the nonsubstance of the text. No term can exhaust its meaning, and so Derrida is compelled to move through variations of the terms of metaphysics he calls into question—*différance*, trace,[139] spacing,[140] and supplement.[141]

Beyond representation: inhabitation and movement

Derrida's deconstructive approach only allows him to identify the contradictions of Western philosophy *through* that philosophy, by mobilizing its structures and structuration. As long as metaphysics frames being as grounded in the evidence of self-awareness as a mental perception or consciousness of being, he argues, it must contend with an "inaccurate yet necessary" language denoting objects that announce their thingliness by virtue of a system of signification that simultaneously confirms the impossibility of assuring any such thingliness. A signifier points to its ideal referent, thereby producing an infinitely repeatable object, but the referent itself can never appear as such. This conundrum led Derrida (1977) to formulate

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be as "tones" are enfolded into what is entailed by the flow of being. For Husserl, retentions and protentions are "lived" as dimensions of the now rather than represented as nonpresences hived off from their essential continuity within time's flow.

[139] This and the following terms, which Derrida will expand upon separately in different writings, are already in play in this early text. Of the trace, for example, Derrida writes:

> Sense, being temporal in nature, […] is never simply present; it is always already engaged in the "movement" of the trace, that is, in the order of "signification." It has always already issued forth from itself into the "expressive stratum" of lived experience (pp. 85-86).

[140] In regard to spacing, Derrida argues:

> *the temporalization of sense is, from the outset, a "spacing."* As soon as we admit spacing […] as openness upon the outside, there can no longer be any absolute inside, for the "outside" has insinuated itself into the movement by which the inside of the nonspatial, which is called "time," appears, is constituted, is "presented" (p. 86).

[141] In this early meditation on the idea of supplementarity, Derrida explains, the "concept of primordial supplementation […] designates […] the 'in place of' (*für etwas*) structure which belongs to every sign in general" (p. 88).

consciousness itself in terms of writing, as a "signifier of the signified" (p. 7), according to "the 'literal' meaning of writing as metaphoricity itself" (p. 15). To return to a quotation from the opening section of this chapter, Derrida insists that the figure of *writing* encompasses "the essence and the content of [the activities of action, movement, thought, reflection, consciousness, unconsciousness, experience, affectivity, etc.] themselves" (p. 9). It is difficult to imagine how it could be otherwise, if the guarantee of presence starts with a presence-to-self taken as apodictic evidence of transcendent beingness. Thought, by this formula, recognizes "itself" as belonging to a substanceless, experiencing subject, distinct from the body it inhabits and through which it perceives objects as occupying space and time on a plane of materiality. Presence thus announces itself in consciousness as a *subject* that is "present"—having being but not material thingliness, separated by some essential and invisible difference, what Heidegger characterizes as the difference between being and beings.

Furthermore, if, as Derrida proposes, consciousness is a kind of writing—"metaphoricity itself"—then we will be forever plagued with a problem of aptness, of finding metaphors whose implications unambiguously match some original or essential ideal that might correspond in its sameness. Every story is a text, but every story also has its contexts, a series of interrelations that determine what its details can come to mean. Derrida's critique of Husserl's description of the *punctuality* of the "now" claims to uncover a contamination of nonpresence in the now, which must enfold retention and protention into its beingness as (the) present. The ruthless logic of signification comes up against its own limits, and can no longer support its own story. Yet a mathematician might not be troubled by the particular unease voiced by Derrida. Geometry has a different set of contexts from grammatology. Descartes linked Euclidean geometry and algebra by offering a way of mapping points and lines onto a three-dimensional grid, but geometric points and lines are not material objects. In mathematics, a point is pure positionality: it marks a coordinate, but is not, in itself, any thing at all: it has no width, no height, no depth. It is locatable in space, but immaterial. Similarly, a line, which marks a trajectory of points across space, has directionality, but no thickness. It is not as if, were one to look with adequate magnification, one would discover that the points "touch" each other, each point resting against the next in an *almost* infinitesimal smallness, as if each point were an atomistic "slice" of the line. A geometric line marks a continuity of points, all of them equally present only in their ideality, and none having

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any material surface that one might be able to rub up against. The line drawn onto a Cartesian grid maps directionality via a representation, a depiction of length artificially informed by a width and a height that make it perceptible to an eye that has always been situated spatially in three dimensions.[142] A geometric line is pure concept, although the insight that spawned such a conceptual entity surely arose out of material, animate experience, and can be applied with considerable success to describe and calculate spatial positionings. The idea of time as pure succession is similarly conceptual, and similarly tricky to map in language. Husserl's description of our experiencing of time as a punctual now, with retentions and protentions, can be understood in similar terms to the Cartesian mapping of a line. Husserl's mapping uses language to describe something we know intrinsically in lived experience and have learned to conceptualize as the flow and directionality of time—directionality itself being both an impoverished and overdetermined spatial metaphor to describe the durational continuity that links temporal "punctualities" or "positionings"—even as time's substancelessness sits outside the parameters of its object-oriented mapping within language, and must be thought otherwise.[143] Time is described in metaphorical terms,[144] but it is important to consider which aspects of the metaphor are apt, as

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[142] Though the saccadic movement of the eye takes place on a curved two-dimensional plane.

[143] Henri Bergson (1998/1911) wrote extensively about the concept of duration, and the problematic tendency to understand its punctuality in what he termed a "cinematographical" way as a series of snapshots that only simulates its unified, indivisible whole. In his description, "our duration is not merely one instant replacing another. [...] Duration is the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances" (p. 4). For a consideration of this tension between an understanding of time according to its effects as viewed from an outside, and an understanding that takes living account of its continuity, see Couillard (2012). What a "snapshot" description of time fails to acknowledge, in treating "now" as punctual, is that bodies do not experience being as a series of instants. What we experience as bodies is a continual flow, a trajectory of duration. Punctuality is an abstraction of consciousness's representation of its experience of being—complicated by the brain's lag in receiving and processing the information it receives.

[144] In an extended footnote in *Speech and Phenomena*, Derrida (1973) finds Husserl's identification of the experiencing of temporality as an "absolute subjectivity" to be particularly telling. Husserl is trying to precise the paradox of a temporal unity and contiguity that cannot be adequately expressed in the static, spatial term of a punctual "now," a task that leads him to decry the inadequacy of language. Derrida quotes an extended passage from §36 of *The Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness* (the emphasis is Derrida's):

> We can only say that *this flux is something which we name in conformity with what is constituted*, but it is nothing temporally "Objective." It is absolute subjectivity and has the absolute properties of something to be denoted metaphorically as "flux," as a point of actuality, primal source-point, that from which springs the "now," and so on. In the lived experience of actuality, we have the

well as considering how the varied ways our consciousness experiences or imagines time do or don't match up to our animate, material, corporeal experiencing of time.[145] It also seems prudent to ask—if, as Derrida suggested, writing comes before language—what resources might provide a

> primal source-point and a continuity of moments of reverberation (*Nachhallmomenten*). For all this, names are lacking (Husserl as quoted in Derrida, p. 84).

In resorting to the term "absolute subjectivity," Husserl would seem to be suggesting that temporality offers us what is primordial as experience and therefore before any system of signs or signification, a presence that indeed does not need to announce itself, because it is not an object that can be constituted; it is the sheer movement *of* constituting. Language and metaphor fall short of the task of description. Derrida, not surprisingly, reads this inadequacy as an indication of the irreconcilable inconsistency at the heart of a metaphysics of presence. He argues that it is the very notion of "absolute subjectivity" that must be put under a sign of erasure, since "the concept of *subjectivity* belongs *a priori and in general* to the order of the constituted" (p. 84), and by this logic, "There is no constituting subjectivity. The very concept of constitution itself must be deconstructed" (p. 85).

[145] Language offers a fluidity that allows us to slip easily between varied, often imprecise and frequently contradictory descriptions of corporeal experience and conscious imagining, and this seems particularly true in our conceptualizing of time. One salient example can be found in Rebecca Schneider's (2011) evocative description of the ways circularity, non-linearity, time-lags and deferrals can move across and haunt various pasts, presents, and futures. In *Performing Remains*, Schneider is particularly interested in considering how performative re-enactments trouble our understanding of a now, offering a thoughtful and nuanced account of how gestures, considered to be ephemeral in their non-materiality, can in fact recur and resurge, transmitting or mimetically resurrecting animately and corporeally rather than enduring as purely material remains. At times, however, she equates gestures, through which we are able to experience duration, with time itself. In particular, she argues: "That time can be *porous, malleable, tactile, given to recurrence, given to cross-affiliate assemblage, given to buckling, given to rupture, given to return* is denied by the tick-tock of the time clock" (p. 174). What Schneider is opposing here, however, are two different measures of experience that are mutually dependent. Time, as we spatially and materially manifest it in an ever-changing now, appears to have an irreversible and inescapable directionality. Indeed, that we can even conceive of or sense the possibility of repetition, recurrence, and return—all marked as instances of *temporal difference*—requires an underlying perceptual understanding of time's continual, inexorable trajectory of transformation as we are—albeit finitely—able to experience it. The *textural* similarities that we are able to sense as recurrent are animate, affective, and gestural: "time" has not been replicated, though some of the relational conditions that informed a past now, including neural memory, might indeed be repeated. To be fair to Schneider, the comment I have cited above appears aimed at countering a misguided and repressive ideological narrative of "the 'real time' of progress" (p. 174) that is entrenched in Western thought and equally removed from any viable description of the way human bodies manifest time. I call attention to the imprecision of Schneider's language, however, because I believe it obscures her own description of the profound resonance of meaningfulness and signification that can be carried and possibly transmitted in the relationality facilitated by animateness. Earlier in her analysis, she styles this expressive, communicative animateness more aptly as *gesture* rather than time per se:

> The gesture of the time-lag is one that shows itself, by virtue of the still, *to be a gesture—to have posture, to enunciate*. That posture, that enunciation, does not solely happen in past time, nor singularly in present time, but steers a wobbly course through repetition and *reappearance*— reappearance rife with all the tangled stuff of difference/sameness that anachronism, or syncopated time, or basic citationality affords (p. 143).

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foundation for the *possibility* of metaphoricity and of a theory of signs. If a sign is only ever a sign of other signs, how could the idea of a referent ever arise, and on what basis could any metaphor come to be constructed?

Intuition *announces* consciousness as being, and all of western philosophy organizes itself around an effort to make sense of its appearance.[146] For Derrida, being-as-presence is bound up in signification, in an objectification forever haunted by a trace that must by rights be more originary than any actual thing that could be said simply to "be"—even as that trace calls into question the very notion of primordiality. Yet Derrida found his own elbow-room[147]—to use a pointedly corporeal metaphor—to describe another possibility of presencing through various figures, notably those of inhabitation and movement. *Of Grammatology* repeatedly employs the term *inhabitation* to describe a certain kind of active participation whereby nonpresence presents itself, as if a trace were able to take up residence despite of and within its own insubstantiality, much the way a soul is construed to inhabit the flesh of a body.[148] Derrida (1977) uses the notion

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[146] The writer of this text—"it is not I," as Derrida's (1987) words hasten repeatedly to assert in *The Truth in Painting*—must inhabit differences in descriptions of manifestation, some aural (a thing "announcing" itself) and some visual (a thing "appearing"). Derrida (1973, 1977) reminds us that an entire (and in his view, troubled) set of distinctions—between the ontic and the ontological, between the empirical and the logical, between the indicative and the expressive—is bound up in our understanding of these two senses. What is "meant" when a thing "appears" or comes into sight, as an exterior object? What is "meant" when a thing is "announced" or is voiced to (or as) an interior subject? With another philosopher, we might ask different variants of what apparently disclose themselves as equivalent questions. One might ask in relation to Heidegger (2010/1953), for example, what stakes have been claimed, what *a priori* certainties already assumed, in the assertion of a distinction between being and beings?

[147] The reference to elbow-room echoes the translation (cited earlier) that Inwood (1999) offered for Heidegger's concept of *der Spielraum* (p. 14), but a more literal English translation of the term, which suggests *room* to *play*, can be found in Inwood's entry relating to the term or idea of finitude, where he uses the phrase "leeway or free space" as an effective translation. In a passage summarizing exposition from Heidegger's *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, Inwood writes:

> The transcendence made possible by our understanding of being creates the leeway or free space (*Spielraum*) in which an entity can appear as an object: a *Gegenstand*, the entity as an appearance to finite cognition, not the 'thing in itself', the same entity as it is know to infinite cognition (pp. 69-70).

[148] Etymologically, inhabitation is a productive term to consider, with is roots in the "Latin *inhabitare* 'to dwell in,' from *in-* 'in' (from PIE [Proto-Indo-European] root **en** "in") + *habitare* 'to dwell,' frequentative of *habere* 'to hold, have' (from PIE root **ghabh-** 'to give or receive')" (Etymonline.com, 2018). This puts into mind Heidegger's (1993/1951) essay "Building Dwelling Thinking," in which he argued, "To dwell […] means to remain at peace in the free, the preserve, the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its essence" (p. 351). Heidegger described dwelling in terms of a "staying with things" in a "unity" that brings "the

of inhabitation to exemplify the methodology of deconstruction,[149] to explain the nature of the trace in opposition to the "uninhabited world" of pure presence,[150] and as a description of how representation pervades presence.[151] He further characterizes inhabitation as a kind of *movement*, where what is present is not what can be discovered *as* the object; rather, it is a hidden action of occupying that animates liveliness and can be said to remain.

For Derrida, the trace is movement itself, as is time. In *Speech and Phenomenology*, Derrida (1973) asserts:

> The new now [of each moment] is not a being, it is not a produced object; and every
> language fails to describe this pure movement other than by metaphor, that is, by
> borrowing its concepts from the order of the objects of experience, an order this
> temporalization makes possible (p. 84).

Curiously, this passage seems to suggest that all conceptualization in language must ultimately

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fourfold into things" (p. 353). Heidegger's fourfold (*das Geveirt*) denoted a coming together of earth, sky, mortals and divinities within built objects. According to Inwood (1999), for Heidegger, "A *Ding*, 'thing' […] lies at the intersection of the fourfold" (p. 51). Interestingly, the idea of the fourfold also plays a role in Heidegger's sign of erasure that so impressed Derrida (see footnote 95 above). Inwood, citing *Zur Seinsfrage*/*The Question of Being*, notes that when the word Sein is crossed out "to indicate that being is not an object for man nor the whole subject-object relation, the crossing out also 'points to the four regions (Gegenden) of the fourfold and their gathering at the place of the intersection'" (p. 52). This mysterious intersection suggests that self, world and transcendence can all be found within objects, but only through an askance perspective that thinks around the oppositions of subject/object, material/immaterial, or mortal/immortal. The fourfold can only be discovered within things as an in-betweenness, an interplay; i.e., in *der Spielraum* that allows an entity to appear as an object. Put another way, the fourfold, like the figure of the knot, is an enactment. Removing the parts that constitute the unity from their interested and intersecting situationality can only tell us what a thing is not; to appreciate a thing as it *is* requires holding it in the fullness of its unity. As the ethologist William H. Thorpe has noted, "the whole can be greater than, and very different from, the sum of its parts" (quoted in Sheets-Johnstone 1990, p. 300).

[149] He argues, for example, that the movements of deconstruction "are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures. Inhabiting them in *a certain way*, because one always inhabits, and all the more when one does not suspect it" (p. 24).

[150] Derrida suggests that pure activity and pure passivity as concepts belong "to the myth of the origin of an uninhabited world, of a world alien to the trace: pure presence of the pure present" (p. 291). That Derrida should take "pure" presence and present to correspond to an *uninhabited* world is, at least on the surface, almost diametrically opposite the "knotted" understanding of presence that this dissertation describes. For Derrida, inhabitation appears to be the privileged metaphorical activity of representation, whereas I seek to explore the possibility of inhabitation as a relational, animate and corporeal event.

[151] In Derrida's view, "representation does not suddenly encroach upon presence, it inhabits it as the very condition of its experience, of desire, and of enjoyment (*jouissance*)" (p. 312).

refer back to things—"*objects* of experience"—rather than finding assurance in dynamics, temporality, movement or relationality (a presumption that this dissertation will seek to question in the following section). Caught up in a system of absolute metaphoricity, Derrida (1977) intertwines the notions of inhabitation and movement in his search for the most apt figures to describe the contradictory haunting at the heart of signification. Movement is the descriptive term that confirms the substitutive power that would allow a signifier to simultaneously reveal and efface its content,[152] and movement is, in its nonmaterial activity, the vehicle for the enactment of nonpresence.[153] In Derrida's analysis, all substitution is marked by the recurrent term of movement, including the substitutions he wishes to identify as targets for deconstruction: Husserl's reductions,[154] the very notion of ideality,[155] even philosophy itself.[156] Movement signals the sheer possibility of simultaneous revelation and erasure. Like the geometric line that exceeds the concepts of continuity and contiguity that its figuration attempts to make visible, some mysterious *nothing* figured as movement allows for a seemingly contradictory extension in more than one direction at once.[157] Nowhere is this more evident than in Derrida's description of auto-

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[152] Movement reasserts itself with each new term Derrida constructs, from trace —"the strange movement of the trace proclaims as much as it recalls" (p. 66)—to arche-writing, which he suggests "would constitute not only the pattern uniting form to all substance, graphic or otherwise, but the movement of the *sign-function* linking a content to an expression, whether it be graphic or not" (p. 60), to supplementarity: "The movement of supplementary representation approaches the origin as it distances itself from it. Total alienation is the total reappropriation of self-presence" (p. 295).

[153] Not only nonmaterial, but also immaterial, in the sense of not adding any thing: "fundamentally nothing escapes the movement of the signifier and […], in the last instance, the difference between signified and signifier is *nothing*" (p. 23).

[154] Derrida asserts, for example, "To the extent that the concept of experience in general—and of transcendental experience in Husserl in particular—remains governed by the theme of presence, it participates in the movement of the reduction of the trace" (pp. 61-62).

[155] He writes, "idealization is the movement by which sensory exteriority, that which affects me or serves me as signifier, submits itself to my power of repetition, to what thenceforward appears to me as my spontaneity and escapes me less and less" (p. 166).

[156] As when he asserts, "Philosophy is, within writing, nothing but this movement of writing as effacement of the signifier and the desire of presence restored, of being, signified in its brilliance and its glory" (p. 286).

[157] Thus, Derrida writes, in relation to pleasure, which he suggests is always only archetypal in its constitution but at the same time unknowable in its archetypicality: "imagination […] alone arouses or irritates desire but also it alone, […] in the same movement, extends beyond or divides presence" (p. 311).

affection,[158] a term he uses to describe the way a self attains its subjectivity at the price of its own objectification, through a kind of voluntary exteriorizing of its interiority, as in "the operation of 'hearing oneself speak'" (p. 78).[159] In a passage that seeks to highlight the troubled metaphoricity of the term *movement* by placing it in quotation marks, Derrida writes:

> We speak metaphorically as soon as we introduce a determinate being into the description of this "movement" [of one now into the next]; we talk about "movement" in the very terms that movement makes possible. But we have been always already adrift in ontic metaphor: temporalization here is the root of a metaphor that can only be primordial. The word "time" itself, as it has always been understood in the history of metaphysics, is a metaphor which *at the same time* both indicates and dissimulates the "movement" of this auto-affection. All the concepts of metaphysics—in particular those of activity and passivity, will and nonwill, and therefore those of affection or auto-affection, purity and impurity, etc.—*cover up* the strange "movement" of this difference (p. 85).

For Derrida, all extending beyond is only conceivable through the metaphor of movement, and it is movement that allows him to think the possibility of a kind of presencing of nonpresence, the inhabitation that is revealed in or as the trace in its constant actions of differing and deferral. Derrida suggests that the trace, as a kind of movement that all of western philosophy attempts to elide or efface—the effacement being its own form of movement—must be thought before the

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[158] In *Speech and Phenomena*, Derrida (1973) introduces the term auto-affection in the context of a self engaged in the "operation of hearing oneself speak," (p. 78) suggesting that "auto-affection is no doubt the possibility for what is called *subjectivity* or the *for-itself*, but without it, no world *as such* would appear" (p. 79). He soon extends the idea of auto-affection to a consideration of Husserl's notion of retention in relation to the punctuality of a "living now":

> The process by which the living now, produced by spontaneous generation, must, in order to be a now and to be retained in another now, affect itself without recourse to anything empirical but with a new primordial actuality in which it would become a non-now, a past now—this process is indeed a pure auto-affection in which the same is the same only in being affected by the other, only by becoming the other of the same (p. 85).

[159] While there is a general agreement that the concept of auto-affection is closely tied to subjectivity, readings of what Derrida means by the term vary. Douglas Collins (1999) has suggested that "only a being capable of symbolizing, that is to say of auto-affecting, may let itself be affected by the other in general. [… A]uto-affection necessarily 'admits the world as a third party'" (p. 4). Patricia Clough (2000) describes auto-affection as "giving the subject an inner presence, an inner voice, so that the subject, when it speaks, is presumed to speak its own voice, to speak its intention and to express its inner being" (p. 17).

being-present that signification brings to appearance:

> The trace, where the relationship with the other is marked, articulates its possibility in the entire field of the entity (*étant*), which metaphysics has defined as the being-present starting from the occulted movement of the trace. The trace must be thought before the entity (p. 47).

If the trace is a kind of movement, perhaps it is *movement* that must be thought before—or rather in relation to—being. Certainly it is worth considering why movement should be the most apt "ontic" metaphor available to get at what Derrida wishes to say. At the same time, we must also question the presumed distinction between ontic and ontological that would allow us to posit a divide of metaphoricity that separates material and mental into distinct categories, the former accessible to the latter only as metaphor. In short, we must return to thinking with a body.

After all, the equation *cogito ergo sum* can only be considered coherent if one already has a notion of self. Thought, if it is to be a proof of some kind of existence, can at best only prove that thinking exists. Yet the "first person singular" conjugation of *cogitare* already indicates an "I" who thinks: the conclusion is previously embedded in the structure, and has, in a sense, been reached long before and beyond any achievement attained by the "proof." There can be no meaningful concept of "I" without a corresponding "not-I" that distinguishes identity as an achievement. Furthermore, for there to be a "not-I," an "I" must have a domain. Thinking can only discover itself according to the equation *cogito ergo sum* if it has *already* learned certain lessons with respect to being an animate body in a world.

Awareness of a *mental* "self" as a coherent entity with a continuity is hard-won and tenuous. Contrary to Descartes' doubting ego,[160] we do not suddenly discover ourselves as

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[160] Or, for that matter, Heidegger's *Dasein*. Heidegger's (2010/1953) analytic is founded on a being for which "average everydayness constitutes [its] ontic immediacy" (p. 43). Average everydayness, however, equates to the fully socialized and enculturated world of a human adult whose evolutionary and developmental histories are curiously absent. Inwood (1999), citing Volume 27 of Heidegger's *Gesamtausgabe*, notes that in relation to Dasein, "Children and early man are to be understood 'in a privative way', by noting how they fall short of fully fledged Dasein" (p. 43). Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (2009) has frequently pointed out the problematic nature of ontological inquiries that fail to take into account our developmental histories. In *The Corporeal Turn*, for example, she writes:

> Adultist views of oneself in the world, perhaps particularly ontologically-oriented "phenomenological" views, ignore the complex nature of infancy and its intricate developmental history, a history without which one could not attain adult habits, let alone adultist views of oneself in the world (p. 265).

ahistorical, fully formed entities placed before a doubtful world. Self-awareness—at least in so far as it manifests as the hallmark of rational thought capable of doubt—develops with and through corporeal experience. Before a human ego is able to assert, "I am," a body has already discovered itself as an entity capable of various doings, while also encountering various resistances, shortcomings or incapacities; thus, I, body and world are all discovered simultaneously with, through and in relation to each other.[161] This journey to self-awareness does not take place in a vacuum, but entails a deep dependence on a social and physical world that sustains us. Furthermore, within that trajectory of a lifetime of creaturely growth and change, we daily slip in and out of consciousness while the world appears to maintain itself in a foundational way. We close our eyes and disappear to ourselves in sleep—we "lose" consciousness—but the ground, it seems, continues to support us. When we awaken, we "come to our senses," to find ourselves inhabiting a body that breathes continuously, whether or not our mind seeks to notice or control the ongoing rhythm of inhalation and exhalation. From an empirical perspective, then, it is difficult not to conclude that body and world are demonstrably more durable as entities than anything that might be called a mind. Consciousness is buffeted regularly by qualia that enact sharpenings and dullings of mental acuity, alter moods, command attention, and sometimes overtake one's sense of self. The evidence of a consistent mind is mercurial, elusive, sporadic and highly localized.

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[161] Dan Zahavi (2003) notes that Husserl, particularly in his later writings, acknowledged this same point. Zahavi argues that even if Husserl's reductions used the self-present ego as a *methodological* entry point, his descriptions emphasized that "the self-givenness of the subject goes hand in hand with an encounter with alterity"; thus, Husserl realized that "subjectivity cannot be defined as pure self-presence" (p. 98). Husserl also recognized that although "the *existence* of an object (its being) is correlated to its intuitive givenness for a subject," such that an "[existing object] can appear intuitively in *propria persona*" (p. 95)— rather than as a recollection or imagined object—even in this direct, unmediated appearance, "only a single profile [of the object …] is intuitively present." Husserl's argument for transcendence, however, is that in the subject-object relationship, "our intuitive consciousness of the present profile of the object is always accompanied by an intentional consciousness of the object's *horizon* of *absent* profiles" (p. 96). For Husserl, horizonality is part of the object's mode of givenness, but this does not mean that what appears is not the thing-in-itself (in a Kantian sense). As Zahavi puts it:

> Phenomenology is not a theory about the *merely* appearing, or to put it differently, appearances are not *mere* appearances. For how things appear is an integral part of what they really are. […] The reality of the object is not hidden behind the phenomenon, but unfolds itself in the phenomenon. As Heidegger would say, it is phenomenologically absurd to say of the phenomenon that it stands in the way of something more fundamental that it merely represents (pp. 55-56).

(Here Zahavi is referring to Heidegger's arguments in *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*.)

Allow me to return to the enigma of presence that began this chapter with another first-person observational passage.

I am lying in bed, awake. A moment ago, I was not conscious of myself as a breathing, fleshy, material coherence. I was asleep, though a lifetime of experience points to the conclusion that even in what is called sleep, I nevertheless continued to be a living entity engaged in an inescapable entanglement with matter, time and space. I am convinced that the world around me continues while I sleep, as I have seen the world continue while other creatures have slept. But now I am awake. An "I" has been somehow roused from the depths of its slumber, a self-awareness that recognizes itself as manifesting not only a living materiality that sustains itself through breathing lungs, the circulation of blood pumped by a heart through a system of veins and arteries, and the perpetual activity of a host of other organs working in harmony to maintain a homeostasis of flesh and bone, but also, at the same time, as encompassing a consciousness of its own animation within this materiality. Waking up—an event, a remarkable, astonishing shift of states—already sets up a seemingly infinite set of potential questions about what meanings might be intended by and attendant upon terms like "I," "living," "consciousness," "materiality"—but that is not quite where I wish to direct this description. For I have not yet drawn attention my particular knotted situatedness.

I am awake. And knowing (or at least thinking) that I am awake, I also discover a reason for this unwanted state (for I do not welcome being awake at this time, in this manner).

I am in pain. My left leg hurts, so much so that it has activated my consciousness. This rousing pain demands my attention. The realization that I am awake, and the conclusion that it is the pain that has awoken me, are almost indistinguishable from one another. Already registered, they congeal into a recognizable pattern of thought, which I find a compulsion to mark in words, unspoken but formulated as an inner dialogue, something approximately replicable as: "Ah, this pain in my leg has woken me up." Thus, there are at least three different and sequential layers of perception or signification or representation (it remains to determine whether any of these terms are quite accurate or suitable to describe these levels of awareness): a pre-conscious, already-registered recognition; a synthesized pattern of thought; and finally, an enculturated, language-based formulation that names and seemingly restructures those antecedent events.

This experience of pain is persistent. It insists its presence with an urgency that feels more immediate than a peripheral something that signals to a durable, transcendental "me." Though I devise and undertake various methods to assert the mastery of an "I" that merely and temporarily suffers this pain—sitting in a hot bath, reading a book, taking an opiate—none of these actions brings me back to the intact whole of an idealized, continuous, healthy "I," a detached I that can confidently survey the situation and pinpoint, "Ah, yes, there 'I' is; here 'I' am. It is only my leg that is hurting. The I-that-I-am remains somewhere else, beyond this leg, apart from this pain." The pain is an inhabitation, which "I" experience as an ontological inseparability. I try to name it, wavering between two different expressions, two different subject positions. *Am I inhabiting the pain*? Or, *Is the pain inhabiting me*? It does not feel accurate to simply say I *have* pain, or even that I am *in* pain. The pain belongs to me. The I-that-I-am is, in this moment, indistinguishable from the pain; it is pain that has brought a "me" to consciousness, it is pain that determines and fixates my attention. Pain is not something out there, or even in here. Pain is immediate to me. Pain is proximate to me. Pain conjures me. Pain lives me. I am made of pain. Whatever else it might be, here and now, the pain *is* me. In this situatedness, there can be no other "I."

The above observational passage, drafted as the events it attempts to describe were occurring, has subsequently been edited from the vantage point of a consciousness that, thankfully, is no longer racked with physical pain. A changed "I," but one that declares its continuity with that earlier "I," has emerged. Parts of the description have been reshaped for clarity or to bring out particular aspects of the experience—a tricky process; pain transforms, but to have lived pain is not the same as to be living pain. Mostly, I have removed what seems now to be repetitive, a jagged circling around an incommensurability of articulation. How to say, "Pain is my world. There is no 'I' apart from this pain" in a way that could be intelligible to someone outside of pain? Phrases like "I am made of pain" are not rhetorical hindsights or poetic evocations: they are what the I-that-I-was wrote in the moment.

What is significant about pain as a presence in this context is that it is constituting in a way that leaves "me" no room to doubt its existence, and no way to disentangle a

compartmentalized mind or consciousness from my experiencing of pain as a presence.[162] In the moment, there could be no question of a differing and deferring trace, no nonretrospective way to disentangle a rational "me," a conceiving "me," a perceiving "me," an affective "me," a thinking "me," or a physical "me" from the urgency of sheer experience. Thought as we know it—thought as we are capable of encountering it as a manifestation of our living self—comes with and as a body. This, despite millennia of speculation about eternal souls, centuries of fealty to a mind/body split, and more recent imaginings of brains in vats experiencing a world of pure simulation (where evil scientists come to replace Descartes' evil demon as the overlord manufacturers of a deliberately illusory lifeworld). This dissertation argues that to hive off particular brain functions tied to self-awareness and rationality as "thought" to the exclusion of other nonconscious brain functions—and, for that matter, to insist on the discrete separation of particular body tissues or organ systems as being the sum total of what a brain is—entails an artificial cut that predetermines which processes and activities come to count as agential and meaningful. Such an un-knotting limits what one is able to discover, to know, or even to ask, a delineation of parts that precludes the possibility of viewing a whole. In this context, it is useful to consider a very different reading of Husserl from the one that Derrida provides, one that begins not with an already reified world of illusory objects whose foundational being can only be described in relation to the mysterious movement of the trace, but with movement itself as a foundation.

Animate forms

The philosopher Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, a former dancer/choreographer and dedicated

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[162] In *The Body in Pain*, Elaine Scarry (1985) notes how the experience of pain is so personal to the self that it seems to place us into entirely individual worlds, inaccessible to each other. She writes:

> for the person in pain, so uncontestably and unnegotiably present is it that "having pain" may come to be thought of as the most vibrant example of what it is to "have certainty," while for the other person it is so elusive that "hearing about pain" may exist as the primary model of what it is "to have doubt." Thus pain comes unsharably into our midst as at once that which cannot be denied and that which cannot be confirmed (p. 2).

As a sheer sensation, pain eschews any subject-object relationship. Scarry suggests that "precisely because it takes no object […, pain,] more than any other phenomenon, resists objectification in language" (p. 3).

phenomenologist,[163] has written extensively about life in terms of animate form. Her approach to philosophy is grounded in the writings of natural historian Charles Darwin and philosopher Edmund Husserl. Unlike Derrida, who attempts to deconstruct Husserl's ontology, Sheets-Johnstone embraces Husserl's phenomenological epistemology, including both its genetic and constructive strands.[164] She carefully attends to how humans discover self, world and others by means of a moving body that has a tactile-kinaesthetic relationship with its surroundings as well as a personal (ontogenetic) and species-specific (phylogenetic) history of development. Her fealty to Husserl's call to return to "the things themselves" includes a deep suspicion of abstract theoretical structures.[165] She focuses on the intrinsic connection between meaningfulness and having a body that moves, which allows her to probe deeply into the origins that Derrida finds so illusory—in relation to consciousness, perception, conceptualization, and language.

If Sheets-Johnstone is able to find the utility of phenomenology in uncovering origins in relation to meaning, it is because she approaches Husserl's inquiry as being fundamentally epistemological rather than ontological. She mobilizes Husserl's phenomenological method by

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[163] Her first book, based on her dissertation, was *The Phenomenology of Dance*, published by the University of Wisconsin Press in 1966.

[164] The term "genetic phenomenology" comes from Husserl, and reflects a concern with *origins* of meaning. Sheets-Johnstone (1990) characterizes genetic phenomenology as being concerned with a "*history* of experienced meanings" whereby "the origin of human meanings can be ultimately exposed, to the end that […] fundamental concepts in domains of human knowledge such as mathematics, are *evidentially* clarified" (p. 13). The term "constructive phenomenology" comes from Husserl's assistant, Eugen Fink. As Sheets-Johnstone (2011) describes this approach, rather than working backward from one's "present-day adult world," constructive phenomenology requires us to "start […] from the world of our natality and attempt to follow it in its forward movement, concentrating our efforts on understanding how that world comes to be built up" (p. 217).

[165] Sheets-Johnstone (2011) decries, for example, analytic American philosophy's "infatuation with scientifically-rendered humans—or *models* of humans—over everyday experiencing ones" (p. 181). In her view, abstract models tend to eschew animate, breathing, tactile-kinaesthetic bodies in favour of visual conceptualizations—as with theorizations of body image and body schema in the work of Merleau-Ponty and Andrew Meltzoff—or by substituting purely synecdochal symbolizations. In *The Roots of Power*, Sheets-Johnstone (1994) takes aim at Derrida's notion of phallogocentrism, which in her view is symptomatic of a "metaphysics of absence" that substitutes language for living bodies. She describes Derrida's grammatological musings as "play […] with genital cut-outs at the expense of understanding the body as a whole—understanding the body as animate form—including genitalia" (p. 107). As such, Sheets-Johnstone would find Spivak's (1977) assertion that "presence can be articulated only if it is *fragmented* into discourse; 'castration' and dismemberment being both a menace to and the condition of the possibility of discourse" (lxvi) to be unintelligible in its failure to take account of the animated bodies that ground any possibility of meaning that might be attached to a practice called discourse.

reading his insights into eidetic essence as being concerned with meaning more than being.[166] As Sheets-Johnstone (2009) frequently reminds her readers, Husserl's concern with intended, eidetic objects rather than "real" ones reflects his concern not for some eternal perfection of form, but for what we as humans experience: "The object as *meant* is the epistemological object, i.e. the object as it is cognitively and affectively experienced" (p.232).[167] Crucially, phenomenology does not seek an ideal *representation* of what is; instead, Sheets-Johnstone (2011) asserts in *The Primacy of Movement*, it considers how we make sense of a world by constituting it as meaningful:

> Rather than being a camera-ready take on the world, and one particularly construed as a copy of the world in the form of a representation in a brain, phenomenological investigations show the perception of an object to be an epistemological process; objects are *constituted* [….] not in an ontological sense—we do not *create* the objects we perceive—but in an epistemological sense. We put the world together. We make sense of it (p. 164).[168]

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[166] Not all scholars agree that Husserl's project is purely epistemological rather than ontological in nature. In *Husserl's Phenomenology*, Dan Zahavi (2003) contends that while Husserl's phenomenological approach may temporarily suspend any judgment on being, its ultimate aim is nevertheless to achieve ontological understanding:

> it is problematic to claim that Husserl's phenomenology is only to be understood as a theory of meaning and not as an ontology. […] As Husserl points out already in *Ideen I*, […] phenomenology eventually integrates and includes everything that it had at first parenthesized for methodological reasons. […] It is against this background that Husserl can eventually claim that a fully developed transcendental phenomenology is *eo ipso* the true and realized ontology […], where all ontological concepts and categories are clarified in their correlation to constituting subjectivity (p. 61).

[167] A meant object in its cognitive put-togetherness, however, is durable in a way that transcends its intuitive appearance as simply present. As Husserl (2012/1931) explains in *Ideas*,

> The tree plain and simple can burn away, resolve itself into its chemical elements, and so forth. But the meaning—the meaning of this perception, something that belongs necessarily to its essence—cannot burn away; it has no chemical elements, no forces, no real properties (§89, p. 187).

[168] For Sheets-Johnstone, one of the implications of such an approach is that, contrary to Derrida's assertions, we cannot take the appearance of an object "as *meant*" to be a purely visual/spatial event. Appearance takes place *across* all of a bodily sensorium, and over the duration of an encounter: "This epistemological object […] is not only never altogether there to be taken as such, but […] it exists across the acts of perception through which we come to constitute it" (p. 167).

She further notes that Husserl explicitly identified the human sense of spatiality as having kinaesthetic rather than visual origins. As his lectures from 1925 published under the title

Transcendentality is similarly framed in epistemological rather than ontological terms, as a species-specific disposition toward a world and the objects one discovers there, or, as Sheets-Johnstone describes it, "transcendental in the sense of specifying originary epistemological structures and ones common to all subjects" (p. 128).

For Sheets-Johnstone (2009), meaningfulness begins with animate forms understood from an evolutionary perspective, and its origins are to be found in bodies rather than in theories of signification:

> The starting point from this perspective is not "the sign" but sense-making organisms themselves, in terms of both the bodily ways in which the world is meaningful to them and the bodily ways in which they go about making sense of the world (p. 279).

A theory of "signs" abstracts theoretical entities—signifiers and signifieds—that can be treated as things rather than considering meaning-making as a process that involves animate bodies engaged in dynamic, qualitative experiences. As Sheets-Johnstone (1990) consistently argues, however, "meanings are not free-floating entities; meanings are incarnated, anchored in living bodies" (p. 121). For her, the phenomenological stance is not about an insistence on the unity of self-presence as the transcendence that guarantees being for self, world, and others. Instead, she pragmatically recognizes that sense-making is a function of living organisms. Organisms determine and validate meanings by the way they inhabit and respond bodily to worlds that include objects and others. Where Derrida accords primordiality to mysterious, phantom, and purely theoretical structures that simultaneously bestow and deny being, Sheets-Johnstone is interested in considering how human beings as organisms learn and constitute self, world and others *as meaningful*.

Understanding how meanings are made requires attention to the continuum of animate forms as meaning-makers,[169] a continuum that not only predates Homo sapiens, but also

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Phenomenological Psychology note: "*Animation* designates the way in which mind acquires a locality in the spatial world, its spatialization, as it were, and together with its corporal support, acquires *reality*" (Husserl cited in Sheets-Johnstone, p. 113).

[169] Sheets-Johnstone (1990) points out that "*human mental powers are on a continuum with nonhuman mental powers*" (p. 306). The artificial divide that treats humans as mentally and communicatively distinct from all other creatures not only obscures our evolutionary roots, but also severely limits our ability to theorize the origins and organic resources that make thought and meaningful interaction with a world and others possible. While Sheets-Johnstone persuasively argues that consciousness is not exclusively or

encompasses all organisms. Sheets-Johnstone (2009) advocates the possibility of developing "evolutionary semantics" that begin not from linguistics, but natural history:

> As formatively realized over the course of evolution, sense-making has involved the constitution of new interanimate meanings on the basis of new corporeal acts, dispositions, discoveries, developments, and so on. Because in all such instances it is a question of meaning and not reference (or information, for that matter), understandings of the origin of sense-making necessarily require understandings of the living organisms that define natural history, in particular, understandings of the diverse ways in which they both move about in and experience the world (pp. 280-281).

In Sheets-Johnstone's (1990) view, "animate bodies are potential semantic templates" (p. 121). The way creatures inhabit and negotiate the world instantiates both intra- and inter-species meanings that are both understood and enacted corporeally. Not only do we recognize objects and morphological details (e.g. the face of the mother that nurtures us, the plant that is edible vs. the one that is toxic); we also learn to recognize and attach meanings to movements and behaviours that are essential to our survival. Umberto Eco's (1976) assertion cited earlier, that "*semiotics is in principle the discipline studying everything which can be used in order to lie*" (p. 7), is significant in this regard. There are many intra- and inter-species examples of corporeal and behavioural deceit: forms of mimicry, feigning death, even play-fighting.[170] Starting with animate forms as sense-makers directs one's attention to how meanings are forged. While asking how *being* starts is an almost unfathomable question, *meanings* originate not as linguistic signs or traces, but as and through a creature's tactile-kinaesthetic and kinetic experiences. Meanings are matters of significance for *organisms*, and they are instantiated through actions.

Sheets-Johnstone (2011) considers how Husserl was deeply attuned to the close

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perhaps even primarily a brain-based activity, the evolution of what we identify as "mental" powers is surely of significance to an overall understanding of human meaning-making. Antonio Damasio (1994, 1999, 2010) describes a continuum of biological development in which internal regulatory systems, emotions, a primordial feeling of self, and full-fledged consciousness are all part of an evolving and overlapping set of neurological innovations and adaptations that have enhanced individual species' abilities to survive and reproduce in specific environments. The nervous system's role in contemporary human consciousness reflects the sensory, perceptual and motor achievements of a long line of animate forms that precede us.

[170] For a discussion of dissembling and deceit in animals as forms of behavioural propositionality, see Sheets-Johnston (1990), pp. 151-157.

connection between life and movement. Husserl described living in terms of animate form,[171] and accorded a foundational importance to what he called the kinestheses—"the kinesthetic correlates of perception" (p. 119)—in establishing the ego. In *The Crisis of European Sciences*, Husserl (1970/1954) asserts that the way a creature knows itself through the kinestheses makes the living body that one inhabits (*Leib*) essentially different as a self from the physical or material body (*Körper*) as an entity in the world. He refers to the living body "as the only one actually given (to me as such) in perception" (p. 107). In Sheets-Johnstone's (2011) reading of Husserl, the kinestheses "are, in their own right, *perceptual experiences*, the most fundamental of perceptual experiences, and as such are the very core of the constituting I, that is, of transcendental subjectivity" (p. 120). Sheets-Johnstone highlights how a sense of self is closely aligned with the ways in which we are animate forms. We do not simply have bodies that move: we *are* bodies capable of moving ourselves and of exploring our environment, imbued with sensations of touch, texture, temperature, and vibration, of weight, of position in space, and of the dynamics of motion. These tactile and kinaesthetic bodily senses developmentally precede not only language but also vision, and they are essential to allowing our brains to make more of vision than simply a detection of light and dark or a spectrum of colour. They are the primal building blocks for shared meaningfulness, already contributing to our survival and development before we leave the womb. It is through touch and movement that consciousness is able to discover and affirm basic concepts such as inside and outside that are essential to the notion of a self in a world. This makes the kinetic/tactile-kinaesthetic body—as Sheets-Johnstone (1999) describes it in "Re-Thinking Husserl's Fifth Meditation"—"the *Ur*-locus of experience" (p. 100).

In her revisiting of Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations*, Sheets-Johnstone argues that all five of the characteristics Husserl accords with the "sphere of [one's] ownness" have their roots in how humans experience themselves as kinetic/tactile-kinaesthetic bodies. Sheets-Johnstone identifies

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[171] In *The Corporeal Turn*, Sheets-Johnstone (2009) writes: "In the descriptive terms Husserl uses […], the core self is fundamentally *animate* and *animated*" (p. 47). This assertion permeates her work. See, for example, Sheets Johnstone (2011): "That we are first and foremost *animate* organisms is a truth Husserl consistently recognized. […] In his lifelong studies of sense-making […] Husserl […] wrote throughout about *animate organisms*" (pp. 466-467), as well as her citation of Husserl's *Phenomenological Psychology* (see footnote 168 above).

these five characteristics of ownness as follows: "1) fields of sensation,[172] 2) an 'I govern,'[173] 3) a repertoire of 'I cans,'[174] 4) a reflexive relationship between organs of sense and objects of sense,[175]

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[172] Fields of sensation are givens of daily experience, encompassing what we have come to think of as our "five" senses, but also extending to numerous other bodily sensing systems, many of them internal, that are essential to maintaining our integrity as an organism: registering movement, weight, temperature, balance, spatial and relational position, pain, and so forth. We are able to isolate aspects of many of these systems and think of them independently, but they also function in an integrated way. An action as simple as closing our eyes, for example, immediately alters the perceived acuity of other senses. While each sense has its own spatial, temporal and material fields and horizons—so that I can tell that something is touching my knee but not my thigh, for example, or that an analogue clock is ticking in another room near to where I am sitting, while a refrigerator is humming somewhere farther away—they also operate within a larger, integrated field of bodily experiences. The sound of the clock corresponds to its visual and tactile appearance. If I pick up the clock, I can also feel its weight and the smoothness of its surface, as well as the way it vibrates with each tick of the seconds. These various sensations cohere as part of an integrated phenomenon that can be named as "clock," and that remains recognizable under variable conditions (e.g. whether it is morning or night; whether I look at it or turn away from it; whether I am beside the clock or looking at it from across the room; whether I graze it with my arm or hold it in my hand; whether I hold it in a bare or gloved hand; etc.). Often—and particularly once we have come to recognize a set of recurring and predictable patterns that correspond to a coherent event or entity—these sensations take place in the background. We register them without paying them much mind, perhaps even deliberately tuning them out as extraneous or distracting from a more pertinent task at hand; but, as Sheets-Johnstone frequently suggests, whenever we wish to pay them attention, we find them there. What is implicit in our recognition of these fields of sensation as experiences is that we feel them as our own. *I* hear the clock. *I* see the clock. *I* pick up the clock. *My* hand feels the clock's weight and vibration. Furthermore, as Sheets-Johnstone notes, fields of sensation "are first and foremost tactile-kinesthetic fields […] that derive their meaning and value from moving and having moved." (p. 99). Movement is foundational and integral to what we experience as fields of sensation; the clock coheres as an entity by virtue of our ability to experience it dynamically, across changing conditions of space and time. We discover the conditions of its coherency by moving toward or away from it, trusting that we are experiencing the same "clock" whether it is near to us—though it appears to grow in size and loudness as we approach—or far away, where it manifests as taking up less of our visual and aural fields.

[173] An "I govern," points to the immediacy of my bodily experience to my sense of self. When I touch the clock, I do not feel my hand from the point of view of the clock. This is fundamentally different from the way *my* face would feel my hand if I were to scratch my nose. The clock does not announce itself as part of my ownness in the way that my body and its fields of sensations assure me that there is an "I" that is this body with its locus of experience. Furthermore, although I can pick up the clock and hold it in my hand, I cannot cause the clock to move in the same way I can move my body, by will. Sheets-Johnstone indicates, "An 'I govern' is patently a bodily capacity to move spontaneously and freely [.... It] has its origin in a kinetic/tactile-kinesthetic body and […] is intimately connected with a sense of effective agency" (pp. 99-100).

[174] A repertoire of "I cans," fills out the sense of agency indicated by an "I govern," providing it with definitions, boundaries and potentials, and pointing implicitly to causes and effects. "I cans" are essential precursors to shared language, in that they establish and affirm consistencies and qualities that can be repeatedly experienced and therefore meaningfully named. In our doings and not-doings, we discover both a self, expressed through a body that manifests intentions and deliberations, and a world, announcing itself as a set of dynamic conditions and patterns of experience that respond and correspond in specific ways to

and 5) a consummately and uniquely singular psychophysical unity"[176] (p. 99). In particular, she notes,

> A repertoire of "I cans" is most fundamentally an expandable or potentially expandable repertoire of movement possibilities that has its origin in the pan-human phenomenon of learning to move oneself, in other words, in the corporeal-kinetic apprenticeship that all humans—pan-culturally—share (p. 100).[177]

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the doings and not-doings of our bodies. Sheets-Johnstone asserts that while these doings and not-doings are grounded in our moving bodies, they also provide an essential building block for shared meaning among humans, because humans share similar basic body structures, capacities, dispositions, and developmental patterns that amount to tactile-kinaesthetic invariants. Sheets-Johnstone's argument suggests that in considering our sphere of ownness—what allows us to recognize a *self*-presence—we should pay attention not only to the characteristics we find in our adult bodies, but also to how we develop. First, most human bodies grow and change similarly according to broadly predictable patterns; but at least as significantly, being tended to by other humans and imitating their gestures is an essential part of how we learn to move. Our apprenticeship in movement—the ways we learn to move, and through our movements discover who we are and what our world is—is shared, regardless of our cultural specificities.

[175] A reflexive relationship between organs of sense and objects of sense is at the core of the phenomenological project. We understand "thingliness" because our organs of sense confirm to us that our bodies are material things. If I touch my leg with my hand, both hand and leg experience similar fields of sensation to what would be generated in each of those parts if they touched an object that is not part of my body. Through this experience of my body as both subject and object, I am able to make sense of the relationship between touching and being touched. In the same way, I can see, hear, smell, taste and even move parts of my body as objects. This reflexive relationship is foundational to what allows Husserl to assert that my experiencing of the phenomenon *is* the phenomenon. The phenomenon as it is perceived through our fields of sensation is exactly what is possible for us to mean when we call a thing a "thing," because things manifest or announce their appearance to our senses *as things*; that is, in the way that things exist for us as kinetic, spatio-temporal, material forms in our perception. A thing imagined or remembered appears differently than a thing that we can move around, touch, smell, or taste. This reflexivity also points directly to the way we as kinetic/tactile-kinaesthetic bodies find ourselves to be not simply surrounded by an environment, but dwelling within and responsive to a world *of which we are a part*. We understand the materiality of things because as thinking bodies we experience ourselves as material things. As Sheets-Johnstone says, "Organs of sense and objects of sense are reflexively related, most notably with respect to the kinetic/tactile-kinesthetic body. […] I am, in short, a perceptible object for myself, a kinetic/tactile-kinesthetic phenomenon" (p. 100).

[176] A consummately and uniquely singular psychophysical unity points to the remarkable feeling of being an animate form, a flesh-and-blood, bodily "who" with a lived history, situated in a particular space and time, manifesting specific dispositions, capabilities, desires, and habits.

[177] In *The Roots of Thinking*, Sheets-Johnstone (1990) emphasizes both the ontogenetic—"in the process of growing an infant discovers and builds up a bodily compendium of *I can's*" (p. 161)—and phylogenetic—"*I can's* comprise a personal repertoire of movement possibilities ordained and limited by a certain biological heritage" (pp. 371-372)—aspects of what amounts to the kinetic spontaneity that contributes to a creature's sphere of ownness.

"I cans" equate with a creature's fundamental agency, making them not only a part of one's sphere of ownness, but also an integral foundation of the possibility of discovering and sharing a world of objects.[178] As Sheets-Johnstone (1990) notes in *The Roots of Thinking*:

> Abstract placement in the world in the sense of specifying an enduring object is […] fundamentally guaranteed not by language but by a tactile-kinesthetic freedom to observe (or to do actively or desist from acting), a freedom derived from the *I can's* of a personal existence (p. 376).

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[178] While these qualities are meant to define a sphere of ownness, Sheets-Johnstone finds in them clues for understanding how it is possible to experience intersubjectivity, explaining how we can come to achieve what Husserl calls an "apperceptive transfer of sense" that allows us to recognize others as being selves for themselves. In her reading of Husserl, Sheets-Johnstone is insistent that what is on offer is not "a metaphysics of others" that proves their existence, but "an epistemology of others" (p. 105) that considers how we come to distinguish others as beings like ourselves, with their own psychophysical unities. Sheets-Johnstone goes on to outline how Daniel Stern's studies of early childhood development provide empirical evidence of how the tactile/kinaesthetic experiences of our bodies as animate forms—experiences that Sheets-Johnstone pointedly notes are "nonliguistic"—are central to our ability to come to know our selves and others as entities. This leads her to the assertion that

> the basic phenomena associated with […] the development of a subjective self and of intersubjective relatedness are fundamentally rooted in bodily life: shared attention, shared intentions, and shared affective states are played out in gestures, postures, movements such as pointing and reaching, in eye contact, facial expressions, and so on. They are clearly grounded in the kinetic/tactile-kinesthetic body, the foundational phenomenological stratum of experience (p. 104).

What guides her analysis is a conviction that the foundations of how we come to know ourselves and recognize others—how these entities come to presence—can be found in tactile-kinaesthetic experience. This line of reasoning can equally be extended to the nonhuman entities that populate what we come to know as a world. Our bodies as animate forms respond to tactile and kinetic harmonies and incongruities that resonate or coalesce as recognizable qualities—soft, hard, smooth, rough, slow, fast, continuous, staccato—or as complex clusters of meaningfulness: e.g., as entities, events or states/conditions. Put simply, presence, in these terms, is affirmed as and through sensory experience—and most foundationally, tactile-kinaesthetic experience. Furthermore, what emerges from tactile-kinaesthetic experience is not only the sense of a subjective self with a sphere of ownness, but also an awareness of an intersubjective relatedness of that self with other selves in a world populated with myriad recognizable entities. To extend Sheets-Johnstone's insights, this makes the kinetic/tactile-kinaesthetic body not only "the *Ur*-locus of experience" (p. 100), but also the locus of the possibility of presence as shared meaningfulness. Responding to Derrida's abstracted notion of writing as the only possible basis of language's meaningfulness, we could further suggest that *tactile/kinaesthetic experience* taken as a whole—not artificially bifurcated into the sensible and the intelligible—*is what precedes and provides the fundamental ground of language*. Rather than appealing to an abstracted notion of "writing" as secondary inscription that informs any potential meaningfulness, we might instead affirm how tactile-kinaesthetic experience both enacts and inscribes meaningfulness by stabilizing our sense of self, confirming our immersion in a world of which we are part, and distinguishing others as distinct but recognizable and intersubjectively meaningful entities.

Our ability to move gives us the capacity to learn who or what we are and to encounter, explore and test a world that encompasses us and that includes other animate forms.[179]

If Derrida finds movement to be mysterious, perhaps it is at least in part due to a Western description of movement as the displacement of an object from one location to another.[180] Such an approach reduces spatiality to visuality, and equates the *effects* of movement with movement itself. For Sheets-Johnstone (2011), focusing only on the motion of objects obscures the fundamental nature of movement by objectifying a subjective, dynamic process:

> Marking the effects of, but not remarking on movement itself, preserves the rule of matter. More specifically, it preserves the unquestioned hegemony of substance as the ultimate key to explaining the universe by freeing it from what would threaten it most: a recognition of movement, along with its troublesome retinue of cognate notions—animation, animism, teleology, and the like—notions that are anathema to inflexible materialist doctrine (p. 97).[181]

Movement is not foreign to understanding; it is intrinsic to living bodies as animate forms. In terms of our visual acumen, movement is, in fact, pre-objective. Sheets-Johnstone cites the research of T. G. R. Bower, a pioneer in the field of child development, whose experiments show

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[179] Albert Johnstone (1986) has argued that one of the key significances of the idea of "I cans" (or *Ich Kann* in the German) for Husserl is their role in countering Humean skepticism. I cans offer the "facultative possibility of moving or not moving, of observing or not observing," producing "optional observations any of which could have not been made, or could have been made at some other time" (p. 592). This spontaneity randomizes experience, making it unlikely that the coherency and durability we perceive in objects could be the result of mere chance. Thus,

> It is precisely because some measure of freedom to do or not, to observe or not, is operative in any perception and known (implicitly at least) to be so present, that the Humean skeptical thesis of the irrationality of belief is felt to be so outrageous (p. 595).

[180] As Sheets-Johnstone (2009) succinctly puts it, "To see movement as taking place *in* space and *in* time is in actuality to see not movement but an object in motion" (p. 366).

[181] One of the key aspects of movement is the particular way it not only enfolds spatiality, but also draws attention to—and offers us corporeal ways of experiencing and thinking about—temporality. Materiality of course enfolds both space and time, but when encountering a static object, we often overlook its situatedness in duration. As has been previously noted, Theodor Adorno (2001/1965) believed this forgetting of time is precisely what allowed Aristotle to (erroneously) posit an ideal of eternal forms (see footnote 89 above). Movement, however, cannot be thought coherently outside of its temporality. Our textural and affective experience of movement also brings to the fore the notions of dynamics, duration, rhythm, repetition, recurrence, difference, transformation, completion, cause and effect. Movement forms the basis of relational understanding, not only materially and spatially, but also temporally.

that younger infants "respond *not to moving objects but to movements*" (Bower, cited in Sheets Johnstone, p. 223).[182] If we as humans take note of objects when they are in motion, prior to recognizing them as having a distinct size, shape or colour, then before we begin to theorize how chains of signifiers determine any one signifier's meaning, we might first want to consider how the recognition of objects is already the result of an extended process of relational discovery that begins with movement. In terms of the human capacity for conceptualization, things acquire their objecthood as signs not as a primordial perceptual given, but out of a cognitive predisposition toward distinguishing movement and relationality. Indeed, just as our sense of spatiality has a tactile-kinaesthetic foundation that precedes its synthesis in visuality, Sheets-Johnstone frequently argues that language begins with "motional-relational concepts" rather than with the naming of objects. She points to research that suggests this is true both phylogenetically—as indicated by the work of anthropological linguist Mary LeCron Foster[183]—and ontogentically—as suggested by educational psychologist Lois Bloom.[184] Derrida requires the "trace"—which, as has been

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[182] Sheets-Johnstone cites a 1971 article by Bower in *Scientific American* entitled "The Object in the World of the Infant." In a series of experiments aimed at determining how infants come to make sense of objects—to constitute them phenomenologically, as it were—Bower concluded "that younger children (6 weeks to 22 weeks) are not affected by feature differences [in objects]. For them movement is predominant. They respond to a change in motion but not to a change in size, shape or color" (Bower cited in Sheets-Johnstone, p. 223).

[183] The term "motional-relational complexes" comes from Foster, who posits that primordial language was not arbitrary, but rooted in analogous articulatory gestures. Foster argues that an "m" sound, for example, takes its meaning from the way it is made corporeally, by bringing together the lips. Hence, as Sheets-Johnstone explains, "All reconstructed root forms of the sound 'm' refer to bilateral relationships that are spatio-kinetically analogous to the act of bringing the lips together." Before language becomes a tool for naming things, it first describes concepts of movement and relationality. Sheets-Johnstone goes on to suggest that "the felt, moving body, the tactile-kinesthetic body, was the focal point of symbolization" (p. 332); put another way, linguistic symbolization proceeds from a foundation of corporeal discoveries and synthesized meanings. This suggests that a word's indexical and conceptual roots are not to be found in a floating chain of arbitrary signifiers, but in lived, corporeal experiences.

[184] One of Sheets-Johnstone's more detailed considerations of Bloom's work is in *The Primacy of Movement*, where she teases out the relationship between Bloom's insight that "first single-word utterances are […] 'conceptual rather than linguistic'" (Bloom cited in Sheets-Johnstone, p. 430) and an implicit recognition of these early concepts as being fundamentally connected to movement and relationality. As Sheets-Johnstone notes, "Single words are initially paired with *happenings* of some kind or other—thus 'down,' as in getting down from a chair; objects are paired with certain *perceived dynamics*—thus 'tick-tock,' as in noticing a clock" (p. 430). Another favourite example of Sheets-Johnstone (2009) comes from Jean Piaget, who offered a casual observation about a young child opening and closing her mouth repeatedly before exploring the possibility of opening and closing a matchbox:

previously noted, he interlaces with an abstracted concept of "movement"—to make sense of an essentially linguistic process of signification as a mental occurrence that is marked by a primordial absence. What is missing from his account, however, are the animate bodies and bodily experiences that are essential and inherent to what can only be hived off abstractly as "mental" events.[185] By starting from language as a monolithic and pre-given structure, Derrida fails to take account of the material and kinetic resources that found the very possibility of language, as well as its contents. Conceptualization begins not as a mental process, but through animated corporeal engagement with a world and the consequences that result. Thus, Sheets-Johnstone (2009) argues, "the acquisition of verbal language is *post-kinetic* and should properly

> In *La naissance de l'intelligence*, [Piaget] describes a sixteen-month-old infant opening and closing her mouth several times in prelude to her attempt to open a matchbox. […] Piaget interprets [these lingual acts] as a *faute de mieux*: "Lacking the power to think in words or clear visual images, the infant uses, as "signifier or symbol, a simple motor indication" [….] He in consequence misses the extraordinary conceptual reality; infants think in bodily terms. They think in nonlinguistic concepts, not in words but in movement, knowing through their own experiences that openings lead to insides. In effect, bodily experiences testify to the fact that the concept of insides exists prior to language (p. 368).

[185] One could also argue that with his notion of deferral, Derrida confounds the methodology of phenomenology with its results. Husserl (2012/1931) proposes "to stand bodily aloof from all […] anticipatory ideas of every kind" (p. 55) through a process of suspension that is indeed a kind of deferral for the sake of a particular kind of objective description. Although one may have a "thesis" of "experience as lived (*Erlebnis*)" according to the natural standpoint (see footnote 138 above), in a phenomenological approach, Husserl argues, "*we set it as it were 'out of action*', we '*disconnect it*', '*bracket it*'" (p. 57). As noted by Zahavi, however, this bracketing is temporary, with the ultimate aim of discovering the underlying foundations of understanding (see footnote 166 above). More to the point, however, the bracketing that makes this kind of analysis possible is exactly not *Erlebnis*. Bracketing experience and organizing what happens into bounded categories inevitably suggests an infinite process of deferral to interpretation, even as events unfold as occurrences with knotted, situational continuities according to dynamic and qualitative wholes that defy static divisions. As Sheets-Johnstone (2011) notes:

> We do not experience kinetic *befores*, *nows*, and *afters*. This tripartite *ordinal ordering* of time is a sophisticated, reflective attainment that, in terms of the originary temporal structures of self-movement, imposes divisions where none exist, divisions that if present would in fact disrupt what is experienced as a global qualitative dynamic (p. 135).

Extracting a moment from a duration creates abstract differentiations that separate past, present and future, thereby lending visibility to certain relations while obscuring others. Derrida (1977) insists that when Rousseau describes "*a succession of present moments of which the first is always that which is in action,*" this can only be read in such a way that each new moment "must always be repeated within another presence, [opening] originarily, within presence itself, the structure of representation" (p. 311). The knotted "whole" that is presence, however, is not bounded by moments. Instead, it is the abstracted idea of *something called a moment* that is a representation—and it is indeed absent from lived experience.

be considered such" (p. 225). Describing language as being post-kinetic rather than designating infants as being in a pre-linguistic state avoids the teleological assumption that thought and conceptualization are ultimately linguistic accomplishments.[186]

Sheets-Johnstone's genetic phenomenological approach suggests that our discovery of

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[186] Such teleology is rampant, despite Sheets-Johnstone's extensive analyses of how concepts are first discovered and synthesized by animate bodies. Hans-Georg Gadamer (2004/1975) offers a textbook example in his treatise on hermeneutics, *Truth and Method*. "Language," he writes, "is so uncannily near our thinking, and when it functions it is so little an object, that it seems to conceal its own being from us" (p. 370). For him, no thought can be properly labelled as "understanding" until it has been expressed discursively. "The inner world," as he calls our synthesizing consciousness, "must always draw what it thinks out of itself, and present it to itself as if in an inner dialogue with itself. In this sense all thought is speaking to oneself" (p. 422). For Gadamer, words are synonymous with concepts in such a way that thought requires language in order to come into being. "[W]e must recognize that all understanding is interwoven with concepts and reject any theory that does not accept the intimate unity of word and subject matter" (p. 404). Indeed, for Gadamer, understanding can *only* mean a coming-into-language:

> *[T]he fusion of horizons that takes place in understanding is actually the achievement of language.* [...] It is not that the understanding is subsequently put into words; rather, the way understanding occurs—whether in the case of a text or a dialogue with another person who raises an issue with us—is the coming-into-language of the thing itself (pp. 370-371).

If Sheets-Johnstone and Husserl believe that we have a world by virtue of our tactile-kinaesthetic dispositions, for Gadamer, language is the medium through which a world comes into view. "Language is not just one of man's possessions in the world; rather, on it depends the fact that man has a *world* at all" (p. 440)—a conclusion that would apparently deny the possibility of a world to any nonhuman creature. Gadamer's way of framing human existence leads him to his own form of the *cogito*, which might be phrased as "I speak, therefore I am."

> [T]his activity of the thing itself, the coming into language of meaning, points to a universal ontological structure, namely to the basic nature of everything toward which understanding can be directed. *Being that can be understood is language*. The hermeneutical phenomenon here projects its own universality back onto the ontological constitution of what is understood, determining it in a universal sense as *language* and determining its own relation to beings as interpretation (pp. 469-470).

Sheets-Johnstone (2009) would no doubt be highly critical of Gadamer's analysis, given her conviction that "language is not experience; it is the means by which we describe experience" (p. 239). I would argue, however, that while language may not in itself be experience, *languaging*—the active process of constructing and interpreting through words—is indeed experience. Language has the capacity to move us, to engage our animate forms in unique and unexpected forms of relationality, and to reorient our attunement to qualitative phenomena. How else would it be possible to read a narrative describing experiences one has never had, and find oneself affectively engaged? How else could it be that two words could be placed side by side in a poem, and suddenly, new ideas are generated? How else might we explain Gadamer's conviction that "coming-into-language" equates to a profound constitution of understanding? What is of moment, however, is Sheets-Johnstone's recognition that language, like thought, is the accomplishment of an animate, sense-making body, and that whatever meanings take place are only intelligible through and as the interactive experiences of such bodies.

objects develops and is constituted out of a bodily exploration of an unfolding, processual world. Things begin as qualitative "happenings," and these happenings coalesce conceptually— meaningfully—into entities. Similarly, some things happen to us, while others happen before us, around us, behind us, engaging different senses, and this allows us to discover a "self" that is already agentially "being" or enacting itself as an entity before it "knows" itself as "I" according to the narrow boundaries of an ego consciousness. Through our movements, we as animate forms already enact a primordial sense of self and find ourselves to be part of a world, even as our movements contribute to an ongoing refinement and transformation of our sense of self and world. Sheets-Johnstone's descriptions go further than simply suggesting that movement gives us the possibility of discovering a self and a world. While she expands on Husserl's analyses to explain how many of our most foundational concepts—including a recognition of self, determinations of causality, and the transcendent objectivity of things—have their roots in our experiences of movement,[187] she also argues that we "think in movement." Movement is more than simply an expression or outcome of either thinking or consciousness: it is inseparable from them:

> Movement and perception are seamlessly interwoven; there is no "mind-doing" that is
> separate from a "body-doing". My movement is thus not the result of a mental process
> that exists prior to, and is distinguishable from, a physical process in which it eventuates,
> nor does my movement involve not thinking at all. To separate myself into a mind and a
> body would be to perform a radical surgery upon myself such that a vibrant kinetic reality
> is reduced to faint and impotent pulp, or excised altogether (p. 32).

What Sheets-Johnstone is suggesting here is that conceiving of movement as the *outcome* of thought ignores a fundamental phenomenological reality: that *movement is an intrinsic part of the thought* itself. Put another way, for animate forms, movement does not simply signal or signify

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[187] Sheets-Johnstone (2009) describes in some detail how

> experiences of movement are the generative source of concepts of agentivity, of if/then
> relationships, of spatio-temporal invariants. They generate expectations; they are replete with
> kinetic concepts having to do with energy, distance, speed, range of movement, direction—in
> short, with a complex of dynamic qualities inherent in the experience of movement itself (p. 57).

consciousness; it is consciousness unfolding.[188]

 Creaturely movement, whether or not it is effected with the involvement of a brain or a nervous system, enfolds perception, doing and meaningfulness. Thus, Sheets Johnstone (2011) identifies "kinesthetic consciousness" as "the most primitive form of consciousness" (p. 460). In her view, "Evolutionary forms of life are […] living subjects of particular *Umwelts*, and as such create *synergies of meaningful movement*, synergies that assure their survival" (p. 462).[189] She

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[188] It is also worth noting that even to the extent that movement and thought can be defined as distinct, both remain animate processes *of* material bodies. Too often, as in the abstracted construction—or perhaps more aptly described, extraction—of what comes to be called "the body," we tend to overlook this intrinsic unity of animate materiality. If, as Sheets-Johnstone argues, we think in movement, then there is surely a basic confusion in Merleau-Ponty's (2002/1945) oft-cited assertion, "It is never our objective body that we move, but our phenomenal body" (p. 121). Rather, one might more accurately say, it is movement that prompts the sensation or impression of *being a phenomenal body*. It is also worth noting that Merleau-Ponty's analyses generally avoid any direct reference to a "material" body, as evidenced by the footnote that accompanies the aforementioned passage, in which he explains,

> It is not a question of how the soul acts on the objective body, since it is not on the latter that it acts, but on the phenomenal body. So the question has to be reframed, and we must ask why there are two views of me and of my body: my body for me and my body for others, and how these two systems can exist together. It is indeed not enough to say that the objective body belongs to the realm of 'for others', and my phenomenal body to that of 'for me', and we cannot refuse to pose the problem of their relations, since the 'for me' and the 'for others' co-exist in the same world, as is proved by my perception of an other who immediately brings me back to the condition of an object for him (pp. 121-122).

Setting aside Merleau-Ponty's reference to "the soul," this configuration describes animate bodies according to two poles: one, phenomenal (experiential), and the other, objective (*viewed* by an other). Both are mental projections that cannot be understood as corresponding to a realm of brute, material intelligibility—matter that "recognizes" other matter by the resistance of contact, for example, or responds to stimuli by moving differently. Merleau-Ponty's footnote neatly foreshadows the questions that he would eventually grapple with in *The Visible and the Invisible*, including his tendency to frame the privileged distinction between "phenomenal" and "objective" in terms of visibility, while also holding space for a common "world" of here still-indeterminate description that brings them together.

[189] Sheets-Johnstone (2009) encourages her readers to take a more expansive view of consciousness by explaining how "the capacity to respond signifies both sentience and mobility" (p. 219) and by framing the responsivity of living creatures as a "readiness toward meaning" (p. 230). For all living creatures, the meanings toward which they are ready can be understood as being directed toward a self and specific to a being's lived, spatio-temporal *Umwelt*. For social creatures, meanings can also be understood to extend to a larger group of creatures that inhabit similar or overlapping *Umwelts*. Such shared meanings are validated through interaction: "unless and until the receiver certifies meaning, the movement will not enter the communicative repertoire of the species or group in question" (p. 356). Sheets-Johnstone's arguments suggest that for all living creatures as animate forms, movement as an expression of corporeal consciousness and "readiness toward meaning" points to a surety of being. One might therefore posit (*pace* Descartes): "I move, therefore I am."

argues that even bacteria exhibit a form of consciousness in the "molecular polling" whereby they undertake appropriate responses to their environment. Zoologist William T. Keeton and evolutionary biologist James L. Gould explain the process of molecular polling in their introductory textbook *Biological Science*, using the terms "sampling," "foundering," and "striking out" to describe bacterial responsivity. Sheets-Johnstone pointedly cites an extended passage from their book in the context of a larger analysis of the arbitrariness with which notions such as "thinking" or "knowing" are placed in quotation marks whenever a manifestation of what might otherwise be considered emblematic of cognition occurs without the involvement of a human brain. She argues that activities of "sampling, foundering, and striking out in a new direction are precisely a matter of animation and animation is precisely in some sense cognitive or mindful" (p. 46).[190] Situating consciousness in corporeal movement rather than in brain activity points to "a

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Taking these arguments further, one might consider how such a dictate could be expanded to a fresh approach to physics—or perhaps a more ancient approach, bearing in mind Aristotle's exhortation: "Nature is a principle of change…. We must therefore see that we understand what motion is; for if it were unknown, nature too would be unknown" (Aristotle from *Physics* Book III, cited in Sheets-Johnstone 2001, p. 77). We are quick to consider questions about matter as being most fundamental—why is there some *thing* rather than nothing?—but we seldom begin with questions about movement. Why is there movement rather than stasis? We think of "particles" as the building blocks of qualitative substantiality, but at the subatomic level, movement—expressed in terms of attraction, repulsion, orbit, and wave—seems to be equally important in determining how "matter" ultimately manifests qualitatively. If consciousness and animation are indeed linked, then one might go so far as to argue that there is a kind of "consciousness" at work in the self-organization that takes place at the subatomic level. How else does a rock "know" to be a rock – that is, for its atoms to line up in particular dynamic patterns of protons, electrons and neutrons, to be attracted to other atoms in particular ways that lead to the "forms" and "qualia" we perceive at a human level of awareness?

If one doubts the significance of rethinking the fundamentality of motion, one need look no further than Einstein's theory of relativity, which, by considering time and space from the point of view of an observer, places motion, in a sense, as a key determinant of time. As Karen Barad (2007) puts it,

According to Einstein, time is relative to motion (not the reverse): "time," by definition, is what is measured by an observer's clock [….] And what an observer measures with a clock […] differs for differentially moving observers: time […] is relative to the motion of an observer (p. 437).

[190] It should be noted that Sheets-Johnstone identifies this example of bacterial consciousness, which comes near the beginning of *The Primacy of Movement*, as being "corporeal" (or "meta-corporeal") rather than "kinesthetic"; kinaesthetic consciousness is a formulation she only arrives at in the expanded second edition of the book, under an added section entitled "Twenty-first century reflections on human nature: Foundational concepts and realities." What is striking in her consideration of bacteria, however, is the way that she already imbricates the tactile activity of "sampling"—which might traditionally be labeled as "perceptual"—and the responsive activity of "striking out in a new direction"—which might traditionally be characterized as resultant—with the decision-taking process of "foundering" that might more traditionally be associated with "thought." Treating "sampling, foundering, and striking out" as a *single*

radical revision of the materialist's characterization of consciousness as identical with neurological brain events" (p. 53), and leads Sheets-Johnstone to the conviction that "understandings of the evolution of proprioception lead precisely to understandings of the provenience of consciousness" (p. 54). Many neuroscientists have argued that from an evolutionary perspective, the main task of human brains is not thought, but movement. This is evident in the writings of R. W. Sperry, whose key hypothesis, as parsed by Sheets-Johnstone, is that "*the function of consciousness is coordinated movement*" (p. 377).[191] The notion of movement as the primary reason for brains can also be found in the work of Daniel Wolpert[192] and J. A. Scott Kelso.[193] At the very least, such insights trouble ontological musings that place

whole that collectively demonstrates an example of directed consciousness already points toward her later insights concerning thinking *in movement*. In cognitivist accounts of consciousness, where, as Sheets-Johnstone describes it, "cognition is dissected out of perception and studied *ex situ*, an event unto itself divorced from real-life" (p. 181), perception, recognition, and response may be artificially abstracted into distinct phases, but they are phenomenologically all of a piece. "Thinking" only takes place through all of these activities taken together, unfolding *as* animation.

[191] One of Sperry's (1952) key arguments is that motor, sensory and associative functions of the brain are interwoven in a way that makes it structurally and physiologically impossible to separate them. Indeed, he concludes that at its core, "perception is basically an implicit preparation to respond" (p. 302). Sperry's insights are confirmed by observations of fetal development. In considering the links between primal animation and kinaesthesia, Sheets-Johnstone (2011) points out that "the first developing *perceptual system*, apparent soon after conception and dramatically apparent in the varied self-movement abilities of fetuses, is the somatosensory cortex" (p. 228), and that "the motor system is thoroughly enmeshed as a singular organized whole with perception" (p. 384). Further, self-movement is integral to embryonic development:

> The comparatively early development of neural tissue related to movement is of particular interest in conjunction with physiological studies suggesting that neural development of the motor cortex is stimulated by the body movements of the fetus itself. In other words, form does not develop solely on its own. Movement influences morphology (p. 74).

[192] In a popular TED Talk, Wolpert (2011) states emphatically, "We have a brain for one reason and one reason only, and that's to produce adaptable and complex movements." He illustrates his point by referring to the life cycle of the sea squirt, which as a juvenile has a nervous system, but once it has selected a permanent spot to anchor itself, "the first thing it does […] is to digest its own brain and nervous system for food. So, once you don't need to move you don't need the luxury of that brain" (see https://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_wolpert_the_real_reason_for_brains).

[193] Sheets-Johnstone (2011) quotes "An Essay on Understanding the Mind," where Kelso writes, "the brain did not evolve merely to register representations of the world; rather, it evolved for adaptive action and behavior. Musculoskeletal structures coevolved with appropriate brain structures so that the entire unit functions together in an adaptive fashion" (Kelso cited in Sheets-Johnstone, 389). What is implicit in Kelso's argument is that representations and adaptive action and behaviour are all of a piece; to consider the former in isolation from the latter is to stage an artificial absence. Kelso (1995) is best known, however, for

"mental" activity at the centre of being-concerned-with-itself.[194] More broadly, they also call into question the insistent tendency to estrange mental processes from the physical world as a privileged sphere of being that exists epiphenomenally to the animate forms that ground the very possibility of thought.

Using her phenomenological approach, Sheets-Johnstone is able to bring together various strands of sociological, psychological, and neurological research in ways that redefine semiotics. Rather than beginning with a notion of signs as abstract representations that differ from direct interactions and defer engagement with lived experiences, Sheets-Johnstone discovers movement as foundational to an understanding of both consciousness and meaning-making. Her explorations of corporeal life rooted in tactile-kinaesthetic sensation also result in a fresh reading of Husserl's eidetic project of a "*a science of essential Being.*" Understanding organic bodies as potential semantic templates allows her to ground the notion of *logos* in terms of living interactions rather than according to a divine order. In Sheets-Johnstone's (2009) parsing, creaturely comportment and movement demonstrate how organisms have access to a "*kinetic bodily logos*, a natural kinetic intelligence that is there from the beginning in both prey and predator and that evolves on the basis of experience" (p. 53). In her reading, the transcendence that allows an organism to go "beyond" its inner self to engage meaningfully with a world populated by others is evolutionary rather than immortal. Organisms are born into worlds to which they are evolutionarily suited, and meaningful engagement is directly tied to their ability to thrive: the creatures "who are able

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his attention to the importance of self-organizing system dynamics in determining action. In *Dynamic Patterns*, he argues that neurobiological structures are no different in their function than other types of systems: "At each level of complexity, novel properties appear whose behavior cannot be predicted from the knowledge of component processes alone" (p. 228, also cited in Sheets-Johnstone 2011, p. 492). This suggests another possible avenue for taking seriously Sheets-Johnstone's argument that consciousness is to be found *in movement*; it is the dynamic relations as much any particular material arrangement that plays a key determining role.

[194] Antonio Damasio (2010)—whose examinations of what awarenesses human consciousness has access to, what tasks it attends to, what it does well, and what it does not do, are all based on a consideration of biological value—points out that "attitudes and intentions that we associate with the conscious human mind and that we intuit to result from the workings of big human brains" are present at the cellular level. He maintains that in their basic responsiveness, individual cells exhibit "a stubborn insistence to remain, endure, and prevail," each with its own internal structures for interaction that "deal with the moment-to-moment problems posed by the living conditions and adapt the cell to the situation in a survivable manner" (p. 35). How can this will to live at a cellular level not be understood as a demonstration of being-concerned-with-itself?

actively to make sense of [the world in which they find themselves] in continuously life-enhancing ways […] are the creatures who survive and reproduce" (p. 350).

Sheets-Johnstone reads essences as "tactile-kinesthetic invariants" (p. 292) that originate or are determined by virtue of similarities of animation and form. Tactile-kinaesthetic invariants are "rooted in species-specific capacities, dispositions, and possibilities" (p. 293) that allow like creatures to experience environments similarly, and these invariants are "corporeally codified" (p. 232) through and as kinetic negotiations that enfold thought in their physicality. Essences understood in this way are not abstract representations unique to a human consciousness, whether configured as Dasein or as a transcendent ego; rather, they are active expressions of "a body which moment by moment fulfills a kinetic destiny and so invests the world with meaning" (p. 36).

Sheets-Johnstone considers how tactility and animation provide the corporeal resources that ground the possibility of analogical apperception. Analogical apperception, or appresentation, is Husserl's (1960/1929) descriptive term for the process whereby an ego is able to intuit or constitute a complete object in consciousness even though only a partial surface of that object is sensorially experienced at any given moment. Appresentation is also central to Husserl's theorizations of how intersubjectivity—the mediacy that allows the enclosed consciousness of a self to recognize and communicate with another ego—is possible.[195] Derrida (1973) critiques apperception as revealing a fundamental absence or void at the core of any possibility of presence.[196] Sheets-Johnstone (1990) asserts, however, that analogical apperception is possible

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[195] Husserl describes appresentation as "a kind of *making* '*co-present*'" (§50, p. 109). Recognizing "an Other Ego" presents the difficulty of intuiting a separate "psychophysical unity" with its own distinct sphere of "ownness" (§50, p. 110), even though that separate ownness can never be directly perceived—or, as Husserl describes it, "can never attain actual presence, never become an object of perception proper" (§51, p. 112). Despite the evidential difficulties of assuring the existence of another's consciousness, Husserl insists that appresentation involves more than mere inference; it "points back to a '*primal instituting*', in which an object […] became constituted for the first time" (§50, p. 111). This is accompanied by pairing, "*a primal form of* […] *passive synthesis* [by] '*association*'" whereby two or more data "*found phenomenologically a unity of similarity*" (§51, p. 112). In the particular case of apperceiving an Other Ego, Husserl posits, "The experienced animate organism of another continues to prove itself as actually an animate organism, solely in its changing but incessantly *harmonious* '*behavior*'" (§52, p. 114).

[196] Derrida identifies representation and appresentation as twin modifications Husserl finds necessary to describe how experience presents itself to consciousness:

precisely because we are animated bodies already attuned to and part of a populated lifeworld.[197] "Analogical apperception […] is a built-in of corporeal life. It has its origin in the *biological disposition to use one's own body as a semantic template*" (p. 308).

In Sheets-Johnstone's (2009) phenomenological analysis, speculation about the arbitrariness of signifiers and the absence of the signified is replaced by considerations of the lived experience of a "tactile-kinesthetic body" that "is always present" (p. 260). Grounding semantics in bodies and in animation significantly reorients how the notion of *representation* is understood. "*Kinetic corporeal representation* […] articulates dynamic rather than static semantics; it is an analogically rather than arbitrarily formed semantics; and it is a relational rather than object-tethered semantics" (pp. 290-291). Kinetic corporeal representation is *lived* by a body,[198] precisely because "analogical thinking is foundationally a process of thinking not in words but in movement" (p. 294). Animate bodies act as a template for making sense of the surrounding environment and the other bodies encountered there; meanings are formed and discovered analogically through and as the qualitative experiences of a moving body that can influence and is influenced by a responsive environment of which it is a part. What is "always present" in kinetic corporeal representation are an animate body that experiences phenomena and

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What […] is called a modification of presentation (*re*-presentation, *ap*-presentation) (*Vergegenwärtigung* or *Appräsentation*) […] conditions it by bifurcating it *a priori*. […T]he security of presence in the metaphorical form of ideality arises and is set forth […] upon this irreducible void (p. 7).

[197] As should be clear by now, while Husserl's consideration of appresentation is directed to an implicitly human ego consciousness, Sheets-Johnstone extends her various readings of analogical apperception to encompass creatures across an evolutionary spectrum, with or without brains.

[198] One of the unique qualities of lived experience is that it enfolds tactile-kinaesthetic qualia. To imagine a touch is not the same as experiencing a touch directly—Sheets-Johnstone (2011) observes that "*the kinestheses* […] can be freely varied *imaginatively* only as a *visual* phenomenon" (p. 172)—hence the trope of pinching oneself to make sure that one is awake. This dissertation's earlier discussion of mirror neurons suggests that Sheets-Johnstone's assertion is not entirely accurate, or at least requires a rethinking of what is involved in vision; in at least some primates, including humans, neural pathways in the premotor cortex are activated when we see or *hear* movement and object-related action (see Kohler *et al*. 2002 and Keysers *et al*. 2004). Marc Schieber (2013) reports that the same appears to be true when humans imagine moving, and that neural activity extends beyond the premotor cortex and into the spinal column (p. R152). What differs—and indeed what allows us to distinguish a difference between imagined or observed movement and realized actions—is the neural follow-through into active movement. Given Husserl's and Sheets-Johnstone's insistence on the primordiality of the kinestheses, this would appear to be an important epistemological if not ontological dimension of lived experience configured as presence.

the qualitative experiences that are the phenomena. Furthermore, animate bodies often have multiple and integrated perceptual systems that contribute to the construction of kinetic corporeal representation, facilitating the capacity for apperception.[199]

By considering the meaning-making practices of living creatures as animate forms, Sheets-Johnstone is able to uncover the corporeal foundations of conceptualization and to trace how tactile-kinaesthetic processes are a part of thinking in movement. She concludes that language and other forms of symbolic thought arise out of having a body with a movement-based capacity for analogical thinking.[200] Because kinetic corporeal representation is processual rather than static, an animate body has the opportunity to stumble, hesitate, make mistakes, encounter unexpected qualia, explore relationalities, and achieve successes that clarify phenomena's meaningfulnesses. Relationality is the experiential given through which an animate body builds up the repertoire of corporeal concepts that inform a sense of self, world and others:

> elemental spatial concepts such as near, far, open, close, inside, and outside are contingent on kinetic/kinesthetic experience; elemental qualitative concepts such as smooth, sudden, intense, attenuated, and soft, are embodied in affective experience. Affective/tactile-kinesthetic concepts are clearly not lexical creations but the result of affective/tactile-kinesthetic experience; they are clearly tied not to static phenomena but to dynamic happenings and experience (p. 365).

The departure point for uncovering the "essence" of presence, then, might not rest with Derrida's abstract notion of metaphoricity, but with a consideration of the conditions of *relationality* that

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[199] Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2002/1945) makes the point that the perceptual systems of the human sensorium can be accessed both as integrated structural wholes and in isolation:

> there is a natural attitude of vision in which […] the parts of the field are linked in an organization which makes them recognizable and identifiable. The […] separate sensory impact occurs when I break this total structuralization […] in order to catch and describe it. When I have taken up this attitude, […] the world is atomized into sensible qualities (pp. 262-263).

[200] As Sheets-Johnstone (2009) puts it: "*the body is both at the origin of analogical thinking and the foundation on which symbolizing activity and symbols originate and evolve*" (p. 302). In *The Roots of Thinking*, Sheets-Johnstone (1990) makes a strong case for the premise that "the origin of language lies in the discovery of certain sensory-kinetic powers, the discovery of certain bodily *I can's* in the form of lingual articulations and discriminations" (p. 162), showing how "the act of sounding, the sound itself and the meaning of sound were all physiognomically related" in primordial language (p. 163).

make analogical thought possible.[201] In her meticulous considerations of animate forms, Sheets-Johnstone shows how the distinction between inside and outside that Derrida employs to organize his critique of presence is less the mark of a void or an absence at the heart of consciousness than the recognition of an inherent feature of both bodies[202] and bodily movement.[203]

Any ontology that separates minds from bodies and thereby privileges mental awareness as the core of being will inevitably come up against lacks and excesses when it attempts to account for the being of the material world and of the fleshy bodies that such awarenesses appear to inhabit and move within. This is in part because what has come to be identified as an ego consciousness usually only takes into account a constructed and highly selective sequestering of human brain functions devoted specifically to generating conscious representations of self, world, and others. Such a narrow focus ignores the bulk of what constitutes the being of animate bodies. In order to recuperate a notion of the value of presence in relation to this dissertation's concern with the possibility of shared consensuses of meaningfulness, these opening chapters have sought to argue for expanded understandings of what comprises both thinking and consciousness. As has been argued from various perspectives, the brain activity associated with conscious awareness

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[201] Representation involves not just the signification of a signified, but also a mapping of its contextual relations to the meaning-maker, whether implicitly or explicitly. Chiara Ambrosio's (2014) consideration of Charles S. Peirce's use of diagrams uncovers the importance of iconicity as a representational practice with the specific capacity to "make *relations* visible" (p. 259). In unpacking Peirce's understanding of the "likeness" that distinguishes icons as a particular class of signs, she argues, "the fruitfulness of icons partly consists in the fact that they naturally invite us to re-enact […] the process of finding a suitable representative relation holding between particular signs and the states of affairs they stand for" (p. 261) (see also footnote 119 above). She cites a key example of resemblance offered by Peirce, where he points out the analogous relationship between two seemingly distinct visual figures by describing the tactile-kinaesthetic similarities involved in their production. In such "representations," the "sign" points less to a signified than to the relationality through which the signified is constructed: not a stand-alone thing, but a thing in its situatedness, with a meaning tied not to text per se, but to *con*text.

[202] We tend to think of space as three-dimensional, according to the object-oriented visuality mapped so expertly by a Cartesian coordinate plane, but Sheets-Johnstone (2009) argues that phenomenologically, bodies experience an additional dimension:

> The spatiality of the body […] is actually four-dimensional, not with respect to the commonly added temporal dimension, but with respect to a further spatial dimension that is rarely recognized or included in discussion of the spatiality of the body, namely, inside/outside (p. 365).

[203] Sheets-Johnstone (2011) reminds us that when we move, we activate both an affective sense of inner movement, and an objective sense of moving through a world of proximities, such that "self-movement has an inside and an outside, either of which can be the object of our attention and hence constitute our experience" (p. 517).

and reasoning is only a part of the integrated meaning-making resources of animate bodies. Consciousness and mental awareness are not distinct from the material world; nor are they processes or functions limited to the workings of a brain or even a nervous system. An expanded recognition of what constitutes consciousness and meaning-making opens up various possibilities for reconsidering presence and presencing as meaningful terms. With this groundwork in place, we should now be ready to consider questions of presence by focusing on *relationality* while engaging the particular rigours of *thinking with a body*, which envelops Maxine Sheets-Johnstone's formulation of thinking in movement.

CHAPTER 4: RELATIONALITY

Intra-active relationality: presence as enacting and enacted agency

This dissertation began by proposing to investigate notions of presence and consider how presence might be connected to the possibility of shared meaningfulness. Developing an understanding of presence that incorporates insights from philosophy, neuroscience and performance art led me to think through questions of human consciousness and in particular what thinking is, using Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *What is Philosophy?* as a departure point to identify several "ways" of thinking that encompass percept and affect as well as concept. Identifying perception and feeling—both central aspects of our fundamental sense of corporeal being—as forms of thinking works against the twin cultural tendencies to separate mind and body as distinct entities, and to frame thought as a mediated representation of a reified and separate material existence. With this grounding, I moved to a consideration of Jacques Derrida's critique of Western philosophy, which he characterized as an extended metaphysics of presence. I asked whether, as he claims, writing is indeed the proper metaphor for understanding thought, consciousness, and by extension, how this might influence understandings of presence. I have argued, following N. Katherine Hayles, that thinking cannot be separated from the bodies that produce thought, finding particular usefulness in Maxine Sheets-Johnstone's writings on the corporeal roots of thinking and on thinking in movement. Rather than framing presence as a problem of metaphoricity, which emphasizes an uncertain correspondence of concepts or essences with the things they represent, I have suggested that presence might be productively reconfigured as centrally attuned to questions of relationality, focusing on movement, dynamics, and configuration as the building blocks of corporeal sense-making that make it possible for us to recognize and name individual agencies, entities, or things.

Understanding "presence" as incorporating and enfolding relationality fundamentally changes the meaning of the term from what Jacques Derrida was referring to when he described Western philosophy's project as a metaphysics of presence. In *Body Art*, Amelia Jones (1998) casually but usefully refigures Derrida's phrase as "a metaphysics of intentionality" (p. 30), which points to how Derrida's use of the word *presence* is frequently a stand-in for a particular notion of a supposedly "pure" *self-presence*. In this sense, Derrida's unease with presence stems in large

part not from an absence or lack of *being*, but from an intentional consciousness's inability to control the directions in which it finds itself already pulled, both knowingly and unknowing: a decentring—or in the rhetoric Derrida favours, a "contamination"—of consciousness that is often also read as excess. Thus, Jones's self-avowed "poststructural suspicion of discourses of presence" (p. 33) can be understood as a critique of the ideal of a self-contained intentionality that generates a hermetically enclosed meaningfulness. In her analysis of United States-based body art practices of the 1970s, for example, Jones argues that "the presentation of the body/self in body art marks not the immediacy, unity, and presence of this body/self but its radical interdependence with the other" (p. 107).[204]

Jones's suspicion of intentionality extends to a critique of any privileged guarantee of shared meaningfulness that might be associated with liveness and direct bodily contact. In particular, she has suggested that digital, photographic and textual records of a performance can be understood as being at least as productive of meaning as the live witnessing of an event. In relation to Carolee Schneemann's performance work, *Interior Scroll*, for example, Jones writes:

> Having direct physical contact with an artist who pulls a scroll from her vaginal canal does not ensure "knowledge" of her (as individual and/or artist and/or work of art) any more than does looking at a film or picture of this activity, or looking at a picture that was made as the result of such an action (pp. 33-34).

In Jones's view,

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[204] Jones nevertheless acknowledges a quality of "thereness" that, unlike the proximal "here" or the immediate "now," apparently sits outside her critique of presence, as when she describes "the brute, bloody *there*-ness of [Orlan's] body" (p. 227), or when she notes how "the production of pain across the body […] confirms its 'thereness' and yet opens to question how such thereness signifies in relation to the self (and by projection, other) who suffers" (pp. 234-235). The gap between presence and thereness, for Jones, appears to be at least partially a matter of interpretive undecidability. She writes, for example:

> The body […] is always already thought: the body has no fixed, "material" truth preexisting its relations with the world and with others, and we know our own bodies only through our own thought, conditioned by our perceived relations with others (p. 59).

Her argument here assumes as given numerous ideas that this dissertation seeks to problematize, among them the construction of an essentialized notion of "the" body (and by extension, Jones's hybrid notion of the "body/self" as subject); the equation of conscious "knowing" with material intelligibility (forgetting the "truth" of, for example, how a flesh-and-bone body physically inhabits time and space); and the reification of thought as somehow distinct from and prior to the animate forms through (and as) which thought manifests.

For those who wish to privilege performance or body art for its merging of art and life, its delivery of the body/subject of the artist directly to the viewer, the body must be seen as an unmediated reflection of the self whose presence guarantees the redemptive quality of art activism (p. 35).[205]

There are a number of points to unpack here. First, it should be noted that as an art historian, Jones's interest in a performance hinges precisely on how it functions as representation—that is, how successfully it evokes or provokes particular concepts, percepts, and affects for an audience. Given this imperative, it is not surprising that, for her, the documents that survive or come out of a performance, which can undoubtedly have their own impact and expressivity for those who encounter them, must be enfolded into an overall understanding of what constitutes the "artwork." She also rightly points out that many artists who choose to use their own bodies in the creation of an artwork are precisely interested in presenting and interrogating how their bodies act as images, as representations—and often for *themselves* as much as for others. From her perspective, there is no imperative to privilege either the immediate event of the performance or a direct encounter with the artist's body since, as she argues, a live body in performance functions or communicates just as representationally (though not identically) as a photograph or a video image of a body does. Reading performances as essentially discursive activities, Jones notes that being in the company of a performer does not allow an audience member to inhabit the performer's body or directly experience the performer's consciousness. Furthermore, the circulation of an image of an event not only has the possibility of reaching a much wider audience; it can also powerfully influence how the performance comes to

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[205] At the beginning of this dissertation, I noted the move to reject distinctions between art and life in some performance practices. Contrary to Jones's argument here, I understand the "merging of art and life" not as necessarily embracing the ideal of a body that can present its self-as-psyche in an unmediated directness, but rather, as reflecting an explicit interest in the unfolding of liveness and interactivity that takes place in shared time and space. Ritualized viewing conventions that treat live presentations as purely symbolic representations (to be placed in front of bodies that have been reduced to spectating brains) cover over the fact that performer and audience are all animate bodies that continue to inhabit their corporeal existence as they perform or watch, manifesting materially in time and space as they generate the concepts, percepts and affects that are experienced mentally as an "as if." In this case, refusing to artificially hive off "art" from "life" is better understood as a recognition that art operates and has agency only within the shared plane of ongoing being that is always already animate, material, spatial, and temporal.

have meaning for others, whether or not they experienced the live event. Indeed, such documents can even influence how a performer understands or remembers her actions.

What is crucial for Jones, who argues powerfully that live presence offers no privileged possibility of unmediated access to the intentionality of an other, is that meaning is continually negotiable and deferred—a condition Jones ascribes not only to the performance as an expressive gesture, but to the performer's "body/self" as well.[206] For Jones, this openness to interpretation marks a radical *intersubjectivity*—a term she equates with "the self as […] performed or enacted in relation to others" (p. 86)—that informs not only a live experience, but also any encounter with performance documents.[207] Jones understands the achievement of this intersubjectivity as taking place representationally, through the chiasmic intertwining of the visible and the tangible proposed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, which will be explored in greater depth later in this chapter. As she describes it,

> body art projects explicitly stage the phenomenological model of intersubjectivity, in
> which the *exchange* of subjectivities (their *intertwining*) takes place through the
> engagement of bodies/subjects as well as, more specifically, the *reversibility* of

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[206] For Jones, this uncertainty of meaning marks both the supplementarity of bodies in their materiality and the deferral of an intentional, knowable "self" as psyche that a human body purports to surface through its appearance: "the photograph of the body art event or performance could, in fact, be said to expose the body itself as supplementary, as both the visible proof of the self and its endless deferral" (pp. 34-35).

[207] In "'Presence' in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation," Jones (1997) writes, "While the live situation may enable the phenomenological relations of flesh-to-flesh engagement, the documentary exchange (viewer/reader <—> document) is equally intersubjective" (p. 12). I agree that performance documents can be powerfully meaningful and open to subjective interpretation, although I have also written elsewhere about how, for me, Jones's argument belies the persuasive vividness and visceral intelligibility of her own eyewitness accounts of performances she has experienced live as opposed to only through documentation (see Couillard 2021b). As a performer, I would also note that the nature of the "exchange" that can take place between audience member and performer through the viewing of a residual document is profoundly different, at least for the artist, from that of a live interaction. In the company of live witnesses, I experience the audience as engaging not only with my bodily surface, not only with whatever image or representation individual audience members may be formulating of me—an active interpretive process of objectification that I can often feel quite keenly, in ways that I have immediate opportunities to embrace, interrogate, resist or redirect—but also, in an albeit mediated way, with an animate, responsive, subjective *me* that unfolds through lived experience. I certainly do not feel an audience's reaction to a photograph or video or text about one of my performances as constituting an engagement *with me*. Indeed, I may never even become aware of such an engagement, taking place in a discrete time and place, between the "audience" and an object or thing distinct from my lived experience. However one might attempt to gloss an image or text as extending the agency of my subjectivity, I do not experience that document as my *self*.

expression and perception (as well as of subject and object) through which we constitute ourselves in the world. In Merleau-Ponty's terms, "the body proper is a premonition of the other person," a spatial and temporal projection. By opening the embodied artist/subject to the other, body art also opens the embodied other (as interpretive *self*) to the artist; each projects onto the other—*each taking its place there as subject* while simultaneously authorizing the other as subject (p. 106; Jones's citation of Merleau-Ponty comes from *Signs*, a collection the philosopher's essays published in the early 1960s).

Although Jones characterizes this engagement as an exchange or intertwining that has the potential to shape the subjectivities of both artist and witness, it is important to note that she identifies the meanings and interpretations that are generated as being particular and individualized rather than *shared*. Even as we influence each other, reading each other as a self, determining how each of us is perceived as a self, and perhaps even impacting how each of us perceives and projects our "selves" in relation to each other—we cannot fully know or share our perceptions.[208] By extension, we can never really *be* our selves.

"Body/self" is the construction that Jones uses to describe her understanding of the meaningful subject who is expressed and deployed in body art practices. Presented through the medium of a body that can only ever be apprehended as a representation, "the subject 'means' always in relationship to others and the locus of identity is always elsewhere" (p. 14). Such a body is not, first and foremost, material (or even lived[209]), but rather, a "particularized social body

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[208] Note that this intersubjective malleability, our capacity to influence each other, is predominantly framed as targetting the self-as-psyche—"an exchange of *subjectivities*"—in which the locus of impact is generally understood in terms of what this dissertation has outlined as ways of *thinking* (affect, percept, concept). Such an approach primes us to understand human interactions as being primarily mental transactions that can affect our corporeal understanding rather than as intra-corporeal transformations that have consequent effects on consciousness. Is our openness to being best understood as a function of our consciousness, or as the entanglement that is our animate bodily inhabitation of spatio-temporal materiality?

[209] In *Carnal Thoughts*, Vivian Sobchack (2004) attempts to write from the point of view of what she calls a "lived body" rather than using the abstracted construction "the body," (see footnote 188 above):

> that is, […] not merely with the body as an abstracted object belonging always to someone else but also with what it means to be "embodied" and to live our animated and metamorphic existences as the concrete, extroverted, and spirited subjects we all objectively are (p. 1).

This sentiment accords with the musings of feminist artist Eleanor Antin, who wrote

> the notion of the body is itself an alienation of the physical aspect of the self. . . . But what if the artist makes the leap from "the body" to "my body"? "My body" is, after all, an aspect of "my self"

(or in [Jones's] terms, the body/self)" (p. 206), whereby "the subject 'is' only always in relation to the perceptions/memories of others" (p. 239). While this socially formulated, intersubjective body/self "is not self-contained in its meaningfulness" (p. 34), it is still surprisingly Cartesian in its privileging of psyche over materiality. Its *meaningfulness* is entirely determined by individual, mental *consciousnesses* that can affect each other, but can never truly know each other (or themselves). This formulation relies on an idea of the body/self-as-subject—a consciousness whose body manifests as supplementarity because it is only ever notional, i.e. only ever intelligible as something to be mentally "known"—that is both enclosed in its ability to "know" and yet never capable of cohering as self-contained because of its relational intersubjectivity.

Perhaps, however, there is another approach, one that does not so confidently separate consciousness from the bodies—or configurations of bodies—that manifest (as) individual and collective awareness and intelligibility. What if relationality in its dynamic unfolding could be understood as animate, material, spatial and temporal coherence and intelligibility?

Returning to the figure of the knot, which I suggested can only be truly grasped in its knotted state, presence is not something that can be deconstructed into an exclusively nounal entity. That approach leads into the morass of untethered representation. Rather, presence is profoundly prepositional, always produced or determined in relation to/ with/ among/ before/ against. If we are able to uncover entities or agencies whose presence we can label according to terms such as self, world, and other, it is precisely because their contours or patterns appear *in relation to* each other. It is relationality that allows *things* to emerge as identifiable entities. In this sense, the notion of presence always already implies—indeed, requires—co-presence. Individuated presences, if we can describe entities in this way, distinguish themselves

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and one of the means by which my self projects itself into the physical world (Eleanor Antin in "An autobiography of the Artist as Autobiographer," from the October 1974 issue of *LAICA Journal* (Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art), p. 18, as quoted in Jones 1998, p. 159).

As Sobchack (2004) notes, replacing actual bodies with an essentialized notion of "the body" means regarding them "often like a text and sometimes like a machine" (p. 3). While the need to constantly remind oneself that one not only has but *is* a body points to the profoundly ingrained tendency—at least in Western culture—to theorize the mental and physical as distinct realms (see footnote 23 above), Sobchack usefully reminds her readers that the way one experiences oneself as thinking with a body is "always already qualified by the mutable specificities and constraints of history and culture. In this sense, embodiment is never a priori to historical and cultural experience" (p. 2). Contra Sheets-Johnstone, Sobchack embraces embodiment as a term that "necessarily entails both the body and consciousness, objectivity and subjectivity, in an *irreducible ensemble*" (p. 4).

reciprocally. If I am able to assert my being as a self, it is not as some abstracted, essentialized, informational entity removed from anything but its own solipsistic surety. How else could a self recognize its being, except in relation to something other than its being? Being is only a meaningful term if there are recognizable borders or limits on that being: times or locations that being does not inhabit or move through, or that are inhabited by other, different and distinguishable types of being. A self discovers itself not simply as a consciousness that happens to have a body, but rather as already being a body that moves, and already existing as part of a larger world, occupied and inhabited by various entities, including other animate, bodily selves. Presence is a profoundly intra-active phenomenon, in which recognizable entities do not precede their interactions, but rather, are mutually constituted and made intelligible through encounter.

By invoking the notion of intra-action, I am returning to the insights of Karen Barad (2007), who explains intra-action this way:

> The neologism "intra-action" *signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies*. That is, in contrast to the usual "interaction," which assumes that there are separate individual agencies that precede their interaction, the notion of intra-action recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action. […
> T]he "distinct" agencies are only distinct in a relational, not an absolute, sense, that is, *agencies are only distinct in relation to their mutual entanglement; they don't exist as individual elements* (p. 33).

In Barad's agential realist ontology, to say that an entity exists is to say that it appears or emerges dynamically, in relation to other entities or agencies. Intra-action is the boundary-making process that defines the intelligibility of an entity and determines the conditions whereby an entity can be considered to manifest presence—to "be" a particular thing. Put another way, particular conditions of relationality are what determine and stabilize what counts as an individuated entity. Entities "exist" as intelligible markers of situated meaningfulness. It should be noted that Barad's appeal to intelligibility, drawing as it does from observations of quantum behaviour, moves beyond any humanist notion of what constitutes knowing. She asserts, "There is no res cogitans that inhabits a given body with inherent boundaries differentiating self and other. Rather, subjects are differentially constituted through specific intra-actions" (p. 379). In an agential realist account, knowing belongs as much to the world as it does to any self that might populate that

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world.[210] As such, "intelligibility is an ontological performance of the world in its ongoing articulation. […K]nowing does not require intellection in the humanist sense […]; knowing is a matter of differential responsiveness (as performatively articulated and accountable) to what matters" (pp. 379-380).[211] Barad's approach treats the distinction between ontology and epistemology as, at best, misleading; if "intelligibility is an ontological performance of the world in its ongoing articulation," then *meaning is the enactment of being*.[212] Meaning is articulated and enacted performatively through actions or practices, and manifests as identifiable bodies or as marks on bodies that are intelligible within the context of "the larger material arrangement of which 'we' are a 'part'" (p. 178).[213] An agential realist account recognizes that meaning and intelligibility are always contextual, and therefore partial; this situatedness[214] is determined

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[210] This seems to go a step beyond Brian Massumi's (2002) definition of a thing "in itself" as the sum of all "the thought-perceptions in which it is implicated" (p. 92)—see footnote 64 above. Here, it is not only the perceptions of what we recognize as sentient or living beings that signal or constitute intelligibility and evidence worldly connectedness; rather, any phenomenal materialization—any manifestation of differential responsiveness; for example, the orientation or orbital position of an electron within an atom—can be viewed as a marker of the ongoing, dynamic intelligibility of a thing as a "thing."

[211] Barad's evocation of performative articulation finds its roots in the writings of Judith Butler, but we might also consider Stuart Hall's (2006/1980) insight that meanings are "articulated in practice" (p. 164), by which he means that they must be performed or produce specific actions and responses in order to be recognizable as having been transmitted and received. Although a transmission model of communication is antithetical to Barad's project, since such a model starts with the notion of already defined and distinct entities coming together in interaction, there remains a similar emphasis on the notion that intelligibility is determined by, equated with, or articulated through particular materializations, practices, and actions.

[212] Here one might look productively at the various definitions associated with the term enactment: to "enact" being suggests more than simply performing it as a representation or simulation; rather, meaning ratifies the event of presence by putting it into practice as a doing or being: presence in its fullness suggests an accord or consensus among entities always in the process of being brought into being, a relational *becoming* that enfolds the dynamic specificities of time, space and matter that are its recognizable constituents. Being is active—something we tend to forget when we turn verbs into nouns by treating them as gerunds; in this sense, one might consider the word presence to be at least as closely aligned with "becoming" as it is with "being."

[213] Although Barad often refers to the manifestation of phenomena as evident in "marks on bodies," she also makes it clear that she is thinking "not only of the surface or contours of the body but also the body in the fullness of its physicality, including the very 'atoms' of its being" (pp. 152-153). It should perhaps further be noted that while the concept of "marks on bodies" brings us into the realm of physical traces, what such marks evidence are particular positionings, trajectories, and movements that determine how a thing comes to be recognized as one type of entity rather than another.

[214] I should note that Barad might disagree with my wording here, at least to the extent that "situatedness" could be taken to imply the idea of fixed time and space that together act as containers for changeable

through "agential cuts" that identify what parts of the world count in the manifestation of particular, intelligible, iteratively enacted differentiations.[215] As Barad explains,

> it is only through different enactments of agential cuts […] that [the world] can come to know different aspects of "itself." Only part of the world can be made intelligible to itself at a time, because the other part of the world has to be the part that it makes a difference to (p. 432).

Rather than beginning from the idea of agents or actants as pre-existing beings that have particular forms of agency, Barad focuses on intra-action itself as the process through which an entity manifests as a recognizable thing—that is, how it comes to be: "*Agency is 'doing' or 'being' in its intra-activity. It is the enactment of iterative changes to particular practices—iterative reconfigurings of topological manifolds of spacetimematter relations—through the dynamics of intra-activity*" (p. 178).[216]

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material entities. In her agential realist account, time, space and matter are all intimately interconnected and intra-active. Differential responsiveness effects not only matter, but also time and space; in this context, my reference to "situatedness" should be read as pointing to the intra-active inseparability of *timespacematter* (see footnote 46 above). Barad asks her readers to

> resist the familiar conception of spacetime as a preexisting Euclidean container […] that presents separately constituted bodies with a place to be or a space through which to travel. […] Spacetime itself is iteratively configured through the ongoing intra-activity of the world (p. 376).

This corresponds to physicist Niels Bohr's observations, in which measuring a fixed position materially enacts conditions of indeterminacy for momentum, and vice-versa. Position cannot be understood as an absolute, because fixing one set of conditions opens up varying possibilities for other conditions that can only be projected in terms of probabilities. Hence, "*Embodiment is a matter not of being specifically situated in the world, but rather of being in the world in its dynamic specificity*" (p. 377). One might apply Barad's specific reference to *embodiment* more generally to the notion of *presence*; i.e. *presence* is a matter of being in the world in its dynamic specificity.

[215] Barad arrives at the notion of agential cuts by way of a concept of exclusions as the "defining limit of the domain of intelligibility," a commonality she discovers in both the gender theory of Judith Butler and the theoretical physics of Niels Bohr (p. 439). Where Butler identifies a zone of abjection inhabited by beings that are not recognized as subjects—thereby determining what constitutes a subject by virtue of exclusion—Bohr outlines how "specific material conditions have to exist for the concept of position to be meaningful, and if such conditions exist, they materially exclude the notion of momentum from being intelligible" (p. 436). In Barad's account, which extrapolates from both of these insights, "Intra-actions always entail particular exclusions," which thereby "iteratively reconfigure what is possible and what is impossible" (p. 177).

[216] Barad's emphasis on iterativity is of particular note in terms of thinking through temporal relationalities. We can draw an analogy to the way animate bodies habituate patterns of activity: instantiating styles, behaviours, and meanings by repeating and retracing particular gestures. Barad appears to argue that

While this dissertation is not proposing to consider presence solely or entirely through an agential realist lens, Barad's arguments provide a useful framework for proposing a redefinition of presence. I have suggested that presence is centrally attuned to questions of relationality, and that it is a profoundly intra-active phenomenon. Earlier in this dissertation, in contemplating how to cite the performance art works that I will consider in the following chapters—ephemeral events that offer no textual documents as legible, objective sources for independent verification—I described those performances as occasions of presence that called for a working-through from my embedded position as audience, witness and participant in their becoming. I further asserted that since I am part of what constitutes those performances' presence, I could only map them as instances of presence from within my embedded or implicated (some might say subjective) position. I used the figure of the knot to evoke the situatedness of presence—what, following Barad, we might now call "*being in the world in its dynamic specificity*" (p. 377)—as something that cannot be understood by deconstructing it into a set of constituent parts. Removing the "part" from its situatedness effectively erases the conditions that support or constitute its being. Relationality—being in the world in its dynamic specificity—is an essential aspect or condition of presence. Intra-action also proposes something even broader than this. If Barad is correct, my constitution as a particular, identifiable self has been and is being *effected* by my intra-active involvement in these performances. This suggests that my understandings of the works must be understood as being something more than simply subjective reactions; as instances of differential responsiveness, they are enacting and enacted material-discursive outcomes of the performances.

Drawing from Barad, I might now suggest that *presence is another name for the enacting and enacted agency of intra-active relationality*. If intra-action produces or allows for the differentiation of entities that are intelligible to each other as distinct bodies, or as distinct marks on bodies, then what I am calling presence is the event whereby "'doing' or 'being'" enacts agential cuts that reveal "there is something."[217] Indeed, the event of presence necessarily reveals not just *a* something, but multiple somethings, by enacting or establishing boundary lines of

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something similar is at play across *timespacematter*. Although there are always leeways and differences of condition that can alter relationalities, pathways and dynamic configurations (for lack of better words) that are taken appear to smooth the way for their replication or repetition.

[217] Here I am borrowing a phrase from Merleau-Ponty (1968) that will be sketched out more precisely later in this chapter.

intelligibility. To speak of presence is to recognize the emergence of distinct entities through intra-action. According to Barad, "Intra-actions enact specific boundaries, marking the domains of interiority and exteriority, differentiating the intelligible from the unintelligible, the determinate from the indeterminate" (p. 181) In this reading, interiors and exteriors are co-defining, and differential responsiveness is the foundation of shared meaningfulness. This moves us toward a framing of ontology that is somewhat removed from an opposition of either subject/object or material thing/representational concept, and radically alters any possibility of understanding meaning as being endlessly "deferred."

Presence—the enacting and enacted agency of intra-active relationality—occasions the emergence of meaningful boundaries, and therefore should be understood not as an event of absolute being, but rather, as an iterative process of continual becoming.[218] Becoming is an iterative process because it is always possible for different agential cuts to be enacted, thereby producing different boundaries and entities. Indeed, matter is dynamic, and "phenomena are forever being reenfolded and reformed" (p. 177). This, however, is not the same as Derrida's assertion that meanings are always deferred. Derrida calls presence into question by equating meaningfulness with the imperfect symbolic representations of a consciousness separated from material existence. In an agential realist account, meaningfulness is an ontological event of differential responsiveness evidenced by the emergence of specific bodies and/or marks on bodies. According to Barad, the openness that allows different entities to emerge, what we are asked to understand as *being in the world in its dynamic specificity,* is not an endless deferral of meaning. Rather, agential cuts enact specific boundaries and therefore materialize specific meanings and agencies/entities where "intelligibility is an ontological performance of the world"; in this sense, enactment as performative articulation is precisely contrary to deferral. Meanings are not deferred; they are actualized in dynamically specific contexts.[219] Although "bodies are not

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[218] My use of the word becoming here should be understood as distinct from Deleuze and Guattari's (2004) hyphenated notion of becoming-other discussed earlier. While we share a similar interest in evoking an ever-dynamic moving-toward within an open field of play and discovery rather than insisting on an incontrovertible being that can never be satisfactorily proven, my use of the word becoming is not meant to invoke the horizon of an object that becomes intelligible as a subjective experience of internal transformation. For more on Deleuze and Guattari's hyphenated idea of becoming-, see Couillard 2020.

[219] Here, I am suggesting that we understand the various movements and inhabitations that manifest as presence not as representations, but as actualizations. If I get bitten by a mosquito, the sharp pain that

objects with inherent boundaries and properties; they are material-discursive phenomena" (p. 153), the performative enactment of particular agential cuts iteratively produces specifically intelligible—that is, meaningful—boundaries and bodies, resolving their indeterminacy and bringing them into being, albeit temporarily and contextually. Meaning is quite literally—which is to say, temporally, spatially, and materially—enacted.

Clearly, Barad's agential realism sidesteps any notion of "writing" as an apt descriptor for the manifestation of phenomena when it asserts that intelligibility as differential responsiveness is not a determination of human consciousness or intellection. More pointedly, however, her approach also reformulates the very notion of discourse. For Barad, meaning—framed as discursive practice—and materiality—described as material phenomena—are intertwined, and must be understood together as entangled, worlding processes. "Discursive practices are not speech acts, linguistic representations, or even linguistic performances, bearing some unspecified relationship to material practices" (p. 149)—nor can they be seen as the exclusive domain of humans, since humans emerge *from* material-discursive practices. "[D]iscursive practices are […] material (re)configurings of the world through which the determination of boundaries, properties, and meanings is differentially enacted" (p. 151). Meaning is not something that gets inscribed onto a neutral, pre-existing thing called matter positioned within a neutral container of space and time; rather, "matter and meaning are mutually articulated" (p. 152).[220]

Moreover, matter is "*not a thing, but a doing, a congealing of agency*" (p. 151). Thus Barad refers to bodies sometimes as agencies, and sometimes as entities. "Doing" and "being"

accompanies the sting and the lingering itchiness of my skin at the site of the puncture could be characterized as "representations," in that they are bodily signals that provide information about the trauma. As neural events, they appear at first glance to be a different kind of event from the physical puncturing of the skin, the extraction of blood, or the exchange of chemicals, viruses and other substances that takes place when the mosquito bites. Does it make sense to characterize the trickle of blood that clots around the bite simply as a "representation" of the bite, subject to translation and *différance*? I would argue that the body's various reactions, including both neural and molecular changes, are better understood as actualizations, intra-actions in which the mosquito as predator and I as its prey are made intelligible to each other. Similarly, if I were to contract malaria as a result of the bite, surely my body's various responses to the disease would be more than simply representations.

[220] Barad's argument for the entanglement of the material and discursive as practices of intelligibility can also be viewed as according with efforts to find an alternative conception to the mind-body duality that continues to pervade contemporary thought.

become inseparable as agential enactments, where, as has been noted previously, "*agency is 'doing' or 'being' in its intra-activity*" (p. 178). Barad's enfolding of "doing" and "being" offers a way of rethinking of Maxine Sheets-Johnstone's evocation of animate form explored in the previous chapter. Sheets-Johnstone meticulously links animation to liveness, to consciousness, and to meaningfulness. Is it plausible to go beyond an understanding of organic life as animate form, and living, organic bodies as semantic templates who manifest consciousness through movement, to recognize all matter and movement in its differential responsiveness as meaningful being? Barad seems to suggest as much when she posits intra-activity as "a new sense of aliveness" that "makes possible the very distinction between the animate and the inanimate" (p. 449). What is implied rather than explicit in Barad's Bohr-inspired account, however, is an appreciation of the fundamentality of animation as a key manifestation and agency of differential responsiveness. Quantum measurement is critically concerned with properties such as momentum, orientation, and position. In considering whether a photon exhibits wave-like or particle-like behaviour, for example, what is being observed is whether what happens conforms to the *movement* of matter or the *movement* of energy. Such a description obscures the way motion is not simply an attribute belonging to a particular type of entity; motion becomes a determinate and determining characteristic of its being. Materiality as a "congealing of agency" necessarily involves not only formal entities (bodies or marks on bodies), but also animation as a key aspect of intelligibility.[221] Extending the insights of Sheets-Johnstone, I advocate here for the importance of recognizing animation as something other than simply an *attribute* of matter.[222] Adopting the vocabulary of agential realism, animation can be productively understood in terms of both *being* and *doing*; it is a key agential component enacting and enacted by intra-active relationality; like matter, it is "agentive and intra-active" (p. 170).

What is important for Barad is that recognizable attributes associated with animation, such as momentum and position, are "*theoretical concepts* [… that] are not ideational in character

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[221] I am tempted to go so far as to suggest that while Barad asserts, "There is no res cogitans that inhabits a given body with inherent boundaries differentiating self and other" (p. 379), animation itself is a kind of *inhabitation* that is fundamental to intelligibility. This points back to the previous chapter's consideration of the importance of the terms movement and inhabitation to Derrida's analysis of *différance*.

[222] Just as Barad would have us recognize time and space as dynamic outcomes rather than simply static containers for matter.

but rather *specific physical arrangements*." They are "material articulations of the world." As such, they must be understood as being properties of phenomena rather than of individuated objects, where "*phenomena are the ontological inseparability/entanglement of intra-acting 'agencies'*" (p. 139).[223] This is equally true of subjects and objects as individuated entities: "intra-actions enact *agential separability*—the condition of *exteriority within phenomena*" (p. 140) whereby it becomes possible to differentiate subject and object. Barad's ontological shift requires a different understanding not only of objects and attributes, but also of causality. In agential realism, observing and measuring are viewed as material-discursive practices that enact physical arrangements.[224] As activities, they entail the making—that is, the doing or being—of apparatuses that perform agential cuts whereby "the agential cut enacts a causal structure among components of a phenomenon in the marking of the 'measuring agencies' ('effect') by the 'measured object' ('cause')" (p. 140).[225] Causality is not simply an outcome of interacting entities within a neutral spacetime container; rather, intra-action determines the nature or structure of causality that

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[223] Barad uses the term *phenomenon* not in the Husserlian sense, but as a way of identifying the relations set up by agential cuts as the "ontological primitives" that effect what count as entities. Intra-action is the basis of a phenomenon, not the entities produced. The determinate emergence of an entity as relata is secondary, an *effect* of the ontologically fundamental agential intra-action:

> A specific intra-action (involving a specific material configuration of the "apparatus") enacts an agential cut […], effecting a separation between "subject" and "object." That is, the agential cut enacts a resolution *within* the phenomenon of the inherent ontological (and semantic) indeterminacy (pp. 334-335).

While Barad is no Deleuzean, even taking pains to distance her understanding of the way possibilities are opened up or excluded by the dynamic specificities of intra-action from Deleuze's critique of "the possible," a concept he would have us abandon in favour of a distinction between actual and virtual (pp. 436-437), one could nevertheless draw a productive parallel between Barad's idea of entangled relationality as ontological primitive and Deleuze and Guattari's interest in conceiving *events* over the consideration of essences or things (see footnote 41 above).

[224] For Barad, conceiving, observing and measuring are inextricably related as intra-actions that infiltrate and materialize worldly becomings. Underlining the point made in the quote cited above, "*concepts are defined by the circumstances required for their measurement. That is, theoretical concepts* are not ideational in character; *they are specific physical arrangements*" (p. 109).

[225] Even so, we should not think of intra-activity as "a deterministic dynamics. […] Intra-actions are constraining but not determining" (p. 442). For Barad, an essential aspect of an agential realist account is considering how "indeterminacies, contingencies, and ambiguities coexist with causality" (p. 225). While agential separability marks the emergence of mutually intelligible (i.e. differentially responsive) entities, as has been previously noted, "phenomena are forever being reenfolded and reformed" (p. 177).

unfolds, and apparatuses enact the agential cuts that make and mark the boundaries of the intra-action. Hence, the notion of the apparatus is crucial to an agential realist understanding.

Of apparatuses: thinking action through intra-action

In outlining her concept of an apparatus, Barad finds it useful to survey various sociocultural, philosophical and scientific uses of the term for productive resonances, without foreclosing on her own "reworkings of the notions of materiality, discursive practices, agency, and causality" (p. 146).[226] While she comes to the term by way of laboratory set-ups and measuring devices, she wants her readers to recognize that apparatuses are not simply built assemblies of pre-existing entities, constructed according to human intention.[227] They are not boundaried objects or structures located in the world so much as they are "material-discursive practices" and/or "material configurations or reconfigurings of the world" that also "re(con)figure spatiality and temporality as well as (the traditional notion of) dynamics" (p. 146). Apparatuses "are themselves phenomena" (p. 170), and they "are productive of phenomena" (p. 171). Tracing the outlines of an apparatus involves attending to "the ways in which particular entanglements

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[226] At the beginning of her account of the nature of an apparatus, Barad provides a list of potential references in the form of a set of questions:

> What is an apparatus? Is it the set of instruments needed to perform an experiment? Is it a mediating device that allows the object world to give us a sign of its nature? Is it a prosthetic extension of our sensing abilities? Shall we understand an apparatus in terms of Kantian grids of intelligibility? Aristotelian schemata? Heideggerian background practices? Althusserian apparatuses? In Foucault's sense of discursive practices of *dispositif* (apparatus)? In Butler's sense of the performative? As Latour's inscription or translation devices? Or as Haraway's apparatuses of bodily production? (p. 141)

[227] Barad's nod to Bruno Latour (2005), who has advocated for actor-network theory as a way of analyzing the construction of scientific apparatuses, is instructive here. While Barad's idea of an apparatus can appear to be very similar to what Latour understands as a network, there is a crucial difference. Actor-network theory considers a network to be an assemblage of actors—human and non-human entities—that contribute in a direct way to the shaping of relationships, asserting particular interests and influencing outcomes through their association. In Latour's reading, actors are the agents that form a network through the relationships they establish. Barad's apparatuses may ultimately encompass the same range of human and non-human entities that are understood to belong to a network, but the emphasis is exactly reversed; it is the apparatus as a configuration of relationships that creates or determines the contours that allow for the appearance of discrete entities. Agency and presence manifest through relationality—that is, within material-discursive *practices* as phenomena—rather than belonging to pre-existing material entities. In actor-network theory, a network enlists and consists of entities. In Barad's apparatuses, the apparatus enacts material-discursive practices that allow for the relational emergence of intelligible entities.

matter to the production of subjects and objects" (p. 232), an inquiry that necessarily requires taking a transversal approach where any disciplinary assumptions about intra-actions' boundaries are set aside. As configurings of doing and being—i.e., not static arrangements of objects, but active engagements that amount to "specific practices of differentiating" (p. 232)—apparatuses reveal how material relations are entangled across various domains, "including those that get named social, political, economic, natural, cultural, technological and scientific" (pp. 232-233). Perhaps most importantly, apparatuses are open-ended practices of boundary-making in which "agency is a matter of intra-acting; it is an enactment, not something that someone or something has." For Barad, identifying the intra-activities and exclusions that determine the boundaries of an apparatus also opens up our ability to recognize how "particular possibilities for (intra-)acting exist at every moment, and these changing possibilities entail an ethical obligation to intra-act responsibly in the world's becoming" (p. 235). Following Barad, and in keeping with my revised understanding of presence as the enacting and enacted agency of intra-active relationality, one of the ways I propose to mobilize the performance art works cited in the following chapters is to consider how they function as or within apparatuses.[228] This entails drawing attention to how they function as "specific practices of differentiating," enfolding material-discursive practices that enact material configurations or reconfigurings of self, world, and other, extending beyond the artist's intentions and the audience's understanding of what is considered to properly constitute a performance art work. Approaching the works in this way also demands a closer consideration of what constitutes their "agency."

As an advocate for a posthumanist perspective,[229] Barad is clear in her insistence that "agency is not aligned with human intentionality or subjectivity" (p. 235). While she draws on key theoretical approaches from humanities and social studies scholarship to understand "the practices by which meanings, boundaries and bodies are produced"—notably Michel Foucault's analyses of power and discursive practices, and Judith Butler's meditations on performativity—

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[228] For more on conceiving performance art practices in relation to Barad's notion of the apparatus, see Couillard (2019).

[229] The term "posthuman" has come to be read in multiple ways. Barad uses this term to push back against "the covert resurrection of Man as the unspoken measure of what is and isn't observable or intelligible. [...] Posthumanism doesn't presume the separateness of any-'thing,' let alone the alleged spatial, ontological, and epistemological distinction that sets humans apart" (p. 136).

she reworks their ideas to move beyond what she identifies as "a host of anthropocentric assumptions" (p. 145). Barad's project is aimed in part at establishing an ontological understanding of intelligibility that stands apart from human intellection and intention. Thinking agency beyond a specifically human frame allows Barad to posit material-discursive practices in new ways, calling attention to a broader range of influences and entities while also leaving open the possibility of drawing different boundary lines to demarcate what constitutes humanness. My concerns here are somewhat different, in that I am interested in exploring human agency as a particular manifestation of intelligibility. In relation to this dissertation's effort to rethink presence, human agency and intention appear as specific agential separabilities that *reveal* presence through their attunement to specific types of meaningful entities.

In thinking through questions of agency, intention, and action in relation to performance art, I have found valuable insights Hannah Arendt's (1998/1958) writings on the *vita activa* in *The Human Condition*.[230] Given that Arendt is so passionately concerned to map out a precisely *human* sense of agency and intentionality, reading her work in relation to Barad's posthumanist agential realist perspective may seem a perverse gesture.[231] What I hope to gain, however, is not a repudiation of human agency, but a deeper appreciation of human intentionality as a particular, identifiable agency or animation—a doing or being—that emerges through and forms part of the enacting and enacted agency of intra-active relationality that I equate with presence. While we traditionally tend to understand human agency as *determining* or shaping what counts as subject and object, it is also possible to view our human sense of agency and intentionality as an *outcome* of differential responsiveness. Considered this way, human intentionality, so closely aligned with a sense of selfhood, becomes a recognizable manifestation of presence. Human intention signals intra-active relationality at work; it is something we feel as a specific awareness when we are

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[230] See Couillard (2014) and Couillard (2019).

[231] Arendt's text positions itself at the cusp of a new age, identifying the launch of the first human-built satellite into earth's orbit as a boundary-changing, age-changing event that provides her with an occasion "to trace back [humankind's] modern world alienation […] to its origins, in order to arrive at an understanding of the nature of society" (p. 6). Her concern for the way technological developments not only reflect, but also influence, humankind's understanding of our relationships to the world, to materials, and most particularly to each other, is palpable. Her resolute attempt to delineate (and remember) specifically human forms of agency reflects her astute understanding of just how pervasive, penetrating, and reconfiguring other types of agency are in contemporary life.

being in the world in its dynamic specificity.[232] Returning to the language of Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, intention—which is as much a bodily sensation felt and expressed through movement as it is an intellectual impulse—is one of the ways we experience ourselves as animate forms. As such, we could say that intentionality is one of the ways that presence inhabits us, moves through us, and enacts us as human "selves."

In her meditation on the human condition, Arendt maps out three types of "fundamental human activities: labor, work and action." Each of these activities corresponds to what she understands as the traditionally bounded domains of worldly life,[233] and her analysis is aimed in part at identifying how contemporary life has undergone a blurring or collapsing of those boundaries.[234] For Arendt, "Labor is the activity which corresponds to the biological process of the human body [....] The human condition of labor is life itself" (p. 7). Thus, any human

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[232] In his meditation on the emergence of consciousness, neuroscientist Antonio Damasio (2010) offers a striking account of the way human consciousness appears as an entity through intra-active relations. While his narrative is focused only on what he understands as going on within a brain, and does not encompass the various exteroceptive and interoceptive stimuli that excited the neural system as part of the total apparatus of the "performance" that produces an intentional consciousness in the form of a "conductor," the way he describes the emergence of this "consciousness product" is instructive. He writes:

> The ultimate consciousness product occurs *from* […] numerous brain sites at the same time and not in one site in particular, much as the performance of a symphonic piece does not come from the work of a single musician or even from a whole section of an orchestra. The oddest thing about the upper reaches of a consciousness performance is the conspicuous absence of a conductor *before* the performance begins, although as the performance unfolds, a conductor comes into being. For all intents and purposes, a conductor is now leading the orchestra, although the performance has created the conductor—not the other way around. The conductor is cobbled together by feelings and by a narrative brain device, although this fact does not make the conductor any less real. The conductor undeniably exists in our minds, and nothing is gained by dismissing it as an illusion (pp. 23-23).

In Damasio's description, the agent that directs intentionality—felt by the body as an expression of "self"—comes into being through the performance; it is the outcome of particular intra-active relations.

[233] Arendt frames them as "the basic conditions under which life on earth has been given to man" (p. 7). Throughout her text, Arendt uses the gendered term "man" to refer generically to humankind.

[234] Arendt's three-part *vita activa* folds together the Aristotelian notion of a *bios politikos* with a more modern understanding of the social sphere. In the Greek *polis*, all activities directed toward physical necessity and survival—what we now understand as economy—were considered to belong to the strictly private sphere of family and household, and did not overlap with the public sphere of the *bios politikos*. In contemporary life, however, what constitutes the public world of common concern has been vastly reconfigured, to the point where the social and the political are inextricably linked within the *vita activa*. Arendt traces these historical origins to clarify her identification of labour, work and action as distinct activities.

activities that relate to the cycles of life and death—all that we do that connects us with the natural world—can be considered to fall under this category of activity. To the extent that labour encompasses process, ephemerality, the everyday, and the cyclical nature of life and death, it points to activities of necessity. Labour is concerned with basic sustenance rather than production: it results in no enduring products and generates no real excess. That which is transformed through labour is returned to nature in a repetitive cycle that "assures not only individual survival, but the life of the species" (p. 8).[235]

Arendt distinguishes between labour and another activity she labels as work, a separation that is, by her own admission, unusual. "Work," Arendt asserts, "is the activity which corresponds to the unnaturalness of human existence [....] Work provides an 'artificial' world of things, distinctly different from all natural surroundings" (p 7). If labour is the activity that links us to what we have come to call "nature," then work is what results in a "culture"—that is, the human-made environment and artifacts of human civilization that Arendt signals as constituting a world—without which a distinction between nature and culture would have no meaning. It is therefore through our engagement in work that we as a species come to see ourselves as separated from nature. The things we make through work attain a durability that sets them apart from us as makers, and leads us to recognize an "objecthood" in things. Thus, Arendt argues,

> against the subjectivity of men stands the objectivity of the man-made world rather than the sublime indifference of an untouched nature. [...] Only we who have erected the objectivity of a world of our own from what nature gives us [...] can look upon nature as something "objective" (p. 137).

Arendt identifies an undertone of violence in the human tendency to regard the world as a resource of material available for the fabrication of things that stand apart from the cycles of nature:

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[235] Arendt's description of labour is somewhat abstracted in that it seems to lack a full accounting of the way industrial processes and digital technologies have become inextricably bound to the functions and practices that ensure our daily sustenance—a shortcoming that becomes only more evident with the passing decades. In twenty-first century civilization, it is almost impossible to conceive of *any* human relationship to a surrounding world—natural or otherwise—that is not heavily mediated by complex and ubiquitous technological forces and mechanisms.

> Material is already a product of human hands which have removed it from its natural
> location, either killing a life process [...] or interrupting one of nature's slower processes
> [....] This element of violation and violence is present in all fabrication, and *homo faber*,
> the creator of human artifice, has always been a destroyer of nature (p. 139).[236]

What Arendt does not say in so many words, but is implicit in her highlighting of a nature/culture divide, is that work corresponds to a classically anthropocentric worldview. She has essentially drawn a boundary around the particularly human activities that reinforce the idea of a world that exists primarily for human manipulation: humans are the measure of these activities, and human intentionality is understood to be the primary source of agency by which these activities are recognized and understood as work.

In contrast to labour and work, the two activities that have come to define our social realm, sits the third activity of the *vita activa*, action. Action is distinct because it draws its meaningfulness not in relation to a material world of objects, but in relation to others. "Action, the only activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter, corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world." Arendt proposes that we take our understanding of the term from the Greek notion of action—that is, *praxis*—as human activity undertaken not out of necessity, but in freedom, with the express purpose of enacting association with other free humans.[237] Action, for

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[236] Arendt's assertions here correspond with Martin Heidegger's (1977) concern, noted in Chapter 1, for what he describes as technology's fundamental characteristic or essence of instrumentality, which casts all that it uses as a standing-resource, or *Bestand*.

[237] Parallel to *praxis*, and almost inseparable from it in Arendt's analysis of action, is *lexis*, or speech. These two together "constitute what Aristotle called the *bios politikos* […], out of which arises the realm of human affairs […] from which everything merely necessary or useful is strictly excluded" (p. 25). For Arendt, "action […] is humanly disclosed by the word, and […] becomes relevant only through the spoken word in which [the speaker] identifies himself as the actor, announcing what he does, has done, and intends to do" (p. 179). Arendt posits disclosure through speech as the minimum necessary ground for the intersubjectivity that association with other free humans requires; action must be undertaken as a gesture of togetherness, "*with* others and neither for nor against them" (p. 180). What seems particularly salient for Arendt is the idea of speech as a uniquely human-to-human form of interaction capable of communicating profound complexity. Her view of speech as patently transparent ("without the intermediary of things or matter") clearly sidesteps the extensive problematization of language explored in some detail in the previous chapters. It would appear that Arendt's view accords somewhat with Hans-Georg Gadamer's assertion that "*Being that can be understood is language*" (see footnote 186 above). As should be well established by now, this dissertation seeks to question such assumptions on multiple fronts, drawing on

Arendt, is what allows us to create the terms by which we relate to each other. Action is also a pointedly political activity, because "plurality is specifically the condition [...] of all political life" (p. 7). Plurality—the idea not only that we are many, but also that we are not the same—is the key precondition that makes human interrelationships politically significant. Political in this context refers to more than simply issues of human governance and power; it addresses the whole range of our associations with one another, and arises not only from the premise that we are distinct, but also that, as humans, we share a basic equality.[238]

If the manner of understanding given to us through the "world" created by work is that of objecthood, then action is the activity that discloses who we are as subjects, what Arendt refers to as action's "agent-revealing capacity": the ability to disclose each person's individual humanity (p. 182). Arendt characterizes this as a "disclosure of 'who' in contradistinction to 'what' somebody is—his qualities, gifts, talents, and shortcomings" (p. 179).[239] Because of our plurality, we need to undertake actions in order to be understood: to communicate not just our needs or wants, but ourselves. "[T]he primordial and specifically human act must [...] contain the answer to the question asked of every newcomer: 'Who are you?'" (p. 178). Action, in Arendt's schema, is a manifestation of agency that reveals our individuality, disclosing our differences and reflecting the possibility of enacting choices that fall outside rule-bound or habitual behaviours. This idea of action only makes sense if there is the possibility of choice: in order to take action, one must have the sense that one could instead choose to follow another path (e.g., to act differently, or to not act

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resources as diverse as Maxine Sheets-Johnstone's (1990) explorations of the underlying corporeal foundations of language, and Karen Barad's (2007) reworking of the notion of intelligibility.

[238] Although Arendt's historical overview reaches back to the *bios politikos*, she clearly argues that equality in contemporary society means something different than the equality available to a limited number of privileged males within the public sphere of the ancient Greek *polis*. As such, she argues, "modern equality, based on the conformism inherent in society [... is] possible only because behavior has replaced action as the foremost mode of human relationship" (p. 41).

[239] Arendt's terminology here reveals the underlying anthropocentrism inherent in her analysis. An expanded reading may allow for the recognition of non-human agents that reveal themselves to us in the manner of "whos," whether this corresponds to an ancient notion of animism that recognizes spiritual inhabitation in all materials, a new materialism that responds to a liveliness in objects, an actor-network approach that seeks to make objects talk "of what they are making others—humans or non-humans—do" (Latour 2005, p. 79), or Jiro Yoshihara's (1996/1956) assertion in the Gutai manifesto of an artistry in which "the human spirit and the material reach out their hands to each other" (p. 695), to cite only a few possible examples.

at all), and that one's choice is determined or activated as a free expression of one's intention.[240] Arendt is quick to point out that because action is predicated on human plurality, one of its key characteristics is its "inherent unpredictability" (p. 191). While work is judged by the way the "finished product" matches "the image or model perceived beforehand by the craftsman's eye," actions create new stories with consequences that can only be known in hindsight, after the act's completion.[241] Thus, the consequences of action are always distinct from the intentions that motivated them. As Arendt understands it, for the one who engages in action, "the meaningfulness of his act is not in the story that follows" (p. 192). We act with no guarantee of what our acts will achieve beyond their capacity to express or make intelligible who we are.

Arendt's *vita activa* functions as a kind of apparatus by engaging in specific practices of differentiating. In her model, labour, work, and action effectively correspond to the emergence of three distinct aspects of human intentionality. Labour marks intentionality directed toward sustaining the self; work marks intentionality directed toward transforming the world; and action marks intentionality directed toward communicating with—and establishing a place within a community of—others. If, for Arendt, labour, work, and, action signal different types of human agency, this dissertation proposes to use them as a way of identifying particular intra-active relationalities that correspond with the emergence of three distinct forms of reciprocally individuated, materially animate presence: self, world, and others. I have already argued that human intentionality can be understood as being closely aligned with the manifestation of presence: it is part of the human capacity to experience a feeling of self-presence, and a key way that we as humans feel our animateness as animate forms. Arendt's schema offers a way to map intra-actions that make particular forms of individuated presence—self, world and other— intelligible to us. In the working-through of performances that I will undertake in the three

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[240] Beyond the idea of having choices, of course, is a conviction that one is not the only *who*: an "other" is another we believe capable of accessing a type of feeling and understanding that in some way matches our own, a someone we want to recognize and be recognized by. Implicit in the idea of action is an understanding of human sociality that extends beyond the fulfillment of basic needs for sustenance, reproduction, and security of the person. Others are important in part because human self-discovery also entails a discovery of needs and desires around companionship, validation, belonging, and intellectual stimulation.

[241] There is a fundamental indeterminacy involved in action that makes its outcomes impossible to predict. Arendt characterizes action as having a faculty of interruption, which offers "an ever-present reminder that men, though they must die, are not born in order to die but in order to begin" (p. 246).

chapters that follow, Arendt's differentiations of labour, work, and action will be used to help identify intra-active relationalities involved in the manifestation of these particular forms of presence.

In working through the concept of relationality, this chapter has so far developed an understanding of presence as the *enacting and enacted agency of intra-active relationality*. Being has been contextualized as *being in the world in its dynamic specificity*, where intelligibility is closely linked with becoming. Karen Barad's notion of an apparatus has been explored as an approach for defining the contours of intra-active relationality, and Hannah Arendt's *vita activa* has been proposed as a framework for identifying intra-active relationalities directed toward particular forms of reciprocally individuated, materially animate presence. Before engaging with Marilyn Arsem's *Meridian*, Adina-Bar-On's *Disposition*, and Elvira Santamaría's *Everyday life words in progress* as iterations of practice in the flesh of theory, however, it is worth asking whether my appeal to an expanded use of Natalie Loveless's phrase *practice in the flesh of theory*, as I have outlined it based on the premise of thinking with (and as) a body, simply replaces Derrida's metaphor of "writing" with a different metaphor, that of "flesh."

The metaphor of flesh

The notion of flesh comes from phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1968),[242] who was in the midst of outlining what he considered to be a radically new concept to philosophy[243] when he died at the age of 53 in 1961. His unfinished manuscript and notes on the subject were published posthumously under the title *The Visible and the Invisible*, edited by Claude Lefort. For Merleau-Ponty, the concept of flesh was a way of circumventing the subject-object divide. Flesh was a term he used to think through a reciprocity between the visible and the invisible. He suggested that a "chiasm" binds and enfolds these two "sides" of existence,[244] which encompass

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[242] Merleau-Ponty's reference to flesh expands on an image put forward by Jean-Paul Sartre (1966/1943) in *Being and Nothingness*: "In my desiring perception I discover something like a *flesh* of objects" (p. 479).

[243] Indeed, Merleau-Ponty went so far as to suggest, "there is no name in traditional philosophy to designate it" (p. 139).

[244] Vivian Sobchack (2004) equates Merleau-Ponty's notion of the chiasm directly to that of presence: "*chiasm* is used to name the ground of all presence against which discrete figures of being emerge; as such

internal and external while extending across multiple relationships, including those pertaining to what constitutes self (often conceived according to the duality mind-body, or according the terms Merleau-Ponty uses, phenomenal-objective), those that place us among a world of objects (subject-object),[245] and those that govern our interactions with other selves:[246]

> The chiasm is not only a me other exchange (the messages he receives reach me, the messages I receive reach him), it is also an exchange between me and the world, between the phenomenal body and the "objective" body, between the perceiving and the perceived: what begins as a "state of consciousness" ends as a thing (p. 215).

Flesh, as Merleau-Ponty theorizes it, has not only a surface, but also a depth; it signals a thickness that includes not only our physical visibility, but also our invisible, phenomenal perceptions.[247] In

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it is the ground from which oppositions both emerge and fall away, on which they become reversible" (p. 60).

[245] Merleau-Ponty suggests that even so-called inanimate objects assert their own sense of presence: "as many painters have said, I feel myself looked at by the things" (p. 139).

[246] The concept of the self as Merleau-Ponty uses it is clearly related to the idea of having a human consciousness that recognizes its own existence. As different readings by phenomenologist Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (2011) and neuroscientist Antonio Damasio (2010) cited previously indicate, however, there is a more primal way in which all animate creatures exhibit a sense of selfhood necessary to their own preservation. As Damasio notes, many organisms without brains have "the ability to *sense* changes in physiological condition, inside their own perimeter and in their surround" (p. 50). Being able to respond to these changes appropriately, by moving toward or away from them, or by adjusting internal homeostasis, provides basic evidence of a practical ability to distinguish an inside and outside, and to adapt to those conditions accordingly. Indeed, the imperative within organic forms to maintain homeostasis can be viewed as an indicator of a basic will to stabilize selfhood. Damasio's description for the more particular type of "self" that concerns Merleau-Ponty is "self-as-subject-and-knower" (p. 9), a self that Damasio clearly understands as being the product or purview of a brain, though perhaps not exclusively a human brain. Damasio charts the self according to a developmental evolutionary model, starting with "the protoself and its primordial feelings; the action-driven core self; and finally the autobiographical self, which incorporates social and spiritual dimensions" (p. 10). He suggests that various animals have at least a "core" sense of self, including reptiles, birds and mammals, and that various mammals have a more developed "autobiographical self," including wolves, apes, marine mammals, elephants, cats and dogs, as well as humans (p. 26).

[247] I read this depth or thickness as all-encompassing, but others parse Merleau-Ponty's concept of flesh as being something closer to a two-sided or reversible skin or surface. Amelia Jones, for example, describes it as a *contour in process*:

> As a physical membrane that sheds and reconstitutes itself continually, the flesh is never always the same material but always a contour in process; the flesh exists provisionally both as a permeable, shifting physical perimeter, a limbic surround of virtual containment, and as the visible trace of the human body (whose contours are never stable in one's own or an other's visual field).

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this configuration, consciousness is no longer held separate as a privileged mode of being: As he puts it, "I 'am of the world' and [...] not in it" (p. 127). This suggests something more than simply immersion, where we feel ourselves as entering an environment that is distinct from our being; we are, rather, part of what composes the environment, part of the environment's being. Flesh is neither mind nor matter, but something more fundamental, an "'element' of Being" in the ancient or classical sense of an element, as "a sort of incarnate principle that brings a style of being wherever there is a fragment of being" (p. 139). While he does not belabour the description, it appears that Merleau-Ponty is still seeking a metaphor to get at a fundamental mystery whereby being manifests in more than one register. Following this logic, we might equate "flesh" in its materiality with earth's solidity, or in its capacity for animation with water's fluidity, while our internal consciousness in its invisibility might equate stylistically with air, or in its energetic qualities with fire.[248] Flesh in its elemental registers enfolds not only self and world, but also corporeality and consciousness.[249]

Sight is at the core of Merleau-Ponty's notion of flesh, as indicated by the book's title. He writes of the gaze itself having a kind of flesh,[250] and of the flesh of the world as being "of the Being-seen" (p. 250).[251] For Merleau-Ponty, when one looks, one does not only discover a distance that separates and objectifies; one is also pulled into what one surveys, entering into an exchange by virtue of one's own visibility, by the recognition that one not only sees, but is also seen:

> Metaphorically as well as materially, the flesh is an envelope, a "limit" inscribing the juncture between inside and outside but also the *site of their joining* (pp. 206-207).

[248] One could also draw a parallel with Heidegger's (1993/1951) idea of the fourfold, in which the coming together of earth, sky, mortals and divinities within built objects suggests different modes of dwelling as distinct elements of being (see footnote 148 above).

[249] As Sobchack (2004) describes it, "Not reducible either to matter "in itself" or to being "in itself," flesh is the tie that binds them in existence, the common ground of their differentiated relation to and reversibility each with the other" (p. 293).

[250] For example, "the gaze itself envelops [things], clothes them with its own flesh" (p. 131).

[251] From his working notes:

> It is by the flesh of the world that in the last analysis one can understand the lived body (*corps propre*)— —The flesh of the world is of the Being-seen, i.e. is a Being that is *eminently percipi*, and it is by it that we can understand the *percipere*: this perceived that we call my body applying itself to the rest of the perceived (p. 250).

to be seen by the outside, to exist within it, to emigrate into it, to be seduced, captivated, alienated by the phantom, so that the seer and the visible reciprocate one another and we no longer know which sees and which is seen. It is this Visibility, this generality of the Sensible in itself, this anonymity innate to Myself that we have […] called flesh (p. 139).

He suggests that sight has an almost tactile ability to grasp and feel the surfaces that it observes: "vision is a palpation with the look" (p. 134). Indeed, his thinking turns frequently to the tactile to describe this exchange, using examples such as touching oneself,[252] or the point of contact between the inside and outside of a glove, which he describes a kind of "double 'representation'" that marks the "passage from the 'For Itself' to the For the Other" (p. 263).[253] Thus the Being-seen could be understood as having a close corollary in a Being-touched. While he recognizes a close parallel between vision and touch, however, Merleau-Ponty does not argue, as this dissertation does, that our various sensory systems are in fact intertwined, making the boundaries we identify between them somewhat artificial. Rather, for him, each remains distinct:

> There is double and crossed situating of the visible in the tangible and of the tangible in the visible; the two maps are complete, and yet they do not merge into one. The two parts are total parts and yet are not superposable (p. 134).[254]

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[252] After describing sight as an act of "palpation of the eye," Merleau-Ponty turns to tactility to explain the reciprocity of such an exchange:

> my hand, while it is felt from within, is also accessible from without, itself tangible for my other hand [….] Through this crisscrossing within it of the touching and the tangible, its own movements incorporate themselves into the universe they interrogate, are recorded on the same map as it; the two systems are applied upon one another (p. 133).

[253] Although this metaphor plays on the tactility of the hand to suggest a felt point of contact, Merleau-Ponty inevitably brings it back to what can be *seen*: "the end of the finger of the glove is nothingness—but a nothingness one can turn over, and where then one sees *things*" (pp. 263-264).

[254] I should note that some theorists have pointed to the first line of this excerpt to suggest, contrary to my arguments here, that Merleau-Ponty precisely wishes to suggest not merely an imbrication, but a crucial *intertwining* of these two senses. There is also a tendency to read Merleau-Ponty's use of the word tangible here, which follows directly from a discussion of touch, as describing a relationship between vision as object-oriented, related to the visible body and tangibility as subject-oriented, relating to the phenomenal body. Consider, for example, this passage from Amelia Jones (1998):

> Merleau-Ponty embeds vision in touch, touch in vision, and their chiasmic crossing is the flesh of the world/the body itself [….] The chiasmus is the "doubled and crossed situating of the visible in the tangible and of the tangible in the visible," and the *flesh of the visible* indicates the carnal being—at once subjective and objectified. There is a "reciprocal insertion and intertwining" of the

This reasoning fails to take full account of our ontogenetic development as animate forms, discussed earlier, in which tactile and kinaesthetic understandings precede and inform the development of human visuality. The corporeal foundation of having a body that can negotiate the world and touch its surfaces is what allows us to interpret our visual detection of light, dark and colour as qualia of a dimensional world with spatial depth. Furthermore, by understanding flesh according to the visual binary of visibility/invisibility, Merleau-Ponty fails to consider the kinds of chemical and pheremonal permeability of our bodies and our senses suggested by Teresa Brennan (2004), let alone the potential chiasmic effects associated with hearing through the sound qualities of rhythm, pitch, timbre and intensity—as well as its tactile correlate, vibration. Nevertheless, Merleau-Ponty frequently links what he calls Visibility with other types of corporeal sensation to form the Sensible.[255]

Merleau-Ponty's appeal to flesh marks a movement away from his earlier focus on "consciousness" as the phenomenal ground of being.[256] In *The Visible and the Invisible*, he characterizes our ability to sense as offering a particular kind of empirical *evidence* of being rather than comprising the *ground* of our being: "we have with our body, our senses, our look, our power to understand speech and to speak, *measurants* (*mesurants*) for Being, dimensions to which we can refer it, but not a relation of adequation or of immanence" (p. 103).[257] Our

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seeing body in the visible body: we are both subject and object simultaneously, and our "flesh" merges with the flesh of the world (p. 41).

Vivian Sobchack (2004) offers an apposite reading in *Carnal Thoughts*:

As Merleau-Ponty suggests […] our own vision and flesh are enfolded in the flesh and vision of the world and others, thus, the embodied gaze is the "double and crossed situating of the visible in the tangible and of the tangible in the visible." In this formulation the gaze is neither anthropocentric nor nonanthropocentric; rather, it is *reversibly mimetic* in its shifting address, constant mobility, and fluid identifications. It is above all inclusive of alterity (p. 100).

[255] In his working notes, Merleau-Ponty asserts:

Each "sense" is a "world," i.e. absolutely incommunicable for the other senses, and yet constructing a *something* which, through its structure, is from the first open upon the world of the other senses, and with them forms one sole Being (p. 217).

[256] See, for example, *Phenomenology of Perception*.

[257] Merleau-Ponty's list of measurants is confusingly broad in its inclusion of both what is traditionally characterized as objective—"our body," which is visible—and what is considered in the realm of the phenomenal—"our senses," which are not directly visible—as well as the physical abilities or *I cans* that give us a self and the possibility of acting upon or within a world—"our look, our power to understand

perceptions may not reveal to us precisely what being is, but they nevertheless assure us that *there is something*, a fabric into which we are woven and that resonates through us. As measurants, they reveal and intuit the depth, reciprocity, and responsiveness of flesh, through a direct correspondence between inside and outside.[258] This depth is something we experience intrinsically, even though it cannot be attributed to a particular sense or named in the same way that we designate a thing's qualia.[259] The depth of flesh is integrally linked to our reciprocal openness to the world, and we encounter it in all that we see: "It is […] because of depth that the things have a flesh: that is, oppose to my inspection obstacles, a resistance which is precisely their reality, their 'openness,' their *totum simul*" (p. 219).

Our openness to being is at the core of Merleau-Ponty's critique of Cartesian doubt, which he characterizes as disembodied reflection. Life and flesh give us an "*openness upon being* which is perceptual faith" (p. 88). The images or representations we purport to inspect as aspects of our mental world find their stability against the already innate guarantees of being. If we expect a thing to be the "same" thing when we look back at it after having turned away—or the same thing even though it changes appearance as we observe it from different perspectives—this is a conviction that surely conforms to conditions that preexist or guide our way of perceiving them. When our experience reveals to us a coherence of objects that persist from moment to moment as we move toward, away from, and around them, exploring them with our various bodily senses, it is because we begin from a corporeal and perceptual ground attuned to the

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speech and to speak" (p. 103). One wonders how this articulation might have been clarified or refined had his work not been cut short.

[258] Merleau-Ponty considers several ways of describing this "correspondence" in a footnote:

> One can say that we perceive the things themselves, that we are the world that thinks itself—or that the world is at the heart of our flesh. In any case, once a body-world relationship is recognized, there is a ramification of my body and a ramification of the world and a correspondence between its inside and my outside, between my inside and its outside (p. 136).

Here we can see Merleau-Ponty struggling with the conundrum of interiority and exteriority that separates a self from a world of which it is, nevertheless a part; in this sense, "flesh" is his way of describing or reconciling their entangled relationality, and the way, despite what we feel as a boundary line that separates them as distinct entities, there is an intrinsic openness between them.

[259] Merleau-Ponty seems intent on finding a substantiality that asserts itself if not underneath then in-between, throughout, and beyond the surfaces that we are able to describe as qualia. "Between the alleged colors and visibles, we would find anew the tissue that lines them, sustains them, nourishes them, and which for its part is not a thing, but a possibility, a latency, and a *flesh* of things" (pp. 132-133).

discovery and affirmation of concepts such as stability, continuity, and cause and effect relationships. To identify and explore a thing from various vantage points only makes sense if one already believes that the perceptions one acquires through that exploration "are determinations of the same thing" (pp. 37-38). As we move around an object, its appearance changes, but we have faith that it is, nevertheless, the same object. As Merleau-Ponty notes, "My conviction that I see the thing itself does not *result* from the perceptual exploration; on the contrary it [i.e. his conviction] is what gives me the notion of the 'proximal,' of the 'best' point of observation, and of the 'thing itself'" (p. 37).[260] Cartesian doubt is only possible if one already has the faith—not to mention the experience—of having a body. Reflection introduces a new operation to our experience of being, where "a thing perceived and an openness upon this thing" has been "transformed into perception-reflected-on and thing-perceived-within-a-perception-reflected-on." Merleau-Ponty calls for a "*hyper-reflection* (*sur-réflexion*)" that does not take for granted what Husserl has called the natural standpoint, but that nevertheless "would not lose sight of the brute thing and the brute perception and would not finally efface them, would not cut the organic bonds between the perception and the thing perceived with a hypothesis of inexistence" (p. 38). The metaphor of flesh is meant to reaffirm the ground of being that necessarily underlies or determines the way our perceptions are structured.

Although Merleau-Ponty's work predates Derrida, he has a highly developed concern for language, as well as a sensitivity to the connection between language and difference, which he expresses in terms of separation or divergence [*écart*]. Unlike Derrida, however, he holds language apart or distinct from corporeal experience, arguing that language, like reflection, creates an illusory second world that is removed from brute experience. One feels as if Merleau-Ponty is anticipating Derrida's arguments when he writes

> Far from harboring the secret of the being of the world, language is itself a world, itself a being—a world and a being to the second power, since it does not speak in a vacuum,

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[260] This "perceptual faith" regarding things—materiality—applies equally to spatiality and temporality. If we are confident that the ever-changing thing we are observing remains the same "thing," we must also be confident that we are experiencing that thing's materiality within a spatio-temporal continuity as well. As has been repeatedly suggested, although we are able to make conceptual distinctions that allow us to discuss time, space and matter as if they were separate phenomena, we experience *timespacematter* as a unity.

since it speaks *of* being and *of* the world and therefore redoubles their enigma instead of dissipating it (p. 96).

Crucially, for Merleau-Ponty, thinking is prelinguistic in the same way that brute perception is prereflective. Words are certainly not the thing itself, nor even the perception or thought of the thing, but they have a flesh, a "grillwork" through which one is able to glimpse the thing. When one "x"s out a word, one does not efface so much as make visible through this marking a something that stands behind the word, just as the letters of the word remain visible behind the mark of erasure in Derrida's practice of placing concepts *sous rature*. The resistance of flesh, and its otherness, are also its openness:

> The other's words make me speak and think because they create within me an other than myself, a divergence (*écart*) by relation to . . . what I see, and thus designate it to me myself. The other's words form a grillwork through which I see my thought. Did I have it before this conversation? Yes, as a unique fundamental tone. *Weltthesis*, not as *thoughts*, significations or statements——To be sure, it is necessary to think in order to speak, but to think in the sense of being in the world (*être au monde*) or in the vertical Being of *Vorhabe*.[261] Thoughts are the coinage of this total being——Delimitations—within it (p. 224).

Where Derrida sees the trace as more fundamental than anything it could possibly refer to, Merleau-Ponty finds in the trace an underlying faith that there must *be* the possibility of a thing before the possibility of crossing out that thing. The very act of crossing it out brings its contours into relief and affirms their visibility. What is striking in Merleau-Ponty's working notes is the way he eschews the terminology of metaphoricity in favour of terms that suggest relationality:

> Replace the notions of concept, idea mind, representation with the notions of *dimensions*, articulation, level, hinges, pivots, configuration——The point of departure = the critique of the usual conception of the *thing* and its *properties* → critique of the logical notion of

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[261] *Vorhabe*, or "fore-having" is part of the intentional fore-structure of Dasein posited by Martin Heidegger. It forms or informs an essential aspect of the ground of knowing that allows us to place ourselves in relation to the world. Without it, there would be no possibility of interpretation. Michael Inwood (1999) defines *Vorhabe* as "the general understanding of the entity to be interpreted and of the totality of involvement (Bewandtnisganzheit) in which it lies" (p. 107).

the subject, and of logical inherence → critique of the *positive* signification (differences between significations), signification as a separation (*écart*), theory of predication—founded on this diacritical conception (p. 224).

These notes suggest a movement away from a subject-object delineation of things and of representations, toward a focus on the configurations that impinge on or impact what comes to count as subject or object. Merleau-Ponty recognizes that things appear within "a system," a "total field" with multiple appearances corresponding to varying points of view.[262] The shortcomings of any one particular point of view do not point to a deferral of presence so much as a failure of the "idea of the subject, and that of the object as well" as "a cognitive adequation [of] the relationships with the world and with ourselves that we have in the perceptual faith" (p. 23). This points away from the process of signification—i.e. an endless proliferation of stand-ins or signifiers—and toward cohering patterns of relationality—dimensionality, dynamics of movement, and positionality.[263]

Merleau-Ponty is insistent that although our perceptions about things may appear to deceive us, in that they change as our temporal and spatial relationships to those things change, there is yet an undeniable starting point in that we begin with the perception *there is something*.[264]

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[262] As he describes it, "the close, the far-off, the horizon in their indescribable contrast form a system, and it is their relationship within the total field that is the perceptual truth" (p. 22).

[263] In his essay "Soft, Smooth Hands: Husserl's Phenomenology of the Lived Body," Donn Welton (1999) attempts to reconcile the split "between a natural scientific description of the body and a phenomenological characterization of the body" (p. 39). He argues that like Merleau-Ponty, Husserl also understood the appearance of things as being tied to a relational field, as evidenced in *Ideas II*. In Welton's words,

> Husserl [...] understands the material presence of things to be a *relational* presence. Without their web of conditional dependence on other things and other dimensions of the environment, things would be but "phantoms" floating at a distance somewhere between world and mind (p. 43).

Welton points out that having a moving body is at the core of any possibility of discovering and investigating such relationality. As he puts it, "Things have a relation to other things because they are perceptually situated, and they are perceptually situated because of the orientation they have to our perceiving and moving bodies" (p. 43).

[264] In a critique of Sartre, whom he characterizes as engaging in "high-altitude thought," a vantage point somewhat similar to what Donna Haraway referred to as the "god trick of seeing everything from nowhere," Merleau-Ponty suggests:

> Our beginning point shall not be *being is*, *nothingness is not* nor even *there is only being*—which are formulas of a totalizing thought, a high-altitude thought—but: this is being, there is a world,

Even if we cannot say exactly what that something is, we can begin to track its relationality, identify patterns and relationships, recognize coherencies and discover how these relationships determine how and what things become, as well as how they affirm our own being.[265] For humans, self, world and others are all concepts that cannot and do not exist in a vacuum. They find their meaningfulness in relation to each other, as a mapping of relations and of borders that is possible because we are all part of a larger tissue of being—what Merleau-Ponty seeks to describe with the term "flesh." Rather than finding primordiality in an endless process of deferral and difference that must somehow precede any ground, Merleau-Ponty considers how, even though our perceptions of things change, we nevertheless continually find a "thing" to return to and to measure that change of perception against, even if we can never exhaust the catalogue of possible perceptions. In another passage that predates Derrida's turn to the strategy of erasure, Merleau-Ponty argues

> our openness, our fundamental relationship with Being, that which makes it impossible
> for us to feign to not be, could not be formed in the order of the being-posited, since it is
> this openness precisely that teaches us that the beings-posited, whether true or false, are
> not nothing, that, whatever be the experience, an experience is always contiguous upon
> an experience, that our perceptions, our judgments, our whole knowledge of the world
> can be changed, crossed out, Husserl says, but not nullified, that, under the doubt that
> strikes them appear other perceptions, other judgments more true, because we are within
> Being and because there is something (p. 128).

Flesh as a metaphor has its utility in terms of recuperating a notion of presence in that it points to an absolutely necessary fore-structure, a perceptual faith in being, that undergirds the kind of doubt that Descartes—or Derrida's deconstructive analysis—explores. Derrida was

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> there is *something* [….] One does not arouse being from nothingness, *ex nihilo*; one starts with an
> ontological relief where one can never say that the ground be nothing (p. 88).

Merleau-Ponty finds a false dialectic in the Sartreian notion of nothingness, because at its core, there is still a "there is" to be found in the negentity of the self—a not-nothing.

[265] In his working notes, Merleau-Ponty writes:

> Show that these notions [Pregnancy, *Gestalt*, phenomenon] represent a getting into contact with
> being as pure *there is*. One witnesses that event by which there is something. Something rather
> than nothing and this rather than something else. One therefore witnesses the advent of the
> positive: this rather than something *else* (p. 206).

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certainly aware of Merleau-Ponty's arguments, and was careful to note that his critique of presence could only be undertaken using the precise grounding and premises that he called into question. At the same time, while this dissertation's adoption of the phrase "practice in the flesh of theory" harks back to Merleau-Ponty, it is important to acknowledge some important shortcomings in his work. Not the least of these is the undeniable recognition that his idea of "flesh" is, indeed, metaphorical.[266] Additionally, Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (2011) has frequently noted that despite his allegiance to phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty had a "natural attitude view of movement" that supposed "there is nothing to movement apart from an object in motion" (p. 208). Merleau-Ponty's musings about human bodies were often marred by his privileging of visuality over other senses as well as his failure to fully understand our bodies in evolutionary and developmental terms.[267] As a concept, flesh risks becoming a purely symbolic model that has

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[266] One needs to consider carefully what aspects of a metaphor are salient. This dissertation has argued that the usefulness of metaphors are not in their equating of like *things*, but rather, in their ability to draw attention to similarities of *relationality*. Merleau-Ponty makes clear that he is not thinking of flesh as a purely material substance; it is perhaps more usefully thought of as "animate tissue." The notion of tissue brings forth an emphasis on interconnectedness, a specific type of materiality distinguished by intricate and intrinsic wovenness; this corresponds with Merleau-Ponty's assertion of a chiasm that enfolds the visible and the invisible. "Animate" directs us toward a recognition of its responsiveness: i.e. not any type connective tissue, but a tissue capable of and inhabited by purposeful movement. Indeed, what Merleau-Ponty names "flesh" could be coherently reconfigured to correspond to Barad's (2007) notion of the apparatus as phenomenon if one understands flesh as animate interconnectedness—i.e. as a set of intra-active practices that instantiate relations—that enact the differentiations that manifest particular entities.

[267] For a succinct analysis of some of the consequences of Merleau-Ponty's overprivileging of sight in his understanding of spatiality, see Sheets-Johnstone (1990), pp. 283-288. By failing to acknowledge that a body does not orient itself exclusively by sight, but also experiences gravitational weight proprioceptively, Merleau-Ponty misreads the conclusions to be drawn from studies concerning how test subjects respond to having their vision artificially inverted. Sheets-Johnstone is particularly critical of Merleau-Ponty's reliance on pathological rather than "intact" bodies for much of his phenomenological analysis—though it is worth asking how one might determine the limits of "intactness" in relation to humans as mutable and evolving animate forms. In defense of Merleau-Ponty's consideration of bodies in which typical physical and cognitive functionality appears to have gone awry, Vivian Sobchack (2004) notes: "Cases of 'dis-ease' are often objects of phenomenological description and interpretation since they denaturalize the transparency of embodied being in the world" (p. 291). Sobchack cites Thomas Langan's (1966) *Merleau-Ponty's Critique of Reason*, in which Langan argues

> Only unusual experiences revealing a fissure in the otherwise unrelieved atmosphere of already constructed world—the hallucination, the illusion, anything which causes the smooth unfolding of the world suddenly not to be taken so much for granted—can provide the epoche needed to suspend the practical experience's attention-absorbing hold on us (p. 23).

A more extended questioning of Merleau-Ponty by Sheets-Johnstone (2011) can also be found in *The Primacy of Movement*, where she devotes an entire chapter to an inquiry—literally, a series of questions

little to say about the actual qualities of presence; that is, as the lived experience of animate creatures who find themselves in a world to which they are evolutionarily suited, and whose ongoing survival is tied to their interactions with other animate creatures. Flesh—organic flesh as opposed to metaphorical flesh—is animate form. Its organizational coherence, as far as we can define it, can be found even at the cellular level, where it is linked to what neuroscientist Antonio Damasio (2010) has described as "a decisive, unshakable determination to stay alive for as long as the genes inside their [i.e. single cells'] microscopic nucleus commanded them to do so" (p. 35). While we are used to thinking of our bodies as being animated by a top-down consciousness, Damasio makes the point that "a stubborn insistence to remain, endure, and prevail"—and one might add, since I am asserting that flesh is *animate* form, *to move*—asserts itself first at a cellular level, even in single-celled organisms, long before the development of the complex aggregates of specialized cells found in an organism with a human brain. This kind of flesh may be perceived through the gaze as a visible presence, but it is perhaps better understood if one starts by recognizing its kinetic/tactile-kinaesthetic presence.[268]

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that are answered only in the form of further questions—into Merleau-Ponty's philosophical method (pp. 238-277).

[268] There is also, of course, the possibility of recourse to other ways of configuring the term flesh. One might productively point to Rebecca Schneider's (2011) evocation of flesh in *Performing Remains*. She opposes living, responsive flesh—"that slippery, feminine subcutaneousness" (p. 103) constantly replacing and reproducing itself at a cellular level—with bones, those desiccated, arrested and "sight-able remains" that can be archived in order to "speak memory of flesh" (p. 100). In challenging an understanding of archiving that relies on reified, static and visible objects as the only remains possible to history, an understanding that negates "*a different approach to saving*" (p. 101) and "scripts performance as disappearing" (p. 100), that is to say, as memory rather than history, Schneider is also making a claim for animate form as the site of knowing. Her model of the cycle of knowledge production and reproduction refers not to a translation from material, external object to immaterial, internal thought, but to a bodily transmission that manifests as act and action. Her interest is to "resituate the site of any knowing of history as body-to-body transmission" (p. 104), a project that, it should be noted, she explicitly distances from any "metaphysic of presence that fetishizes a singular 'present' moment." Indeed, she asserts, "it is not *presence* that appears in the syncopated time of citational performance but precisely (again) the missed encounter— the reverberations of the overlooked, the missed, the repressed, the seemingly forgotten" (p. 102). While she argues against a particular ideal of presence as pure being, however, she appears equally skeptical of any claims for absolute loss, absence or irreconcilable difference. In moving away from being, she advocates instead for "becoming," a process in which "disappearance is passed *through*" (p. 105), making way for new appearances. In this iteration, meaningfulness is shared not as infinitely identical and reproducible information, but as dynamics of resonance and reverberation, and being, reshaped as becoming, confirms Merleau-Ponty's formulation that *there is something*.

Performance art as a practice in the flesh of theory obviously engages not only Merleau-Ponty's abstracted "flesh of the world"—time, space, matter—but also the literal flesh of the human bodies that witness or participate in an action, as performer or audience. That performance art is not simply practice in the flesh, but practice in the flesh of theory, opens onto a different debate, referenced previously in this dissertation, about what distinguishes art from philosophy.[269] I am suggesting that at least some performance art practices—and certainly the works that will be explored in the following chapters—can be viewed as forms of enacted philosophy that engage directly in the development and understanding of theoretical knowledge.

Theory as a specifically philosophic and scientific method extends back to the ancient Greeks. According to Anthony Preus (2015),

> *Theōrein* (the verb) means, in the first instance, to look at, be a spectator, observe. […]
> **Plato** and **Aristotle** adapted the word to mean the activity of the mind in relation to its
> proper objects. […] "Theoretical" knowledge is about **ousia**, nature (**physis**), and the
> causes (**aitia**) for their own sake […]; mind (**nous**) can also be exercised for the sake of
> **praxis**, that is, **phronēsis**, or for the sake of **poiēsis**, that is, **technē** (p. 390).

In this definition, theory and praxis are distinguished from each other, with poiēsis and technē—the activities more commonly associated with artmaking—falling under the purview of praxis.[270] Theory in this configuration is taken to be a purely contemplative pursuit.[271] One might argue, given the inherent spectatorial relationship, that performance art is a discipline that specifically invites its audiences to engage in philosophical reflection, a view that perhaps has some

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[269] See, for example, footnote 2 above, as well as the discussion of different forms of thought in Chapter 2.

[270] In Hannah Arendt's (1998/1958) account, "the *bios theōrētikos*, translated into the *vita contempliva*" (p. 14), was also traditionally marked as distinct from the *vita activa*. She notes that it is only with the advent of the modern age that there was a "reversal of the hierarchical order between the *vita contempliva* and the *vita activa*" (p. 289) which also marked the definitive break between science and philosophy, in which "*doing*" replaced "*contemplation or observation*" as the most esteemed and reliable method of acquiring knowledge (p. 290). At that point, the scientific understanding of theory shifted from a purely observational role to a more actively interventionist approach, and a greater emphasis on practical application.

[271] Gerard J. Hughes (2001) offers two pointed observations about *theōria* as contemplation. The first is that it is deeply grounded in what one already knows, and the second is that it is an active process:

> Aristotle says that it is not the *seeking* of such an understanding, but the active consideration of the
> understanding that one has achieved […]. I prefer 'active consideration' to the common translation
> 'contemplation', which […] has the unfortunate connotation of a 'looked gaze' (p. 46).

resonance for those who argue that one of performance art's distinctions from other live art practices is its refusal to function primarily as entertainment. My argument here, however, goes beyond this somewhat superficial reading.

Part of what distinguished *theōria* for the ancient Greeks was a concern for that which was judged to be universal and eternal. Glossing Aristotle's *Nicomachaean Ethics*, Gerard J. Hughes (2001) describes Aristotle's ideal of *theōria* as "the intellectual grasp of the most noble objects: and these, in the best Platonic tradition, are those which are changeless and perfect" (p. 46). At first glance, performance, with its nod to ephemerality, seems the antithesis of *theōria*, declaring its fundamental loyalty to immediacy, proximity, and liveness, the very conditions that stand in opposition to the universal and eternal. When notions of universality, eternity, perfection, changelessness, and even being come into question, however, one must look to other grounds for fundament and certainty. Any rediscovery of these classic notions—or for that matter, any possibility of recourse to something that proves to be more fundamental—must be built from the (less "noble") certainties to which we, as humans, do have access: relationality, impermanence, permeability, dynamic specificity, and becoming. Performance art is, in fact, an ingenious device for undertaking the active consideration of the very questions that have preoccupied Western philosophy since the ancient Greeks. Its method of contemplation is not a suspension from living, but a bracketing of human life's most basic givens—time, space, body—within the framework of an intra-active relationship with an audience that need not conform to the cultural and societal norms we generally take for granted. Performance art thereby offers the possibility of actively considering meanings, intelligibilities, becomings, and actualizations, either to affirm what we thought we knew or to discover something new. It is, indeed, well suited for undertaking practice in the flesh of theory.

By approaching Marilyn Arsem's *Meridian*, Adina Bar-On's *Disposition*, and Elvira Santamaría's *Everyday life words in progress* as practices in the flesh of theory in the chapters that follow, what I hope to highlight can be summed up in Claude Lefort's characterization of Merleau-Ponty's (1968) analytical approach. In his "Editor's Forward" to The *Visible and the Invisible*, Lefort suggests that Merleau-Ponty's description of experience uncovers contradictions in the way we traditionally think of being. For Lefort, Merleau-Ponty's text "demands that the meaning emerge from the description of experience and of the difficulties it harbors as soon as we

want to think it in terms of the categories of the past philosophy—or think it, in general" (p. xxiv). Because what Merleau-Ponty describes based on his lived experience does not conform readily to the traditional categorizations offered by Western philosophy, the descriptions themselves require a fresh approach to understanding what the components of experience are, and, indeed, what experience as a whole is. As instances of enacted philosophy, the performance works I will consider also allow meanings to emerge at least in part because of the way they trouble expectations and accepted understandings of how we experience presence, demanding descriptions that account in fresh ways for a *something* that is experienced animately by a body, which is to say, as an intelligibility that articulates itself tactilely and kinaesthetically.

CHAPTER 5: SELF IN *MERIDIAN*

Meridian's horizon of self

This dissertation has taken up the task of rethinking presence, asking about "being"—both as animation and as entity—in a search for links between the notion of presence and the possibility of shared meaningfulness. Having marshalled a range of resources from the fields of philosophy and neuroscience, this account now turns to description of experience as a way forward. The turn to description is also a return, in that it is based on my ongoing work as a performance artist and curator, which grounds my concerns related to presence and shared meaningfulness. The following chapters will describe three performance art works as practices in the flesh of theory, offering my individualized point of encounter with them.[272] Describing my experience of these performance art works involves attending to what my thinking body knows and does not know in relation to them, while remaining alert to lived understandings that may not fit normalized patterns and ways of characterizing such experience in language. I have previously proposed an approach that involves *thinking with a body*, but even this phrasing retains vestiges of the notion of a mind/body split. It seems more apt, then, to say that I approach these works *as a thinking body*.[273] In working through the notion of presence, three particular categories of being

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[272] Many performance artists consider the bodies of the live audience to be the main or even sole way a performance can endure. For example, in "THIS is Performance Art," originally published online, Marilyn Arsem (2020/2011) writes, "The record of performance art resides in the bodies of the artist and the witnesses" (p. 290).

[273] This revised expression is borrowed from Gerard J. Hughes (2001), who describes Aristotle's characterization of fleshy humans—as opposed to God, "a being which is pure Thought"—as "*thinking bodies*, rather than disembodied minds, or even embodied minds" (p. 47). Situating myself as a thinking body already veers from the phenomenological method taken up by Edmund Husserl (2012/1931), who describes his approach as "pure eidetic 'description'" (p. xxxv). A thinking body cannot begin from the assumption of an eidetic realm as distinct from a material realm, since the traditional differentiations "mental" and "physical" are entangled as a single whole. Separating them into distinct categories entails a boundary-making enactment that determines and limits possibilities for fully understanding and appreciating the "doing and being" I am calling presence. As a descriptive term, thinking body comes very close to Maxine Sheets-Johnstone's (2011) "mindful body"—a phrase she offers up in opposition to the same term called into question by Hughes, "embodied mind" (pp. 477-523)—see footnote 23 above regarding Sheets-Johnstone's critique of the notion of embodiment. I have settled on this slightly different term in part to avoid the reification of dynamic and processual thought with a thing-like structure called mind.

or becoming—entities named as self,[274] world, and others—have repeatedly emerged as key sites of contestation, and will provide a useful departure point for organizing the performance descriptions that follow.[275] With Marilyn Arsem's *Meridian*, I am particularly interested in thinking through how the performance frames a meditation on questions of self-presence, not only for its creator, but also for an audience of thinking bodies experiencing and engaging with one or more aspects of the project.

The notion of "self" is central to *Meridian*'s structure and content. As a commissioned work in the series Public Spaces/Private Places, *Meridian* was conceived and developed by Arsem in response to a curatorial theme that proposed to explore the demarcation point between "neutral 'space'" and "meaningful 'place.'"[276] Although Arsem has a long history of works that are

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[274] Antonio Damasio (2010) notes, "Self […] is not a thing; it is a dynamic process [….] Turning processes into things is a mere artifact of our need to communicate complicated ideas to others, rapidly and effectively" (p. 165). Some might therefore call me to task for formulating "self" as an entity, but as with the idea of a thinking body that refutes an unexamined, absolute separability of mental and physical as distinct categories, I argue that notwithstanding the notion of god, we know of no "selves" that do not inhabit physical bodies; a self manifests as a particular type of animate form.

[275] These contested sites mirror, to some degree, variations in how presence more generally is constituted, as discussed in Chapter 3. The idea of "self" is closely related to an equation of consciousness with being. The idea of world relates to the existence of an ontic realm of objects. Finally, while "others" is generally taken to correspond to the idea of other beings with like consciousnesses, I contend that the spectrum of what might be formulated as an other begins with the idea of liveness. What distinguishes both liveness and consciousness from objects as categories of presence is a recognition that they exhibit not just "thingness," but also the appearance of inhabitation by animated responsiveness, a kind of sentience that manifests even at a cellular level. To put this in Heideggerian terms —though this is not a sentiment he would share, since he contends that care toward one's being is specific to the nature of a human Dasein—liveness is being that cares for itself, as evidenced by a responsiveness that attempts to preserve and protect its liveness, and this is the fundament of otherness. The notion of other will be taken up in greater detail in Chapter 7.

[276] Both *Meridian* and Adina Bar-On's *Disposition*, which will be considered in the following chapter, were produced in the context of a performance art series that I organized entitled Public Spaces/Private Places, presented between 2000 and 2003. My curatorial approach involved commissioning new works by an international selection of artists based on my knowledge of their past work and ongoing concerns. Although artists were asked to address the given theme in the works they presented, they had free rein in how they chose to respond. The series featured a total of 22 projects involving 26 artists from six countries. My curatorial premise was to explore

> the elements that turn neutral 'space' into meaningful 'place' through performances that examined the degrees of intimacy, connection and interaction that mark the dividing line between public and private. The series was particularly focused on performances created for intimate audiences. Some projects featured site-specific or installational environments that invited participants into a sensory or experiential journey. Others were process-oriented, involving public intervention, intimate

explicitly site-specific in the way they call attention to the particular features, history and activity of a location, *Meridian* offers an overtly personal focus. By symbolically tracing a temporal trajectory directly related to her own bodily existence, Arsem memorializes, meditates on, and attempts to provide shape to her self as an animate presence: as a life already lived, a life being lived, and a life yet to be lived. The performance offers an image of Arsem as a bodily self in and of a world, interacting with, responding to, and defining herself in relation to her projected lifespan as marked by and intersecting with external events and other selves.[277]

Self is, of course, the phenomenological starting point, the particular form of presence that Edmund Husserl could not bracket out as he developed his philosophical "science of experience." It is also René Descartes' locus of certainty (*sum*) from which he felt free to "doubt" the verity of his perceptions of the external world.[278] At the same time, the notion of a unitary self has been deeply problematized in contemporary Western culture. Rather than offering the solid ground of irrefutable experience, the rational, conscious self—what, as was previously noted, Antonio Damasio has called the "self-as-subject-and-knower"[279]—is now commonly understood to be fragmented, fluid, contradictory, conflicted, and culturally constructed, to name a few common tropes. Variously theorized as being driven by an inaccessible unconscious, limited by

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gestures, or actions that were, by their nature, nearly invisible. Above all, the series explored the points where identity and geography intersect to generate meaning.
See http://www.performanceart.ca/index.php?m=program&id=125.

[277] Although I read Arsem's work as marking the public/private divide by distinguishing between the *site as public place* and *her self*—a living body with a personal history—*as private space*, it is unlikely that Arsem would describe the work in quite this way. In her published writings about her work, she tends to minimize discussion of her own reactions or feelings in favour of a focus on the audience's experience. She might be more amenable to a broader notion of *our selves* (artist and audience) *as private spaces*, given the way she enfolded the personal experiences of the audience members into *Meridian*. Arsem's artist statement, a description of the performance, and photo and video documentation of *Meridian* can be found on Fado's website at http://www.performanceart.ca/index.php?m=program&id=139.

[278] At least since Descartes, Western philosophy has been fixated on an impulse to site the "proof" of being in human consciousness. This is both the wonder and weakness of the phenomenological project, which begins with at least a temporary assurance of "self" in the form of ego, Having a secure harbour for our own being allows us to theorize and discover a world and others, but seems to continually snake back around to wonder about the validity of this assurance of self, at least when taken as an ontological rather than epistemological ground.

[279] See footnote 246 above.

perceptual inadequacies, marked by finitude, conflicted by multiple and frequently incompatible roles, and isolated or alienated by mediation, the self is indeed a deeply problematized entity.

This dissertation has referenced many possible configurations of self, from the Cartesian *cogito* to Martin Heidegger's notion of *Dasein*, through various phenomenological interpretations ranging from Husserl's formulation of intentional consciousness to José Ortega y Gasset's system of living reason, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's idea of a self enmeshed in the flesh of the world, and Maxine Sheets-Johnstone's body-centred description of human selves as animate forms and semantic templates. It has also considered other ways of thinking about what might constitute a self, from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's interest in nonhuman individuations to Karen Barad's agential realist account of entities whose borders and intelligibility are determined through intra-active relationality.[280] Each of these approaches points or leads to different possibilities for shared meaningfulness. This dissertation positions humans as thinking bodies— forms inhabited through animation with a consciousness that comes out of and is tied to our materiality, encompassing not only thoughts, but also perceptions and emotions, feelings and moods. As becomings not simply surrounded by or immersed in a world, but part of that world in its dynamic specificity, we engage with, inform, and are informed by time, space and matter, discovering our selves, inhabiting a world, and encountering other selves as intelligible entities intra-actively.[281] I have named the enacting and enacted agency of intra-active relationality as

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[280] These are all philosophical approaches to understanding the self, but this dissertation also includes insights from science, particularly Antonio Damasio's attempts to explain, from the point of view of neuroscience, an evolutionary understanding of how humans have come to manifest selfhood. In *The Feeling of What Happens*, Damasio (1999) notes that an organism's survival depends on having an internal structure that can be regulated for minimal variance—i.e. that can maintain homeostasis—in response to changing external conditions. In this sense, all life "knows" something about inside and outside without needing a complex consciousness to represent or signify its state to itself. Damasio suggests that these necessities of survival are clues to how and perhaps why a consciousness of self has evolved in some species:

> The specifications for [an organism's] survival […] include: a boundary; an internal structure; a dispositional arrangement for the regulation of internal states that subsumes a mandate to maintain life; a narrow range of variability of internal states so that those states are relatively stable. […C]ould it be that I am also describing some of the biological antecedents of the sense of self—the sense of a single, bounded, living organism bent on maintaining stability to maintain life? (p. 136).

[281] Perhaps it should be noted that the intelligibility achieved through intra-active relationality is not necessarily a symmetrical correspondence; the shared meaningfulness that manifests might be better understood as symbiotic.

presence, and proposed that its thrall is what offers the very possibility of shared meaningfulness. I trace shared meaningfulness not in terms of an identical representation that reproduces itself among various individuated consciousnesses, but as an actualizing recognition and intelligibility that manifests multiple, simultaneous entities in relation to each other. This perspective and way of describing human becoming is consistent with my understanding of experience, and it informs the accounts that follow.

Marilyn Arsem's *Meridian* was performed at Toronto's Ward's Island Beach in 2001, the year she turned 50. Conceived as the "meridian" of a life lasting a century, the work was designed to look forward and backwards from a midpoint.[282] Part retrospection, part prediction, *Meridian* was an act of creative interpretation driven by a series of crowdsourced questions tied to the years 1951 to 2050. Although Arsem's birthday is in May, she developed the work as a solstice performance to take place on June 21, beginning at sunrise (5:36 am) at the east end of the beach, and working her way westward, finishing at sunset (9:02 pm). The trajectory of the performance along the sandy shoreline followed the arc of the sun. The performance was structured as a series of repetitive, progressive actions. Sitting in a metal chair, facing Lake Ontario, Arsem began each cycle by reading out questions she had gathered pertaining to a particular year, starting with 1951. The questions had been solicited in advance of the performance via email, using the artist's networks of friends, colleagues and relatives, as well as interested participants reached through the producing organization, Fado Performance Inc.[283] For some years, a single question was

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[282] *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary: Fifth Edition* offers a definition of meridian as the "point at which sun or star attains highest altitude"; as an adjective, it can also mean "Of noon; (fig.) of the period of greatest splendour, vigour, etc." Its etymology traces back to the Latin *meridianus* (noon) from *medius* (middle) and *dies* (day) (p. 761). The word meridian in current daily usage more commonly refers in global cartography to a line of longitude, or in Chinese medicine to energetic pathways in the body: both involve practices of mapping something unseen to produce specific understandings of material bodies.

[283] Fado solicited questions for the project through its e-mail lists and a set of invitation/instruction cards distributed by hand to the residents of the Toronto Islands, where the performance took place. In her invitation to participants, Arsem attempted to randomize the process for choosing what year(s) a querent might target. A document circulated in advance of the performance entitled "Your role in *Meridian*" offered the following instructions:

> 1) Pick a number between 0 and 9, and write it down.
> 2) Pick another number between 0 and 9, and write it after the first number.
> 3) If the number you have chosen is 51 or higher, add 19 before it, and you now have a year.
> 4) If the number you have chosen is 50 or lower, add 20 before it, and you now have a year.
> 5) Email <marilynarsem@hotmail.com> before 6/19 with a question concerning that year,

generated, some years had multiple questions, and for a few years, there were no questions, which provided an opportunity to solicit questions from the audience members in attendance. Each of the e-mailed questions had been handwritten in advance onto sections of ribbon—one piece for each year— that were wound together into a ball that gradually diminished in size over the course of the performance. The querent's name and nationality were noted on the ribbon, but these details were generally not read aloud. The overall length of the performance allowed for approximately nine minutes to respond to the questions for each of the hundred years, and Arsem actively encouraged conversation among and personal responses from those who were present.[284] The duration of each set of actions was regulated using a small electronic timer. Occasionally, the actions for a particular year would go over time, which would be compensated for by shortening the discussion for the subsequent year. Adhering as closely as possible to the published schedule of when questions would be answered was an important aspect of the performance's accountability to its audiences. After discussing or responding to each question with those who

and it will be answered during *Meridian*.
6) After you email the question, we will reply with the Eastern Daylight Saving Time at which it will be answered during the performance on the beach.
7) Come if you can, or be there in spirit.

[284] *Meridian* was designed to engage two—or perhaps three—distinct but partially overlapping audiences. One was the local audience who showed up to observe and interact with Arsem on the beach during the published time of the performance, either deliberately or by chance. Visits varied from a few minutes to several hours. Attending the performance required a ferry ride from downtown Toronto for anyone who was not a resident of the islands, an investment of time and resources that encouraged longer interactions. A second audience, geographically dispersed, encompassed those who participated by contributing questions in advance via email. Those engaging in this process had been informed when their question would be "answered." These participants were asked, wherever they might be, to pay attention to what they heard at the precise time that the question was being considered on the beach, and to determine whether they had heard the answer to their question. They were also invited to share their experiences and reflections with Arsem via email. The responses of those who agreed were later published anonymously on the Fado website. The current document on the Fado website is incomplete following a migration of the archived material to a different web design; however, the full list of questions and remote answers can be accessed on the artist's website. See http://marilynarsem.net/wp-content/uploads/2006/05/1147569522-14_Meridian_Q_A.pdf. Both of these audiences were offered a potential way of accessing the published "now" of the performance, either with the artist or remotely. A third audience—one I can only consider speculatively—consists of those who might later find one or more of the stones with printed messages that Arsem left at the site, more than likely without knowing anything about the performance that generated them, and almost certainly not knowing what question had inspired the messages inscribed on them. Indeed, "audience" may not be a fit word to describe this potential group of people, given their removal from the context of *Meridian* as a live event. They must nevertheless be considered as possible entities influencing and influenced by the boundary-making practices of the performance.

were present, Arsem would write a personal "answer" onto a smooth, flat stone with a black marker. The hundred stones used in the performance had been gathered from the beach over the preceding week by Arsem, who spent several days in advance of the performance at Artscape Gibraltar Point, an artist residence located on the Toronto Islands.[285] Arsem's written reflections were private; she did not speak them aloud or encourage audience members to read them over her shoulder.[286] Still sitting in her chair, after finishing each response she would reach down, dig a hole approximately a half-foot deep in the sand with a garden trowel, deposit the stone, and cover it with sand. She would then stand up, tie the piece of ribbon with the hand-printed questions for that year to the chair back, and proceed to the next station, usually prompted at some point during this process by the beeping of the alarm. A narrow red cloth band, 12 feet in length and staked in the sand in front of her, was used to measure the distance from vantage point to vantage point. To find her position for the next year, Arsem would uproot the easternmost stake and swing the cloth band around to extend 12 feet further west along the beach. She would then place her chair and wire basket of materials at the new midpoint. The band was the most brightly coloured element of the performance; Arsem's clothing, chair and materials were a combination of muted tones— primarily grays and taupes—that blended with the colours of the beach.

Reaching the end of her trajectory at sunset, Arsem had one final action, notably different from the rest of the performance. Moving to a stretch of sand behind her, she uncovered three round, glass magnifying lenses opening onto small caverns in the earth, not much larger than the holes she had dug for the stones with their messages. Installed prior to the start of her

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[285] As an artist whose works are carefully responsive to where they are sited, Arsem seeks the maximum amount of time to explore—and when appropriate, prepare—a location in advance of the performance. This particular site was initially scouted by the artist on a trip to Toronto a year before the performance. Already certain that she wanted to work at an outdoor location on the solstice, she viewed and selected the site, chosen from a shortlist suggested by me as the local producer, under weather and light conditions that we imagined might match those of the actual event. At the time of scouting, Arsem had not yet decided on what her performance would be. The content of her performances is often dictated or heavily influenced by her exploration of the site.

[286] Arsem's written answer for one of the hundred years is visible on the video documentation of the event. See http://www.performanceart.ca/index.php?m=page&id=54&year=2001. Her response is structured in the form of a question, which I believe was true of all of her answers; but I am not certain whether this is something I confirmed with the artist, or simply assumed to be the case based on this single recorded response. It is, however, an understanding that I have carried for the nearly two decades since the performance occurred.

performance, these holes, illuminated from within by hidden LED lights, were miniature tableaux offering a glimpse into the usually hidden subterranean life below. This final image reprised elements of another performance installation work entitled *Hidden Views*, which Arsem had presented two years prior in Darmstadt, Germany.[287] The revelation of these small windows at the end of the performance was almost certainly meant to reference a time or place beyond the artist's human lifespan and outside the parameters of human sociality and visibility, evoking thoughts of returning to the earth, of burial, decay, and transformation, and perhaps of a normally hidden and inaccessible unconscious. The tableaux could also be read as a visual stand-in for what cannot be expressed or answered through speech or language.

The contrast of this coda with the rest of the performance—the way the installation intervened in the environment, the way it diverted viewers from interaction with the artist to interaction with the environment, and even the way it called upon audience members to engage their bodies by bringing their faces down to the ground to peer through the lenses—calls attention to the function of Ward's Island Beach as a location for the performance. Given that the answering of the collected questions appeared to be the main animating action of the performance, it is fair to ask: why this site rather than another? There is nothing obvious to indicate why the interactions initiated by Arsem might be best suited to take place on a beach, let alone this particular beach. *Meridian* is tailored to the site, but for the most part is not designed specifically to disclose the site's unique features or imaginative possibilities. Rather, the performance takes advantage of various aspects of the beach as a quasi-rural, outdoor space—its geography and scale, its sensual environment, its established social rhythms as a public recreational area, and its evocative proximity to personal histories—to facilitate and inform actions that might have unfolded in a variety of locations or circumstances. The performance is more site-responsive than site-specific.[288]

Ward's Island Beach is remarkable as a downtown location in a city of several million people. Bordered by a small conservation area that has been designated by the city as an Environmentally Significant Area, the beach, while not exactly isolated, has a slightly ragged,

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[287] See http://marilynarsem.net/projects/hidden-views/.

[288] For a detailed consideration of the idea of site-responsiveness, see Couillard 2006.

unkempt feel.[289] A copse of trees provides a visual and aural barrier that separates the beach from the rest of the islands, including the nearby residences.[290] Those seeking a more manicured or built-up recreational area gravitate to the larger Centre Island, with its amusement park, formal gardens, extended pier, concessions, and public showers. The regular foot traffic at Ward's Island Beach is skewed toward island residents, supplemented by a lively presence of wildlife, particularly birds and insects. The most common urban sounds are the planes that land at or take off from the small airport at the opposite end of the islands, and the occasional ferry horn; the use of vehicles on the island is carefully restricted, and the vegetation effectively muffles the car sounds that drift across the water from downtown Toronto. Birdcalls, the lapping of waves, and wind generally provide the predominant soundscape, contributing to a sense of removal from the bustle of the city. As one might expect of a quiet public park, the pace of action tends to be leisurely: people come to walk along or scavenge the beach, to look out over the water, occasionally to lie in the sun or swim in the lake. This somewhat rustic outdoor setting seems in keeping with Arsem's overall sensibility; many of her performances evoke premodern human lifestyles and behaviours, reflecting a past when attending to diurnal and seasonal cycles not only grounded humans in their world, but was crucial to everyday survival. Her vocabulary often draws upon ritual, myth, dreams, and fairy tales, as well as pagan, Wiccan, and occult perspectives that value the power and mystery of the natural world.[291] These perhaps older ways of negotiating and understanding our world seem easier to evoke in settings that have not been overrun by built form, industrialization, and electronic technologies.

The beach itself is not particularly long or wide. It stretches little more than a third of a kilometre from the rock and concrete pilings at the east end to a small overgrown rise on the west

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[289] For information on the City of Toronto's Environmentally Significant Areas, see https://www.toronto.ca/311/knowledgebase/kb/docs/articles/parks,-forestry-and-recreation/parks/toronto-islands-natural-areas-environmentally-significant-areas.html.

[290] There are a few hundred residential homes built on the interconnected set of islands, clustered on Ward's and nearby Algonquin Island.

[291] This sometimes corresponds to an interest in the coincident and "rationally" inexplicable, as suggested by Arsem's question to querents who were unable to attend the performance: did they hear the answer to their question at the time it was being addressed on the beach? More generally, the overall structure of the performance, answering submitted questions, echoes the mythical image of a female oracle dispensing prophetic but ambiguous answers to those seeking advice.

end, leading to a main walkway that joins up with the various paths and roadways that crisscross the islands. The distance is short enough that Arsem was a visible figure from all points along the beach. Although the beach is relatively intimate in scale, one of its key characteristics is the open vista of sky and water, a feature that no doubt played a role in Arsem's choice of *Meridian* as the title for the performance. The arc of the sun's path offered a dynamic reference to ground her metaphorical image of a trajectory centred on a temporal midpoint, and its steady passage across the sky informed the cyclical progression of the action. Along with the unobstructed view of open sky, one's gaze was inevitably drawn to the horizon line of the lake. The occasional marine traffic of ships, sailboats and rowers barely made an impact on this prominent vanishing point, which my thinking body remembers as the engine of the performance.[292]

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[292] As I write of my experience of *Meridian*, it is almost two decades in the past, so the bodily experience I must rely on is accessible only through or as memory. I acknowledge that even though this dissertation is concerned with presence, a concept heavily invested in the idea of a "now," I have paid limited attention to the problematics of time. As records of experience, memories are notoriously fickle; not only are they incomplete and liable to fade over time; they can also begin as inaccurate and transform entirely in terms of both details and affect over time. Memories are not material marks in the way, for example, a scar might be understood as a record or evidence of injury, or the developed film of a photograph has a fixed chemical surface that presents as an image. According to Antonio Damasio (2010), memories are reanimations of bodily sensorimotor patterns, which he describes as composite records of "*the multiple consequences of the organism's interactions*" (p. 132). He observes that "the interaction importantly includes our own past, and often the past of our biological species and of our culture" (p. 133); and we can further note that memories can also be affected by events and experiences that intervene between an original experience and its evocation in memory. Indeed, as ghostly movements that inhabit a body by reanimating some of that body's interactive responses in the absence of the conditions that first prompted those responses—thus bearing only a spectral connection to their presumptive origins—memories seem like a textbook example of the Derridean concept of the trace. Without wanting to make light of what appears to be a glaring methodological question, I nevertheless remain committed to considering the meaningful *something* that remains as "doing and being"—the movement that inhabits my flesh as memory. Perhaps what is called for here is a reworking of Hans-Georg Gadamer's (2004/1975) inquiries into the hermeneutic method, with a revised understanding of memories not as *texts*, but as *movements*, which inevitably enfold duration into their tissue; as temporal events, they reanimate aspects of the remembered "now." Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (2009) provides a useful discussion of the "spatio-*temporal*" nature of animate movement and the significance of duration to the coherence of dynamic patterns in relation to neuropsychologist Aleksandr Luria's notion of kinaesthetic or kinetic melodies (pp. 253-261).

Gadamer (2004/1975) argued, of course, for "temporal distance as a positive and productive condition enabling understanding" (p. 297), asserting, "The discovery of the true meaning of a text or a work of art is never finished; it is in fact an infinite process" (p. 298). While it is difficult to say for certain what is meant here by the word "true"—notwithstanding Gadamer's assertion that we must view a text as belonging not solely to the author or even to its initial audience, but to the whole of whatever age seeks to gain meaning from it (p. 296)—I might rework his passage to suggest in relation to the memory of a

With the exception of the installation-coda, Arsem spent the entire 15-plus hours of the performance staring out toward that distant horizon. Why was this an important choice? What could she see, and what did the audience see? For Arsem, who grew up sailing with her family, the Great Lakes featured prominently in her early life. While she might not have visited Ward's Island Beach as a specific location, the flora, fauna and geography of the area were deeply familiar to her, as was the view of the lake. Looking southward, she also knew that the shore that lay beyond the horizon line, while not humanly visible from her vantage point, was the United States, her home and country of birth. Sensually and geographically, then, the location provided Arsem with an admixture of familiarity and distance, a potentially productive position from which to consider her lifespan and self as boundaried "objects." Setting aside the personal history that informed Arsem's engagement with this particular view, however, the horizon line is also enacting in a particular way that could be experienced by all of the sighted human attendees of the live performance.

To think through the significance of this prominent horizon line to the performance, it is useful to consider some propositions made by Elmar Holenstein (1999/1985) in "The Zero-Point of Orientation: The Placement of the I in Perceived Space," originally published in German in 1972 and translated into English in the 1980s. Holenstein's article takes up Edmund Husserl's fundamental assertion that "the perceiver's own lived-body (*Leib*) is […] the zero-point of orientation." Husserl believed that human understanding of spatiality is grounded in the kinaesthetic experience of one's lived body, which provides the basic reference point for concepts such as "near and far, over and under, right and left, and so forth" (p. 57). Husserl designated the lived-body as the *nullpunkt* of spatial orientation, in much the same way that the intersection of the x and y axes form a zero-point in a Cartesian grid.[293] Holenstein tests Husserl's assumption

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thinking body that *the shared meaning of a set of intra-actions is never finished*. Memory is one of the ongoing intra-actions that determine the performance's becoming.

[293] One part of Holenstein's article deals with the way particular parts of the body can take on the designation "here," such that "the zero-point [as the 'seat of the I'] changes with changing situations" (p. 74). This line of reasoning leads him to a useful qualification of what this idealized zero-point means as a mapping onto an actual lived-body: "The absolute Here-qualification […] bestowed upon the lived-body in contrast to all other things, is […] due to […] the lived-body's specific function as a referential organ. As such, the lived-body cannot be entirely replaced by nothing whatsoever" (pp. 74-75). While an idealized point has no dimensionality (as discussed in Chapter 3), the "zero-point" of a lived-body is not situated in an empty grid space, but must be understood as being established in relation to a populated environment. It

against everyday experiences and produces several examples where something other than the lived-body appears to provide the dominant orienting force for a body's spatial organization. Most of his examples—walking beside a friend so that the pairing becomes the point of orientation, or being drawn to the centre of a dominant geographical, architectural, or cultural feature—involve deeply enculturated motivations that entail learned or nurtured attitudes of the self. One could therefore argue that these imposed perspectives have come to override or mask a primordial corporeal tendency to orient spatially in terms of one's lived-body. Certainly Holenstein's analysis often reflects an adultist perspective that does not take full account of the extensive inquiries into child development cited by, for example, Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (1990, 2009, 2011).[294] He argues,

> A child can learn what 'over' and 'under,' 'front' and 'behind,' 'right' and 'left' are from any objects—a house, a mountain, a stream—and in the same way that the child projects this understanding over to other things, it can project it into its own lived-body (p. 76).

What is missing in such an account is a full appreciation of the role our tactile-kinaesthetic bodies play in making any spatial meaningfulness possible. Spatial understandings of the objects in our lived world begin from our knowledge of ourselves as spatial bodies, as Sheets-Johnstone suggests in her analysis of Jean Piaget's anecdote of the child and the matchbox.[295]

For Holenstein, any number of gestalt-factors (e.g. the relative size, weight, volume, solidity, colour) or sense-factors (e.g. a self-confident vs. an obsequious personality) can influence or dominate our spatial orientation.[296] As he puts it, "Any objective data that have a greater practical or affective meaning for the perceiver can just as well draw the orientation toward themselves" (p. 62). Holenstein concludes, "Each dominant formation of perception draws

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is only the appearance of multiple entities that allows for the retrospective establishment of both a spatial centre (zero-point) and a relational grid. Pointing to referentiality as the boundary-making determinant suggests that any spatial shift in the seat of the I must be understood as intra-actively determined. I would add to this that a body must also already have a thickness that allows the zero-point to shift with changing situations; i.e. there is an "inner world" that intra-acts with both itself and with an "outer world."

[294] See footnote 160 above.

[295] See footnote 184 above.

[296] One notable absence on his list of potential gestalt-factors is movement, which child sensory development studies suggest precedes all of the attributes he lists as an organizing quality essential to object recognition and orientation in our visual field (see footnote 182 above).

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toward itself the zero-point of orientation" (p. 80), and this certainly seems true of the human adult. However, Holenstein's account obscures an underlying premise. Throughout his narrative, there is a lived-body—self-aware and self-interested—that is the organizational centrepoint or locus for engendering the practical or affective meanings it produces. If I orient myself in relation to the massive, solid, unmoving wall that I see before me, it is precisely because I feel it to be massive, solid, and unmoving *in relation to my body*. The wall dictates my spatial orientation by virtue of what it discloses to me about my own relative properties as a spatial body. This also points to the fact that a lived-body is not just an assembly of its immediate personal experiences. As an animate form with both an ontogenetic and phylogenetic developmental history,[297] its ways of responding include both learned and dispositional behaviours.[298] While such behaviours may skew the apparent origin of spatial orientation in a given circumstance, they could still be understood as having their genesis in the lived-body as zero-point.

Holenstein's narrative becomes particularly confusing when he tries to account for the lived-body as a kinetic form. He describes the experience of jumping over a brook, where

> either the landing on the other bank […] or the landing from which I have to push off becomes the center in terms of which my action-space is partitioned and toward which my present position and the stretch I choose for a running start are oriented (p. 69).

Describing the launch point or landing point as the centre of orientation seems to miss the point that the motivation of the action is not directed to either of those points, but to the task of getting one's lived-body across the brook. *Where is the launch point?* as a question includes an implied prepositional content that is so obvious it becomes invisible: *in relation to my body*. That we are able to move our bodies in a way that we cannot move those things that are not a part of our bodies is exactly why Husserl is able to suggest that the lived-body provides the zero-point of

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[297] See footnote 177 above.

[298] Antonio Damasio (2010) describes the bodily dispositions of creatures with neural structures—including humans—as "know-how formulas" of neural patterning that are a part of one's genetic make-up; for example, responding to being hit by moving in the opposite direction (p. 134). One of the key features of dispositions is their generality; the response does not require specific information, such as identifying what kind of object did the hitting, to be activated. They are, however, the building blocks by which the organism can develop more complex mappings of its internal and external environments. Dispositions can be understood as prepersonal, in the sense that they are automatic or intuitive as opposed to learned, and in that they are generally similar for many or all members of a species. One might also think of Maxine Sheets-Johnstone's (1990) understanding of living bodies as semantic templates.

orientation: our bodies are what we are capable of orienting, and the only site from which we are capable of discovering and confirming the very notion of orientation.

Both Holenstein's account and my rebuttal, however, take the entities of self and world—including the objects that populate a world—as givens. Holenstein could counter my argument by responding. *Where is my body?* as a question includes an implied prepositional content *in relation to the launch point*. I have argued that self and world as entities are constituted intra-actively; we discover them together, as meaningful entities whose boundaries are established in relation to each other. They are, in this sense, *both* orienting. Consider this key passage from Holenstein:

> We obtain our position before we have had the opportunity to get a grasp on ourselves and our psychic abilities. It is assigned by a world that constitutes itself in our sense-perception before any activity of the I. The axle upon which the world is anchored and around which it turns together with us […] is not […] (the result of) a subject-guided fixation originating with us, the perceivers. Rather, the axle is an objectively guided referential structure (*Verweisung*) that has congealed and crystallized itself as the main axle in the living formation of our sensual affections (p. 66).

What Holenstein writes here seems only partially coherent, as it insists on a world as something one has before there is an I to have a world or to engage in a practice of sense-perception. For a thinking body, world and self are synthesized together through intra-action, thereby producing what can only be named retrospectively as world or self within the dynamic specifics of their relationality.[299] Holenstein seems to suggest something closer to the idea of co-emergence in his summary arguments, when he notes that perception

> is constantly in a state of developing and changing. One reason for this is that the manner in which sensible objects of perception are given is inadequate. Every phenomenon implies horizons that are empty and undetermined, and that strive toward concrete fulfillment and arrangement. In this way, sensory consciousness is constantly held in motion by tensions that provoke regroupings on the objective side and new attitudes on the subjective side (p. 80).

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[299] Or, for that matter, what can only be retroactively identified as a "referential structure," if we agree with Karen Barad's (2007) assertion that agential cuts are what produce or enact particular causalities (p. 140).

In this description, world (as suggested by objective regroupings) and self (in the form of subjective new attitudes) appear to develop and change together.

Holenstein argues that the phenomenological method, which asks that we direct our attention to experience with a reflective attitude, misleads us from producing a proper account of everyday experience. He suggests it is only in particular types of experiences that "the perceiving subject together with the transcendent object comes to consciousness." Rather than being co-present in our relationship with objects, Holenstein asserts, "Over long stretches of experience, the subject is actually 'self-forgotten,' […and] 'lived-bodily-forgotten'" (p. 86). He notes that this is particularly true of visual perception as compared to tactile engagement. Holenstein's arguments eschew the thinking body; in his analysis, only a small range of directed awareness counts as the "I" that constitutes the lived-body. In essence, he reduces the lived-body to a narrowly defined, self-conscious I. Certainly it is true that paying close attention entails a different kind of intra-action than physical activities done without directed awareness, such that a reflective attitude may manifest a different quality of self and world. Further, it is not surprising that this shift in presence might be more obviously noticeable as affecting what Holenstein hives off as the subjective I. But, one might ask, on what basis can he gauge that the objects of a subject's world have not also been "forgotten" and are therefore different in some measure for this I when it is not paying attention to them?

Where Holenstein's descriptions are useful in relation to my consideration of *Meridian* is in their recognition of the felt quality of the intra-active relationalities that produce subject and object as entities. They point to the fact that many of the ways we experience our world with a lived-body are the result of deeply ingrained bodily attitudes and behaviours that may be shared on a culture- or even species-wide basis. These animations often take place at a non-conscious level, but they can nevertheless affect the entirety of the self, including the conscious level of experience. They are certainly capable of influencing a thinking body's self, including its conscious self-image, in that orienting oneself spatially, determining one's position, is *part* of the ongoing process of "get[ting] a grasp on ourselves and our psychic abilities." Orienting oneself is, in a sense, foundational to what makes it possible to be or recognize one's self as a self. At the same time, the animations that determine spatial orientation can also be *informed* and possibly directed by conscious experience. Holenstein characterizes this dance between orienting

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influences as a struggle inherent to perception: "Each perception is unfolded between its own contradictory tendencies, the tendency to constitute itself as a whole as an enclosed unity, and the tendency to reach beyond its own borders" (p. 84). In an intra-active model of relationality, however, the tension is not simply one of "perception," but of the subject itself in its dynamic specificity. The boundaries of an entity qua entity can only be made manifest through agential cuts—that is, specific physical arrangements and animations that enact relations of intelligibility.

Returning to *Meridian*, what manifests in my thinking body when I face the horizon of a vast body of water is a deeply felt disposition that brings this tension—between an affirmation of a closed unity of self and a call to reach beyond the borders of that presumed unity—to the foreground of awareness. Part of this disposition has to do with the particular eye focus involved in looking to or beyond the horizon; it is a searching gaze that immediately affects the felt quality of my body, perhaps more potently so in an age where we spend more of our time in enclosed or built-up spaces where there is no distant horizon, or staring at screens that do not encourage our eyes to rove beyond the fore- or middle-ground. To face the lake's horizon is to viscerally and vestibularly feel my self in relation to empty, open space. The haziness of the separation between water and sky, less distinct than a horizon line between land and sky, further emphasizes this sense of empty openness, inducing a sense of disorientation that asks me to take stock of myself. I immediately have a sense of both my own relative smallness, and the largeness of the surrounding expanse that a body might move within or through. To feel small is not at all the same as feeling oneself as nothing; nor, for that matter, is it the same as not feeling oneself at all. It is, rather, to absolutely know that you are *something*, but at the same time to feel an urge to account for what that something might be in relation to this other, perceived something that one is not, and that is of an entirely different scale than one's body.[300]

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[300] Even Holenstein (1999/1985) notes, in relation to psychological experiments involving the projection of an isolated line onto a wall in a darkened room, that in such a case, "the single lived-body, of course, establishes itself as the outstanding figure of perception, and as such, determines the orientation of the isolated lit-up object of perception" (p. 61). An empty horizon, much like an isolated line, would also presumably call forth the awareness of the "I" at least insofar as spatial perception in relation to that horizon is concerned.

A dominant horizon both requires and calls attention to one's standpoint.[301] This orientation to the horizon produces a tension in which a thinking body seeks to delineate boundaries, including the boundary between inner and outer. Michael Inwood (1999) points out, "In Greek a *horos* was a 'boundary, limit, frontier, border […]'. It gaves [sic] rise to *horizein*, 'to divide or separate as a boundary; to mark out boundaries, limit; to appoint, settle, define, etc.'" (p. 98). Granted, the boundary usually understood in relation to a horizon is more likely to be either that between earth and sky, or that between what can be seen and what lies beyond the edge of visibility. Still, as part of the apparatus of *Meridian*, Arsem's position facing the horizon produced a very different affect than would have been generated if, for example, she had been facing the western end-point (looking forward to her lifespan's completion), the eastern beginning point (looking back over a lifespan that has passed), or facing the nearby barrier of vegetation (which also would have placed the rhythmic soundscape of the waves behind her, altering the aural spatiality of the performance). All of these placements would have made Arsem's body the central image of the work, like an actor framed by a proscenium: her body looking toward us as audience, as opposed to the very different image of a body looking out toward the water. Facing herself toward the lake engineered the audience's gaze to face the same perspective. To face Arsem directly required either stepping into the water, or standing in the wet sand and detritus of the tideline—a mix of marine vegetation, gravel, broken shell, and bits of washed-up driftwood and jetsam—at an uncomfortably close distance.[302] Instead, her interlocutors generally positioned themselves beside or behind her, ensuring that the horizon was at the very least in their peripheral view, where it would tend to draw their focus as the most compelling physical feature of the landscape.

Directing the audience's gaze toward the horizon, and encouraging what I call an over-the-shoulder perspective, already created a potential starting point for accord and shared

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[301] Having a standpoint reminds us that we have a body and are not "pure thought." It locates us in a world as thinking bodies, disqualifying us from what Donna Haraway (1988) calls the "god trick of seeing everything from nowhere" (p. 581).

[302] The red cloth band in front of her also formed a kind of barrier—not like the invisible "fourth wall" of the stage through which the audience might see Arsem, but as a wall that delineated an area where the audience was implicitly expected not to stand, or one that marked a liminal proscenium for Arsem's and the audience's view of the lake horizon.

understanding among *Meridian*'s participants.[303] Focusing on a vista that evokes what I understand to be a dispositional response—part of our phylogenetic heritage—provided a way for Arsem to bring her audience into direct engagement with the underlying concerns of the performance. Confronting the horizon subtly directed the audience members' awareness toward their own standpoint, generating an impulse to search and define their own inner and outer boundaries, regardless of their investment in Arsem's exploration of the contours of her own selfhood and lifespan. This, the prominence of the horizon implied, was an inquiry we could do for our own selves and lifespans, alongside Arsem, rather than simply viewing the performance from a third person stance as a depiction of her specific, personal journey.

In referencing the horizon of self in *Meridian*, it is also instructive to consider the metaphorical connotations of the concept of a horizon, which plays a particularly significant role in phenomenological understanding. In his discussion of the term "horizon," Michael Inwood notes that Husserl understood an object as having an "inner horizon" that encompassed all possible views from which it might be seen, and an "outer horizon" involving all possible relations of that object to other objects.[304] Husserl (1960/1929) describes horizons as "'predelineated' potentialities" that encompass not only what we know but also what we take as implicit and what we could explore in order to open up new horizons (p. 45).[305] This notional understanding of a horizon is fundamental to his phenomenological method as it furnishes a source of openness—"the horizon structure belonging to every intentionality"—that allows for the ongoing possibility to make further determinations (p. 48). For Husserl, humans have not only spatial horizons, but also *experiential* horizons that include temporal horizons and a "horizon of

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[303] I will consider this "over-the-shoulder" perspective in some detail in relation to Elvira Santamaría's work in Chapter 7, analyzing its importance to the way we encounter the entity of an "other."

[304] From Inwood (1999):

> Husserl speaks of (*der*) *Horizont* in his account of perception. […] The potential perceptions of all the aspects of the object constitute its 'inner horizon'. An object is related to other objects, and these to further objects. This is the object's 'outer horizon', which is indefinitely extendible and embraces the whole world (pp. 98-99).

[305] Husserl suggests: "We can *ask any horizon "what lies in it"*, we can *explicate* or unfold it, and '*uncover*' the potentialities of conscious life at a particular time. Precisely thereby we uncover the *objective sense meant implicitly* in the actual cogito" (p. 45).

ownness" (p. 130).[306] What is called forth by the notion of a horizon, then, is not only a manner in which spatiality is given to us in perception, but also a way in which we are able to perceive time, lived experience, and even self. All of these are enfolded in *Meridian*, which encouraged participants to engage with the sky-lake horizon, thereby calling attention not only to Arsem's projected lifespan, but also to the experiential and temporal horizons of each thinking body who encountered the project.

Meridian's labour

The previous chapter outlined how Hannah Arendt's (1998/1958) schema of the *vita activa* can be seen to map human intentionality as it is directed toward self, world, and others. I proposed to use Arendt's model in thinking through how the contours of these three manifestations of presence—self in relation to labour, world in relation to work, and others in relation to action—are made intelligible in the performances I am describing. For *Meridian*, which is centrally concerned with understandings of self, this means taking stock of how the performance engages in what Arendt would qualify as labour. *Meridian* also involves activities that might be framed more fittingly as work or action, however, and these should be considered for how they are used in the performance, particularly since I argue that individuated presences as meaningful entities are produced in relation to each other. To supplement and support this reading of *Meridian*, I will also reference Arsem's (2020/2011) "THIS is Performance Art," which provides a succinct manifesto outlining her approach and attitudes toward performance art.[307]

Labour refers to activities that involve maintaining our daily physical existence. To the extent that any artistic practice—including performance art—presents itself as separate from everyday experience, not directed toward the daily life or ongoing sustenance of its audience, it sits outside the realm of labour. An artistic practice that produces physical objects or reproducible works that contribute to a human-made "culture"—books, plays, musical scores, choreographies

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[306] With regard to temporal horizons, Husserl writes, "I can look ahead or look back, I can penetrate and uncover the horizon of my temporal being" (p. 102), which seems an apt description of *Meridian*'s structure and intentions.

[307] Arsem's short piece is specifically subtitled with the description "A manifesto written by Marilyn Arsem" in the recent retrospective book about her practice, *Responding to Site*.

and so forth—would generally be understood to fall under the purview of work as an activity. As was noted in Chapter 2, however, many performance art practices refuse to acknowledge any separation between art and life. Arsem characterizes this as performance art's realness, where there is no as-if: no fictionalized time or place removed from the everyday world, no imitation of characters, and no segregation—or exoneration—from what constitutes our human existence.[308] Even if *Meridian*'s physical tasks were not those of an average beach-goer, not those of a typical Thursday routine, not directed toward gathering food, making meals, washing clothes, or some other regular chore of bodily maintenance, we were nevertheless asked to read its activities within the frame of daily existence: ordinary movements done by an actual person at a public location in and amongst the regular users of the beach. Other than the fact that Arsem was sitting in a chair one would not normally expect to see on the beach, increasingly festooned with ribbons as the day progressed, which made her an obvious focal point for attention, Arsem was as approachable as any other person on the beach.[309] She acknowledged strangers but did not insist on their attention; she invited newcomers into the conversation, explaining in everyday language what she was doing when asked; and she also encouraged or allowed any other participants gathered

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[308] "THIS is Performance Art" is structured as five stanzas consisting of six to eight lines each, with the first line of each section identifying an overarching area of concern. The second paragraph gives a sense of what Arsem intends to highlight by describing performance art as "real."

> Performance art is real.
> Performance art operates on a human scale.
> It exists on the same plane as those who witness it.
> The artists use real materials and real actions.
> The artists are no one other than themselves.
> There are no boundaries between art and life.
> The time is only now.
> The place is only here (p. 290).

[309] The chair had a soft pewter-coloured metal frame with armrests and a seat cushion that blended with the colour of Arsem's clothing. It was artisanal rather than generic, made in an asymmetrical shape with thin, curvy rods. Ball caps on the two back corners, which rose to different heights (one side above and the other below the shoulder), added a modest flourish. The colour and the open construction of the frame made it seem more like an outline of a chair than a solid object, though the whimsy of the design had just a hint of Alice-in-Wonderland regalness—a tea party throne. Arsem's carrying basket also had an open wire construction, making it seem more like an outline of a basket, leaving all of her materials transparently visible. These are small details, but somehow both the chair and basket point to a sense of permeability in their openness to the elements and to the gaze of the audience. At the same time, the chair affirmed Arsem as the centrepoint of the performance, as audience members had no such comfortable perch, and were forced to either stand around her or sit in the sand.

around her to greet or explain or observe or interrupt or add their own explanations of what was happening as their personalities dictated. Certainly some aspects of her presence on the beach might have stood out for a keen or dedicated observer—the long duration of her stay, the regulated shifts of her vantage point, the chair she was sitting in—but she nevertheless blended into the milieu: not too colourful, not too loud or quiet, not too animated or static. If anything, Arsem's demeanor seemed designed to normalize her presence as a figure in the landscape and to deflect attention from herself as a personality. This placed her act of self-deliberation, however unusual, squarely in the sphere of ordinary life, opening up a public space for what would normally be framed as a solitary practice of reflection and providing a potential model for others to do the same.[310]

What did immediately stand out about the performance were the very things that most marked Arsem's activities as labour, an activity related to the cycles of life and death and our connection to the natural world. If her gestures seemed remarkable, it is precisely because the prominence of labour as Arendt outlines it has greatly diminished in contemporary life. The time span of the performance—from sunrise to sunset on the longest day of the year—draws attention to a daylight cycle that was once of key significance but has faded somewhat into the background of urban existence. The repetition of the actions, tied to a progressive marking of the years, echoes the cyclical nature of how we have traditionally experienced and mapped time. The burial of the stones using a trowel is reminiscent of planting, a labour that was central to a large portion of the human population until the advent of industrialized farming.[311] The use of the lake-polished

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[310] In "Some Thoughts on Teaching Performance Art in Five Parts," Arsem (2011) suggests that a live action "can challenge someone to imagine operating in the world differently, as they witness another body in action" (p. 2).

[311] The audience was not, of course, meant to read Arsem as "pretending" to be a farmer, and the sandy soil was hardly a lush site for gardening. We were not asked to imagine that the rocks would suddenly become seeds and begin sprouting trees of rock. If anything, this action seemed more like burial—returning earth to the earth—than sowing. There is, however, the possibility of a more oracular or magically transformative reading of the gesture, enhanced by the privacy around what was printed on the rocks. One could view the action as a variation on the common practice of writing wishes or burdens onto paper or some other object and either leaving the inscribed token at a special location (e.g. in the hollow of a tree) or burning it with the hopes of having one's wish granted or burden released. Viewed this way, the marking and burying of the stones calls forth consideration of the way these gestures metaphorically enfold various elemental forces: earth in particular, but also water that smoothed the stones to create a legible surface, and air taken in through the filtering gaze of the horizon. Of course, within the performance's structure, words were commended not only to the earth, but also to the air. As the questions for each year were answered, the

stones, harvested from the site and then returned to it, reflects how that which is transformed through labour is returned to nature.[312]

Arsem's act of writing her answers onto stones and burying them in the sand translates the published proposal of the performance—answering a collected set of questions—into a physical display of labour. At the same time, however, this enacted image is where the activities of labour, work, and action most clearly intersect in the performance. Viewed as labour, which leaves no enduring products, the public task of mining history, memory, and speculation appears to culminate in written messages that vanish as quickly as they are generated. This suggests a cyclical process where the social labour of the performance—eliciting, recovering and uncovering a collective consciousness of facts, opinions, recollections, and conjectures—is literally covered over the moment it coheres materially as written language. Labour is distinguished in part by its repetitiveness, but also by its ephemerality, the way it is both informed by and blends into nature's cycles, rooted in its time and place and leaving no excess. This is also something that can be said in relation to performance art, which understands time and space—here and now—as its primary materials.[313] At the end of the performance, not only the stones, but any visible traces of

ribbons on which they were printed were unfurled from the spool and tied to the chair back where they fluttered in the breeze. Unlike the private answers written on the stones, this marked the questions as remaining open to the public gaze.

[312] The use of the rocks, like the employment of the horizon, is characteristic of the way natural elements of the environment were incorporated into *Meridian*. Even the weather was acknowledged for its contribution to the texture of the performance. As the day progressed, the sky clouded over and the temperature cooled, so that by the final "decade" of questions it had begun to rain, and the participants crowded in close to Arsem under a makeshift canopy of umbrellas. Arsem later told me that she found this to be an appropriate mirroring of the way she imagined the aging process: life getting darker and more closed in as one's body becomes frailer, one's social circle contracts, and one experiences the loss of family, friends and colleagues.

[313] Arsem equates the ephemerality of performance art with human vulnerability. Mortality is a recurring theme in her work, which may be one of the reasons she has chosen performance art over any other artistic practice. Performance art works, like human lifespans, have a duration that begins and ends, such that the disappearance of the event reminds us that we, too, will disappear. It is no coincidence that Arsem chooses the *closing* stanza of her performance art manifesto to address ephemerality.

> Performance art is ephemeral.
> It is an action created by an artist for a specific time and place.
> Witnesses are privy to a unique experience that will never happen again.
> Performance art reveals the vulnerability of living.
> Performance art reminds us that life is fleeting.
> We are only here now (pp. 290-291).

Meridian's occupation of Ward's Island Beach were gone as quickly as the lake's waves erase a footprint in the sand.

There is, however, the possibility of reading the writing on the stones as work rather than labour. Work is the activity of *homo faber*, the manipulator of objects who creates an artificial world and transforms the natural environment. The stones are hidden, but not erased. Burying the stones opens up the possibility that they might resurface. Their inscriptions—or their defacements, if viewed negatively—would almost certainly fade over time, but not necessarily illegibly so. The potential violence of the urge to leave a trace, to assert one's presence or leave one's commentary emblazoned on the landscape is evident in what are often framed as acts of vandalism and graffiti. Arsem's stones, to be fair, offered a rather gentle intrusion into the ongoing use and enjoyment of the beach: relatively small, hidden from sight, their markings probably somewhat impermanent, and with a negligible environmental impact. At the same time, the potential for one or more of them to be rediscovered was anticipated. Because they were buried shallowly at the edge of tideline, many of them were likely to be disturbed by the waves, wind, and winter ice, if not by a human digging in the sand. Leaving these legible, material markers created a possible conduit to the future, an opening for the time and action of the performance to continue in a new context. Still, Arsem would not have her audience read these ciphers as either an enduring "record" of the performance or as a foray into the art practice of object production. For her, performance art exists only in and as an economy of the present, framed as an experience that is shared among people and tied to its creator, notwithstanding the art world's occasional interest in performance art's physical residues as exhibitable traces or potentially marketable items (p. 290).[314] The stones were not being marked with the intention of

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[314] Arsem claims, "Performance art is not an investment object" in the only section of her manifesto that describes performance art in negative, oppositional terms—what it is not and what it cannot do rather than what it is and does:

> Performance art is not an investment object.
> The work cannot be separated from the maker.
> It cannot be held.
> It cannot be saved.
> It cannot be reproduced.
> Performance art is experience—shared time and space and actions between people.
> The record of performance art resides in the bodies of the artist and the witnesses (p. 290).

turning them into precious objects, but rather, for the unpredictable ways they might animate the curiosity of a future finder.

One way to consider Arsem's gesture of marking and burying the stones is as an inter(in)animate hail that carries the trajectory of the performance into an unknowable, distant future. In *Performing Remains*, Rebecca Schneider combines the Althusserian idea of a hail that interpellates individuals as subjects[315] with her own reworking of what she takes as Fred Moten's reverberation of John Donne's poetic vision of interinamation.[316] Schneider (2017) makes her intentions in linking these two ideas explicit in a conversation with Lucia Ruprecht:

> We might read Moten's use of the phrase "interinanimation" as a greeting, a response and a call [.... In *Performing Remains*] "interinanimation" becomes a means to think about the ways in which cross-temporal reenactments allow the live and the no-longer-live to cohabitate, cross-interrogate, and pose old questions anew, or new questions of old. "Interinanimation" might also be a figure for gesture given that gesture jumps across bodies and across times to both reanimate (as I might step live into a footprint that appears to precede me) and render us in intimate, reiterable relation to the by-gone (the paradox of following what has gone before, as if, in the logic of "following," the past lay before us in the future [...]) (pp. 118-119).

Schneider (2011) feels the force of the hail in what she identifies as the "theatricality" of photographs—inanimate objects that nevertheless carry forward scenes staged for future viewers.[317] She asks her readers to "think of photography as a technology of the live in an

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[315] Louis Althusser poses the scenario of a police officer calling after someone on the street; turning around in response implicates that person as a subject, thereby illustrating, in Schneider's (2011) words, "the circulatory structures by which persons become subjects of the broader social networks they inhabit" (p. 222).

[316] Moten uses the term interinanimation in his book *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*, "recycling" without directly citing a term from John Donne's poem "The Ecstasy." In Schneider's (2011) telling, the complex temporalities of her encounter with the word—reading it in Moten but then revisiting it in Donne's poem, which she had read prior to Moten's use of the term—enact a kind of "return." For her, this interweaving of associations "felt rather like a sidestep, or a dance, to remember Donne through Moten who *reverberates* the word in several of his writings." She goes on to "use the phrase with parentheticals as 'inter(in)animate' to highlight the syncopation of interanimate and interinanimate" (p. 189).

[317] She introduces this idea by considering how, through their circulation, photos of torture from Abu Ghraib—no doubt contra the intentions of the photographers and the posing torturers—"allowed for a

inter(in)animate or syncopated relationship with other times and other places that it not only records but hails" (p. 141). Rather than completing the scene with the click of the shutter, then, photography becomes the enabling medium for a durational event that can always be reanimated through potential future encounters that implicate and engage the living bodies of new witnesses. Here, Schneider asks, "Can we think of the still not as an artifact of non-returning time, but as situated in a live moment of its encounter that it, through its articulation as gesture or hail, predicts?" (p. 141). While I do not agree with Schneider that time itself repeats in such an example,[318] I do agree that an animate connection is instantiated between the time of the recording and the time of the encounter through the recorded document, confirming their continuity across the seeming void of the interval that appears to separate them. The two "times" cannot be thought of as absolutely discrete, since they are joined by a duration that positions them along a common, shared trajectory that is animated—and even, in a sense, inhabited—by the hail.

Schneider also offers another form of inter(in)animation, however, whereby the "time" of human gestures can be "passed" (along) and also brought forward through the medium of inanimate objects. We interact with objects even when we merely pass by them, participating in an exchange in which both we and the objects we pass are enfolded and cross-informed in the gesture of that passing. To illustrate this idea, Schneider invokes a line from Michel de Certeau's (1984) *The Practice of Everyday Life*: "the passing faces in the streets seem […] to multiply the indecipherable and nearby secret of the monument" (p. 15).[319] Here, de Certeau is describing how he experiences the faces of his fellow pedestrians after walking past the Igreja do Passo in Salvador, Brazil. He finds that their passing, animate presences resonate with his passing impression of the dark church façade. His thoughts—percepts, affects and concepts—informed equally by his encounter of both animate bodies and the imposing monument of a dark church, are unified by virtue of a duration marked by his movement (and the movements of the passersby he encounters) through the streets. Schneider (2011) writes, in relation to this line,

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dynamic of witness and a call for account that the scene so desperately required." She writes how she found herself "interpellated into the images' theatre, and it was a theatre in which events unfolded live in the ongoing fact of encounter with those scenes and with the dead they disgraced" (p. 140).

[318] See footnote 145 above.

[319] In *Performing Remains*, Schneider misquotes the passage very slightly, changing "in the streets" to "on the street."

> In this resonant sentence, a monument is given to retain its secret, its monumentality, in
> and through passage, or the live act of passing by. Animate and inanimate, moving and
> stilled, are not in this sense diametrically opposed as much as part and parcel of an
> inter(in)animation (p. 145).

But Schneider also follows this sense of temporal resonance informing our co-relationship with animate and inanimate objects in another direction. She cites Robin Bernstein's notion of the "scriptive thing"[320] to suggest that affect, like the hail, can also be carried forward through inanimate objects to be reinstantiated in our animate bodies. In a complex consideration of Tino Sehgal's performative work *The Kiss*, Schneider argues that artworks, as scriptive things "are pitched, already, for the jump of affect, for reperformance across bodies, as a call is pitched for a response" (p. 135).[321] The key that binds all of these inter(in)animate engagements explored by Schneider—what makes a thing scriptive; what makes affect transferrable; what places temporalities in syncopated relationship; what effects the passage from one animate body to another through the medium of a thing—is the tactile-kinaesthetic engagement and movement to

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[320] In her article "Dances with Things," Bernstein (2009) outlines how "a 'scriptive thing,' like a play script, broadly structures a performance while simultaneously allowing for resistance and unleashing original, live variations that may not be individually predictable." In her reading, not all objects are things. Things are objects that evoke a lived history for those who encounter them, marking a difference that is "not essential but situational and subjective" (p. 69), informed by social conventions and previous personal experience. Because of their connection to a subject's lived world, things inspire kinetic responses. They

> invite—indeed, create occasions for—repetitions of acts, distinctive and meaningful motions of
> eyes, hands, shoulders, hips, feet. These things are citational in that they arrange and propel bodies
> in recognizable ways, through paths of evocative movement that have been traveled before (p. 70).

Echoing Maxine Sheets-Johnstone's argument that we think in movement, Bernstein suggests that scriptive things invite us to move in iterative and often mimetic ways that can direct us to new and specific thoughts: "Things script meaningful movements, and these citational movements think the otherwise unthinkable" (p. 70). One of the examples she explores is that of reading conventions, showing how the anticipation of turning the page of a children's book can charge or inform the reception of the page's content.

[321] Schneider posits that artworks can be understood as scriptive things in the specific sense that "all art is performative, in bodily transmission realized through ritualization (the context of any showing) and the performance-based properties of memorization and repetition" (p. 135). Here Schneider is building on her earlier reading of how, when one consults an archive or views an artwork, just as when one recalls an event in memory or retells a story to a friend, "one *performs* a mode of access" (p. 104). This mode of access physically and animately scripts our body-to-body transmissions, thereby also scripting in particular ways both our ability to understand what has already occurred and what parts of that occurrence are transmissible. For more on Schneider's idea of "performing a mode of access," see Couillard 2016 and Couillard 2021b.

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be found in corporeal gestures. In thinking through the hail of the photograph, what Schneider repeatedly focuses on is not the spectre of faces staring out toward her from an inaccessible past, but "the action we take in response [that] is 'in our hands'" (p. 168). This phrase, which resounds through *Performing Remains*, comes, Schneider informs us, by way of the writer Toni Morrison:

> Toni Morrison writes of the future of any writing as being "in your hands." We might say the same for any image, whether your hands are on a book or magazine or newspaper where the image is printed, on your remote control as your television screens them, or on your keyboard as your computer streams them. What you *do* with your hands becomes the photograph" (p. 163)

Schneider's layered conception of inter(in)animation, with its cross-readings of various authors, offers rich ways of thinking through Arsem's gesture of writing texts on stones and burying them. Like a photograph that stages a scene for later viewing, the stones with their writing hail a future audience. The stones can be understood as scriptive things that prompt particular forms of kinetic engagement. Their size and smoothness invite human handling, drawing a beach visitor to pick them up. They could thus be read as being "scriptive" not only for their particular social and personal significances for whoever might find them, but also for their meaningfulness to the bodies of modern humans more generally as *semantic templates*.[322] Perhaps more in keeping with Bernstein's analysis, their inscriptions—so clearly the marks of human intervention—would also encourage finders to respond to what is written on them specifically *as a message*. Recognizable as written language, they offer a provocation, inciting the reader to make sense of them in relation to their own lived history.[323] It would be unusual to come across such an artefact, and whoever found one might well wonder: were these words somehow meant for me? For those following Arsem's performance, the content of the words on the stone references multiple points in a durational trajectory—the time of Arsem's performance; the time at which the question they respond to was formulated and asked; the year associated with the question, which also informed Arsem's research and memories in determining what to write—

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[322] See the discussion of animate bodies as semantic templates, as outlined by Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, in Chapter 3 above.

[323] Bernstein (2009) writes: "A thing demands that people confront it on its own terms; thus a thing forces a person into an awareness of the self in material relation to the thing" (pp. 69-70).

though these "pasts" would not be consciously legible to a stranger encountering the stone at a new point in its gestural trajectory. Beyond this veiled trajectory, however, we might also consider how the handling of the stone, like Schneider's example of placing one's foot in an outline made by a previous foot, resonates as an animate, corporeal repetition. Human bodies have particular ways of handling stones. We respond to shapes, sizes, weights, and textures iteratively, our tactile-kinaesthetic explorations triggering memories that can be enacted animately—as familiar rhythms or habitual physical positions, for example—or experienced consciously—as remembered incidents or sensations from one's past. Repetition, as Karen Barad (2007) emphasizes, has an agency in shaping the continual becoming of *timespacematter*. Revisiting Barad's argument, "*iterative intra-actions are the dynamics through which temporality and spatiality are produced and iteratively reconfigured in the materialization of phenomena and the (re)making of material-discursive boundaries and their constitutive exclusions*" (p. 179). Small as the repeated gesture of handling a stone may seem, one might still wonder how time and space might be shaped by this simple action, as Arsem's gesture resonates in the handling of one of her stones by a future stranger.

Returning to Arendt's *vita activa*, one might also note how, as a temporal gesture, Arsem's writing on and burying of the stones also sits more closely in the realm of labour than that of work. A work, once completed, is meant to endure continuously, accessible in its visibility and materiality. Labour, however, unfolds more like a pulse, in cycles and repetitions, in gestures that—at least in their visible appearance—use themselves up, or at least, and perhaps more tellingly, are absorbed into the fabric of daily life, to be taken up anew on another day or at a return of season. Labour falls into and reinforces the rhythmic texture of time's unfolding. Arsem's labour with the stones does not leave an enduring, material "work." Instead, it inscribes a hail whose reverberation might be felt as much in one's hands—through the heft and thickness of the stones on which she has written—as seen on their visible surfaces: a gesture that must be passed from one set of hands to another to become intelligible.

The third activity of the *vita activa*, action, is what reveals our individuality, discloses our differences as individuals, and reflects the possibility of enacting choices that fall outside rule-bound or habitual behaviours. It is also the defining activity of the public sphere. Arendt (1998/1958) remarks, "action not only has the most intimate relationship to the public part of the

world common to us all, but is the one activity which constitutes it" (p. 198). To the extent that performance art positions itself as either an activist practice or a forum for ideas and opinions, one could argue that action is its proper descriptive category.[324] Indeed, many practitioners prefer to call what they do "action art," thereby avoiding any confusion with the broad notion of "performing arts."[325] As was noted in the previous chapter, for Arendt, *lexis*, or speech, is a key component of action, which "is humanly disclosed by the word, and […] becomes relevant only through the spoken word" (p. 179).[326] No doubt many would characterize *Meridian* first and foremost as action, if for no other reason than its heavy reliance on and commitment to facilitating a public dialogue. While its content was tied to a marking of Arsem's lifespan, its structure was, fundamentally, a conversation organized around crowdsourced topics. The performance was designed so that Arsem could do the activities by herself when necessary, responding to the questions alone, but ultimately this was only true for the first two questions at the beginning of the performance, when no other audience had arrived and I was recording video and taking pictures from a distance, allowing her some moments to get her bearings and set a tone for herself. The impulse for written or spoken interaction with others permeates the work—from the initial soliciting of questions, through the generating of answers via live conversation, to the post-performance correspondence about what querents experienced at the time their questions were being addressed. While Arsem generally encourages public feedback about her work, and some of her performances for intimate audiences or single audience members have been structured around conversation, few of her other performances rely so heavily on spoken interaction. If anything, she values silence and inner reflection as performative experiences.[327] In

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[324] It is not difficult to argue that Arsem sees her performance art practice as engaging with activist concerns. Perhaps reflective of her years of teaching, Arsem's website allows users to search her performances according to a number of categories that include not only genres (e.g. Audience of one Performances, Durational Performances, Gallery Performances, Performances with Installation), but also by content: Environmental Issues, Feminist Issues, Politics of War, and the one outlier as a subject topic that does not reference a hot-button sociopolitical "issue," Time and Mortality (see footnote 313 above).

[325] For an extensive discussion of the term "action art," as well as a more in-depth analysis of manoeuvre as a specific genre of performance art that is crucially concerned with creating a public sphere, see Couillard 2014.

[326] See footnote 237 above.

[327] For a more detailed consideration of Arsem's use of silence in her practice, see Couillard 2020.

Gustaf Broms's (2018) artist project *9Questions*, Arsem writes, "I relish silence. I rarely add sound to a work, and instead let the site, the materials, the objects, produce their own sounds through my use of them" (p. 45).[328] In *Meridian*, conversation and words are key *materials* of the performance, but so too was the larger soundscape of the beach: the constant pulse of waves, the static undercurrent of wind, the screeching of gulls, the buzzing of insects, and the low roar of planes overhead all added their own texture to the human flow of words, filling the gaps and edging up the volume. Unlike many of Arsem's works that take place in quiet spaces, where the silences one becomes attuned to are internal, tied to one's breath, heartbeat, and inner voice, in this loud, outdoor space the self was forced to seek its internal silence in relation to a somewhat chaotic and highly kinetic environment—perhaps another reason why the open, empty horizon became so pivotal to the performance's unfolding.

Arendt (1998/1958) pointedly identifies, *speech*, not text, as central to action. Action involves direct exchange among humans, aimed at disclosing ourselves to each other. It both demands and opens up the possibility of spontaneous clarification and challenge. As Arendt puts it, "men in so far as they live and move and act in this world, can experience meaningfulness only because they can talk with and make sense to each other and to themselves" (p. 4). As a gesture that relies on language, the writing on the stones points toward the possibility of action, since it is a response that reflects—perhaps summarizing or clarifying—a human attitude and intention. At the same time, the fact that it is withheld from spoken disclosure or exchange, and translated into a form that will be immediately unmoored from its social context, seems to willfully remove its content from the public sphere of action. To be read as action, Arsem's writing on the stones must be understood either as an act deliberately meant to assert and communicate to those who were present at the performance that there is a part of the self that is private—not determined, dictated by, or addressed to a community of others; or, alternately, as a call to some not-yet extant or fully imaginable shared community that might be formed through the eventual recovery of the stones

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[328] *9Questions* began in 2014 when Broms approached a number of experienced performance artists with a prepared list of short questions, hoping to gather for himself a written record of their knowledge around crucial questions he had formulated about and through his own practice. In 2018, the responses he received were compiled and condensed into a publication—not his original intention when he solicited the questions—co-published by Fado Performance Art Centre and Broms's Centre for Orgchaosmik Studies. Arsem's answer cited here responds to the question, "What are your thoughts on SOUND/SILENCE in your process?"

and their messages. This silent gesture—in some ways perhaps more typically characteristic of Arsem's sensibility as a "who" than the public conversation—suggests a way to find meaningfulness outside the inevitable biological cycle of life and death, by generating a possible intrusion or interruption that reaches beyond the closed narrative and established world of the performance. Where Husserl might speak of opening up a new horizon, Arendt frames this in terms of action as "the faculty of interrupting [the life span of a man running toward death] and beginning something new" (p. 246).

As an interruption of the regulated cycle of life and death, action poses the risk of uncertainty and failure. It instigates new stories or events whose outcome cannot be foreseen. Arendt describes action as "the human ability […] to start new unprecedented processes whose outcome remains uncertain and unpredictable whether they are let loose in the human or the natural realm" (pp. 231-232). It is here that we see the closest alignment between Arsem's vision of performance art and Arendt's understanding of action. Because performance art is a live event embedded in the everyday world, its outcome is always unpredictable.[329] Arsem (2020/2011) identifies risk as essential to performance art, not only for the performer, but also for the audience, since, she says, "Witnessing a performance challenges an audience's own sense of self."[330] Arsem's observation is useful for thinking through how *Meridian* presents itself as a meditation on self not only for the performer, but also for the audience. All forms of art can be challenging, but performance art is particularly so in relation to notions of self, because its form

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[329] The content of *Meridian* involved a continual, unpredictable weaving of everyday life into its ongoing dialogue. Since Arsem did not craft the questions, there was already a randomness and uncontainability to the topics of conversation. Some questions were clearly directed to Arsem's personal biography; many were directed toward or reflected the querent's own life and concerns; many concerned particular trends, events or news items tied to specific years; and many reflected a concern for broader societal, environmental or political issues. This unpredictability was then magnified exponentially by throwing the questions open to a public dialogue involving anyone who happened to join the group, each of whom might take the conversation in unforeseen directions.

[330] Notably, those who act as producers or organizers are also enfolded into Arsem's sense of risk.

> Performance art requires risk.
> The artists take physical risks using their bodies.
> The artists take psychic risks as they confront their limits.
> Witnessing a performance challenges an audience's own sense of self.
> Sponsoring performance art, with its unpredictability, requires taking risks.
> Failure is always possible (p. 90).

so clearly implicates and places on display the performer's thinking body. Performance art expands the potential range of human behaviour not only as an abstract model or demonstration, but *in everyday life* by virtue of the fact that it involves real people doing real things, even if it has a published duration. Each member of the audience is challenged to gauge not only their attitude toward what is happening, but also their responsibility to its unfolding: Should I join in this activity? Should I intervene? Should I support it? Should I watch it? In this way, performance art has the potential to generate new intra-actions that can redefine the established borders of self, world, and others, making what one thinks, perceives, and feels seem either familiar or strange.

I have suggested that paying attention to activations of labour might prove useful for thinking through the particular kind of individuated presence called self, since labour reflects human intentionality as it is invested in and directed toward one's self. Certainly, numerous elements of *Meridian* involve labour as defined by Arendt, but to the extent that this is labour enacted primarily by the artist, its influence on the selves of the audience might be viewed more in the nature of a demonstration than an intra-action. What activities do the audience undertake in their roles as witnesses or participants that might be recognized as forms of labour? Arsem (2011) has outlined several generic roles that performance art audiences can play as witnesses supporting and furthering the actions of an artist,[331] but my inquiry speaks more directly to how the querents' and interlocutors' contributions could be understood as investing in their own self-care. Two key thoughts about what constitutes the self determine how it is possible to answer such a question. First, this dissertation takes the position of a thinking body, which would not support the option of partitioning biological nourishment and maintenance from all of the other contributions that might be understood to sustain such an entity's daily existence. Tending to one's psychological,

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[331] In "Some Thoughts on Teaching Performance Art in Five Parts," Arsem (2011) considers how witnesses can influence the performer's labour or intentions:

> The presence of a witness to an action can heighten the stakes, holding the artist to her or his stated intentions, with the expectation that the action will be fully completed. The witness can provide moral support and encouragement when the artist is doing something that is difficult or challenging. The witness can also serve as a safety net, potentially stepping in to assist if something goes awry. They can also serve as the artist's eyes, reflecting back what has happened. They can verify that the action occurred, since they were witness to it, even after all physical evidence of it has disappeared (p. 2).

intellectual and emotional health and survival are necessary aspects of the maintenance of the thinking body. Labour, then, should rightly enfold activities directed toward the well-being of one's animateness as well as one's materiality. Second, Arendt frames labour in terms of not only the self, but also of the species; reproduction is an essential form of labour, as the word's association with giving birth implies. This suggests that the self should be considered not in terms of some abstracted notion of an adult consciousness removed from its own development, but as a being with an ontogenetic and phylogenetic history—a being that owes its existence to the fact that it was conceived, raised and taught by other humans, as well as to an evolutionary process that has deeply influenced what constitutes both its form and its animateness. Labour encompasses activities that nourish a self whose survival cannot be separated from an entanglement in a larger body of family, community, and society rather than a self that sits as an artificially isolated, absolutely autonomous consciousness. Activities that secure one's place within a family or community, or that are directed toward helping that community thrive, also fall under the aegis of labour.[332]

In this context, contributing questions to be answered, engaging in the public conversation by sharing one's own ideas, opinions, anecdotes and reactions, or even simply watching *Meridian* unfold and working through what it means from one's perspective as a witness can all be understood as activities of labour. The siting of the work in a public park, for example, already engaged questions that reflect or determine one's role as a resident, as a citizen, as a user of the site. Is this an appropriate use of the park? Does this enhance or interfere with my reasons for coming here? How does what she is doing affect me? Do I know any of these people? Should I involve myself with what she is doing? Is there anything useful or affirming or stimulating or disturbing in the conversation that is taking place? Responding to the performance implicated the participants and witnesses in labour by mobilizing their various investments in the things that make them feel, perceive and think as a self defined by its allegiances.

The labour of self-care in relation to one's role among others can play out in complex ways. Some contours of the self might be defined by what one finds oneself refusing or failing to share: this part of me is private; this part of me is not relevant to this group and context; this part

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[332] Though Arendt (1998/1958) reminds us that for the *animal laborans*, "social life is worldless and herdlike" (p. 118), suggesting a somewhat impoverished sense or understanding of community.

of me might be threatened if it were revealed in this context; I don't know what to say about this topic. Other contours might be activated by the particular circumstances: I am an expert on this topic and so I will speak; I find this deeply troubling and I need to assert a different view; this situation is very pleasant and I wish to extend it for as long as possible; she looks wet so I will make a place for her under my umbrella. Some contours might reflect or amplify particular entanglements: I want to contribute because I am a friend of the artist; being here makes me feel part of a community; this is an opportunity for me to promote my important cause; I'm so happy not to be in the office right now. Some might be surprising or affirming: I find this fascinating but I am not sure why; I would never have imagined doing something like this myself; I forgot how much I love spending time beside the lake; this reminds me of my mother, who died three years ago; ah, so I am not the only person who sees these things or thinks this way.

Any such reactions or self-discoveries might be only tangentially related to the intentions of the artist, and of course can just as easily be triggered by a myriad of other daily life events. The context of *Meridian*, however, offers the opportunity to understand these stirrings of the self as something other than simply random. Because the performance was specifically concerned with self, all of the individual audience reactions could potentially be understood as sources: impulses that the thinking bodies of the audience manifested as appropriate expressions, however mundane, of what they knew in relation to the topic of self that was at hand. My years of experience and training in impulse work convince me that such reactions can be productively read as specific outcomes generated by the performance as an apparatus of intra-actions.[333] Such

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[333] I have Linda Putnam more than any other teacher to thank for my understanding of body impulses and source work. I studied with her sporadically in both group and private sessions in Toronto and at her studio in Massachusetts between 1993 and 2001. She calls her Jerzy Grotowski-based curriculum simply "the work," and although it is primarily directed toward stage performance, Putnam's student base has always tended to be those she calls "independents": artists who are too rebellious or individualistic or visionary to fit the standard institutional models that offer body training for performance. Stephen Wangh's (2000) *An Acrobat of the Heart* provides a good introductory guide from a theatre actor's perspective to some of the methods that Putnam also uses. What I learned in her classes has become fundamental to how I approach performance art. It has given me a way of reading my body's gestures, movements, and moods by understanding them as sources, a vast well of pertinent information that is both stored and retrievable, though not—at least initially—in the form of linguistic concepts or conscious logic. Such an approach alters one's appreciation for "what comes up" in the contexts of working, creating, or simply engaging in everyday experience. So, for example, if one becomes unexpectedly angry or frustrated while trying to complete a task, one can ask oneself, "What does anger have to teach me as a source in this situation? What does anger know about this task?" This decentres the emotion from one's usual, personalized and

reactions are difficult to pinpoint as direct effects of a performance; usually, they end up taking the form of story, or anecdote—coincidental occurrences that we recall as meaningful in the context of the event, but that we may not see as having been actively generated by what we were experiencing. Perhaps we may not even notice or remember them as being connected to the event—aware of what we felt, but not of the intra-actions that gave rise or shape to the feeling.

I could continue by telling my "story" of *Meridian*, recounting what I remember as being particularly impactful—thought-provoking, sensually striking, or emotionally moving. I could talk about some of the surprising synchronicities made possible by the particular now of the performance—for example, the shared laughter of recognition when, as we were discussing the Avro Arrow tested over Lake Ontario in the 1950s, a jet flew overhead, so loud it became impossible to be heard for several moments.[334] Indeed, I could approach the extended conversation of the performance—reconstructed from the video documentation, collected reminiscences, and personal memory—as a script, analyzing its content (both verifiable and misremembered) for specific references to the self. This dissertation, however, is directed toward uncovering the role of presence in making shared meaningfulness possible, not with the specific, individuated meaningfulnesses of *Meridian* for me, its creator, or its other audience members.[335] I am also wary of placing too much stock in the performance as either a text or an image. Language and visuality are both, in a sense, black boxes: syntheses of myriad processes and sources of meaningfulness that are easy to abstract and perhaps impossible to unpack. *Meridian*'s knowledge, what it has to offer to a discussion about presence and self, is valuable in large measure because it takes the form of a performance rather than being a recording or a text.

It would be easy to privilege oral discourse as *Meridian*'s key source of performative agency. To understand the work as essentially enacted through language, however, covers over

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paralyzing interpretation—"I am angry"—which serves only as an impediment or obstacle, and transforms it into a potential door to knowledge and insight, as an occurrence that has a potentially positive contribution to offer.

[334] For a news report on the recent retrieval of a model of the Arrow from the bottom of Lake Ontario, see https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/avro-arrow-recovered-lake-ontario-1.4793463.

[335] The types of performance art I am most drawn to generally do not tell already existing stories; rather, they create or present situations that *become* stories for the thinking bodies of the participants or witnesses. In thinking through these particular performance art works as instances of enacted philosophy, I see my task as working to pinpoint the conditions of presence that made shared meaningfulness possible.

the kinetic and tactile-kinaesthetic core that grounds the work and makes shared meaningfulness possible. Language and verbal dialogue were part of the basic structure of *Meridian*, but as a site-responsive performance art piece, it was fundamentally a kinaesthetic and sensual experience, enfolding gesture, proximity, rhythm, and texture, to name only a few of its defining elements.[336] I have pointed to the significance of the lake horizon, but there are many other details, like the unsteadiness of the sand underfoot, that could be similarly considered for their subtle impact in bringing the thinking bodies of the audience members into a particular alignment with their contours of self. Most significantly, however, tactile-kinaesthetic bodies as kinetic entities are immersed not only in space, but also in time, and temporal horizons are at the core of *Meridian*'s exploration of self.

Meridian's spatio-temporal-energic horizons

Meridian was concerned with exploring a very particular aspect of self: its temporality. Time is both deeply familiar and deeply mysterious to us as thinking bodies with a lifespan. Felt as duration, time is central to our corporeal existence. Time is sometimes understood mathematically as a fourth dimension that extends space into another realm, but in our lived existence, space and time are inseparably entangled; we experience them as a whole. Though we

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[336] Speech is also at its core tactile-kinaesthetic, despite a notational system of writing that privileges language as being text-as-words. Taking vocabulary and sequencing as a comprehensive representation of speech misses the important role dynamics and gesture play in securing shared understanding. Timbre, pitch, intensity, and rhythm each offer their own fields of meaningfulness in spoken exchange. Some of these aspects of speech are partially captured in writing's own dynamics: its linear flow, its employment of punctuation and diacritical marks, in the use of italics, bolding, capitalization, spacing, etc., all of which contribute to a kinetic undergirding that is often forgotten or overlooked, as is the grounding in some kind of spoken language that generally precedes and informs our encounters with written text, whether or not the particular text we are engaging with uses our mother tongue. Written language, like speech, also evolves over time; the proliferation of emojis and acronyms in contemporary texting practices are just one example of how text adapts to enfold what it misses of speech, as well as how it transforms to communicate in ways that speech does not or cannot. Many scholars have theorized a fundamental difference between oral cultures and those that rely on literacy, arguing, to use a chapter heading from Walter J. Ong's (2002/1982) *Orality and Literacy*, that "writing restructures consciousness." Understanding the concepts of writing and speech as oppositional has been radically complicated, however, by the ease with which current electronic technologies tend to mediatize both forms in an entangled way. There is no doubt that language is essential to contemporary human society, and that it plays a key role in determining what is possible for us to express to each other, and even for what is possible for us to think; what I am pointing out here is that language, which began not as written text but as gesture and speech, encompasses far more than simply words.

tend to conceive of matter in purely spatial terms, this is, in fact, an abstraction, in which time has been suspended or bracketed out to produce something like a frozen snapshot.[337] We perform a similar kind of suspension to measure time, imagining individualized moments—separated from any relationship to spatiality and somehow voided of their duration, *the very thing that time is*— that are sequenced to represent an abstracted idea of a time's passage. Our perceptual systems are hard-wired for such exercises of abstraction, since within the range of unenhanced human perception, much of what we experience appears as stable and static. Nevertheless, our bodies are inextricably sited "in" time, just as they are in space: we experience time's duration as progression and transformation, and this is evident in various ways to each of our senses.[338] We feel overlapping and variable durations, boundaried by measurable dynamics or recognizable events that we use to pinpoint beginnings and ends. As animate forms, the way we understand and experience time in its continuance is as and through movement. This is in part why Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (2011) understands bodily logos as being essentially kinetic, offering the phrase "*spatio-temporal-energic semantics*" to describe how we think in movement, which allows us to generate boundaried units of meaningfulness as a fusion of space, time, and dynamics (p. 442).

*Meridia*n's task of addressing the artist's lifespan—half of it receded into the past and half of it a projection into the future—presented considerable conceptual, perceptual, and affective challenges. How might one organize such a daunting inquiry? What aspects of a lifespan's duration are compelling to investigate? What gestures might do justice to a lifespan's spatio-temporal-energic horizons? Several of *Meridian*'s organizational strategies around time have

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[337] This is exactly the paradox Henri Bergson (1998/1911) attempts to grapple with in his formulation of duration. In refuting the arguments of Zeno of Elea, who argued that movement must be impossible, since at any single moment, an arrow in its trajectory is still, Bergson states, rather clumsily, that "the arrow never *is* in any point of its course" (p. 308). This is, in a way, true—but only because a "point" never "is": a point is an abstraction that has no dimensionality in space or time, and so the idea of a "moment" that has no time bears no relation to the unfolding of the lived world of *timespacematter*. Any *moment* that refers to an actualization of time *must have a duration*, even if it is so infinitesimally small that we are unable to measure it. What Bergson does intuit through movement, though his reasoning is muddied by his reference to multiple trajectories—in his explanation, he splits a trajectory AB by a point C, creating AC and CB as new trajectories, thereby imagining motionless "stops" that place an arrow in position and destroy the unity of the original trajectory—is that a duration is a unity with "a continuity of which every one of us is conscious whenever he lifts an arm or advances a step" (p. 310). Bergson's description also points to the way humans are able to develop a conception of time through movement.

[338] As Bergson says, "We do not *think* real time. But we *live* it" (p. 46).

already been noted: linking the projected duration of Arsem's life to the daylight hours of the longest day of the year; marking time punctually and cyclically according to progressive years; reaching out to a dispersed community to gather questions tied to specific years within that lifespan; twinning the passage of time to a spatial progression along the beach; and burying inscribed stones to mark each yearly duration. Arranging the performance around individual years offered the advantage of focusing the public discussion within boundaried durations, while also maintaining a trajectory that suggested a more expansive set of horizons. Thinking bodies, after all, have an innate capacity to shift their awareness between what is immediate and proximal—in the here and now—and what is more remote or distant.

As a meditation on a lifespan, *Meridian* explored three basic aspects of temporality: simultaneity, ephemerality, and dynamicality. The first of these, simultaneity, points directly to the way we experience time and space as entangled. The duration of a lifespan is experienced not only in terms of a when, but also in terms of a where. Time, however, unfolds over a much greater volume than that occupied by a single thinking body. In any duration being experienced as a now, many events are unfolding across space, most of them outside a self's limited proximity and sphere of awareness. Though these many simultaneous unfoldings may not appear to concern each other, they nevertheless have this one potentially important relationship: they are linked in time as a single unfolding duration. The second aspect, ephemerality, is a function of time's continual progression, which we experience as a continuously renewing now with an ever-receding past and an ever-projected future. Time cannot be suspended or reversed; even when we are still, it moves through us and/or/as we move through it. Ephemerality suggests that time is fleeting and cannot be grasped, and that as living creatures our time is finite. Alongside this, ephemerality points to the certainty that transformation is not only possible, but also inevitable. Transformation gives us a life, but also poses a question of continuity: if everything—not only what I perceive as a world around me, but also what I perceive as my "self"—is in constant flux, what is the continuity that allows me to even speak of an I, and what is my relationship to this ongoing becoming—the I that was but is no longer, and the I that is not yet but will be going forward? The third quality of time that *Meridian* considers—what I am calling dynamicality—points to the way thinking bodies experience time as energetically variable. We construct devices that measure time according to a regulated pace, but as thinking bodies, we experience time

qualitatively: it can seem to move slow or fast; time can feel light or heavy; we can experience it as sudden or subtle, smooth or jerky, linear or cyclical.[339] Indeed, there would be no possibility of dynamics without time, since forces and intensities are felt and measured by the way they change. What these three aspects taken together suggest is that rather than simply positing time as a punctual progression of discrete moments, Arsem's inquiry sought to consider her lifespan as a spatio-temporal-energic whole. *Meridian*'s approach to these aspects of time and how they might relate to understandings of self can be partially mapped through how the performance engaged its audiences. The project enfolded two distinct models of communication, one based on transmission, and the other employing what I will frame—at least initially—as a ritual understanding.[340]

When we are asked to describe how communication happens, the notion of transmission is generally central. In a transmission model of communication, meaningfulness is framed as data or information that originates with a sender and is conveyed to a receiver. The specific content of a message is not of direct importance to the transmission, as long as the content can be encoded and decoded as information. The main technical challenge that becomes evident in a transmission model is the possibility of "noise" that can interfere with the coherence of the message-as-information.[341] This model has been particularly important for conceiving how communication can be effected across distance.

A less commonly considered ritual model of communication is generally understood as privileging a concern for stabilizing meaning over time. Often directed toward an ideal of collective coherence, the emphasis of ritual communication is not on information as data, but rather on meaningfulness as felt and lived through tradition. Rather than transmitting information

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[339] Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (2009) points out our qualitative experiencing of time in an article that considers the relationship between emotion and movement. Writing of the felt quality expressed by the word "suddenly," she notes, "It is a *qualitatively* experienced temporality, just as rushed, prolonged, and creeping are qualitatively experienced temporalities. […] It is fundamentally not a quantitative term but an experienced kinetic quale" (p. 195).

[340] For a description of ritual versus transmission models of communication, see footnote 124 above.

[341] Claude Shannon's (1948) "A Mathematical Theory of Communication" outlines this theory from a technical perspective; his article, which provides a statistical conception of information, has proven extremely influential to the design of many electronic technologies, particularly those involved in communication devices. It also provides a conceptual ground for Stuart Hall's (2006/1980) cultural analyses that pursue issues of encoding and decoding.

between two or more entities, ritual communication configures a synchronicity of movement among entities—in the form of actions, structures, and patterns of interaction that can be repeatedly performed by animated bodies—as the fundamental elements of communication's materiality. Movement—which of course can also include moments of shared stillness—is powerfully communicative because it can enfold time, space, matter and dynamics into differentiated wholes or unities, allowing them to be experienced as recognizable, meaningful events.[342] Through movement, ritual communication roots meaning not in a transfer of information, but in a shared, kinetically and sensorially experienced here and now.[343]

It is easy to point to examples of *Meridian*'s reliance on a transmission model of communication, beginning with the pre-performance task of generating questions related to the 100 years of Arsem's projected lifespan. Gathering an array of different questions emanating from disparate locations and relating to particular years allowed the artist to address all three of her concerns around time—its simultaneity, ephemerality, and dynamicality. Soliciting questions from other thinking bodies can be understood as a bid to expand Arsem's temporal horizons in ways she could not have conceived on her own, providing entirely novel reference points for the possible meanings of her projected lifespan. The questions came from and referenced a wide range of locations. Many of them raised issues of loss, transformation, and continuity. They covered a broad range of topics from the deeply personal and autobiographical to the

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[342] Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2002/1945) tries to describe the way movement enfolds time into a whole in *The Phenomenology of Perception*. He characterizes our bodily movement as manifesting a presymbolic understanding of space and time, which are not containers of our being, but part of us:

> At each successive instant of a movement, the preceding instant is not lost sight of. […] Each instant of the movement embraces its whole span, and particularly the first which, being the active initiative, institutes the link between a here and a yonder, a now and a future which the remainder of the instants will merely develop. In so far as I have a body through which I act in the world, space and time are not, for me, a collection of adjacent points nor are they a limitless number of relations synthesized by my consciousness, and into which it draws my body. I am not in space and time, nor do I conceive space and time; I belong to them, my body combines with them and includes them. […] Our bodily experience of movement is not a particular case of knowledge; it provides us with a way of access to the world and the object, with a 'praktagnosia', which has to be recognized as original and perhaps as primary. My body has its world, or understands its world, without having to make use of my 'symbolic' or 'objectifying function' (p. 162).

[343] One might also note here Karen Barad's assertion that temporality and spatiality are shaped iteratively. This suggests that repetition can shape how time and space unfold, imprinting dynamic patterns that can become, in a way, somewhat self-reproducing.

sociocultural and geopolitical, addressing the complex range of conceptual, perceptual and affective registers through which we discover ourselves, our worlds, and others as thinking bodies. Given Arsem's concern with simultaneity, which presents a problem of distance, it is not surprising that the performance turned to transmission as a communication model to seek querents. Because the questions were solicited online, across distance, they had to be received via transmission: originating with a sender, encoded first as English-language questions and then as digital data, sent electronically, decoded back into English-language questions, and then further decoded in how they were interpreted by Arsem and the live participants as the receivers. Note that there are at least two levels of encoding (and decoding) required: first, into language, which is understood here as an encoding medium, and then into digital data.

There were, of course, possibilities for noise within the transmission process, but perhaps a more difficult hurdle was to be found at the points of encoding and decoding. What did the querent want to ask? What part, if any, of the concerns of a querent would it even be possible to formulate in the form of a question posed through text? And, once the questions had been crafted and sent, would they be understood in the ways the querents intended? The same set of difficulties can be found in the "answers" written on the stones: what part, if any, of the intended meaningfulness of the answer would it be possible to convey as a written message?[344] If such a message were found, how would it be interpreted? Although there are many possibilities for "noise" in terms how long the messages might remain legible, it is at least as uncertain what "information" is actually being transmitted, particularly given the ephemerality of the performance as a context. Perhaps the most important message being conveyed was not encoded in the text at all, but was rather to be found in the evidence that a human had handled this stone and been compelled to inscribe its smooth surface: a human body to human body transmission through the hail that encourages an iterative kinetic/tactile-kinaesthetic interaction with the stone.

In *Meridian*, the use of transmitted communication emphasizes that while we dwell "in" time as duration, time takes place across distance in such a way that it is impossible to account for the entirety of now's simultaneity, although it may be possible to retrospectively expand our

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[344] This ignores, of course, the equally pertinent question of who the intended recipient of such a message might be, which is surely also relevant to how a message would be best encoded. Framing Arsem's action as communication is already complicated by the fact that the recipient of the "answer" cannot be presumed to be the asker of the question.

awareness and linkages to other locations of that simultaneity. It is equally impossible to account for here's proximity, as suggested by the stones. The imagined finder of a stone may do so by coming upon the precise location where Arsem once was—but being there at a later time, very little of what previously occurred at the site can be communicated. In this reading, here and now both offer intersection points that can and do activate dynamics of resonance and reverberation, but their reliability and comprehensiveness are, at best, limited.

Alongside *Meridian*'s reliance on transmission, however, was a search for an alignment of meaningfulness through presence, by inviting people to congregate in both the here and the now. A partial iteration of this can be found in Arsem's request to querents to direct their attention to the possibility of receiving an answer at the exact time their questions were being addressed on the beach, no matter where they might find themselves. Even if their bodies could not be brought into the immediate spatial proximity of the performance, their temporally aligned awareness was posited as a way of bringing their dispersed bodies into synchronicity with the performance by virtue of simultaneity. What was offered as an "answer" to their questions was not a transmission of data, but a duration of directed attention to their thinking bodies, with a potential for generating meaningfulness. Meanwhile, visitors to the performance were invited to share a more proximal here and now with the artist.

This, of course, is not ritual communication as it is usually understood. *Meridian*'s participants were not coming together to perform a known ceremony with a fixed set of gestures. In ritual as it is generally understood, repeated form is what holds meaning. Enacting the ritual's familiar or predetermined script is an actualization and shared renewal of meaningfulness. Arsem would reject any such characterization of her work. As a performance artist, her concerns are not to re-enact meanings, but to create new ones.[345] Arsem (2011) has clearly stated that performance art "is not about rehearsing a text or recreating a narrative, but rather it is an experiment with a portion of one's life" (p. 2). Her works set out to discover and transform, not to reinforce

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[345] Arsem (2020/2011) makes this clear in the very first stanza of her manifesto.

> Performance art is now.
> Performance art is live.
> Performance art reveals itself in the present.
> The artists engage in the act of creation as they perform.
> Performance art's manifestation and outcome cannot be known in advance.
> Re-enactment of historical work is theater, not performance art (p. 290).

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sedimented understandings. My referencing of ritual communication in relation to *Meridian* is not an appeal to the idea of an imposed and repeatable form—even if the performance did involve 100 repeated sets of actions—but as a way of thinking through how the work roots meaningfulness in a shared, kinetically and sensorially experienced here and now. This requires understanding the conversations on the beach involving Arsem and the participants as being something more than simply oral transmissions of information. *Meridian*'s discursive meaning-making experience was equally grounded in sensation and movement.

In terms of the performance's "here," I have already described some of the rich material and kinetic texture of Ward's Island Beach as the site of the performance. The location envelops the senses. The uneven sand underfoot that slopes gently toward the lake is strewn with mineral and organic material: rocks, shells, lake vegetation, bones, feathers, plastic, glass and other detritus washed up by the tide. In summer, a marine smell permeates the air as the wind blows in across the water. The environment is alive with movements large and small, fast and slow: scavenging birds and insects, objects fluttering in the breeze, whitecaps flashing on the water's surface, waves lapping at the shoreline and churning up the tideline, clouds drifting across the sky, the slow progress of the sun. Shadows also shift with the sun, appearing and disappearing with the cloud cover. The soundscape is a noisy combination of rhythmic pulses and staccato bursts in a wide range of pitches. The temperature and weather are variable, as is the colour hue and saturation. Over the course of the fifteen or so hours of *Meridian*, the light shifted from the rich golden glow of sunrise, through the washed out blaze of midday, to flat greyness as clouds set in, the glistening of wet surfaces as it began to mist and rain, and finally the gloom of impending nightfall. During this same time, the temperature went from cool to pleasantly warm to hot and back to cool and even dauntingly cold.

Adult thinking bodies visiting the performance would have had a wide variety of experiences they could draw upon to provide reference points of familiarity, such that the environment would be unlikely to feel particularly alien or confusing to them. Most of what they encountered would fall within their horizons of known and readily nameable entities or events: e.g., beach, lake, bird, wind, fellow human. The variations in the way these entities presented within the conditions of *Meridian* would be similarly familiar, allowing the participants to experience their dynamic fields of sensation as a coherent and synthesized whole. At the same

time, the environment of the beach is generally not what most urban dwellers encounter on a daily basis. Most audience members' senses would be attuned to the relative novelty of the location—as a performance site, but also simply as a landscape to traverse. Details that are less common to a person's daily experience, or that are otherwise noteworthy—as particularly pleasant or unpleasant, for example—draw more subconscious attention and conscious awareness. Unfamiliar experiences bring the thinking body's sensorial awareness of its boundaries of self to the fore. I have pointed to the lake horizon as one detail with a potent affective, perceptive and conceptual charge in relation to the participants' awareness of themselves *as* selves—something that could be experienced without the necessity of narrative framing. Paying conscious attention as a thinking body might include naming with a word or phrase the confluence of sensations that comes to form a particular *something*—an individuated presence—be it an event, a pattern, a state, a quality, or an animation. But translation into language is not necessary for a something to register or to be recognized: it might as easily be acknowledged or understood through any number of gestures—a nod or a shrug, a slight shrinking from or leaning in toward—without ever coalescing into a linguistic description.[346] It might simply be felt as a mood or emotion.

Language offers a powerful set of variables—vocabulary, rhythm, gesture, etc.—for communicating, and texts have proven to be extraordinarily adaptable and resilient in their ability to communicate in the absence of live bodies.[347] Live bodies sharing a here and now, however, have a number of additional corporeal tools at their disposal to facilitate shared meaningfulness. As Arsem (2011) has pointed out, "Viewers identify with the person in action, whether they are conscious of it or not. Their own bodies begin to mirror the same muscle tension and breathing patterns as the body they are watching" (p. 3). Thinking bodies are hard-wired for mimicry, with mirror neurons providing an animate inner life of pre-sensorial imitation, and hormonal cues such as pheromones influencing our moods.[348] Live bodies coming together in a here and now also

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[346] As was discussed in Chapter 2, thought is not, in itself, language, although language is clearly one of thinking's many possible trajectories, and arguably, one of its most potent.

[347] This phrasing is, of course, misleading. Not only is language in general rooted in the lived-bodies of its users, but also an individual text originates and is rooted in the lived-body of its author, and its communicative power relies on the thinking bodies of its readers—who animate the text with their thought and whose sensual experiences inform their reading of what is written.

[348] Mirror neurons and pheromones are discussed in Chapter 2.

have an expansive and responsive repertoire of communicative movement and sensory possibilities at their disposal: they can point, make sound, orient their bodies toward or away, move closer or farther apart, make eye contact, share eye focus, make facial expressions, draw in or relax their breath, touch objects or each other in various ways. Indeed, these corporeal foundations are necessary precursors to developing and harmonizing shared language. In short, the here and now provides a range of sensual experiences that need not be named to be shared, as well as an opportunity for responsive adjustment, refinement and correction using a range of bodily cues— e.g., kinetically, tactilely, aurally, visually, affectively—that can communicate both *to* particular senses, and *about* what is being sensed. Even the way we take turns—when and how we speak or act, when and how we pay attention, what prompts us to interrupt or to fall silent or still, the level of our involvement—can inflect the meaningfulness of an encounter in the here and now. A shared here and now gives thinking bodies a common set of conditions from which and within which to align their fields of sensation; and of course, it also offers the possibility of collectively naming their shared experience, thereby encouraging at least a partial fusion of their language horizons.[349]

As an encounter with others, coming together in the here and now of a performance offers an obvious opportunity to pay closer attention to the fact that we are all thinking bodies. This recognition involves more than simply affirming that an other looks like me. As Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (1999) has noted, we recognize another human not only by virtue of that organism's physical resemblances—"like my own visual form with its arms, hands, legs, feet, and torso"—but also because of similarities in the way that form moves through the world— "kinetically like my animate organism in its reachings, stridings, pacings, squirmings, grippings,

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[349] The concept of a fusion of horizons comes from Gadamer (2004/1975), whose concerns are admittedly somewhat different, in that he is analyzing the task of interpretation in relation to an ever-changing temporal horizon, where what bridges the gap between thinking bodies is not a here and now, but a text: "In the process of understanding, a real fusing of horizons occurs—which means that as the historical horizon is projected, it is simultaneously superseded" (p. 306). It is possible to acknowledge that each speaker has a language horizon without treating language as a whole in abstracted, monolithic terms as representation beholden to an endless chain of signifiers. While horizons can change, they are, nevertheless, boundaried. If our language horizons were not at least partially fused, how could language have any effectiveness at all? And without boundaries, how could we conceive the possibility of play, when play's meaningfulness as a term implicitly relies on the context of a form or structure within or against which it innovates or negotiates?

stretchings, strikings, tremblings, dawdlings, and so on" (p. 100). Furthermore, what compels me to respond to an other's selfhood is not simply her similarity as an animate form; I can also discern a "harmoniousness" in her "kinetic style" (p. 101) that allows me to recognize not only that she acts intentionally, but also what many of those intentions indicate or express. Think of the difference in dynamics and positioning that separate a pair of outstretched arms raised in greeting from a pair of outstretched arms raised in threat or defence. In our unreflective daily experience of the world, this recognition of other selves and their intentions is not the result of "an inference or reasoned-out procedure, […] but is grounded in what is presented straightforwardly" (p. 100). In other words, our thinking bodies recognize much of what goes on in our worlds without having to apply conscious logic to the process of making sense of what we perceive. This ability and disposition to identify others like ourselves and to resonate with their movements as expressed intentions is innate and familiar. We are attuned not only to what people say or how they look, but also to how they move, which can instinctively reveal to us both what we have in common and how we diverge in our dispositions, intentions, and kinetic styles.[350] In a site-specific performance of long duration, where people are free to come and go as they please, such gestures are perhaps particularly revealing, because the participants are not bound by the narrow range of protocols or expectations found in many genres of performance, where audience members are expected to arrive and leave at more or less the same time, sit in one place, usually in the dark, their bodies quietened and stilled, looking at the lit and often elevated body of the performer.

Ritual communication can be understood as seeking to enforce or reinforce particular alignments of our dispositions, intentions and kinetic styles, in that participants are asked to perform a prescribed set of movements and interactions. But by focusing on our shared kinetic and tactile-kinaesthetic experiences in a here and now, ritual also brings to the foreground the possibility of a different understanding of what counts as meaningfulness. First, our ability to instantly recognize and respond to what Sheets-Johnstone calls a harmoniousness in kinetic style suggests that if there is an encoding and decoding of information that is taking place, it is deeply

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[350] Sheets-Johnstone points out how the "who" of what we are is evident in the motion and dynamics of our daily activity: "I am a psychophysical unity, the locus of meaningful actions, of intentionalities that consistently play off my movings and doings, comings and goings, hesitancies and rushing, curiosities, wonderings, and more" (p. 100).

ingrained in our genetic make-up as animate forms, to the point of being innate. Perhaps more importantly, however, the meaningfulness of ritual is focused less on transmitting information as discrete bits of recognizable data, and more on a larger structure or form that emerges from the patterns or movements that are generated, i.e. the enacted boundaries of intelligibility determined through relationality. There is still a process of synchronization that almost certainly includes practices of transmission, but meaningfulness comes not from having each communicant receive an absolutely identical data set that is then identically and consciously decoded. Instead, behaviours and actions produce or establish recognizable boundaries: a temporary unity of pattern and movement within which individual entities are intelligibly differentiated.[351] Understood this way, the ritual's form initiates a set of boundary-making practices, and the boundaries that result *are* meaningfulness actualized.[352] For the participants, this spatio-temporal-energic unity of shared intelligibility is perceived in relation to the dynamics of the here and now, how it feels and how they find themselves moving through it.[353] Put in agential realist terms, the discernment and differentiation that is meaningfulness in such a model is determined though a larger apparatus of intra-active practices—which may include but are not limited to transmitted, language-based communication—that result in a shared, relational intelligibility. In this reading, the spatially oriented model of transmission is replaced by a more encompassing spatio-temporal-energic model of entanglements.

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[351] This could be likened to a dynamic systems approach, where development is tracked as an outcome of various interactions, or as Esther Thelen and Linda Smith have described in relation to their studies of infant development, "development happens through and because of the activity of the system itself" (as cited in Sheets-Johnstone 2011, p. 198). Here, I am suggesting that shared meaningfulness often has a similar trajectory, where the boundaries of intelligibility that are established do not precede the intra-actions as transmissible data conveyed from one discrete entity to another: rather, new meanings are generated for all of the participants as those participants manifest as entities through their intra-action.

[352] This again returns us to Stuart Hall's (2006/1980) insight that meanings are "articulated in practice" (p. 164). Here I am suggesting that this means more than simply affirming that something has been understood by the responses it solicits. Practices themselves generate meanings by the way they enact particular boundaries.

[353] Textures and dynamics are also important to how an event is remembered. Memories are accessed in a felt way, not simply as texts, but as a synthesis of sensory qualities without which words would be meaningless. How well a memory can be described in language cannot be assumed to correspond to its clarity, vividness, or durability for the experiencer. Indeed, translating our felt experiences into language is a skill that requires talent to develop and considerable effort to hone. Language can stabilize or alter our memories precisely to the extent that it is able to elicit or evoke something of the feltness of experience.

The actualized, boundaried unity that enables this shared meaningfulness registers among the thinking bodies encompassed within that whole not as a physical entity, but as a spatio-temporal-energic feltness, an alignment. As an enactment of intra-active practices, a felt unity could be likened to a dance, in that it involves a play of forces, but perhaps a more resonant comparison can be found in the process of homeostasis.[354] In homeostasis, the cells of an organism intra-act to ensure that particular conditions stay within specific ranges. The process is a balancing act, essential to establishing and maintaining each individual cell's viability as well as to facilitating the ongoing coherence of the whole organism as a boundaried environment. The cells are part of a larger system, or rather, of various systems in which they are implicated and by which they are affected, although no single cell encompasses the whole of the organism. Each cell has its own sphere of influence, as well as a set of abilities that determine its possibilities for asserting its influence and responding to the influences that impact it. Each cell must also have mechanisms for gauging its ongoing viability and detecting the favourableness of its immediate environment. Homeostasis is an adaptive and responsive process that attempts to maintain and optimize stable conditions—within a certain range—in the face of continual and sometimes unpredictable variances.

As a spatio-temporal-energic event, the boundaried unity of shared meaningfulness has a similar kind of liveliness. Once it takes shape as a recognizable whole, its ongoing coherence depends on the continual intra-actions—conscious or not—of those who have a part in that whole, both in how their play of adjustments and adaptations differentiate their selves and affect each other, and in how successfully they stabilize and maintain the actualized unity in the face of influences that impinge upon or permeate its boundaries. The continuity and durability of any particular unity cannot be taken as givens; they are achievements that must be continually secured in the face of temporality's simultaneity, ephemerality, and dynamicality. Meanings appear, actualizing in a here and now; but over time they may remain constant, they may evolve, or they may dissolve.

If this spatio-temporal-energic model of shared meaningfulness can be extrapolated from the example of homeostasis as a process of living organisms, it is precisely because animate forms—including thinking bodies—are themselves spatio-temporal-energic unities. As living

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[354] See footnotes 246 and 280 above.

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entities, we are constantly negotiating the challenges and opportunities posed by simultaneity, ephemerality and dynamicality. A temporal self cannot be understood simply as a static conglomeration of data. As becomings, we manifest as adaptive animateness, determined responsively and relationally through various ongoing, boundary-making practices.[355]

We experience our lifespan as flux, but this does not mean we are never actualized, never *being* in a shared here and now. A self—an "I"—is a meaningful whole, but not a static one. Its unity includes duration, which we often misunderstand because of our tendency to abstract entities by extracting them from their spatio-temporal-energic unity. In doing so, we bracket out part of our essential dimensionality. Such abstractions can be very useful for eliciting particular kinds of understanding, but they also create distortions, just as a two-dimensional map of the earth misrepresents the area of individual land masses.[356]

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[355] While I am making an analogy between patterns of interaction among thinking bodies and the internal self-regulating processes of many living creatures, the temporal patterning characteristic of dynamic systems can be found to work similarly whether the interactions involve animate beings or inanimate objects. Living systems appear to exploit patterns found throughout the material world. In his book *Dynamic Patterns*, neuroscientist J. A. Scott Kelso (1995) argues that our brains as self-organizing systems behave very similarly to other types of dynamic systems, as "open, nonequilibrium systems: open in the sense that they can interact with their environment, exchanging energy, matter or information with their surrounds, and nonequilibrium, in the sense that without such sources they cannot maintain their structure or function" (p. 4). He describes these systems as "self-organizing," in that particular patterns come to dominate and organize temporary structural coherencies, though he also notes that there is no "self" that acts as a conductor, whether internal or external, to direct the process. In his words, "spontaneous pattern formation is exactly what we mean by *self-organization*: the system organizes itself, but there is no 'self,' no agent inside the system doing the organization" (p. 8). Rather, "it's the *organizational concepts* that matter, because they pertain to how complex patterns can emerge and sustain themselves without any detailed instructions whatsoever" (p. 15). This suggests that once a participant becomes a constituent part of a dynamic system, aspects of their behaviour are determined by the system rather than by individual will; intelligibility operates on a level other than that of human consciousness and agency. Further, if one does turn out to be enlisted in a system, it is difficult if not impossible to determine whether particular behaviours or even meanings are spontaneous to one's individuality or functions of the system. Interestingly, unlike the transmission model of communication, which seeks to eliminate "noise" as extraneous, in open, non-equilibrium systems, "noise," in the form of "fluctuation or perturbation" is often precisely what amplifies particular behaviours into dominating patterns. Kelso explains:

> [Fluctuations] are always probing the stability of the system, allowing it to discover new and different ways to solve problems. […] In certain cases […] they may actually help to amplify weak background signals, a phenomenon that physicists and engineers refer to as stochastic resonance (p. 11).

[356] Mapping all of them together at once, however, would be equally problematic from our boundaried spatio-temporal-energic positioning, except as they can be actualized by specific agential cuts. At the quantum level, this manifests as indeterminacy. As Karen Barad (2007) writes:

Selves *live* time's effects as animate becomings. We manifest as boundaried syntheses that progress and transform over the course of a lifetime within the unity of duration's spatio-temporal-energic continuity.[357] We share presence—the enacting and enacted agency of intra-active relationality that makes us intelligible as individuated entities in a world populated by objects and others—and our awareness of presence as thinking bodies can be felt in an exact way, as the dynamic quality of a here and now. To feel oneself, to feel oneself in a here and now, to feel oneself affected, is to manifest presence. To feel oneself differentiated as an entity—as a unique self—is to be part of a larger spatio-temporal-energic unity that allows for the meaningfulness and intelligibility of differentiations, entities, and selves as they come into appearance, dynamically and intra-actively.

Meridian's exploration of selfhood as a temporal continuity did not attempt to tell the story of Marilyn Arsem as an autobiographical script. Instead, the performance offered an iterative series of actions that allowed meaningful and communicative patterns to coalesce out of the unexpected perturbations and fluctuations of a dynamic system—or perhaps more accurately, multiple dynamic systems unfolding intra-actively on multiple temporal, spatial and material scales. The performance offered an exploration of a self receptively and dynamically open to the influences of a world of which she was a part, populated by other selves also manifest in their receptive and dynamic openness.

I have characterized *Meridian*'s practice in the flesh of theory as a meditation on questions of self-presence, working through the ways the performance presented a site-specific public conversation with the artist organized around its creator's projected lifespan. As should be clear, however, Marilyn Arsem would almost certainly not describe the content of the performance as being about herself. For performance artists, their thinking bodies are an essential

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it is the intra-play of continuity and discontinuity, determinacy and indeterminacy, possibility and impossibility that constitutes the differential spacetimematterings of the world. Or to put it another way, if the indeterminate nature of existence by its nature teeters on the cusp of stability and instability, of determinacy and indeterminacy, of possibility and impossibility, then the dynamic relationality between continuity and discontinuity is crucial to the open-ended becoming of the world which resists acausality as much as determinism (p. 182).

[357] Husserl (2012/1931) appears to have a somewhat similar understanding of duration's unity when he describes past, present and future as three simultaneous dimensions of "an infinite unity" (p. 168). See footnote 138 above.

material element of every performance, but not necessarily part of its intended content. When asked by Gustaf Broms (2018) to describe what she does, Arsem's answer was succinct: "I make art as a way to think about the world around me" (p. 45).[358] If, within Arsem's larger practice of thinking about the world, *Meridian* placed "self" at the forefront, it is precisely because of the way world and self as meaningful concepts are intra-actively determined as individuated presences. With this in mind, I turn my attention to Adina Bar-On's *Disposition*.

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[358] The exact question was: "If you had to use WORDS to describe what you do, what would those words be?"

CHAPTER 6: WORLD IN *DISPOSITION*

Disposition's relation to world

Adina Bar-On's *Disposition* was presented twice in Toronto's Cabbagetown neighbourhood, on the afternoons of Saturday, October 5 and Sunday, October 6, 2002.[359] Like Marilyn Arsem's *Meridian*, *Disposition* was a site-responsive work that used the local environment as an essential element of the performance. Unlike *Meridian*, however, Bar-On's work was presented in several countries over a 10-year period, touring most extensively in the first two years after its premiere in Israel in May 2001.[360] Structured as a walking tour lasting approximately two hours, *Disposition* was carefully adapted for each location. For this fifth iteration of the project, Bar-On spent approximately a week and a half on site in advance of the performance, scouting the neighbourhood and planning her route. Her process upon arriving

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[359] *Disposition* was produced in Toronto in the context of Fado Performance Inc.'s Public Spaces/Private Places series (see footnote 276 above). Extensive photo documentation of the Toronto performances taken by Miklos Legrady can be found on the CCCA Canadian Art Database website at http://ccca.concordia.ca/performance_artists/f/fado/adina/adina_perf1/index.html. A smaller selection of Legrady's photos can be found on the Fado website at http://www.performanceart.ca/index.php?m=gallery&id=26 and on Adina Bar-On's website at https://adinabaron.com/works/disposition-התמצאות/, which also includes excerpted video documentation of the performances as shot and edited by Elio Gelmini. Bar-On's web page for *Disposition* also includes documentation of several other iterations of the performance. In addition to the Toronto presentations of *Disposition*, Fado organized two evening events with Bar-On—one on Friday, September 27, 2002 coordinated by Steve Loft for the Art Gallery of Hamilton, and the second on Wednesday, October 2, 2002 at Implant, which was a Toronto performance space run by Istvan Kantor. Both events included an artist talk, a screening of selected video performances by Bar-On, and a live presentation of *Home, Of Course*, a 40-minute performance. Details on *Home, Of Course* can be found on the artist's website at https://adinabaron.com/works/home-of-course/.

[360] The chronology of *Disposition* performances, confirmed by Bar-On, is as follows:

Blurr Biennale of Performance Art at Kibbutz Nachshon, Israel: May 2001
Para/Site Art Space in Hong-Kong: July 2001
Amorph Festival of Performance Art in Helsinki, Finland: September 2001
Festival Mettre en Scène in Quimper, France: November 2001
Fado's Public Places/Private Spaces series in Toronto: October 2002
Fix Festival of Performance Art in Belfast, Northern Ireland: December 2002
Tirana Biennale of Art in Albania: September 2003
Grodzka BWA Gallery in Lublin, Poland: May 2009
Tel Aviv Biennale of Art in Israel: September 2009
Auschwitz Jewish Center in Oswiecim, Poland: September 2010

began with an initial tour of the area during which I offered details of the local history and pointed out typical and prominent landmarks from my perspective as a resident. Bar-On then spent several days exploring the area on her own, identifying key locations, studying traffic patterns and driving habits, observing human activity in the neighbourhood, and taking note of the local landscape and vegetation. Although *Disposition*'s actions and content had been carefully scripted and rehearsed well in advance of the artist's arrival in Toronto, close attention to the local built and natural environment was integral to the unfolding of the work. Indeed, as an ambulatory outdoor performance negotiating concepts of territory and home, Adina Bar-On's *Disposition* raises a number of pertinent questions in relation to the individuated presence that this dissertation identifies as "world." Exploring these questions, however, first requires defining what is meant by world as a shared instantiation of presence.

If, as discussed in the previous chapter, our understanding of self as an individuated presence is already fraught to the point that we can doubt the assurance of our own bodies, characterizing what constitutes a world is no less challenging. As selves, we find ourselves *already being a body*—but inhabiting our flesh in an ambiguous and expansively open way that allows us to think beyond our bodies' physical limitations. This can lead us to reify consciousness as something distinct from our flesh. At the same time, we find ourselves *already being part of a world*—but inhabiting that world in an equally ambiguous way. We may think of the world as something utterly distinct from ourselves, as an outside that opposes the interior of our own being. The world is often understood simply as a spatial container populated by entities, a dimensional environment—real, virtually simulated, or imagined—that we can move through. We often describe ourselves as being *in* the world rather than being *of* the world. At the same time, we also the use the term world to signify private, enclosed, or culturally exclusive experiential environments, as in the phrase, "she lives in her own world,"—suggesting that perhaps a world is not so much an exterior, tangible entity as it is a personal or collective structure of engagement or involvement. What, then, are we to make of the notion of world as an individuated presence?

Martin Heidegger's (2010/1953) analytic of Dasein, outlined in *Being and Time*, provides a productive starting point for such an inquiry. By now it should be clear, however, that this dissertation takes a rather different approach to being than that proposed by Heidegger's

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phenomenological ontology. The term Dasein translates literally into English as "there-being," but it is used by Heidegger to denote human existence, grounded in a particular type of self-understanding.[361] Heidegger argues that "*fundamental ontology* […] must be sought in the *existential analysis of Dasein*" (§4, p. 14), based on an assertion that of all beings, Dasein "understands itself in terms of its existence" (§4, p. 11); or, put another way, "Dasein is a being which is related understandingly in its being toward that being (Sein)" (§12, p. 53). Dasein's way of being is contrasted with what he calls "objectively present" entities: "To something objectively present its being is a matter of 'indifference' ('gleichgültig'), more precisely, it 'is' in such a way that its being can neither be indifferent nor non-indifferent to it" (§9, p. 42). This highly anthropocentric claim pointedly structures "understanding" in terms of human awareness and perception. Heidegger's formulation dismisses tout court the possibility that animate responsiveness and innate biological processes and dispositions focused on self-preservation or survival enhancement demonstrate a living entity's understanding of and concern for its being.[362] In his view, "Life has its own kind of being, but it is essentially accessible only in Dasein" (§10, p. 49). Dasein's exclusive access to understanding being—which is key to the concepts of unconcealedness and openness that run through all of Heidegger's writings—appears to hinge on human consciousness coupled with language.[363] Clearly, Heidegger's analytic also runs counter to

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[361] Michael Inwood (1999) offers this brief history of the term:

> [*Da*] means 'there' […] and 'here' […], as well as 'then', 'since', etc. Prefixed to *sein*, 'to be' it forms *dasein*, 'to be there, present, available, to exist'. In the seventeenth century the infinitive was nominalized as (*das*) *Dasein*, originally in the sense of 'presence'. In the eighteenth century *Dasein* came to be used by philosophers as an alternative to the latinate *Existenz* ('the existence of God'), and poets used it in the sense of 'life'. […] Colloquially it is used for the being of life or persons. (*Dasein* in Heidegger is quite distinct from *Dass-sein*, 'that-being' […]) (p. 42).

[362] Maintaining life is no small feat, and as has been previously noted, the will of an entity to perpetuate its life appears to operate at a cellular level, quite independently of neural consciousness, human or otherwise. How could any life sustain itself under changing conditions if it did not, on some level, uphold a basic disposedness toward and interest in the fact that it is alive—that it *is*, and also that particular conditions allow it to be? It seems premature, then, to suggest that human Dasein is the one being that has uniquely come to understand itself *as* being and to concern itself *with* being, thus attaining an exclusive status as an "ontological" entity in itself.

[363] In "The Origin of the Work of Art," for example, Heidegger (2002/1950) argues that language

> brings beings as beings, for the first time, into the open. Where language is not present, as in the being of stones, plants, or animals, there is also no openness of beings, and consequently no openness either of that which is not a being (*des Nichtseienden*) or of emptiness (p. 46).

the argument supported by this dissertation that the ways in which energy and matter manifest correspond to a fundamental intelligibility of being.[364]

Putting aside *Being and Time*'s approach to the concept of fundamental ontology, Heidegger does offer an insightful deliberation on the way Dasein in its "average everydayness" (§9, p. 43), which is to say as an adult enculturated in a Western society[365]—is disposed toward being. With Dasein, Heidegger attempts to sidestep the rational, isolated Cartesian ego as his

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What such an argument fails to recognize is that being enacts its openness *as and through its being*. The bee recognizes and is open in particular ways to the flower, and vice versa (see footnote 64 above); they share a world of mutual intelligibility by their actions without having to name their responses in language. This is no less true of the earth and the moon, which enact their openness to each other through their gravitational dance. Being does not require an act of "unconcealing" in language, which is after all a transformation that conceals and transforms as much as it reveals—as should be evident from the various discussions of language's achievements and failures found throughout this dissertation. At best, one might say that language provides a particular kind of openness of being *for* Dasein.

[364] What I am calling energy and matter's "fundamental intelligibility of being" is, of course, central to Karen Barad's (2007) labeling of her agential realist account as ontology. Building on the assertions in the previous footnote, thinking ontology in relation to the observed intra-actions of time, space and matter has become relevant in new ways as we have extended human perception to domains where different laws and behaviours than those observable to unenhanced human perception appear to apply. If one is to concern oneself with the meaning of being, then it is fair to ask how it is that entities and events manifest in particular ways, inquiring into the suchness of matter and animateness without immediately prioritizing human awareness. How is it that there are particles that move and vibrate, attract and repulse in relation to one another? Can their intra-active animateness and responsiveness be equated with a kind of concern for their being? Heidegger (2010/1953) argues that a chair and a wall could never "touch" each other because they are "worldless"—incapable of becoming "accessible" to each other in "their being present" (§12, pp. 55-56). But just as Heidegger argues that philosophy has forgotten the question of "being," surely his description of the contact between chair and wall overlooks the wonder that two "entities"—which appear to be mostly empty space at the subatomic level—can maintain their structural integrity, assert their distinctiveness, and eschew the possibility of simply melting together or passing through each other, notwithstanding their lack of humanly understood or measured self-perception. Against Heidegger, I would argue that the meeting of chair and wall is indeed an *encounter* that influences or determines each of them in specific ways and that reveals them as belonging to a shared world. Furthermore, it would seem that human neural systems respond to the event of two beings' contact—even non-living beings—in such a manner; this is part of what makes the earlier cited observations of Keysers *et. al.* (2004) regarding when mirror neurons appear to be activated—"both when the participants were touched and when they observed someone or *something else* getting touched by objects" (p. 335, emphasis added)—so intriguing.

[365] As has been previously noted, Inwood (1999) observes, citing *Einleitung in die Philosophie*, Volume 27 (lectures of 1928-1929) of the Heidegger *Gesamtausgabe*, "Children and early man are to be understood 'in a privative way', by noting how they fall short of fully fledged Dasein" (p. 43). Taking adult, enculturated Dasein in its average everydayness as the definitive manifestation of being that understands itself in terms of its being drastically narrows the possibilities for exploring what might be meant by the very term "being."

starting point.[366] Dasein does not begin as an individuated ego, but as an average, everyday anyone, not unlike the French pronoun *on*. As a being, Dasein finds its orientation from its situatedness within "the they" (*das Man*).[367] For Heidegger, "*The they* […] *belongs as a primordial phenomenon to the positive constitution of Dasein,*" such that "*Initially*, 'I' 'am' not in the sense of my own self, but I am the others in the mode of the they" (§27, p. 125). Moreover, the way in which Dasein's "there" is disclosed or felt as awareness has the quality of "*thrownness* (*Geworfenheit*)*.*" Dasein always already finds itself swept up into contexts, given over to its attitudes and temperament, and involved in actions and reactions, however passively or determinedly. This is not simply a matter of rational choice or intellectual analysis, but of a "primordial disclosure of moods in which Dasein is brought before its being as the there" (§29, p. 131). Thus, Dasein as a "self" is inseparable from its grounding in both affect and human sociality.

While this seems to be a bold step forward as a philosophical positing of what constitutes a self, Heidegger's approach sidesteps any consideration of a human's developmental history, as either an individual or a species.[368] Just as the Cartesian self is an abstraction that forgets how a

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[366] Part of Heidegger's argument deals with the way Descartes treats consciousness as a distinct type of "thingly" being. Descartes insists on a separation of *res cogitans* from *res extensa*, which leads to a positing of consciousness in terms of non-material ontological entities such as soul or spirit. This, in Heidegger's view, is a decisively misleading detour away from the possibility of thinking being as such:

> an unexpressed anticipatory ontological characterization is contained in addressing beings as "things" (*res*). An analysis which starts with such beings and goes on to inquire about being comes up with thingliness and reality. Ontological explication thus finds, as it proceeds, characteristics of being such as substantiality, materiality, extendedness, side-by-sideness.… But the beings encountered and taken care of are also pre-ontologically hidden at first in this being (Sein). When one designates things as the beings that are "initially given" one goes astray ontologically, although one means something else ontically (§15, pp. 67-68).

Heidegger attempts to start from an understanding of human being as a unity with an existence. Rather than describing human being as a composite of material body and ethereal soul or spirit as distinct entities, Heidegger argues, "Beings are a *who* (existence) or else a *what* (objective presence in the broadest sense)" (§9, p. 44).

[367] In Heidegger's analysis, "The they itself, for the sake of which Dasein is every day, articulates the referential context of significance" (§27, p. 125).

[368] This seems somewhat surprising given Heidegger's heavy investment in etymology, in a history of Western philosophy, and in the notion of cultural traditions. Tracing the ways that cultural aspects of human understanding have developed is central to his methodology, but only, apparently, if that development has taken place through written language. Further, Michael Inwood (1999) has pointed out

body and a developmental history underlie and fund the possibility of any thinking ego, Heidegger's analytic of Dasein elides important aspects of how such a being in its average everydayness could come to be integrated into "the they" and to be familiar with a "world," essentially treating these as primordial features of Dasein. Dasein is understood to be a social being, shaped in large part by influences—of its innate character as well as the expectations of the they—that "it never gets back behind" (§58, p. 272); yet Heidegger never raises the question of how and whether socialization and nurturing as individually and culturally *variable* processes might determine both one's understanding of being and the ways one is able to be.[369] Nor is there any consideration of an evolutionary history that might place the disclosure Heidegger attributes to Dasein's moods in context with the clearly observable dispositions of other living creatures (see footnote 298 above). Like the Cartesian ego, Dasein is an abstraction unmoored from some of the key processes, supports and determinants that make its appearance possible.

Heidegger wants to think being independently of beings—to think outside of the subject-object mode of understanding that frames existence first and foremost in terms of material qualities. He suggests that Dasein's initial everyday encounter with entities is never a matter of examining objectively present things, but rather, involves "things at hand being taken care of." He argues that "handiness" (*Zuhandenheit*) as opposed to "objective presence" (*Vorhandenheit*) is "*the ontological categorial definition of beings as they are 'in themselves'*" (§15, p. 71).[370] Things appear to Dasein in the context of their usefulness and familiarity: what they can do and what one can do with them, as well as how they fit within or open onto a larger world of actions and inter-relationships. Seeing entities "objectively" in terms of their material qualities requires an extra step of cognition that only comes to the fore when they fail to function as expected or desired. Heidegger notes three modes in which a useful thing can recede from handiness and thereby call

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that *Being and Time* "is unhistorical in the sense that it presents Dasein's condition as relatively unchanging" (p. 94).

[369] One of the factors Heidegger's abstraction appears to take no account of—particularly significant given his unfortunate ties to the Nazi regime—is which "they" Dasein takes as its referential context of significance. There is "the they" of which one is a part, but generally one also encounters others that are not part of the they from which one finds one's orientation as Dasein. If one identifies an other as constituting an utterly foreign ground, that other might be thought of and treated inhumanely, as not human.

[370] Earlier English translations of *Being and Time* use the phrases "ready-to-hand" for *Zuhandenheit* and "present-at-hand" for *Vorhandenheit*.

attention to its presence: *conspicuousness*, as when a thing is damaged or malfunctioning; *obtrusiveness*, as when a thing is missing some essential element; and *obstinacy*, as when a thing becomes an obstacle to one's aims (§16, pp. 72-73).

      Setting aside the question of how handiness can convincingly be understood to ontologically define "beings as they are in themselves" rather than conforming to the much narrower characterization "entities as Western human adults find themselves disposed toward them," Heidegger's argument does not acknowledge how handiness is largely learned and acquired through an extended apprenticeship of socialization. If Dasein in its average everydayness is inattentive to the objective qualities of things, it is largely because experience has allowed these qualities to recede into the background through an ongoing process of familiarization. Revisiting Heidegger's own example of Dasein's relationship to a hammer, the philosopher never addresses the fact that one is not born recognizing what a hammer is, when and why it is useful, how best to use it, or how it might be connected to a larger network of things, sites, and actions.[371] One learns about hammers by being around them and seeing others use them in various contexts, and if one manages to become proficient in using a hammer, it is through tactile-kinaesthetic exploration and repeated practice—perhaps but not necessarily aided by an inherent aptitude. A child's apprehension of a hammer is very different from that of an adult; for a child, beings are things to be sucked, tasted, rubbed against and touched in myriad ways— intriguing as much for their sensory and sensual qualities as for what one can do with them: their ways of moving, their shape, their colour, the way they glint in the light, their softness or hardness, their heat or coolness to the touch, the way they smell and sound.[372] Furthermore,

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[371] Heidegger argues, "The act of hammering itself discovers the specific 'handiness' ('Handlichkeit') of the hammer" (§15, p. 69), but such a description does not get back behind either how hammers as produced items—along with attendant manufactured items, such as nails—ever came to be, or how a hammer's user ever came upon the notion of using a hammer to pound a nail. In a similar way, he describes the materials that make up the hammer, and their origins, as if they are discoveries that only ensue from the hammer's being: "Hammer, tongs, nails in themselves refer to—they consist of—steel, iron, metal, stone, wood. 'Nature' is […] discovered in the use of useful things, 'nature' in the light of products of nature" (§15, p. 70).

[372] If Heidegger had extended his phenomenological explorations to a consideration of childhood experience, there are several areas where the categorial primacy of handiness would almost certainly call for additional scrutiny. One area that is largely ignored by Heidegger is the sensuality of being. Does pleasurability as a type of self-understanding organize itself according to an imperative of usefulness, for example, or might it be better understood in other terms? This particular concern is taken up by Emmanuel Levinas (1969/1961), as will be discussed in further detail in the following chapter. Turning to the matter of

hammers are not naturally occurring entities. A tool is, by its very definition, something that has

been adapted so that its objectively present qualities can serve a particular purpose. In other

words, a tool's telos as a manufactured object *is* usefulness. Its utility is key to the definition of

what makes it a tool. A tool avoids being immediately conspicuous, obtrusive, and obstinate as an

entity in large part because it has been constructed with just such a goal in mind—designed and

refined, possibly over generations, to be useful without calling attention to itself, through a

process that no doubt demanded a precise attentiveness to the objectively present qualities of its

composite materials. One cannot take as a given that all types of beings are equally apprehended

by Dasein according to an imperative of handiness based on the example of a hammer, let alone

be assured that handiness provides the basis more broadly for an apt definition of beings as they

are in themselves.[373] There is also the difficulty of Heidegger's repeated ontic description of all

beings that are not Dasein as things which are merely "objectively present." It is not obvious how

this can serve as a clear or adequate description of their type of being given his ontological view

that beings as they are in themselves are determined *not* by their objective presence, but through

their handiness.

    Heidegger's arguments do remind us, however, that our disposedness toward being

extends beyond the material qualities or characteristics of entities, beyond what he calls objective

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a child's integration into the they, one might also note that a child's concern for "handiness" applies not only to things in the world, but is also directed inwardly, toward its burgeoning sense of selfhood. A key part of socialization involves a child's journey to discover and define its *own* purpose and usefulness within the varying worldly contexts of family, community, and society.

[373] Heidegger (1977) would later come to see a great danger in technology's instrumentality, which in his view casts all entities—living as well as inert—as pure "standing-reserve" (*Bestand*) for use, leading him to search for an antidote to this technological way of revealing in the blossoming of *poiesis* (see Chapter 1, above). In "Building Dwelling Thinking," Heidegger (1993/1951) also developed a notion of built objects as resting in the unity of the fourfold (*das Geveirt*), a coming together of earth, sky, mortals and divinities (see footnote 148 above). Both of these approaches point at least in part to a rethinking of his claim of handiness as the ontological categorial definition of beings as they are in themselves. In "The Origin of the Work of Art," Heidegger (2002/1950) lays out a slightly different approach that considers things, equipment, and works of art in their interrelatedness on a comparative spectrum, such that "the workliness of the work, the equipmentality of equipment, and the thingliness of the thing come nearer to us only when we think the being of beings" (p. 18). In this analysis, he takes up the task of thinking thingliness independently of both equipmentality and workliness, however inadequate he may find approaching a work of an art as a physical thing in its objecthood to be. Given Heidegger's development of an *ontology* based on an idea of handiness, the three divisions that Heidegger explores in the essay—workliness, equipmentality, and thingliness—bear a striking parallel to Deleuze and Guattari's (1994) three forms of thought (artistic, philosophic, scientific) explored in *What is Philosophy?* (see Chapter 2 above).

presence. We acknowledge and respond to things from and through our absorption in various contexts and doings. As Dasein, we interact with what we find before us in directed ways. We find ourselves already subsumed in "the they" as an essential ground that makes it possible for each of us to understand ourselves as an "I," yet also already manifesting an individualized stance as evidenced by our moods.

In highlighting these features of Dasein alongside an exploration of *Zuhandenheit* and *Vorhandenheit,* Heidegger aims to arrive at the appearance of a world, by which he means something quite distinct from either a general environment or the sum of all the material entities that populate one's surroundings. As was previously noted, Heidegger believes that only Dasein truly has or is engaged with a world per se (see footnotes 31 and 363 above).[374] He argues that Dasein must be understood according to the formulation "being-in-the-world," a deliberately hyphenated expression that "stands for a *unified* phenomenon," which needs to be taken up as a whole to be properly understood (§12, p. 53). Being-in manifests as various actions and attitudes that, for Heidegger, have the character of "*taking care of* (*Besorgen*)"—even if this taking care is sometimes enacted in the "*deficient* modes of omitting, neglecting, renouncing, [and] resting" (§12, p. 57).[375] Crucially, being-in-the-world asserts that Dasein's awareness and knowledge of being does not stand somehow outside its integration with its surroundings. We do not travel in and out, back and forth between an objectively present world and an enclosed consciousness. Instead, we dwell in the world in such a way that we are always together with it. Even though we

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[374] Michael Inwood (1999), citing Heidegger's *The Essence of Reasons*, offers a helpful summary of the philosopher's deliberations on the history of the term world: "The conclusion […] is that there are three notions of world: (a) BEINGs as a whole (*das Seinde im Ganzen*); (b) the community of men; and, most satisfactorily, (c) men in relation to beings as a whole" (p. 246).

[375] While Heidegger never quite comes to grips with a distinction between animation and materiality that appears to underlie the tension between being and beings, it is worth noting that he thinks through the concept of being-in to arrive at his characterization of Dasein as taking care by way of a list of infinitives— verbs that at their root express various types of *action*:

> The multiplicity […] of being-in can be indicated by the following examples: to have to do with something, to produce, order and take care of something, to use something, to give something up and let it get lost, to undertake, to accomplish, to find out, to ask about, to observe, to speak about, to determine (§12, p. 57).

One of the key aspects of an ontology of handiness which Heidegger never states directly is that such an approach shifts the focus of our relationship to things from an attitude of observation or contemplation to one of interaction and doing.

talk in everyday parlance of an internal world of the mind, as if it were something separate from the material world of our bodies, these phenomena must be understood as ultimately belonging to the same world. As Heidegger puts it, "in […] 'thinking' […], I am no less outside in the world together with beings than I am when I *originally* grasp them" (§13, p. 62). This enfolding of what is often characterized as an "inner" consciousness and an "external" environment, along with its acknowledgment that the world always already has Dasein in it, is part of what distinguishes Heidegger's approach from a subject-object description of our relationship to things.[376] Nevertheless, for Heidegger, Dasein's quality of being-in makes it distinct from the being of what he describes as "innerworldly" entities—i.e., those "indifferent" nonhuman things one finds "within" (as opposed to being-in) the world that are not a "who" but a "what." Whereas "the they"—i.e., other humans—constitute and influence the very ground of Dasein, Heidegger understands our engagement with things to be a somewhat one-way relationship: Dasein uses and shapes things rather than intra-acting with them.

Heidegger asserts that "as being-in-the-world, Dasein has always already discovered a world" (§24, p. 111). The world is "that '*in which*' Dasein 'lives'," but it is not in itself a physical being, and certainly not merely a spatial container.[377] Rather, it constitutes an interconnected milieu and sphere of reference[378] that opens onto and supports human dealings with things. The world provides a structure of relevance that presents and presences beings for Dasein,

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[376] Heidegger notes in his text, "subject and object are not the same as Dasein and world," later adding the marginal remark, "Certainly not! So little that even putting them together in order to reject this is already fatal" (§13, p. 60).

[377] Heidegger writes, "World itself is not an innerworldly being, and yet it determines innerworldly beings to such an extent that they can only be encountered and discovered and show themselves in their being insofar as 'there is' a world" (§16, p. 72).

[378] Following Husserl, Heidegger offers his own brief analysis of signification and referentiality, which he views through the lens of handiness. First, he argues that the notion of utility already suggests a world through its referentiality and the multiplicity of entities that necessarily attend the very possibility of reference: "The structure of 'in order to' ('um-zu') contains a *reference (Verweisung)* of something to something. […] A totality of useful things is always already discovered *before* the individual useful thing" (§15, p. 68). Later, he argues that reference "constitutes handiness itself," and that through a sign's function as a type of equipment, whether natural or manufactured, "the surrounding world becomes explicitly accessible to circumspection. *A sign* […] *indicates the ontological structure of handiness, referential totality, and worldliness*" (§17, p. 81). Signs point back to world as the underlying structure that supports relevance for Dasein: "*As that for which one lets beings be encountered in the kind of being of relevance, the wherein of self-referential understanding is the phenomenon of world*" (§18, p. 85).

encompassing one's engagement at both a localized, individual level and as part of a larger society: "world can mean the 'public' world of the we or one's 'own' and nearest (domestic) surrounding world" (§14, p. 65).[379] If the world is not precisely a thing, it nevertheless exerts a kind of agency in its ability to make evident or orient us toward the liveliness and interplay of things, which Heidegger sometimes expresses with the phrase "world worlds." In "The Origin of the Work of Art," for example, Heidegger (2002/1950) writes,

> *World worlds*, and is more fully in being than all those tangible and perceptible things in the midst of which we take ourselves to be at home. […] World is that always-nonobjectual to which we are subject as long as the paths of birth and death, blessing and curse, keep us transported into being. Wherever the essential decisions of our history are made, wherever we take them over or abandon them, wherever they go unrecognized or are brought once more into question, there the world worlds (p. 23).

For Heidegger, the world is "not an innerworldly being," but it is "fully in being" in a way that reveals physical entities in their being as something other than objectively present things for Dasein—as absorptions or involvements. Heidegger asserts not that the world *is*, but rather, that the world worlds. In the context of this dissertation's framing of animation or animateness as more than simply an attribute of matter—recognizing it rather as a distinct aspect of what might be explored or understood *as* presence, particularly in relationship to the possibility of shared meaningfulness—this can be read to suggest that the world is as much a doing as a being. The

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[379] After *Being and Time*, Heidegger (2002/1950) would revise his description of "world" in its openness by detailing its relationship to a sheltering and concealing "earth":

> The world is the self-opening openness of the broad paths of simple and essential decisions in the destiny of a historical people. The earth is the unforced coming forth of the continually self-closing, and in that way, self-sheltering. World and earth are essentially different and yet never separated from one another. World is grounded on earth, and earth rises up through world. But the relation between world and earth never atrophies into the empty unity of opposites unconcerned with one another. In its resting upon earth the world strives to surmount it. As the self-opening it will tolerate nothing closed. As the sheltering and concealing, however, earth tends always to draw the world into itself and to keep it there (p. 26).

In this reconfiguration of world, the relationship between world and earth appears to roughly correspond to that between culture/civilization and nature. This provides an added context for Hannah Arendt's (1998/1958) reference to "an 'artificial' world of things, distinctly different from all natural surroundings" (p. 7) in her contrasting of labour and work (see Chapter 4 above).

world as an individuated presence and the entities that appear within it are not only enacted material things, but also enacting forces.

The analytic of Dasein provides a useful starting point for considering how *Disposition* explores world as a presence that offers the possibility of shared meaningfulness, because Bar-On's performance tackles many of the same aspects of human existence that concern Heidegger: how our immersion in culture discloses and impacts our understanding of being; our integration within and struggle to stand out from "the they"; the revelatory function and power of moods; an attitude of care toward one's environment and the beings one finds there; and close attention to questions surrounding our outlook toward and use of things—particularly, in Bar-On's case, in relation to aspects of ownership, entitlement, and territorial boundaries. Although *Disposition* unfolds in accordance with the pliable relationships Bar-On establishes with her audience—presenting herself by turns as seductive, confrontational, conspiratorial or seemingly indifferent—the work is nevertheless closely attuned to and reliant on its surroundings to generate shared meaningfulness. This is in keeping with Bar-On's (2001) own reflections on her artistic process. In "A Soliloquy," she attempts to explain the experiences and impulses that have guided the development of her practice. She writes, "I think that I'm an environmental artist, in more than one sense. […] And the situations I choose to perform in […] are environmental, social situations" (p. 129). This insistence on overlaying the environmental and the social reflects her underlying concern with a human world.

The complexity of *Disposition* is hinted at by its title, a word with several evocatively intersecting definitions. This dissertation has previously encountered the term in relation to Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, who writes about biological and species-specific dispositions in the sense of a creature's instinctive abilities, inclinations and tendencies (see Chapter 3, above), and to Antonio Damasio, who adapts the term to identify the "know-how formulas" of neural patterning that are a part of the genetic make-up of creatures with neural structures (see footnote 298 above). Shifting beyond these specialized usages, my *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (1964) offers no less than six distinct meanings, each potentially applicable to Bar-On's work:

> Setting in order, arrangement, relative position of parts; (usu. pl.) plan, preparations, stationing of troops ready for attack, defence, etc.; ordinance, dispensation, (*a ~ of*

Providence etc.); bestowal by deed or will; control, disposal, (*at* one's ~); bent, temperament, natural tendency; inclination *to* (p. 353).

These definitions already provide several clues to Bar-On's methods and concerns. The first entry, pertaining to arranging and positioning, echoes Heidegger's notion of handiness, and suggests an active approach to one's world as an engaged organizer and shaper of what one finds there. The second entry, referencing planning and the stationing of troops, has a military connotation, and suggests a potentially aggressive or defensive relationship to the world. This meaning also resonates with the subtle, alliterative link to the word that immediately follows disposition in the dictionary: *dispossession*. In an interview with Martin Zet (2002), whose article "Lady in Red" considers the Belfast staging of *Disposition* that was presented soon after the Toronto version, Bar-On notes,

> I think the conception of this work was confirmed while I was observing the Yugoslavian war on television in Tel-Aviv [….] The images of population movement, not armies, on the roads. The disruption of boarders [*sic*] and the contours of home, family and all ideologies intrigue me (n.p.).

The third, fourth, and fifth entries—relating to dispensation, bestowal, and control—can be read in relationship to Bar-On's underlying effort to give permission to her audience to acknowledge and claim their individual authenticity. In Gustaf Broms's (2018) *9Questions*, Bar-On describes this ongoing concern in her practice as her "plight to legitimize differences" (p. 10).[380] As an interactive work, *Disposition* constantly questions the parameters and limits of the artist's contract with the audience, playing with a tension in Bar-On's role between taking authority and giving permission. The final dictionary entry, perhaps reflecting the word's most common usage, denotes temperament and inclination, which links effortlessly to Heidegger's focus on the disclosiveness of moods.

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[380] This phrase comes up in relation to Bar-On's answer to Broms's final, supplemental question (9b): "What is the QUESTION I fail to ask?" The question she proposes he might have added is, "What images does your work project in your plight to legitimize differences?" (p. 10). This suggested question takes up Bar-On's earlier comments in response to Broms's query, "What are your thoughts on the relationship between the work and AUDIENCE/RECEIVER?" In part of her answer, Bar-On notes, "My intention is to make each individual in my audience aware of their own individual reactions to the performance event, which always touches on the social and political" (p. 8).

Bar-On's performance began at what was then the downstairs front door of my apartment near the corner of Carlton and Metcalfe streets. As audience members congregated on the front stoop and sidewalk, Bar-On appeared at the front door, dressed conspicuously in a calf-length bright red dress made in flowing material, heavy enough to drape but light enough to shimmer in the breeze, along with a red headscarf that framed her face and hung down the back of her neck. This elegant attire, which left her upper front chest and lower arms and legs bare, was offset by her sturdy black boots. Her outfit, immediately distinct from the clothing of her audience and the local passersby, ensured that Bar-On would stand out.

If the performance was promoted as a walking tour, it certainly did not follow the familiar format of a reassuring guide who first gathers together her audience and orients them with friendly banter. Rather than speaking, Bar-On commanded the audience's attention with a series of silent actions and gestures, initially appearing half-in and half-out of the lobby of the building, a semi-detached Victorian house built in the late nineteenth century. As she moved in and out from behind the open door, her eyes travelled from one audience member to another, occasionally catching and holding someone's gaze with her own. Sometimes hesitant, sometimes charming, sometimes smiling coyly or even cloyingly, sometimes posing, she peered down the street as if still awaiting someone or something in particular, coming forward several paces then turning back jarringly. Finally, she stepped out onto the sidewalk and came close to some audience members and passersby, falling into step behind them before turning abruptly away. Suddenly she was moving west toward Parliament Street, a busier thoroughfare of stores and restaurants, and, once the audience had caught up, she turned back east and headed into the heart of the picturesque residential neighbourhood.[381] This unconventional beginning, with its constant disruption of rhythms, may have felt tentative or chaotic, but it was executed with utter confidence and precision.[382] Bar-On was calculating and establishing her relationship with the

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[381] Located near the heart of downtown Toronto, Cabbagetown was designated a Heritage Conservation District in the early 2000s in order to preserve the facades of its extensive Victorian housing stock. A brief history of the area can be found on the Cabbagetown Preservation Association website at https://cabbagetownpa.ca/heritage/brief-history-of-cabbagetown/.

[382] While many artists and cultures employ particular rhythms to generate a shared sense of experience, synchronizing listeners to a common heartbeat, Bar-On's (2018) understanding of rhythm stands in sharp contrast. She views rhythm as a force that can heighten our awareness of individual differences:

audience, letting us know first of all that we should not expect to be lulled into a comfortable entertainment or to be told what to do. As an audience on the prowl and out in common space, we would have to keep up, to pay attention to our surroundings and our impulses as well as the performer, figure out for ourselves not only where to stand physically but also where we found ourselves emotionally and intellectually in relation to what was happening. As an audience, we could not simply retreat into our own world, nor could we give over to being safely and mindlessly transported into the private world of the performer We were out in a larger, open world, a dynamic, unpredictable and imposing place best navigated with care and awareness of not only what was familiar but also what was either strange or being made to appear strange by virtue of the performer's actions. If a world is a sphere of reference where one takes one's cues from one's integration in the they, Bar-On's variability and unpredictability could be understood as a classic Brechtian alienation technique, designed to distance us from our behavioural identification with the they, or at the very least as a prompt to question our allegiances to any one particular "they" over other possibilities. A *world* is not simply a manifestation of what is familiar and regulated; it is also a field of choices and allegiances.

What was immediately striking was Bar-On's physicality, which was not at all typical of an average 50-year-old woman travelling along a residential street. Following the expressive logic of impulses found and honed in the studio, she would not only walk, run and stand, but also march, skip, bend, crouch, reach, and roll, now turning her legs awkwardly inward as one might see a young girl do, now throwing back her shoulders and pushing out her chest aggressively, now stooping forward like an elderly woman. Even more unnerving was her transgression of the norms of private and public space. One minute, she would be walking quite unremarkably along the sidewalk. Then coming upon a patch of green lawn, she would plop herself down as if to loll in the grass, turn to the ground and begin rooting in the dirt. Now posing, she crouched on one knee, head bent forward and one arm held in front of her, the hand curled inward as if she were pulling against the strength of the sky. A man was washing his car in a driveway. No mind—she stepped onto the lawn beside him and lay prostrate on her front in the form of a cross, then went

In this situation [in which … one finds themself immersed in questions about their self, their own existence and time], rhythm is very subjective and not at all objectively shared in the same manner by all present. [...] My work does not project the common, the similar, but only the option that we are all rightfully not alike (pp. 9-10).

up onto the steps of the house and knelt as if to pray as he stood, mouth agape, watching her. Stepping out into the road, she danced fearlessly with passing cars, stopping them to pirouette in front of them, running alongside them, touching them as they passed. Standing stock-still in front of a stop sign, she stood with her arms crossed and stared at its message. Later she did the same with a neighbourhood watch sign with its red icons of houses with giant eyes. A man was getting out of his car, having just parked. Bar-On stepped up to the opposite side and confidently touched the car, even as he was locking it. Wrought iron fences might be touched or grabbed to brace her body in a particular pose; at any moment, she might open a gate at the front of a property and step inside.[383]

When we occupy and move through space, we have learned to do so in specific, regulated ways. Bar-On's gestures immediately made visible our tacit acceptance of particular rights of possession and expectations around public decorum, reminding us that a human world is marked territorially, according to rules of property and ownership. Roads are for cars. Lawns, and even the fences and gates that separate them from the street, are private, as are parked vehicles. Things appear to humans not only according to their material qualities, not only according to our projected aims, needs or even desires toward them, but also according to specific claims on who can use them and how.[384] The borders that mark particular territories may be invisible, but their

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[383] Although these vignettes are described here as if they took place in immediate sequence, my recounting should not be taken as a temporally accurate script of the performance. Rather than offering a linear, textual narrative, *Disposition* unfolded as a series of interrelated and resonant *images*—a term I use to signal any coherent block of sensation and perception, and that need not be specifically visual. Images might engage our kinaesthetic, tactile, or aural senses, for example, and may be felt or remembered as moods. (For more on this particular use of the term *image*, which has precedents both in the Grotowski performance training as taught by Linda Putnam as well as in Antonio Damasio's descriptions of how our brains map sensual and perceptual information, see Couillard 2012.) *Disposition*'s deliberately fragmentary narrative style is implicit in Bar-On's interview with Martin Zet (2002), in which she talks about how a world demarked as territory is formulated out of disparate bits of personal history and experience: "The woman in my performance envisions her boundaries in scraps of stories about homes and neighborhoods she has lived in" (n.p.). It is ultimately the audience's task to construct a meaningful narrative from the rhizomatic jumble of encounters the performance stages. Bar-On (2001) has described the non-linear perception of her works as reflecting how the performance is received by the viewer rather than how it unfolds in time:

> the unboundedness of the time of my performance is expressed […] in the fact that you go home and your notions get mixed up, for what remains is only the visual image that you have created for yourself, of your response (p. 134).

[384] The artist's occupation of space and handling of objects was notable not only for her refusal to respect conventions around the privacy of property, but also for the sensual, full-bodiedness of her interactions.

unspoken presences are enacting forces that impinge on our being and behaviour, materially and animately. The world we encounter and the way we move through it is deeply inflected with our integration into the they, a particular manifestation of shared meaningfulness that is so ubiquitous and ingrained that it goes largely unnoticed and unremarked.

One of the artist's tactics was to shift unexpectedly from ordinary, everyday ways of negotiating space to grand movements, heroic body postures and still poses framed by the surrounding landscape. Bar-On (2001) notes the disclosive effect of this technique in her performances: "something which a moment before looked like a fragment of life, and the next moment it's frozen and has become a picture" (p. 130). In her interview with Martin Zet (2002), Bar-On speaks of her behaviour in *Disposition* as belonging to a character she embodies, describing these moments of tableau as "visual, film-like images she [the performance's protagonist] creates as 'woman in landscape,' 'woman with vehicle,' 'woman with flag' and situations provoked between herself and the audience as leader and follower" (n.p.). These dilated moments have the double effect of making us see not only the performer but also the spaces she inhabits in a new way. Just as Bar-On plays with the members of her audience, individually and collectively, she also plays with the space as a being with its own character and responsiveness.[385] As Bar-On (2018) affirms in *9Questions*, "The place where I have chosen to perform already has, to my sensibility, a state of consciousness; it already has a vision, in itself, which I wish to retain and envelop into my own" (p. 10).[386] Her actions, like the Heideggerian qualities of conspicuousness, obtrusiveness, and obstinacy, draw the world and the beings we encounter there out of their concealedness as either simply familiar or specifically useful items.

Bar-On (2018) links this deliberate tactility with the audience's gaze: "My fingers touch and fondle the objects to arouse the sensuality inherent in the physical material, as an extension of the observer's eyes" (p. 9).

[385] The idea of play is essential to Bar-On's approach. As she describes it in "A Soliloquy" (2001), "I play with you—not in the bad sense, but like playing on memories, sentiments, aesthetics, behavior and culture, on what is right, what isn't right, what you give of yourself, or where you can't give more" (p. 130). As has previously been suggested, play as a concept invokes the context of a situation where there is already a tacit agreement around expectations and meanings. Play discloses the boundaries of our shared understanding by testing their borders.

[386] This comment was offered in response to Broms's question, "What are your thoughts on SPACE/EMPTINESS in your process?"

Bar-On had several methods of addressing the audience—sometimes speaking through silent gestures with her eyes and hands, sometimes addressing us directly as a group, either familiarly or more formally with a rehearsed text or sound score, sometimes directing a conversation to a single member of the group while the others were either welcome to listen or specifically excluded from hearing what was being said. These variations constantly tested or shifted the borders and make-up of what might constitute the they in which the audience could root their individual identities, as well as reflecting the ways in which we generally find ourselves being addressed by—or intra-actively engaged with—the world: sometimes as a force specifically directed toward or purposefully directed away from us, and sometimes as a more random unfolding indifferent to our individual presence, into which we might be swept up or left unmoved. Parallel to Bar-On's form of address, her tone also varied substantially, from theatrical to collegial to neighbourly to intimate. Sometimes the audience would be treated as free agents, allowed to scatter to whatever vantage points they wished. At other times participants would be shaped into a deliberate group, asked to gather round, standing or sitting, at various locations along the route.

At one point during the Toronto performance of *Disposition*, we were ushered into Toronto's Necropolis Cemetery chapel and columbarium and invited to sit in the pews while Bar-On delivered a highly stylized oration. Here, she made particular use of her style of address to remind us that presence asserts itself not merely as physical material, but also through animation. Certainly, there was already something unsettling about our occupation of a place usually reserved for memorialization of the dead and silent reflection, but Bar-On's movement and posture within this space only added to the provocativeness of the situation. Now leaning forward to rest her elbow on a pew as she sounded a series of keening high-pitched notes, now leaning her back on the lectern as the notes shaped themselves into syllables and finally words, sometimes speaking in a cartoonish voice, as if reading a children's story aloud, moving back and forth along the central aisle to take advantage of various framings—against the stained glass windows, standing in the open entrance with the view of Riverdale Park behind her—Bar-On was as much a kinetic and aural force as a visual one. Like her sensual handling of objects, this way of sounding, which is characteristic of many of Bar-On's performances, employs a deliberate and insistent physicality, which she describes in *9Questions* (2018) in both material and animate terms:

I imagine the sound of my voice as matter—physical, with the consistency of shape, of texture, of weight, of temperature—as detailed and as real as imagination can envision. I then animate my internal muscles, contracting and expanding them, to various extents and to imagined forms, with care and energetic thrusting, with flexibility and stiffness, with attention to breathing and swallowing, and contraction and expanding of abdomen and womb, thus, maneuvering the sounds within my body (p. 9).

In Bar-On's work, movement and emotion are closely linked, not only as ways of communicating and expressing meaningfulness, but also as access points to each other. They are the inextricably linked resources she draws upon to generate a charged situation.[387] Thus, Bar-On (2001) follows up her assertion that "emotion can be material, it is my material" with a technical description of how she accesses emotion through particular doings and movements of her body, and orientations to the surrounding space:

I blink, quiver, breathe, swallow—for me, all these movements are form, are content. […] I know the characteristics and place of every movement in the performance—the swallowing, the quivering, the inner excitement, the clear gaze, and whether it'll be sharp, and what perception of space it will have, and if it'll be only to there or also a little bit to here (p. 135).

For Bar-On as a performer, this attention to movement allows her emotions to be as precise and malleable as any spoken language.[388] At the same time, emotions are at the heart of the reactions she hopes to provoke in her audience, of the meanings her work aims to generate. If, for Heidegger (2010/1953), mood is a primordial disclosive force that "makes manifest 'how one is and is coming along'" (§29, p. 131), this is surely equally true of Bar-On, who describes her

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[387] The term *charged* of course has a double meaning: generally, it is used as an adjective to describe something tinged with excitement or tension, but the term can also be more specifically directed toward one's sense of personal responsibility, as in the sense of being charged with a task, or charged with the care of a person or object. Bar-On (2001) has consciously used the term to describe her work, writing, "I create moments of life, charged moments. I reconstruct these moments […] so that you should examine what these states are in life—what charges us and what doesn't" (p. 135).

[388] Although it should perhaps be noted that she regards the particular style of performance she has developed as somewhat unique, writing, "it appears that there aren't many more crazy people who are willing to put themselves on the altar in front of the audience and perform a technical manipulation of the emotional language of their personality in order to provoke" (p. 133).

expectations of the audience in affective terms, according to their attitude of care toward what is being presented. Bar-On (2011) writes,

> One doesn't have to love me, or my work, one just has to be there in order to hate me, to love me, to criticize me—to take a stand. That's what I ask for. And if you're indifferent, then know that you're indifferent as a position you have taken" (p. 136).

Emotions reveal specific meanings, and specific kinds of meaning. For Bar-On, it is not a question of whether emotions are more or less precise than language. What is important is what aspect of meaningfulness their precision is focused on. Thus, in the same way that one can refer to the difference between two types of meaning in the idiomatic parsing of "the letter of the law versus the spirit of the law," Bar-On describes her focus on the affective register as attending to a specifically *ethical* meaningfulness: She explains of her practice, "I wanted to create a situation in which the viewer is committed not only to intellectualism but also to a deeper level, a more human, ethical commitment" (p. 128). If moods disclose our already being in—and our already finding ourselves disposed in particular ways toward—a world, ethics speak to those parts of our inter- or intra- relationality over which we claim to have some agency, the principles we appeal to in order to guide our behaviour and conduct. They also speak to the nature of the shared world in which we find ourselves—one of allegiances, territories, and entities that carry specific meaningfulness.

Disposition's work

A more complete picture of *Disposition*'s ethical relation to world as a manifestation of presence can be drawn by returning to Hannah Arendt's (1998/1958) schema of the *vita activa* in order to consider the performance's connection to the activity of work. To review, work, as opposed to labour, "is the activity which corresponds to the unnaturalness of human existence [....] Work provides an 'artificial' world of things, distinctly different from all natural surroundings" (p 7). Work, as an activity of craft and fabrication, corresponds to the figure of *homo faber*, the toolmaker.[389] As was noted in relation to *Meridian*, artistic practices that result in

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[389] It is commonplace to think of tools as labour-saving devices, but Arendt argues that the chief function of tools is to construct a world: "*homo faber*, the toolmaker, invented tools and implements in order to erect a world, not—at least not primarily—to help the human life process" (p. 151).

lasting art works and contribute to the development of a human culture that sets itself apart from nature are generally associated with the activity of work. Certainly Bar-On's artistic approach and methods align more closely than Arsem's to this classic understanding of the output of an art practice. Although both artists are committed to extensive and rigorous research in advance of a live performance, Bar-On's efforts are focused on the durability of the images she creates. Like an actor, singer, or dancer, she hones her body gestures for precision and repeatability.[390] She constructs works that are intended to be staged multiple times. Though Bar-On's gestures might be adapted to the immediacy of a situation—the specifics of a particular site or audience, for example—she is still performing the same "work" with the same title, whether it unfolds in a cemetery chapel in Toronto, alongside a political mural in Belfast, or on a kibbutz in Israel. What distinguishes Bar-On's overall oeuvre as performance art rather than the traditional performing arts, however, is that her craft aims to script encounters and situations rather than narratives; she is less focused on replicating a plot or telling a story and more concerned with how to move in and out of the identification with a group, or, for example, how moving closer or farther away, or adopting a particular gaze or tone of voice affects the dynamics of the audience's relations to their surroundings, to each other and to the performer, both individually and collectively. As an environmental art practice, Bar-On's approach to performance engages with a world that presents itself as the meeting point of competing interests and affinities, primarily but not exclusively human.

Seen through Arendt's lens of work as activity, the world comes to be understood in utilitarian terms, and this utilitarianism is precisely the conundrum and danger that most challenges *homo faber*.[391] When usefulness becomes one's driving value, all entities, whether

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[390] Arendt would likely have been surprised by Bar-On's description of her working methods, in which the artist claims emotion as a tangible, manipulable "material." Arendt viewed "all bodily sensations, pleasure or pain, desires and satisfactions" as being "so 'private' that they cannot even be adequately voiced, much less represented in the outside world, and [which] therefore are altogether incapable of being reified" (p. 141). Treating emotion as a material suggests, at least in part, an infiltration of the ideals of *homo faber* into our understanding of human affect.

[391] Although Arendt's concept of a world constructed through human work mirrors the human-centric world that Heidegger theorizes, her understanding of the relationship between objective presence and handiness as ways of perceiving the things we find around us is somewhat different. For Arendt, it is precisely our tendency to view things in terms of their utility—to instrumentalize—that is at the core of objectivity, arguing, "Only we who have erected the objectivity of a world of our own from what nature gives us [...] can look upon nature as something 'objective'" (p. 137). Arendt traces the incursion of *homo faber* into the

inert, living or specifically human, come to be seen as nothing more than use-objects, i.e., as means to achieve the next end in a never-ending cycle, such that "in a strictly utilitarian world, all ends are bound to be of short duration and to be transformed into means for some further ends." For Arendt, this way of framing the world results in a crisis point whereby "utility established as meaning generates meaninglessness" (p. 154), and the only solution can be "to turn away from the objective world of use things and fall back upon the subjectivity of use itself" (p. 155). Things have value for their usefulness—but to what ends and in whose interests? Bar-On's Toronto performance of *Disposition* brought this dilemma into stark focus in a section of the performance that traversed Riverdale Farm, a 7.5-acre "working farm" with several kilometres of trails that serves as an admission-free educational and recreational destination for local visitors.[392] As an idealized, artificially pastoral environment in the heart of the city, the site offered Bar-On a particularly rich setting to illuminate the tensions around home and territory that *Disposition* explores.

In the previous chapter, I avoided providing a personal narrative of *Meridian*, instead highlighting details of the performance's structure. Here, however, a story of *Disposition*'s unfolding at Riverdale Farm, as told from my perspective as the performance's organizer, can provide insight into the complex presencing of world—all the more so because this particular incident is undoubtedly unique to the Toronto iteration of the performance.

One of the key challenges for a curator of site-specific performance is securing permissions to use particular sites. Spaces, whether public or private, involve owners, users and other stakeholders, and mobilize various forms of human regulation and policing that reflect the interests of those who claim entitlement to a location's use or occupation. As a performance art organizer operating without a permanent space, I am frequently engaged in various types of negotiation around sites, which can range from informal conversations with owners and users to

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realm of modern science practices, where "the element of making and fabricating present in the experiment […] depends from the very outset upon man's productive capacities" (p. 295). Nevertheless, Arendt finds that the doings of modern science ultimately fall under the aegis of action rather than work, in that they initiate processes with unpredictable outcomes. This poses a unique risk, since through such action, "scientists […] have enlarged the realm of human affairs to the point of extinguishing the time-honored protective dividing line between nature and the human world" (p. 324).

[392] Information on the mandate, history and operations of Riverdale Farm can be found on their website at http://riverdalefarmtoronto.ca/.

formal licences and contracts, insurance waivers, and hiring security services, depending on the nature of the event. For *Disposition*, any such advance arrangements were impractical. Getting a license to use a public park, for example, is a multi-week process, and Bar-On only began scouting her locations just over a week before the performances took place. Presenting outdoor public performances without a license—"guerrilla style"—is generally possible if no admission is charged, if the number of participants is small (e.g., no more than 20 at any one time), if the performance is mobile rather than stationary, and if particular behaviours are avoided, such as digging in the ground, lighting fires, erecting structures, or serving food or alcohol. Organizing an event also involves extensive conversations and negotiations with the artist being presented: determining the artist's intentions, desires, attitudes and level of experience; gauging the risk factors for the performer, the audience, the site, and also the reputation and future of the hosting organization; and anticipating any potential barriers to the performance's successful execution and reception. In my experience, this is a process that generally demands an intuitive balancing of general principles rather than an application of rigid rules. In the case of *Disposition*, a work that had already been presented in multiple locations by an experienced artist who is used to working independently, my involvement in the production end of the performance was minimal. I placed my trust largely in the artist's judgment, to the extent that when the first performance began on Saturday, I was unaware of most of Bar-On's planned actions, not even knowing the exact route she would follow.

Within moments of our stepping onto the Riverdale Farm property, the manager of the site appeared, having already been alerted to our presence in the area by some members of the public who were disturbed by some of Bar-On's earlier actions in the parking area at the south end of Riverdale Park. The first issue we encountered was the presence of the video camera being used to document the performance. We were informed that no videotaping could take place on the Farm grounds, so the documenter was sent to wait for us at the other end of the Farm, where he could rejoin us. As the organizer, I immediately took on the role of negotiating with the Farm manager, identifying myself as the producer and Fado as the host organization. I indicated that the performer and a small audience would be passing through the area but that we did not intend to disrupt the experience of other visitors to the Farm. My demeanour with the manager was polite and accommodating. I recognized and sympathized with her responsibility to protect the

security of the Farm and its patrons, many of whom are children, and to ensure their ability to enjoy the site. I was also concerned to maintain the reputation of Fado as the hosting institution; the organization relies on good relations with various government agencies and institutional bodies as well as local businesses for its funding and venues. I was also keenly aware of my position as a neighbour who lives in the community and visits the Farm regularly.[393]

While I was still talking to the manager, Bar-On moved on ahead with most of the audience. Some members of the audience, however, chose to join my conversation with the manager. They were defending our right to be there and the presence of the camera—somewhat belligerent in the face of what they felt to be an institutional muzzling of personal and artistic freedoms. From my point of view as an organizer, this was an extremely unhelpful development; their forcefulness and passion increased the tension of the situation and put the manager in a

[393] Indeed, as an organizer I have rarely found myself so severely tested as a local citizen and neighbour by a performance that I have produced. I was concerned by some of Bar-On's actions, which I would almost certainly find questionable if I came upon them as an unknowing passerby. I was particularly alarmed for the safety of both the artist and of drivers when Bar-On was interacting with cars in the street and when, during the Saturday performance, she went onto the shoulder of the Don Valley Parkway, one of Toronto's major municipal expressways. I also feared that we might disturb mourners at the Necropolis chapel. At one point I worried about the possibility of property damage; certainly I was embarrassed by Bar-On's occupation of my neighbours' yards and porches. Two recurring thoughts for me during the first performance on Saturday were, "but Adina, I have to live here," and "she is going to do this again, tomorrow." After the first performance, the artist and I had a long conversation about what actions and locations might need to be modified for the following day. It is not unusual for artists and institutions to battle over their competing interests and concerns, but as someone who has worked almost exclusively in the artist-run / artist-driven sector, among my core values are support for the artist's vision, and defense of the artist's right to work in as uncensored a way as possible. I am perhaps a bit more cautious than many around issues of artist and audience safety, but I am also likely to come down on the side of trusting the artist's judgment in such matters. Bar-On's performance challenged my sense of responsibility and culpability both emotionally and intellectually. It was, if I am to be honest, a traumatic experience. In the case of this particular performance, I must simultaneously acknowledge my respect for the artist and the work. Although we have somewhat different comfort levels in terms of how much potential trauma we are willing to expose an audience to, Bar-On is an artist who has thought deeply, unflinchingly and with great sensitivity and awareness about this issue. Her choices are neither naïve nor thoughtlessly arrogant. In speaking of my own trauma, I cannot separate out my concerns as an organizer from those I might have felt if I had been an unaligned spectator. Martin Zet's (2002) short, sharp review of the Belfast presentation of *Disposition*, however, suggests to me that any casual observer might find the performance challenging. Here are some excerpted passages that indicate his affective response:

> Falling, getting dirty, theatrical gestures, poses, stopping cars in the gate, sometimes almost getting hit by them. It's physically unpleasant to watch this, to passively participate in it, to be one of the observing crowd. [...] It's physically unpleasant when she speaks to drivers, enters private gardens, doors. Explains something to people. Sad. Unbearable. [...] It's unbearable, but fascinating. The experience you dream to forget, but you can not (n.p.).

defensive position in which she was less likely to feel positive about allowing the performance to proceed unhindered. As an observer and theorist of the dynamics of such a performance situation, however, it was fascinating to note this impromptu show of commitment to the artist's work and to the principles of free movement and expression. What was particularly surprising to me was that few if any of the antagonists were regular Fado patrons—whom one might expect to most readily take on the role of defenders of the organization's events and the practice of performance art. Some of them were almost certainly artists themselves, but unknown to me. Others, however, were neighbours, local residents who I knew did not regularly attend performance art events, but who had come as a result of my canvassing of the neighbourhood with event flyers and invitations.[394] Clearly, their actions indicated, this was *their* world—and their fight—to engage with.

Replaying the scene in my mind almost twenty years later—its contours blurred in some ways and sharpened in others (not necessarily accurately) by the passage of time—one of the questions I ask is the extent to which gender played a role in the audience response. It is quite possible the audience might have reacted differently, less aggressively, and with less of a sense of entitlement, if the manager had been a man. I am certain that at least one of the audience members involved in the argument was female, although assuredly there were more men than women in the group that chose to be swept up in the confrontation with the manager. What is clear is that the interests and forces that determine how a world is constituted include many factors that are as much social as material.

As I worked to calm the situation, my back was to Bar-On and the audience members who had continued with her. The manager, however, could see their progress over my shoulder. Just as I began to feel that perhaps we were coming to a détente, the cameraman having left the area and the aggressiveness of the audience members beginning to dispel, the manager's eyes widened. As I remember it, her only words were, "What's this, then?" as she strode past me and

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[394] The key form of printed advertising for the Public Space/Private Places series was a business-sized white card produced for each artist, with basic logistical information printed on one side (performance title, artist name, date, location) and a rubber-stamped monochrome image developed by the artist on the other. The cards were packaged in sealed glassine envelopes, resulting in an invitation that was labour-intensive to produce but that conveyed a distinct artisanal and textural sensibility. Bar-On's image for *Disposition* was a child's drawing of a row of planes dropping bombs.

headed in the direction of the performance, which was continuing about 40 metres or so in the distance.

Turning and following behind the manager, uncertain what new development was distressing her, I eventually realized that Bar-On had stepped behind a chain link fence while the audience stood on the path. I already knew the purpose of that fence, but for newcomers to the site, a green sign with white lettering made is purpose plain:

<div style="text-align:center">

Wildlife Sanctuary

Public Prohibited

By Law 319-69

</div>

Riverdale Farm is situated on a slope that once formed part of a wetland along the Don River. Efforts were underway to reclaim portions of the Farm's acreage: removing invasive plant species and repopulating the slope with native vegetation, as well as allowing some of the marshy areas to regenerate as a habitat for local wildlife. Visitors were directed to keep to the paved and gravel trails and wooden lookout platforms. Where Bar-On was standing, just behind the fence, was an area slated for reclamation, although any such work was clearly incomplete; in fact, the immediate area was piled with rubble, bricks and discarded wood. Bar-On was extracting some intact bricks from the pile, and using them to build a miniature square structure—a tiny house at the dividing line between a temporary waste dump and a green space in the process of renaturalization.

The image is deeply resonant and poignant in relation to the textual content of the performance. Bar-On's stylized oration in the Necropolis chapel, which had immediately preceded our entry to the Farm grounds, spoke of the narrator's relationship to and recollections of the Old City of Jerusalem—its palpable history and captivating atmosphere, the eagerness of the residents to sell their wares, but concluding, finally, with the line, "We couldn't visit the Old City any more because of antagonism between Arabs and Jews." Continuing along the sloping, treed paths of Riverdale Farm after building the little house of bricks, Bar-On's persona offered more story fragments of places visited and lived in, for a time, by her and her family—Ramat HaSharon, a suburb of Tel Aviv, and Metula, in the northernmost part of Israel bordering Lebanon, originally a Druze settlement that was purchased and colonized by agents of Baron de Rothschild at the end of the nineteenth century. From the thread of these stories emerged the

image of a family condemned to continual nomadism, drawn to verdant landscapes evoking "the garden of Eden," but constantly uprooted by forces of urbanization, industrial farming, territorialism, and ethnic disputes.[395] Certainly it was a story of racialized and religious politics, of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and of rival claims to rights of settlement. It was also, however, the story of the replacement of labour with work, as well as of the transformation of human self-identification from being *of* the world to being *in* the world.[396] The viewpoint that understands and treats the world as a storehouse of resources is inextricably linked to the viewpoint that encourages the parcelling of land into individually and collectively owned properties.

There is a violence in the active transformation of "raw" being into useful thing.[397] Not only does work reshape and transform materials; it also pits worldviews and interests—both human and nonhuman—against one another, and creates or amplifies divisions between haves and have-nots. This violence is certainly one of Bar-On's concerns in *Disposition*. In her interview with Martin Zet (2002), she acknowledges,

> I am agitated by the premonition of a basic primitive drive that is creation and destruction in one. I suppose [*Disposition*] is another one of my attempts to question what appears as the inevitability of destruction in the process of construction (n.p.).

The story of one people's colonization and settlement is often also the story of another's suppression, decimation, exile, or annihilation. At the same time, conflict is an inevitable product

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[395] Few experiences can match the trauma of being uprooted from one's home. As the lines from Robert Frost's "The Death of the Hired Man" assert, "Home is the place where, when you have to go there, / They have to take you in" (see https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44261/the-death-of-the-hired-man). In a 1994 recording by San Francisco's Glide Ensemble entitled "Coming Home to the Spirit," the poet Maya Angelou misremembers or paraphrases these words as "Home is where when you go there, nobody can put you out," a melodious phrase that continually resonates for me in my remembering of Bar-On's performance.

[396] Arendt (1998/1958) characterizes this shift as a move from a full-bodied "mixing with" to a hand-oriented manipulation or "working upon":

> The work of our hands, as distinguished from the labor of our bodies—*homo faber* who makes and literally "works upon" as distinguished from the *animal laborans* which labors and "mixes with"—fabricates the sheer unending variety of things whose sum total constitutes the human artifice (p. 136).

[397] As noted earlier, Arendt argues that an "element of violation and violence is present in all fabrication, and *homo faber*, the creator of human artifice, has always been a destroyer of nature" (p. 139).

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of the spectrum of relational differences reflected by the competing notions of belonging to a world, of being responsible to or for a world, and of using or owning a world.

These contrasting impulses—and how one's outlook serves as an intra-active force that contributes to how the world manifests, including what entities appear or have the possibility of appearing within it—are made all the more apparent in Bar-On's work by the links she emphasizes between world and home. As Arendt observes, "the world is always meant to be […] a home for men during their life on earth" (p. 173). A house, as a physical manifestation of the notion of home, is a particularly potent image that intersects with the appearance of both self and world as entities. Henri Lefebvre (1991/1974) highlights the house's hold on the human imagination in *The Production of Space*, drawing in part on the musings of Gaston Bachelard:

> The dwelling passes everywhere for a special, still sacred, quasi-religious and in fact almost absolute space. […] Bachelard links representational space […] with this intimate and absolute space. […] In the background, so to speak, stands Nature—maternal if not uterine. The House is as much cosmic as it is human. […] The relationship between Home and Ego, meanwhile, borders on identity (p. 121).

While Lefebvre's analysis is framed in terms of human psychological values and so does not fully account for other types of agency that might intra-actively support or influence the human concept of a house, it can nevertheless be taken as a useful description of the way world as an entity manifests or presences as an aspect of human culture.[398]

Bar-On's construction of the miniature house within a restricted area designated for wildlife by municipal fiat but replete with traces of human activity made evident multiple competing personal, public, and even nonhuman interests, as well as tensions around how the use and occupation of space is regulated and policed in relation to those interests.[399] Where does the

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[398] Lefebvre's framing of the house strictly in terms of the human imaginary is, of course, also true for Bachelard (1994/1958), whose phenomenological consideration of the house aims, in part, to "prove that imagination augments the values of reality" (p. 3).

[399] In researching Toronto's policies regarding city parks and their use, I was surprised to discover that the specific by-law cited on the sign was no longer in effect at the time of Bar-On's performance, having been superseded by Chapter 608 of the City of Toronto Municipal Code. The revised Code was put in place to harmonize city policies in conjunction with the amalgamation of various municipalities to form a Toronto "megacity" in 1997. While a similar regulatory regime remained in effect, there is something poignant about the sign's appeal to a defunct statute—five years out of date, in fact—that speaks to the way texts can enact disciplinary practices that enforce territorial boundaries and social practices, whether the content of

balance of virtue lie in assessing Bar-On's intervention, and who (or what) should act as the arbiter of this small, world-building or world-altering gesture? The artist's action lays bare the questions and their tensions, but does not answer them.

By the time the manager arrived at the fence, Bar-On had completed her construction and stepped back onto the main path. The manager was furious, but perhaps feeling outnumbered, and seeing that the transgressive activity had stopped, she allowed the procession to continue with no more than an agitated scolding. She did not follow the group to monitor any other possible violations of park policy, perhaps calculating that her presence would only prolong our stay and potentially lead to further provocations. No doubt she also had other duties to attend to. I was left to my own ambivalent reactions as an organizer and audience member, and also to the task of overseeing the remainder of the performance, which was far from over.

As was previously noted, Arendt (1998/1958) makes a distinction within the *vita activa* between the world-building activity of work and the process-initiating activity of action, into which she also enfolds speech. She seeks to preserve a division between "man the user and instrumentalizer, and […] man the speaker and doer or man the thinker" that has been of concern at least since Plato (p. 158). She argues that action is "the only activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter" (p. 7), but in building her argument, she does identify an essential role for the artist in creating a world where action is possible:

> acting and speaking men need the help of *homo faber* in his highest capacity, that is, the help of the artist, of poets and historiographers, of monument-builders or writers, because without them, the only product of their activity, the story they enact and tell, would not survive at all. [… H]uman artifice must be a place fit for action and speech, for activities […] of an entirely different nature from the manifold activities of fabrication by which the world itself and all things in it are produced (pp. 173-174).

This suggests that the primary purpose of art in respect to action is to memorialize, ensuring the durability of the stories that action generates. Bar-On's house-building gesture, however, points to a shortcoming in Arendt's vision, a failure to recognize that not only can action and speech

those texts is accurate or not. The document officially repealing By-law 319-69 can be found at https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/pre1998bylaws/toronto - former city of/1997-0635.pdf.

employ materials in their unfolding, but also building and fabrication are often inherently political acts that initiate processes—and stories—whose outcomes are unpredictable.

If action initiates "processes whose outcome remains uncertain and unpredictable" (pp. 231-232), it is also the activity most closely tied to the sense of a public sphere of shared occupation and use.[400] The terms of that sharing are precisely what make action political since, as Arendt points out, "The equality attending the public realm is necessarily an equality of unequals who stand in need of being 'equalized' in certain respects and for specific purposes" (p. 215). Action is above all an activity of disclosure, and the *polis* is the space "where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly" (pp. 198-199), that is, as intentional, mindful whos. Action is predicated on the possibility of recognition and understanding—of some form of mutual intelligibility. If disclosure is not, in itself, equalizing, it at least makes inequalities of agency visible and therefore opens them to the possibility of challenge and reform. Arendt would no doubt read an impoverishment of the *vita activa* in actor-network theory, which seeks to identify any forces or entities that have an impact or involvement as actors.[401] This is because, for Arendt, human intentionality is linked to human responsibility, as evidenced by her appeal to the powers of forgiveness and promise as redemptive mitigations for the irreversibility and unpredictability of actions. An agential realist approach that treats *Disposition* as an apparatus goes even farther afield than actor-network theory, by reorienting the terms of what counts as disclosure. Apparatuses do not frame shared intelligibility strictly according to what can be communicated among thinking humans as concept or even as percept or affect. Instead, apparatuses delimit a world by enacting borders that enable particular possibilities

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[400] For Arendt, action *is* the animate tissue of the public world. She writes, "action not only has the most intimate relationship to the public part of the world common to us all, but is the one activity which constitutes it." Relationality is what creates public space: "The *polis*, properly speaking, is not the city-state in its physical location; […] its true space lies between people living together for this purpose [of acting and speaking together]" (p. 198).

[401] Bruno Latour (2005) offers this succinct description of the actor-network approach:

> If action is limited a priori to what 'intentional', 'meaningful' humans do, it is hard to see how a hammer, a basket, a door closer, a cat, a rug, a mug, a list, or a tag could act. They might exist in the domain of 'material' 'causal' relations, but not in the 'reflexive' 'symbolic' domain of social relations. By contrast, if we stick to our decision to start from the controversies about actors and agencies, then *any thing* that does modify a state of affairs by making a difference is an actor—or, if it has no figuration yet, an actant (p. 71).

or result in particular manifestations of material and animate co-presencing. Intelligibility is broader than human disclosure of human subjects to each other; broader even than the ways nonhumans are disclosed to humans and humans might be disclosed to nonhumans. A world in these terms is not necessarily a *human* place at all.

This turn to what counts as the intelligibility and disclosure of a world lays the groundwork for two key arguments in relation to *Disposition*. First, while it is very likely that Bar-On would be perfectly comfortable framing aspects of her work as political action in the specifically human terms Arendt outlines, what *appears* for me in the house-building gesture are various entities and animate forces: not only Bar-On, not only Bar-On and the Farm manager, not only Bar-On and the Farm manager and the audience, nor even only Bar-On, the Farm manager, the audience members and myself. Aside from the various human agents and institutions laying claim to the site's use, I am also confronted with the competing plant species, with the unseen wildlife, with the discarded but materially obdurate construction materials, and even with the ecology and geography of the lower Don Valley. All of these entities enlisted in the unfolding of *Disposition* emerge in Bar-On's house-building action as potential "unequals who stand in need of being 'equalized' in certain respects and for specific purposes." Unequal though they may be, they become actors in *Disposition*, taking on a character and consciousness—a "who-ness"—that calls for their inclusion in the polity and politics of the public realm the performance enacts.

It can be argued, of course, that this is a case of poetic licence on my part—that it is ultimately a human imagination and a human linguistic facility that give animistic support to what are, after all, only (unthinking and often even inanimate) things and concepts—or, to use Deleuze's term, "individuations." These nonhuman and perhaps in some cases even imagined entities cannot articulate themselves or make any claim except by human fiat—as evidenced, for example, by the sanctuary sign that reflects a specifically human concern for the wildlife's welfare. But this leads me to my second argument, which is that the human imaginary as an instantiation of presencing might be productively understood in larger or different terms than those afforded by, for example, the discipline of human psychology. Concepts, percepts and affects as markers or products of human consciousness do not make their appearance out of nothing, or even out of a human being independent of its worldly corporeality; they are intra-active animate and material unfoldings of our selves *as* and *in relation to* the world's

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simultaneous becoming—however asymmetrical that relationality may appear from a human point of view. As instances of presencing, human imaginings are not only becomings in and of themselves, but also relational participants in—that is, intra-actively involved with, absorbed in, and impacting on—the becomings of the world that envelops them. They can also be pursued as possible clues to uncovering other material and animated presencings—other individuations— whose appearance and relational effects may not yet be recognized. We cannot possibly account for or definitively unpack all of the relationalities that constitute a world—particularly when these relationalities do not always manifest in the direct and linear terms of cause and effect so prized by reason—but when it comes to those that are linked to the human imaginary, it seems that art, and perhaps occasionally philosophy, have generally been more effective than the sciences at tracing their contours.[402]

My claim here, then, is that the world, however human-made it may appear, cannot be understood to be bounded by human consciousness and human industriousness, except by those who artificially hive off humanity itself as somehow standing apart from its own grounding in the animate materiality of its intra-active becoming. Just as we know of no thought that is not linked to a thinking body, if humans are able to imagine and build a world, it can only be because we already find ourselves as entities existing in—and as part of—one.

Disposition's spatiality

Before turning to a more detailed consideration of other individuations, and others as a specific type of individuated presence, I would like to consider Heidegger's analysis of Dasein's spatiality in relation to *Disposition* and the presencing of a world. As has been noted, Heidegger argues that it is ontologically inaccurate to approach space as a three-dimensional container. The abstracted representation of space that maps coordinates onto three sets of planes intersecting at right angles is, after all, a seventeenth century innovation of René Descartes; it is certainly not the way our bodies—or those of other animate creatures—encounter or make sense of space. A

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[402] Perhaps it is this expansiveness of worldview that Deleuze and Guattari are appealing to when they refer to the elusive qualities of infiniteness and eternity in relation to philosophy—the concept's "*point of absolute survey at infinite speed*"— and art—sensation's "power to exist and be preserved in itself *in the eternity that coexists with this short duration*" (see Chapter 2).

dimensional mapping cannot get at the way the world manifests as a presence; rather, a world is fundamentally a relational place whose contours, borders, boundaries and defined entities emerge as a result of our involvement with them. For Heidegger (2010/1953), "The spatiality of Dasein, which is essentially not objective presence, can mean neither something like being found in a position in 'world space,' nor being at hand in a place." Instead, he finds that our sense of space is inextricably linked to our attitude of care toward being: "Dasein is 'in' the world in the sense of a familiar and heedful dealing with the beings encountered within the world" (§23, p. 102). In his analysis, our involvement with the world is tied to the directedness of our concern for that world. We understand the concept of remoteness—how near or far something is—not in terms of an objective measurement of distance, but by virtue of our attention toward the specific entities we find at hand, though here the concept of "at hand" loses its specifically tactile-kinaesthetic meaning, expanding to encompass anything in our line of sight or range of hearing.[403] As self-aware being, Dasein "dwells" through its senses, and so our orientation toward space and our experience of spatiality unfold as what Heidegger calls de-distancing: "Whatever [Dasein's circumspect] heedfulness dwells in from the beginning is what is nearest, and regulates our de-distancing" (p. 104).

Heidegger's argument for Dasein as de-distancing reveals the troublesomeness of his attempts to think being separate from beings. In framing being through conscious, sensory experience, he brackets out the physical body that is the essential site of any such being. As he puts it, "Being near is not oriented toward the I-thing encumbered with a body but rather toward heedful being-in-the-world" (§23, p. 104). What we are left with, however, is an abstraction whereby the world appears through the interrelationship of a host of material entities, but the self appears only as an infinitely mobile site of affective and conceptual absorption, untethered from its necessary physicality.[404] The profoundness of Heidegger's forgetting is evident in his insistence that Dasein is, in essence, wherever one's attention is directed:

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[403] Heidegger also enfolds time into his description of Dasein's lived experience of distance. In thinking through the common parlance of how we talk about distance, he offers examples such as "We say that to go over there is […] as long as it takes to smoke a pipe" or "'It takes half an hour to get to the house'" (p. 103).

[404] My argument here is that while Heidegger takes to task the Cartesian model of a supposedly neutral, griddable space, Heidegger's appeal to a dispositionally charged sense of space ignores a corporeal reality that roots us to a materially spatial *somewhere* in consequential ways. If we are standing in the trajectory of an oncoming car, our physical peril is in no way mitigated if, lost in thought, our heedful attention happens

> Dasein understands its here in terms of the over there of the surrounding world. […] In accordance with its spatiality, Dasein is initially never here, but over there. From this over there it comes back to its here, and it does this only by interpreting its heedful being toward something in terms of what is at hand over there (p. 105).

Heidegger's analysis fails to attend to the basic phenomenology and primacy of movement that Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (2011) so carefully considers. If Heidegger began his consideration of Dasein's understanding of remoteness from the point of view of a child's development, for example, he would need to revise his arguments to account for how one comes to recognize the basic spatiality that allows us to even develop relational concepts such as here and there. We need to experience movement before we can formulate a conceptual understanding of spatial relations. Our bodies, like those of many creatures, have an instinctual predisposition to focus our sensory organs in directed ways. Developing a symbolic understanding of remoteness that encompasses a qualitative understanding of concepts such as near and far, however, comes from tactile-kinaesthetic experience, discovering what happens when one changes the proximity of one's sensory organs in relation to the focal point of one's heedful concern. In other words, to think how near and far feel, one must already have a perceptual, kinaesthetically grounded frame of spatial reference from which to extrapolate. Spatial understanding begins with a body, because bodies occupy and experience space; indeed, they *are* space, whether they intra-act with or without the benefit of symbolic representation.[405]

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to be directed toward our mother a thousand miles away. In his essay "The Ontological Dimension of Embodiment: Heidegger's Thinking of Being," David Michael Levin takes a rather different view. He argues that those scholars who suggest Heidegger has little to say about human physicality suffer from "a peculiarly restricted conception […] of that which constitutes a discourse on the body" (p. 125). The "problem" with what he sees as the conventional discourse "is that 'body' is thought in such a way that discussions about seeing and hearing, posture and gesture, bearing and handling, standing and falling are not regarded as discussions about the body" (p. 127). Indeed, for Levin, "the ontology of *Being and Time* is not intelligible, not possible, except for embodied beings, beings endowed with eyes, ears, arms and hands, throat and lips" (p 129). While Levin makes a strong claim for the fact that corporeality is indeed central to Heidegger's ontological project, my view is that Heidegger continually reads what he discovers in bodily experience as symptoms of a "heedful being-in-the-world" that corresponds more to thought and consciousness than to a thinking body. Indeed, it often seems that Heidegger frames flesh almost the same way he frames things in the world more generally: as mere equipment.

[405] Heidegger argues that it is Dasein's awareness of remoteness that then allows one to discover distance in terms of relational intervals between entities:

Heidegger believes that we are closer to understanding space's relationship to being when we think spatiality according to our heedful concern for the beings that attract our attention in a world than we are when we think space in terms of standardized units of measurement. Both, however, are abstractions of thought—the first more affective and the second more conceptual. Neither makes space any more accessible to being and doing themselves, which unfold as *spacetimematter* without the necessity of human thought. What is important about Heidegger's claims, however, is their attention to the affective register of our involvement with the world. Space, like time, is something we perceive and experience relationally and qualitatively. Just as a minute may seem unbearably long or excruciatingly short despite the clock's insistence that its duration is an unvarying 60 seconds, our worlds can seem larger or smaller, and objects can loom near or dissolve into the distance according to the attention we pay to them and our emotional investment—qualities of our awareness over which we have only limited conscious control. If our heedful concern can affect our qualitative perception of distance, however, there is also a flipside; distance can affect our qualitative perception of our heedful concern. This suggests that affect, concept, and percept are all interwoven in the felt experience of space—an insight that was essential to Bar-On's interactions and play with the audience in *Disposition*.

 Certainly, this was true in terms of Bar-On's play with proximal intimacy. In one sequence quite late in the performance, she produced a number of wallet-sized photos from her cleavage, each a duplicate image of her with her children. We were standing in a parking area at the edge of an alleyway, the kind of in-between outdoor space where one does not expect to linger, let alone have an intimate encounter—or, to cite a behaviour that has come into fashion since Bar-On's performance, take a selfie. Singling out audience members, she would offer them a look at the photo, leaning in close and saying something sotto voce, so that the rest of us could

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> Only because beings in general are discovered by Dasein in their remoteness, do "distances" and intervals among innerworldly beings become accessible in relation to other things. Two points are as little remote from each other as two things in general because neither of these beings can de-distance in accordance with its kind of being. They merely have a measurable distance between them which is encountered in de-distancing (p. 102).

Conceptual understandings of spatiality, however, linger far behind space's practical intelligibility to all of the creatures, objects, and forces that inhabit and occupy it. A mindless sperm is able to make its way to an egg. The inorganic moon circles the earth in response to a gravitational attraction. Even a mass-less photon finds space to be an accessible medium through which it can travel.

not really hear her, before giving them a copy of the image. This evolved into a series of poses with individual audience members, sidling up alongside them or back-to-back and gazing forward as if posing for a photo, her comportment distinctly unlike the seeming candidness of the miniature photos of her with her children. To a person, the audience members played along with this game, their bodies taking on a stiff, frozen formality that acknowledged the framing of their unnatural closeness—a physical proximity to the artist that also served to pull them out of the anonymity of the group and into the spotlight of the onlookers' gazes. This play with physical distance in terms of what we generally think of as one's "personal space" was bound up with an ambiguous sense of intimacy and aloofness—an emotional understanding of closeness.

Disposition was equally attentive to the use of a more expansive sense of space and distance. When the group first arrived at Riverdale Park West, Bar-On invited us to sit in the grass near a large formal planting of flowers. Once we were settled, she stepped into the flower bed and produced a "flag," a triangular white pennant attached to a pole approximately a metre and a half long.[406] Unfurling the cloth that was wrapped around the pole, she headed to the south end parking lot, where she proceeded to enact a series of dramatic poses by brandishing the flag with one extended arm, evocative of images from a revolutionary propaganda poster. What was startling about these poses, however, was her use of the cars as props for her body, crawling up to lie extended on the hoods, trunks and even the roofs of individual cars.[407] The result was a visually compelling image, one that perhaps benefitted from being seen from a certain distance, but also one that no audience member seemed willing to get too close to, lest they be implicated in Bar-On's edgy behaviour. Even watching from a discreet distance, the intentional audience members of *Disposition* felt uncomfortably close to the action.

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[406] As with the retrieval of the photos from her cleavage, the unexpected appearance of hidden objects was a recurring trope of the performance. Earlier in the performance, amid a line of evergreen trees beside an elementary school, Bar-On had lain down on the ground and uncovered another photo that was buried in the dirt and pine needles. I do not remember the image on the photo, but the memory of the action returns whenever I pass the spot. I notice how the grass does not grow in that area because of the acidity of the needles, and I find myself resisting a compulsion to sweep away the surface to see if anything is hidden underneath.

[407] This was the action that prompted at least one car owner, who assumed this must have something to do with Riverdale Farm, to seek out the Farm manager to alert her to—and to complain about—Bar-On's presence. It is also the action that concerned me in terms of the possibility of property damage, although, to my knowledge, no cars were harmed in the making of *Disposition*.

Much later, after sitting in the Necropolis chapel and crossing Riverdale Farm, Bar-On again held the flag aloft as she enjoined us in song. "Come with / me, I'll / go with / you and / so / we will / walk to- / gether / so / we will / walk to- / gether," she urged us as we travelled up the path toward a bridge that crosses the Don River and leads into Riverdale Park East—first positioning herself several metres ahead, facing the group and gesturing us toward her as she walked backwards along the path, then eventually joining the group to sing from its midst. Despite her gleeful joviality, this evocation of the crowd as a marching group was nearly as disquieting as her posing on the cars. Unlike that earlier action, however, this one was clearly directed toward us, allowing no opportunity to blend into the anonymity of pretending to be a random passerby. After leading us onto the bridge and then down the stairs to the bike path that runs along the west side of the Don River, Bar-On left us with the flag as she disappeared.[408]

This was not the end of the performance, but a carefully staged sequence that played with the distance between performer and audience. Before leaving us, Bar-On offered instructions on where to stand. After a while, the performer reappeared, on the other side of the Don River, beside the guardrails on the shoulder of the Don Valley Parkway. For this sequence, she was holding a second white pennant, this one hanging from a pole double the length of the first, rising almost three metres above her head. The performer was largely obscured by the vegetation along the banks of the river, often no more than a flash of red amid the green, but the white flag extending above the tops of the trees allowed us to mark her progress and discern her shape through the scrub. As the action continued, my attention shifted from asking myself, "What is she doing?" to the more straightforward question, "Where is she?"

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[408] I am calling this conjoinment of cloth and pole a flag, but it was not universally so. Before we entered the Necropolis chapel, Bar-On removed the white cloth from the pole and it fell to the ground. This happened soon after a large group of people participating in an architectural tour had passed, staring at her in confusion as she posed on the trunk of yet another car with her white flag. As the cloth lay there on the sidewalk, Bar-On poked at it with the pole, as if it were a dead thing she was not too sure about. The pole became a poker, also used to probe into the branches of a tree. This fluid transformation of objects speaks to the way that it is often actions as much as materiality that determine the contours of the entities that populate our world. Used or positioned in different ways, the same matter can become entirely different things to our consciousness, reflected in the variety of words we use to name objects. Similarly, the attitude with which we approach an object affects our perception of it; think of the difference of inflection between the questions, "What is it for?" and "What does it mean?"

This change in the framing of my concern signals a movement from a more conceptual to a more affective register. While the first question is more interpretive, directed toward a desire to decipher the meaning of the action, the second question already finds its meaningfulness in my identification with the lady in red; my investment in following her changing position, the absorption in tracking her movements, confirms our link. The obtrusiveness of the distance between us, and the lack of clear sight lines, discloses and even compels a sense of connection to her.

In the relationship between artist and audience set up by this action, the flag served an obvious use, helping us to spot Bar-On's location. The fact that there were now two flags, however, took on importance as the action continued. At a certain point—I do not remember the cue—we had been instructed to leave our vantage point and make our way back to the grassy knoll near Riverdale Park Road, a distance of several hundred metres. Without Bar-On to follow, the white flag I was carrying marked us as a group and provided a focal point for our movement. Once we arrived, Bar-On appeared below us with her flag, walking along the large grassy pitch that surrounds the park's baseball diamonds. She did a series of actions while holding the flag, now with a section of the pole removed so that it matched the size of the one we carried. Running back and forth, collapsing in the grass, her movement once again evoked a revolutionary in battle, but also something more like a children's game, all of her comrades imaginary figures. Eventually, she made her way up to our position and collapsed before us, holding the flag in front of her, as if completing an exhausting struggle to bring the two flags together.

The white flags, inorganic but animated by the fall breeze, were a symbolic marker of the connection between performer and audience, signalling that, even across the distance of the grassy field and hill, we were linked as mutual focuses of heedful human concern. In a sense, they brought the spaces of audience and performer together. If they were symbolic markers of affect and solidarity, however, they also acted a bit like the coordinates in a Cartesian grid, standing out against the landscape as representations of spatial positioning, measurable markers of distance.

Returning to this dissertation's interest in the notion of intra-active relationality, there are several conclusions that can be drawn from this overlapping of affective and conceptual delineations of space. Given that multiple and overlapping ways of seeing are possible, perhaps rather than trying to determine which might be more ontologically accurate, one might instead

consider what each frame of reference reveals—or allows to appear. In *Disposition*, Bar-On uses movement and distance to appeal to our various ways of thinking—percept, affect and concept—now leading, now following, now being among the group, now clustering us together, now going distant. In these shifts of position, she changes the dynamics of the audience—sometimes as witnesses, occasionally as an active group force—and our relational attitude toward her and what she is doing: now we are bonded, joined in solidarity; now we are oppositional, suspicious of one another; now we share a common space; now, we do not. Each of these positions has its own tenor of shared meaningfulness, and each discloses a different aspect of world—sometimes as a place of things, and sometimes as a field of actions.

The world aligns itself in overlapping ways—sometimes contradictory and often complementary in their interwoven complexity—to our senses, our emotions, and our rational or imaginative understanding. All of these, however, ultimately stem from a receptive, body-based connection that situates us not just in, but also as a part of the world. Often, our descriptions of conscious experience tend to ignore or forget most aspects of our corporeal being and doing, treating lived experience as if it were a movie projected somewhere ahead, simply passing before our eyes and ears while our bodies remain frozen and detached. Heidegger spins this forgetfulness into an ontological understanding of space, suggesting that when we walk along the street, the ground is farther from us than the distant person we see approaching.[409] It may well be true that the distant person is what looms most pressing in the forefront of our consciousness. But this is only possible because other aspects of our being are tasked with—mindful of—the exigencies of staying upright and moving forward. A great deal of our being—a being that is also doing—manifests without the benefit of or need for conscious awareness. Yet much of it can become accessible in the very specialized terms that concern Heidegger if one chooses to pay attention to it, as indeed his description of walking attests. This is not *spatial* de-distancing, although the concepts associated with distance, learned through being a body that takes up space,

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[409] Here is the full passage:

> When we walk, we feel it with every step and it seems to be what is nearest and most real about what is generally at hand, it slides itself, so to speak, along certain parts of our body—the soles of one's feet. And yet it is more remote than the acquaintance one meets while walking in the "distance," twenty steps away "on the street." Circumspect heedfulness decides about the nearness and farness of what is initially at hand in the surrounding world. Whatever this heedfulness dwells in from the beginning is what is nearest, and regulates our de-distancing.

provide useful metaphors for describing how it feels—for example, by saying that we "place" our awareness in our legs and feet. We know it is not spatial de-distancing because our bodies prove it so: the moment we choose to gauge our relative positions as material bodies *in space and time*, we rediscover the distance that separates us. What Heideggerian de-distancing does point to, however, is the fluidity of the boundaries that define interior and exterior, the contingency and relationality of what counts as self, world, and other. Here is an instance where human intention appears as a specific agential separability that *reveals* the workings of presence through its attunement to a specific meaningful entity—an acquaintance. Human intentionality reveals the intra-active relationality enacting and enacted in this instance by the visual appearance of the acquaintance—a relationality that is not *contained* by distance, time, or even our material bodies, but rather is one of many codeterminants of their entangled textures and boundaries.

This powerful revealing capacity of human intention is both a material-discursive outcome of intra-active relationality—what Barad sometimes describes as "marks on bodies"—and an agency in its own right. This does not, however, accord a human as a thinking body the exclusive role of "a being which is related understandingly in its being toward that being." The agency that does the work of keeping a thinking body upright despite gravity; the agency that maintains the circulation of blood through the body; the agency that prevents the atoms of the flesh from dissolving into the atoms of the air are all, in their way, instances of a being which is related understandingly in its being toward that being. Consciousness does not overcome time, space and matter, even if it is able to imagine them differently; it inhabits them. It is *of* them. We are not untethered thought; we are thinking bodies.

With this observation in mind, this is perhaps an opportune moment for readers to remind themselves just how a world presents itself to the whole of one's being and doing. Lift your gaze away from the page or screen, take a breath, swallow. Stand up, perhaps go outside if you are indoors, and track the tactile and kinaesthetic sensations of your steps, the temperature and movement of the air against your bare skin. Notice the firmness of the ground, its insistent refusal to melt away, whether or not you hold it in the forefront of your thoughts. What do you feel as you stand in open space, breathing the air and attending to these physical sensations? Are you restless, unable to focus on the task of attending so minutely to your sense organs? Does it calm you to direct your attention in this way? What are your thoughts? Do you find yourself drifting to

some undone task (remember to pick up some milk today), or getting caught up in something around you (I wish my neighbour would stop smoking)? Whatever imagined narrative I might provide, your experience of the world is no doubt vastly richer, more complex, and more insistently *there(-being)* than these words can convey.

CHAPTER 7: OTHERS IN *EVERYDAY LIFE WORDS IN PROGRESS*

Everyday life words in progress's material and animate physicality

Everyday life words in progress was a nine-day, 90-hour performance by Elvira

Santamaría, presented in Toronto from March 16 to 24, 2007 in the context of Fado Performance

Inc.'s IDea series.[410] Presented in a small Queen Street West storefront gallery space, part of what

was then Katharine Mulherin Contemporary Art Projects, the performance had an unusual

structure, running for 18 hours on its initial Friday opening, then decreasing in duration by two

hours each day, until the final two hours on the second Saturday. Santamaría kept no clock in the

space, instead asking me to be her timepiece by informing her when each day's allotted time had

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[410] IDea was the last multi-year international curatorial series I undertook as Fado's Performance Art
Curator. Running from 2005 to 2007, the series featured works by a total of 13 artists, focusing in various
ways on issues of identity. This series was a departure from my previous emphasis on formal aspects of
performance—time, space, the performer's body and a relationship to audience—or, to be more precise, a
shift to thinking about the performative possibilities generated by the tensions between the performer's
physical body and the way that body is imaged or imagined by self and audience. Some excerpts from the
curatorial brief outline the broad aims of this particular project:

> The series considers a broad range of identity labels, including gender, skin colour, ethnic origin,
> religion, sexual orientation, physical appearance, familial role, economic status, political
> affiliation and profession, to name a few of the more obvious possibilities. In blunt terms, the
> series will circulate around an underlying set of interrelated questions. How do we accept or resist
> these multiple identities? Which do we choose to embrace, and why? What identity labels are
> misleading, unhelpful or irrelevant, and in what ways? How do these labels intersect with one
> another? How do they determine the nature and quality of our lives? How do they contribute to a
> sense of belonging or alienation?
>   While these questions inform the series, they are only a contextualizing lens, not a
> prescription for how individual projects should or will be structured. *IDea* is not about
> representation, or the politics of difference, which is to say that the intention is not to assemble a
> collection that presents one of each kind. We are not encouraging strident political statements
> (though there is certainly room for them), but rather, featuring works that reveal something about
> how the creators understand and situate themselves. Along the way, we also hope to track how
> artists use performance tactics to circumvent prescribed attitudes and behaviours around identity
> (http://www.performanceart.ca/index.php?m=program&id=190).

The original text used to promote *Everyday life words in progress* can be found on the Fado website at
http://www.performanceart.ca/index.php?m=program&id=51, as well as a selected photo gallery of images
by Miklos Legrady at http://www.performanceart.ca/index.php?m=gallery&id=196. A more complete set
of Legrady's images, taken over at least two different days, is available on the CCCA Canadian Art
Database at http://ccca.concordia.ca/performance_artists/f/fado/elvira/elvira_perf1/index.html. Fado also
holds approximately 10 hours of video documentation shot by me with footage from all nine days of the
performance, but none of this material is currently available online.

been completed.[411] The weather varied considerably over the course of the event, including a snowfall of several centimetres on the first day; some days were cold and grey, while several were warm and brilliantly sunny. These conditions added an important texture to the overall work, since audience members could choose to watch the performance through the window from the street, or by entering the gallery, a small, high-ceilinged room with a floor area of roughly nine square metres. The door to the street was kept locked, posted with a sign encouraging people to knock if they wished to enter. When Santamaría was alone in the space, she would open the door; if audience members were there, they generally obliged any new visitors. Because of the intimate size of the space, there were seldom more than five audience members inside the gallery at any one time.

The framework for the performance was minimal. Each day, Santamaría would select two local newspapers from a 24-hour convenience store on her way to the space, and these would provide the primary material and inspiration for her actions that day.[412] The space was furnished with a single black wooden chair and a rickety metal folding card table. Santamaría also brought with her an array of supplies, including a glue stick, scotch tape, thread, string, wire, scissors, different types of thumbtacks (including a set of tacks with numbers printed on their heads), various needles, fishing hooks and lead sinker weights, clear plastic baggies, some small white

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[411] Santamaría's initial request was to remove one hour from the beginning and end times each day, but Katharine Mulherin, from whom Fado rented the space, was concerned about the rowdiness and unpredictability of the evening Queen Street West foot traffic. She insisted that the evening hours be reduced as quickly as possible. The gallery was located opposite the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, which at the time was undergoing a major redevelopment. The area had long been a magnet for an indigent population dealing with mental health issues; it has since become so gentrified that it is hard to remember that this would have been a legitimate issue for a local business owner at the time. The final published hours were as follows:

Friday, March 16: 6 am – midnight
Saturday, March 17: 6 am – 10 pm
Sunday, March 18: 6 am – 8 pm
Monday, March 19: 6 am – 6 pm
Tuesday, March 20: 7 am – 5 pm
Wednesday, March 21: 9 am – 5 pm
Thursday, March 22: 11 am – 5 pm
Friday, March 23: 1 pm – 5 pm
Saturday, March 24: 3 pm – 5 pm

[412] The daily newspapers publishing in Toronto at the time were *The Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Star*, the *Toronto Sun*, and the *National Post*.

candles, thicker but shorter than a birthday candle, and a book of matches. The gallery served a hybrid role as artist studio, performance venue and cumulative installation site animated by Santamaría's ongoing, mostly nonverbal presence. While *Everyday life words in progress* unfolded as a personal residency/research project for the artist, its situatedness in a visible downtown public space marked Santamaría's actions as discourse, putting her in relation and conversation with a Toronto public—that is to say, in encounter with others.

Dressed entirely in monotone black—pants, tunic, socks and shoes—Santamaría would spend her time at the gallery creating actions and tableaux using the day's newspapers. Some time would be spent leafing through the papers and reading articles of interest; this was particularly true of the first several days, when the actions began while it was still dark and the streets were largely empty. Santamaría would cut out headline or ad words and phrases that caught her interest to be shaped into two-dimensional collages or three-dimensional sculptural constructions and mobiles, sometimes pinned to the wall or glued to the window, or left sitting loose on the table like fridge magnet poetry. Some words or phrases would evoke simple actions, as when Santamaría walked around the gallery carrying the word "WALK" dangling from a thread.[413] One wall piece consisted of a sheaf of obituary notices with the faces carefully removed, leaving a blank open rectangle at the head of each column. Whole articles or extended passages from articles might be strung together as streamers and hung from the walls and ceiling or trailed along the floor. The newspapers also became a distinct material. One set of coloured tabloid pages was slowly transformed into a wall sculpture. Working with one sheet at a time, Santamaría stood on a chair, slowly crumpling up each sheet with one hand until it became a ball in her closed fist, held out like an offering, but at the same time secreted away. Then she stood unmoving for an extended tableau, gazing at her fist as if she might somehow absorb the paper's contents through her grasp, before pinning the ball along a growing horizontal row set at midriff height along one wall. A different set of pages was pinned in overlapping sequence along another wall, pages secured by one corner so that the air drafts in the room transformed them into a subtly wafting and whispering presence, all the more striking in their animation when Santamaría was holding a

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[413] I suspect this was the more salient phrase than the theatre tag line "Three to see" printed on the reverse side, though it is possible she might have integrated both by, for example, performing three separate walks before removing the action from her repertoire of gestures.

static pose. As the days progressed, some elements remained while others would be altered or removed to make room for new ones. Any newspaper materials left unused at the end of the day were stacked in one corner in a growing pile that would not be revisited. Visitors to the space tended to sit or stand along the periphery, sometimes working their way around the room to examine the various elements in greater detail or to read the articulated excerpts of text.

Santamaría's project provides a useful focus for considering the notion of an "other" as a particular type of individuated presence—an exploration that will necessarily involve revisiting the specific concerns that have shaped this dissertation's inquiry into presence and the possibility of shared meaningfulness: subjectivity and consciousness; human corporeal, cognitive, affective and perceptive engagement with the bodies or things we recognize as populating our world; understandings of discourse, language, and signification; and determinations of meaningfulness and intelligibility. References to an other traditionally point to other sentient—and more particularly, human—beings. Moving beyond a humanist framework, one might consider whether the definition of other could be productively expanded to encompass a broader range of animate, responsive, or intelligible entities, a position already hinted at in the previous chapter's discussion of world as an entity. Before proceeding to such a claim, however, it is helpful to outline the figure of the other as it is explored in the writings of Emmanuel Levinas, who proposed an ethics of human interaction based on an intersubjective affectivity that operates beyond ontological understandings, theorized through the notions of alterity, proximity and the face.

Levinas (1969/1961, 1998/1974), whose philosophical inquiries are linked to the phenomenological lineages of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, produced a body of work that, while acknowledging its debt to Husserl's methodological approach, is in many ways a movement away from both Husserl's framework of intentionality or "consciousness of . . ."[414] and Heidegger's insistence on an ontology that privileges being over beings. Levinas also provided a countering influence to Heidegger in the thinking of Jacques Derrida, despite Derrida's 1964

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[414] This phrase is shorthand for describing Husserl's assertion that thoughts are of or about *something*, that is, they are directed toward things, objects, actions, events, patterns, experiences, etc.—the ellipses standing in for the appropriate "something." This something need not be a thing that presents itself to consciousness as an entity existing in the physical world; we recognize a difference, for example, between our perception of a tree and an imagined mental image of a tree, but in each case, our consciousness of the tree, whether "actual" or "imagined" is still a consciousness of a something.

deconstructive critique of Levinas's writings in his essay "Violence and Metaphysics." Derrida's article took a profoundly questioning stance in regard to Levinas's arguments—a level of engagement that no doubt signalled Derrida's abiding respect for Levinas—and also influenced an important shift in Levinas's framing of the relationship of a self to an other between *Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise than Being*.

Levinas's (1969/1961) first comprehensive theorization of the radical alterity of the human other or Other[415] can be found in *Totality and Infinity*. In this book, Levinas aims to show how we encounter a human other in a fundamentally different way than how we experience the alterity of things in the world. He argues against a traditional understanding of another person as a kind of "*alter ego*, [who is] another self with different properties and accidents but in all essential respects like me" (p. 13). In Levinas's view, attempts to frame an other in the terms of "the same"—that is, in terms of their being like one's self as an "I"—reflect a totalizing, synoptic, and reductive system of intelligibility that subsumes the other into the self and seeks an "objective" or "ultimate meaning" of everything as knowable or describable according to the determination of "history" (p. 22). At the same time, Levinas appears to believe that, to some extent, such a totalizing approach does characterize our relationship to a surrounding world where we find ourselves "at home" (*chez soi*).[416] He argues that "subjectivity originates in the independence and sovereignty of enjoyment" (p. 114), where the things I live from are "not objects of representations" but rather, "objects of enjoyment" (p. 110).[417] Things I find in the world can resist my possession, but ultimately, "this alterity [of the inhabited world] falls under my powers" (p. 38) as I engage with things for my own pleasure and sustenance. "Nourishment

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[415] In French, the pronoun *autrui* can be used to signify specifically human others, whereas the more general *autre* may or may not refer to a human entity. In the English translation of *Totality and Infinity*, Alphonso Lingis capitalizes Other to identify Levinas's use of the term *autrui*. This convention is dropped in the translation of *Otherwise than Being*.

[416] Levinas describes the self as establishing itself in the security of a sheltering dwelling, from which it is able to venture out into the world to gather and partake of what it needs and what gives it pleasure. Thus, "the *way* of the I against the 'other' of the world consists in *sojourning*, in *identifying oneself* by existing here *at home with oneself* (*chez soi*)" (p. 37). Sojourning makes the world accessible and familiar to us.

[417] Levinas's argument is at least in part a critique of Heidegger's notion of "handiness"; he asserts that pleasure rather than use defines our primal mode of being toward the world and its objects. For Levinas, "All enjoyment is […] alimentation," such that what occupies one's life corresponds to the living of one's life: "to live is a sort of transitive verb, and the contents of life [from which one takes pleasure and finds nourishment] are its direct objects" (p. 111).

[…] is the transmutation of the other into the same […]: an energy that is other […] becomes, in enjoyment, my own energy, my strength, me" (p. 111). By contrast, however, Levinas maintains that the human other can only be experienced as an instance of absolute exteriority or alterity that defies representation or thematization: "He escapes my grasp by an essential dimension, even if I have him at my disposal" (p. 39). The human other is a stranger, and I have no perceptive faculty or intuition that could simply disclose the contents of an Other's consciousness to my own, no image or representation that would be up to the task of making an Other's being—her lived experience and perspective of the world—knowable to me. Instead, what manifests to my consciousness is "the idea of infinity" (p. 26), which can only be experienced transcendentally, as a "*non-adequation*" of the intentionality of consciousness with what it encounters. As Levinas describes it, "a separated being fixed in its identity, the same, the I, nonetheless contains in itself what it can neither contain nor receive solely by virtue of its own identity" (p. 27). Also notable is the affective response generated by this encounter with an Other. According to Levinas, "the idea of Infinity […] is produced as Desire." By this, he means to signal an attitude that is not based on a need, which could be satisfied, but rather is "perfectly disinterested—goodness" (p. 50).[418]

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[418] Levinas also describes this attitude in terms of an I "who desires what he does not lack" (p. 97). In his formulation, "Desire does not coincide with an unsatisfied need; it is situated beyond satisfaction and nonsatisfaction" (p. 179). This remains a somewhat untested—or perhaps more accurately, untestable— claim in Levinas's analysis in *Totality and Infinity*, and one that in my view does not appear to stand up to a basic consideration of the conditions of human development, either individually or as a species. Granted, Levinas is here attempting to trace the structure of a kind of movement or mystery of transcendence that operates beyond or in excess of anything that could be called the self. The Desire he speaks of describes an insatiability that does not and cannot correspond with need. What is troublesome about his account here, however, is that it is constructed out of a set of conditions that are not realizable in the everyday world, despite his deployment of a phenomenological description that is meant to illuminate the nature of our relationships within and toward such a world. The separation between things that can fall under one's grasp to provide nourishment and an Other who approaches outside of any economy of need ignores the fundamental nature of our initial contact with human others, which surely must in some way condition and thematize how we then experience both the emergence of our selfhood and the approach of an Other. Human reproduction begins with the meeting of two alterities—or perhaps potentialities of alterity; we are already challenged by the assumptions inherent in our terminology to sort out the correspondence between materiality and the ineffable insistence of, say, selfness, ipseity, or consciousness—that merge. As an emergent, developing fetus, our first experience of an Other is our mother, though as a womb she arguably has no face and is precisely the world that nourishes us. Emerging from the womb, we experience Others as disruptive physical impingements but also as sources of heat and nourishment. From the very beginning, then, our contact with what we will come to experience as others is connected to the fulfillment of our basic care and needs, and we must rely on interaction with others for a substantial portion of our physical, social, and emotional development. Not only is our individual genesis tied to a human parentage; humanity evolved as a social species that lives in familial and community contexts, and no human could survive its

The relationship of an I with an Other, which escapes the totality of "relations that are produced within the same" (p. 110)—that is, a relationship that sits outside the system of intelligibility in which everything can be brought into alignment with an object-directed understanding produced by and of the self—is defined by Levinas "as a *face to face*, as delineating a distance in depth" that is "enacted in conversation (*discours*)" (p. 39). Unlike a subject-object relationship, where the subject's "gaze […] would take [the object] as a theme for interpretation, and would command an absolute position dominating the object" (p. 65), the revelation of a face confirms the infinite alterity of the Other by "coming from beyond the world" (p. 215), situated beyond any disclosure available through my senses, including vision. Whereas our apprehension of the being of things begins and ends in their formal, perceivable qualities, as forms that have only a mute surface, a *face* turns toward me and reveals an identity. "Things have a form, are seen *in* the light—silhouettes or profiles; [whereas] the face signifies *itself*. […] Things have no face; convertible, 'realizable,' they have a price" (p. 140).

One might well ask what Levinas means by the term face, an apparently human feature not found in objects or even other creatures. Clearly he is not referring to a dictionary definition

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infancy and childhood unsupported by other humans. In this developmental account, our initial encounter with others takes place not from a position of self-sufficiency and spontaneous freedom, but rather, from one of extreme vulnerability and reliance, and this experience provides the foundation for our expanding interactions with human others. Furthermore, human *need* surely goes beyond any formulation of bare sustenance or sensory pleasure. Sociality is more than just a habit or convenience of species organization. We look to others for companionship, for approval, for a sense of belonging, and for the confirmation of meaning, all of which are felt not simply as luxuries or even longings, but as concrete needs. Can there be no link between a temperament that feels these lacks so keenly and our recognition of an obligation to come to the aid and service of others? A strong body of psychological and social science evidence indicates that children who do not experience physical tenderness, love and bonding at an early age grow up unable to fully feel or express warmth and share such bonds with others as adults. Does this mean they are unable to experience the face of an Other? Or, is what Levinas describes as the Desire for an Other both grounded in need and dependent on at least some experience of satisfaction of that need?

As this dissertation details, *Totality and Infinity* was only a starting point. Levinas went on to continually redefine and refine his descriptions of the approach of the other, searching for more precise language to capture how the alterity of the other impinges on one's ipseity, but this failure to tackle human development in the descriptions that initially found his arguments still seems worth exploring. Because humans do not simply appear as fully fledged selves, but as developing creatures who experience Others corporeally, one is drawn to question, for example, when does ipseity begin, or at what point is an ipseity first able to feel the shock of experiencing an Other's face? Is there a particular level of corporeal-perceptual integration required? Indeed, if one begins with an understanding of a human as a thinking body, one might go so far as to ask whether it is even possible to imagine an ipseity that could operate beyond the fundamental thematization that a body as *me ipse* imposes or conditions.

of a face as the front part of a person's head, since for him the face is not a representable image. The face must be understood as a "*mode*" of appearance—"the way in which the other presents himself, exceeding *the idea of the other in me*" (p. 50)—rather than as an actual figure. At one point, Levinas describes the importance of a face's eyes: "The eyes break through the mask—the language of the eyes, impossible to dissemble. The eye does not shine; it speaks" (p. 66). At another point, he seems to suggest that the sheer animation of the human form can convey the quality of a face: "the whole body—a hand or a curve of the shoulder—can express as the face" (p. 262). Still elsewhere, the face is equated with pure expressivity: "The face is a living presence, it is expression" (p. 66), and "Expression, or the face, overflows images" (p. 297).

The relationship opened up between an I and an Other by the face to face is profoundly asymmetrical. On the one hand, the other calls my freedom and spontaneity into question. In the face of the Other "is the revelation of a resistance to my powers that does not counter them as a greater force, but calls in question the naïve right of my powers, my glorious spontaneity as a living being" (p. 84). The Other is both "teacher" and "master," exerting a presence that "comes from the heights, unforeseen, and consequently teaches its very novelty" (p. 66). Levinas speaks of the "supremacy" of "the Other who judges me; our relations are never reversible" (p. 101). At the same time, the face of the Other appears destitute in its nakedness,[419] with an "absolute frankness which cannot hide itself" (p. 66), and to which I am obliged. The Other offers "the total nudity of his defenceless eyes," which convey "the primordial *expression*, […] the first word: 'you shall not commit murder'" (p. 199). Levinas frames "the call of the other" as "his command, or more exactly, […] the command to command" (p. 178). Thus, "In *Desire* are conjoined the movements unto the Height and unto the Humility of the Other" (p. 200). Responsibility and sacrifice underlie my relationship to the other, who "is desired in my shame" (p. 84), and who is addressed in an attitude of "apology, in which the I at the same moment asserts itself and inclines

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[419] Levinas declares, "The nakedness of the face is destituteness" (p. 75). Recognizing this naked vulnerability is also a recognition of the possibility of doing violence to the Other, a relation that in Levinas's view is not possible with things, even if they resist our will. Matter's resistance

> does not oppose frontally, but as already abdicating to the hand which seeks its vulnerable point, which, already ruse and industry, reaches for it obliquely. […] Thus in the last analysis labor cannot be called violence: it is applied to what is faceless, to the resistance of nothingness (p. 160).

before the transcendent" (p. 40). The other elicits a "summons […] addressed to an infinite responsibility"—that is, "*a responsibility increasing in the measure that it is assumed*" (p. 244).

Oral discourse holds a central place in the encounter of the face to face. A human other opens up the possibility of language by virtue of speech, which for Levinas generates an immediate present and presence: "[The Other's] speech consists in 'coming to the assistance' of his word—in being *present*. […] The present is produced in this […] actualization" (p. 69).[420] Levinas describes the human other in terms of immediacy, as a presence that overcomes the temporal lag that produces objects as purely phenomenal, which is also to say that things themselves are always perceived in absence, a reading that in its way is quite close to Derrida's analysis of Husserl's theory of the sign.[421] Unlike objects, however, Levinas's Other—"a being telling itself to us independently of every position we would have taken in its regard, *expressing itself*" (p. 65)—asserts a presence that can continually, incessantly, give itself an identity by speaking: "The immediate is in the interpellation and […] the imperative of language. […] The immediate is the face to face" (p. 52). In his view, this incessancy, conceived or framed as

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[420] Levinas credits speech, imbued with the immediacy of a human speaker, with numerous remarkable powers. Not only can it secure the presence of the Other; it also dispels ambiguity—this despite his frequent references to the equivocality of language more generally: "Speech consists in the Other coming to the assistance of the sign given forth, attending his own manifestation in signs, redressing the equivocal by this attendance" (p. 91).

[421] Levinas argues that

> to know objectively is to know the historical, the *fact*, the *already happened*, the already passed by. […] The historical is forever absent from its very presence. This means that it disappears behind its manifestations; its apparition is always superficial and equivocal; its origin, its principle, always elsewhere. It is a phenomenon—a reality without reality (p. 65).

His grappling with the lag of a subjective apprehension of the objective world is also tempered, however, by his description of dwelling as a corporeal, sensory and sensual involvement that manages to exceed, if not precede, conscious understanding:

> The idealist subject which constitutes a priori its object and even the site at which it is found does not strictly speaking constitute them a priori but precisely *after the event*, after having dwelt in them as a concrete being. The event of dwelling exceeds the knowing, the thought, and the idea in which, after the event, the subject will want to contain what is incommensurable with a knowing (p. 153).

Here, what Levinas describes echoes the observations of how our brains retrospectively construct our experiences as a "logical," apparently coherent narrative (see Michael Gazzaniga's anecdote of the rattlesnake cited in Chapter 2 above), an organic workaround of the neuroscientific problem of representational lag documented by Benjamin Libet (see footnote 137 above).

immediacy, overcomes the relentless temporal flow that seems to leave consciousness always lagging behind presence in its actualization.[422]

Although language is often understood as enacting a totalizing system of objectification, Levinas asserts that the Other, as the speaker, stands outside or beyond signification. A face that speaks offers an expressive presence that transcends interpretation or thematization:

> The signifier, he who emits the sign, *faces*, despite the interposition of the sign, without proposing himself as a theme. […] The Other, the signifier, manifests himself in speech by speaking of the world and not of himself; he manifests himself by proposing the world, by *thematizing* it (p. 96).

The Other is what, in Levinas's view, opens up the very system of referentiality by drawing attention to the idea of a world, by proposing it as something that can be shared and communicated. The Other's presence is "the interpretive key" that makes signification possible (p. 96), and speech is the root of symbolic thought:

> Speech is […] the origin of all signification—of tools and all human works—for through it the referential system from which every signification arises receives the very principle of its functioning, its key. Language is not one modality of symbolism; every symbolism refers already to language (p. 98).[423]

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[422] Levinas's description appears to valorize the live presence of the spoken word in a way that provides a striking example of what Derrida has labelled Western philosophy's "metaphysics of presence":

> This present is not made of instants mysteriously immobilized in duration, but of an *incessant* recapture of instants that flow by by a presence that comes to their assistance, that answers for them. This *incessance* produces the present, is the presentation of life, of the present. It is as though the presence of him who speaks inverted the inevitable movement that bears the spoken word to the past state of the written word (p. 69).

[423] In *The Roots of Thinking*, Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (1990) tackles the surprisingly common claim that language is the basis of conceptual thought. As she notes, "the claim that *all* concepts are language-dependent becomes absurd, for the concept of language itself is in this view a concept for which there is no language" (p. 139). Her careful theorization of the origins of language makes a strong case for the idea that "no language can be spoken for which the body is unprepared—and […] to understand the origin and evolution of a language is to understand a sensory-kinesthetic lifeworld" (p. 135). Levinas (1969/1961) is in many ways attuned to such an understanding, as evidenced by his extended phenomenological consideration of sensory pleasure, but ultimately, for him, existence only takes on *meaning* with the appearance of an Other: "A meaningful world is a world in which there is the Other through whom the world of my enjoyment becomes a theme having a signification" (p. 209). Certainly there is a strong link between sociality and meaningfulness, but Levinas's description credits language with founding or making possible the very components that must be in place and consolidated as *prerequisites* for the development

Ultimately, however, language for Levinas is less about communication than it is about giving. The impulse for thematizing a world of objects is so that it can be shared with the Other:

> Language is universal because […] it offers things which are mine to the Other. […] Language [...] lays the foundations for a possession in common. […] The world in discourse is no longer what it is in separation, in the being at home with oneself where everything is given to me; it is what I give: the communicable, the thought, the universal (p. 76).

Thus, in suggesting that speech founds signification, Levinas does not understand language as evolving out of internal representation—a system of signification that could be theorized, as Husserl does, from the example of talking or thinking to oneself. Instead, he describes language as a process that transforms sensory and sensual experience into objective conceptualization in a way that could only arise intersubjectively: "Language does not exteriorize a representation preexisting in me: it puts in common a world hitherto mine. Language *effectuates* the entry of things into a new ether in which they receive a name and become concepts" (p. 174). At its core, Levinas's philosophy takes ethics—in the form of obligation to the Other rather than care for one's being—as its starting point.[424] Indeed, in his view, the very point of subjectivity is so that one might serve others: "Metaphysics, or the relation with the other, is accomplished as service and as hospitality" (p. 300).

Derrida's (1978/1964) deconstructive critique of Levinas does not concentrate on unpacking Levinas's appeal to discourse, with its problematic formulations of speech, language, and signification, and its failure to account for how one might even begin to develop a language as a system of representation with common terms that could be shared with an entity posited as absolute alterity. Instead, in one of his key arguments, Derrida questions Levinas's failure to recognize that for consciousness, *all* physical entities manifest as alterity. Derrida asserts, "Bodies […] are others in general for my consciousness. They are outside, and their transcendence is the

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of language. Similarly, Levinas's assertion that speech provides an origin for tools is extremely problematic, and does not reflect the observed use and manufacture of tools by various animals. Robert Shumaker, Kristina Walkup and Benjamin Beck's (2011) *Animal Tool Behavior* provides a useful overview of current understandings on the topic.

[424] As he states, "When I seek my final reality, I find that my existence as a 'thing in itself' begins with the presence in me of the idea of Infinity. But this relation already consists in serving the Other" (pp. 178-179).

sign of an already irreducible alterity." Derrida acknowledges that the alterity of an Other, as a stranger with "experience *from his perspective*, such as he has lived it" presents "a double power of indefiniteness," but he insists that "without the first alterity, the alterity of bodies (and the Other is also a body, from the beginning), the second alterity could never emerge" (p. 124).[425] Husserl, in his phenomenological project that grounds Levinas's approach, was always careful to assert that what manifests to consciousness can only ever be understood to appear *as such*, that is, to occur on the side of the self. If something appears as "infinite," then Husserl would take care to describe it, in Derrida's reading, "by acknowledging in this infinitely other *as such* (appearing as such) the status of an intentional modification of the ego in general" (p. 125). A world is always *one's own* world, and the things that populate that world are always experienced as they manifest to one's own consciousness. Further, Derrida repudiates Levinas's formula of "ethical dissymmetry" in which the Other is not taken as another ego, another like myself, but as an unfathomable infinity and master to whom I am obligated. In Derrida's view, it is precisely "that I am also essentially the other's other, and that I know I am" that "institutes the relationship between two finite ipseities" (p. 128).[426] Derrida sums up these concerns succinctly: "Nothing can appear outside the appurtenance to 'my world' for an 'I am.' […] Understood in this sense, the intentional relationship of 'ego to my world' cannot be opened on the basis of an infinite-other radically foreign to 'my world'" (pp. 131-132).

Derrida also rejects Levinas's assault on Heidegger's return to the question of Being. Levinas (1969/1961) sees Heidegger's appeal to Being as an abstraction that effaces the other, "a reduction of the other to the same by interposition of a middle and neutral term" (p. 43). He argues that a focus on anonymous Being is linked to tyranny:

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[425] Derrida's analysis takes as given an abstracted entity or manifestation called "consciousness" that exists independently of the animate forms that sustain or generate consciousness. For a thinking body, however, the notion of a consciousness that experiences its material body as absolute alterity is an absurdity.

[426] In his formulation of the Other as having a distinct world that is unknowable for the same, Levinas does not adequately address why the same should believe that this Other's world—even if it can only be preserved by preserving the Other's ipseity—is in itself worthy of a nonviolent attention, that it is worth preserving. The Other may not be an alter ego, but surely this conviction on the part of the same, this moral summons, must rest on the recognition of a basic point of similarity: that the Other's world is *like one's own in its value*.

Heideggerian ontology, which subordinates the relationship with the Other to the relation

with Being in general, remains under obedience to the anonymous, and leads inevitably

to another power, to imperialist domination, to tyranny. […] *Being* before the *existent*,

ontology before metaphysics, is freedom […] before justice. It is a movement within the

same before obligation to the other (pp. 46-47).

Derrida (1978/1964) strongly disagrees with Levinas's characterization of Heidegger's approach

to Being. For Derrida, "Being is but the *Being-of* this existent, and does not exist outside it as a

foreign power, or as a hostile or neutral impersonal element" (p. 136). Taking the "thought of

Being"—that is, the distinction between the existent and Being which according to Derrida opens

an "ontico-ontological difference […] in order to articulate Being in language, […] to let Being

circulate in language" (p. 138)—"as a *concept* of Being" (my emphasis) is a category mistake, a

misreading that totalizes Being in the same way that Levinas criticizes ontology as totalizing the

Other in the same (p. 140). In failing to recognize its own implicit and necessary assumption of

Being, "The metaphysics of the face […] *encloses* the thought of Being, presupposing the

difference between Being and the existent at the same time as it stifles it" (p. 144). For Derrida,

Being—the thought of Being—is woven inextricably into the very possibility of language. "There

is no speech without the thought and statement *of* Being" (p. 143); "to be" is implied in all

proposition and saying.[427] Thus, according to Derrida, if Levinas were to follow his own

arguments to their logical conclusion, he would end up with a language without predication,

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[427] In a passage that tries to describe the foundational necessity of Being to thought and language as he
works toward an explication of Heidegger's claim that "at one and the same time language illuminates and
hides Being itself" (p. 138)—a reference to a line from Heidegger's "Letter on 'Humanism'," "*Sprache ist
lichtend-verbergende Ankunft des Seins selbst*"—Derrida writes:

> Being is not simply a predicate of the existent, no more than it is the existent's subject. If it is
> taken as essence or as existence (as Being-such or Being-there), if it is taken as copula or as
> position of existence, or, more profoundly and more originally, if it is taken as the unitary focal
> point of all these possibilities, then the Being of the existent does not belong to the realm of
> predication, because it is already implied in all predication in general, and makes predication
> possible. And it makes every synthetic of analytic judgment possible. It is beyond genre and
> categories [….] It must be a singular truism, that through which is sought, in the most profound
> way, as the most concrete thought of all thoughts, the common root of essence and existence,
> without which no judgment, no language would be possible, and which every concept can only
> presuppose by dissimulating it (p. 136).

without the possibility of verbs or even common nouns, a speech that could consist of nothing but proper nouns and that could consequently offer nothing—certainly not a world—to an I (p. 147).

Levinas's (1998/1974) *Otherwise than Being, or, Beyond Essence* responds to Derrida's arguments by challenging the assumptions that generally determine how we understand cognition, being and signification, part of which involves undoing what he outlines as a preemptive reduction of subjectivity, the *oneself*, into the generalized ego posited as consciousness and being.[428] He argues that ipseity, the singularity of an I, must be thought independently of consciousness, as a unicity that overrides the loss and recovery in temporality that structures consciousness: "The recurrence of the oneself is not relaxed and lighted up again, illuminating itself thereby like consciousness which lights up by interrupting itself and finding itself again in the temporal play of retentions and protentions" (p. 104). While consciousness is immersed in time, and therefore operates as a manifestation of being, for Levinas, the I is not simply being that thinks itself. Levinas argues that the oneself arises as a response to the approach of the other. It springs from the "restlessness of the same disturbed by the other" (p. 25),[429] produced in what Levinas describes as "the anarchical provocation which ordains me to the other" (p. 16)[430]—a

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[428] Levinas attributes this reduction to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and to Heidegger, the two thinkers who feature most prominently as interlocutors in Derrida's "Violence and Metaphysics" article:

> In reintroducing time into being [Hegel and Heidegger] denounce the idea of a subjectivity irreducible to essence, and, starting with the object inseparable from the subject, go on to reduce their correlation, and the anthropological order understood in these terms, to a modality of being. [… E]ssence, understood as the immanence of a knowing, is taken to account for subjectivity, which is reduced to a moment of the concept, of thought or of absolute essence (p. 17).

[429] Even if, for Levinas, establishing the self is always, already a facing of the Other, his argument for how the other "produces" the self is substantially different from the idea often found, for example, in queer and gender studies that the (queer) other defines the (normative) same—i.e., brings the same into existence—by defining its limits through exclusion (see footnote 215 above). This "queer" notion of otherness illuminates a self in relief by defining the contours of what it is not. When thinking the notion of the other, it is constructive to ask: other in relation to whom/what?

[430] Levinas uses the term *anarchical* here to denote an obsessive identification that occurs outside—beyond and also prior to—"any *principle*, origin, will, or ἀρχή [*arche*] which are put forth in every ray of consciousness" (p. 101), i.e., exterior to the hierarchy and temporality of being. Levinas is firm in this conviction: "older than the time of consciousness that is accessible in memory, […] the oneself is exposed as a hypostasis, of which the being it is as an entity is but a mask" (p. 106).

calling forth in which "Goodness gives to subjectivity its irreducible signification" (p. 18).[431] As such, ipseity must be understood not as the animated "intentionality of the for-itself" (p. 105), but as the exposedness in responsibility that manifests as "the impossibility of slipping away and being replaced" (p. 56). Felt as an obsession and generated as the responsibility for another, "The oneself is […] in itself and not in being. […] It is the correlate of a persecution, a substitution for the other" (p. 195).[432]

If, for Levinas, subjectivity cannot be properly understood according to the terms of being, neither should one's body be understood in terms of objectivity. Instead he frames physicality or carnality as the self's vulnerability, its susceptiveness:

> The body is neither an obstacle opposed to the soul nor a tomb that imprisons it, but that by which the self is susceptibility itself. Incarnation is an extreme passivity; to be exposed to sickness, suffering, death, is to be exposed to compassion, and, as a self, to the gift that it costs (p. 195).

Human senses, which Levinas analyzes starting from taste rather than vision or touch,[433] make enjoyment possible, and therefore also open us to vulnerability:

> Sensibility can be a vulnerability, an exposedness to the other or a saying only because it is an enjoyment. The passivity of wounds, the "hemorrhage" of the for-the-other, is the tearing away of the mouthful of bread from the mouth that tastes in full enjoyment (p. 74).

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[431] Levinas's complex (an-)origin story thus offers a philosophical selfhood "irreducible to essence"—ipseity—in lieu of an eternal religious entity, the soul. Nevertheless, he posits this identity as occurring beyond temporality, and as aligned with "what is better than being, that is, the Good" (p. 19).

[432] Not only does the approach of the other provoke the appearance of the self. Levinas would also have us understand this event as revealing a meaning that precedes all of the systematic forces of history and culture that many contemporary Western thinkers understand as impinging on the very possibility of a self. In "Meaning and Sense," Levinas (1998/1964) writes, "Meaning, the intelligible, consists in a being showing itself in its nonhistorical simplicity, in its absolutely unqualifiable and irreducible nakedness, existing 'prior to' history and culture" (p. 101).

[433] In the translator's introduction to *Otherwise than Being*, Alphonso Lingis (1998) offers a concise description of Levinas's parsing of sensation as savouring: "Savoring and alimentation, sensation is conceived as enjoyment. Pleasure is not a mere byproduct of sensation; it is the concord with itself of a content vibrant with its own superabundant plenitude—and the very involution of ipseity in sensation" (p. xxxii).

There is a notable shift in the language Levinas uses to describe the responsibility to the other from his earlier descriptions in *Totality and Infinity*. He continues to rely on metaphor to illuminate his arguments, but his attempt to move away from the language of essence involves both a greater emphasis on the affective register—privileging sensibility over consciousness, passivity over intention, passion over rationality—and an adjusted focus on how the temporal and physical *relationality* of self and other overcomes being—eschewing his earlier emphasis on attributing to the Other a privileged role as an *entity*.[434] Gone are the references to the Other's heightened position as teacher and master. Rather than describe the Other, he focuses on the experience of the self—now more nuanced than the earlier conceptualization of one's self/ego/consciousness as "the same," and outlined in forcefully affective terms:

> Vulnerability, exposure to outrage, to wounding, passivity more passive than all patience, passivity of the accusative form, trauma of accusation suffered by a hostage who substitutes himself for the others: all this is the self, a defecting or defeat of the ego's identity. And this, pushed to the limit, is sensibility, sensibility as the subjectivity of the subject. It is a substitution for another, one in the place of another, expiation (p. 15).

Apology gives way to "existence, with sacrifice imposed on it" (p. 50); desire for the Other is replaced by an obsession that is provoked by the other and yet at the same time is the core of the I: "The recurrence of the self in responsibility for others, a persecuting obsession, goes against intentionality [….] It is in the passivity of obsession, or incarnated passivity, that an identity individuates itself as unique" (pp. 111-112). The encounter with the other is refined in the notion of approach,[435] which "is not the thematization of any relationship, but is this very relationship,

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[434] The difficulty of this approach, from the point of view of the thinking body posited in this dissertation, is that the sensed percept and the felt affect are no less a part of consciousness than the thought concept.

[435] *Otherwise than Being* formulates the approach as effectuated by saying—"saying, qua approach" (p. 47), but earlier, in "Language and Proximity," Levinas (1998/1967) had theorized the approach in relation to touch: "before turning into a cognition of the outsides of things, and during this very cognition, touch is pure approach and a proximity that is not reducible to the experience of proximity" (p. 118). Over the course of his writings, Levinas continually seeks an "ethical language" in the descriptions he hopes might overturn the traditional formulations of ontological inquiry; thus, "approach […] contrasts with knowledge, […] the face […] contrasts with phenomena" (p. 124). Proximity, like Heidegger's concept of de-distancing, is apparently a spatial metaphor, but it is deployed in an entirely different way, which is to say that Levinas recognizes its relational signification as affective rather than spatial. While Heidegger's example is aimed at illustrating an ability of human consciousness to be as much a view from beyond its body as one within it, Levinas's proximity describes a state of encounter with an alterity that is

which resists thematization as anarchic. To thematize this relation is already to lose it, to leave the absolute passivity of the self" (p. 121).[436] Immediacy, a concept that is temporal and therefore implicated in being, is downplayed in favour of the more spatial notion of proximity.[437] Several

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uncontainable and nevertheless within, transcending space, time and materiality and preceding human intentionality. In Levinas's words, "The immediacy of the sensible is an event of proximity and not of knowledge" (p. 116). It is not so much an event beyond or outside a body as it is the very manifestation and intensity that reconfigures the sensible as the intelligible; as such, it is a metaphor that does not seek to overcome interiority but to produce it.

[436] Robert Bernasconi (2004) has pointed out that the move to de-emphasize the "concrete" or "empirical" encounter with an other in *Otherwise than Being* corresponds to Levinas's effort to situate "the responsibility inherent in subjectivity […] prior to my encounter with an other" (p. 242). Although in *Totality and Infinity* Levinas formulates ethics through a descriptive analysis of the face to face, in *Otherwise than Being*,

> he goes behind the back of the consciousness of the I, so that there is no longer any danger that Levinas will be read as if the ethical first arose as a concrete event in the life of an already constituted ego (p. 246).

[437] This should not be read to suggest that Levinas abandons the idea of immediacy. In fact, the idea of proximity is first described in terms of immediacy, particularly in "Language and Proximity," where Levinas (1998/1967) asserts, "Immediacy is the obsessive proximity of the neighbor, skipping the stage of consciousness, not by default but by excess" (p. 119). When he refers to immediacy in *Otherwise than Being*, however, Levinas (1998/1974) ties the term to sensibility rather than consciousness:

> The immediacy of the sensibility is the for-the-other of one's own materiality; it is the immediacy or the proximity of the other. The proximity of the other is the immediate opening up for the other of the immediacy of enjoyment, the immediacy of taste, materialization of matter, altered by the immediacy of contact (p. 74).

Levinas tries to distance his descriptions from the ontological language of being, in which, he argues, "Time is essence and monstration of essence" (p. 9). In equating the language of "being" with time rather than space, Levinas takes a position at odds with the recognition of *timespacematter* as a unity whose individualized components—"time," "space," matter"— only exist on their own as abstractions of consciousness. This twinning of sensibility and proximity attempts to eschew time on two dubious fronts. First, it divorces the sensible world, as distinct from the temporally bound consciousness, from time—as if our senses somehow perceive or express affect and spatiality outside of duration. Second, proximity is a spatial rather than temporal metaphor, and space here has the advantage of having already been abstracted to an atemporal stasis in the rational imaginary. Levinas is certainly aware, however, that spatial understandings are ultimately as much in the thrall of being as temporal ones, which he admits problematizes his use of terms such as exteriority, beyondness, and proximity. Still, in what seems like a direct response to Derrida, he argues:

> what is essential is a refusal to allow oneself to be tamed or domesticated by a theme. The movement going "beyond" loses its own signifyingness and becomes an immanence as soon as logos interpellates, invests, presents and exposes it, whereas its adjacency in proximity is an absolute exteriority (p. 100).

Because all language thematizes, and therefore "betrays" the "pre-original" event Levinas seeks to describe (p. 7), he must frequently remind his readers of the specialized way he tries to mobilize terms and

terms—approach, proximity, saying—are used almost interchangeably to describe the pre-logical, an-archic relationship in which the I of the self and the responsibility to the other are established.

Perhaps most importantly, by reframing the approach of the other as the very event that produces the I—not as an opposition or a negativity, but as an alterity in which the "non-present is in-comprehendable by reason of its immensity or its 'superlative' humility or […] its goodness, which is the superlative itself" (p. 11)—Levinas tries to define a different kind of intelligibility, an intelligibility prior to and independent of essence and intentionality: "To intelligibility as an impersonal logos is opposed intelligibility as proximity" (p. 167). Although the other remains as absolute exteriority and alterity, there is nevertheless what Levinas describes as a "substitution," such that the I is never simply the for-itself, but rather always already finds itself invested as the for-the-other, which also founds signification:

> It is not because among beings there exists an ego, a being pursuing ends, that being takes on signification and becomes a universe. It is because in an approach, there is inscribed or written the trace of infinity, the trace of a departure, but trace of what is inordinate, does not enter into the present, and inverts the *arche* into anarchy, that there is forsakeness of the other, obsession by him, responsibility and a self. The non-interchangeable par excellence, the I, the unique one, substitutes itself for others. […] Thus being is transcended (pp. 116-117).

As the an-archic origin of signification, proximity, or the approach of the other, is no longer described as speech, but as saying—"a saying prior to language, but without which no language, as a transmission of messages, would be possible" (p. 16). This saying, as the event that makes signification possible, produces the said, but at the same time overflows it. Whereas in *Totality and Infinity* Levinas formulated the Other as speaker and signifier remaining outside of signification, he now describes the saying itself as eluding the thematization of the said:

> Essence fills the said, or the epos, of the saying, but the saying […] escapes the epos of essence that includes it and signifies beyond in a signification that hesitates between this beyond and the return to the epos of essence (pp. 9-10).

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metaphors. His goal is to make evident what is anarchic and unfathomable, as when he asserts, "The relationship of proximity cannot be reduced to any modality of distance or geometrical contiguity, nor to a simple 'representation' of a neighbor; it is already an assignation, an extremely urgent assignation—an obligation anachronously prior to any commitment" (pp. 100-101).

Levinas offers his deliberations on the relationship with the other and the structure of substitution as a way of accounting for the possibility of human compassion for one another.[438] His analysis attempts to get behind consciousness and the traditional philosophical language of being by positing what he sees as a hitherto unacknowledged structure of the self that, like the psychoanalytic notion of the unconscious, operates beyond rationality and can only be speculatively uncovered. His ideas offer several potential resources for furthering this dissertation's inquiry into presence and shared meaningfulness, including the possibility of reading them against Karen Barad's agential realist ontology.[439] They also offer a starting point for exploring what might be meant by the term "other" as a particular form of individuated presence in relation to Elvira Santamaría's *Everyday life words in progress*. Levinas's arguments bring multiple trajectories of inquiry to the fore. Is it possible to uncover the privileged manifestations of the face to face and speech or saying that Levinas associates with the other in Santamaría's work? Is there a way to read Santamaría's work that might reveal traces of the unique role Levinas attributes to the other in generating one's own subjectivity? Is the self's affective investment in the other that Levinas outlines—the for-the-other that he labels substitution—evident in the performance's unfolding? And, finally, what constitutes discourse with an other?

The first challenge in launching such an inquiry is determining who or what constitutes the I and the other. If the other is indeed absolute exteriority, there can be no coherence in my writing about the work from the point of view of Santamaría as an I, attempting to draw out her experience of an other as revealed by her actions. If one follows Levinas's reasoning, my best recourse for exploring the presence of an other is through an interrogation of my own experience and my own subjectivity as a self, an analysis that places Santamaría in the role of the other. At

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[438] As Robert Bernasconi (2004) puts it, "Levinas introduces the concept of substitution to address the question of what the subject must be like for ethics to be possible. […] He is not saying that one *should* sacrifice oneself. He merely wants to account for its possibility" (pp. 234-235).

[439] A careful reframing of Levinas's arguments in light of the insights offered by Barad's agential realist ontology, retaining his vision of the proximity or approach of an other that precedes and indeed brings to appearance the self, but showing how this process could be cogently understood as one that maps mattering in material-discursive rather than cognitive/affective terms, and that has a determining effect on all of the entities that appear, human and nonhuman, other as much as self, would merit its own extended study, and could have fascinating implications for redefining proximity in terms of what Barad terms an apparatus. Such a monumental project, however, lies beyond the scope of this dissertation.

the same time, however, one might well ask whether reading Levinas against *Everyday life words in progress* is simply an arbitrary choice—recognizing that the notion of "performance" frames any such event as an intentional encounter between performer and audience, between an I and an other.

The impulse to consider Levinas's ideas in relation to Elvira Santamaría's *Everyday life words in progress* derives in part from her framing of performance art in terms of the ethics involved in an act of encounter or dialogue—a direct consideration not only of her approaching an other, but also the approach to her by an other. Santamaría understands her practice as an appeal to both the intellectual and affective commitment that brings artist and audience together, opening up a context that enters into everyday life rather than separating itself as an extraordinary event. In Gustaf Broms's (2018) *9Questions*, she discusses her relationship to an audience:

> I am interested in the encounter with the Others through my work; the Others as singular humans to commit freely to my work or not. […] I think […] singularities hidden in the persona, witnesses or Others […] can emerge from the mass quality of the audience and the mask of the person (p. 24).

In an unpublished interview with Josefina Alcázar, Santamaría (2013) also notes, "I am interested in action in living contexts, creating new forms of approach to the other. I also have a special interest in the ethical aspect of freedom and the scope of consciousness of the act" (n.p.)[440] More recently, in an article about risk in performance published in *Inter, art actuel*, Santamaría (2017) asserts that

> often the real risk of the artist lies […] where an internal discourse slides furtively or openly toward the communal zones in which sympathy, discomfort, love, and hate can emerge, but not indifference—where there may be conflict that can be articulated in a common (situational) demand and become a political work, in the broadest sense of the term (p. 20).[441]

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[440] From an email interview initiated by Alcázar as part of the research for her book *Performance, un arte del yo: Autobiografía, cuerpo e identidad*, published by Siglo XXI Editores in Mexico in 2014. Santamaría provided me with an unedited copy of her responses; the actual interview remains unpublished. The quotes included in this dissertation are my translation from the original Spanish.

[441] Santamaría originally wrote this text in Spanish. The article published in *Inter* is a French translation by Antoinette de Robien. The English quotes included in this dissertation are my translation of the published French version; the page numbers correspond to the French text.

What each of these comments points to is the way that her artistic practice, however much it may also be framed as a personal exploration, ultimately finds its content and meaningfulness in and as a relationship with others. While Santamaría does not generally structure her performances as overtly participatory, she often works in public spaces where the activities and habits of local inhabitants inform the work, and where what she does acts as an intervention or infiltration into the fabric of public and personal life that can provoke interaction or dialogue. For Santamaría, human witnesses, who are free to choose their own position along a scale that runs from passive observer to active interlocutor, contribute to the integrity and critical rigour of her actions.[442] This aspect of her work opens a trajectory to consider how she stages her actions as an encounter between an I and an other.

Levinas (1969/1961) argues that the relation between an I and an other is the face to face, a positioning that bears an intrinsic ethical imperative. He asserts that the "overflowing presence [of the Other] is effectuated as a position *in face of* the same. The facing position, opposition par excellence, can be only as a moral summons" (p. 196). But how does one know one is confronting a *face*? Levinas takes the face of an other as an overwhelming force of signification beyond thematization. By his account, to feel the approach of the face of the other is not simply to see a material surface—it is to immediately feel the imposition of an irrecusable command that both precedes and supersedes consciousness. As Levinas (1986/1963) writes in "The Trace of the Other," "a face is imposed on me without my being able to be deaf to its appeal nor to forget it, that is, without my being able to cease to be held responsible for its wretchedness" (p. 352). In his view, this impingement is beyond even the rationality or intentionality of awareness and recognition.[443] But if this is so, how could some humans enslave others and fail to find

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[442] Santamaría (2017) also understands the presence of others as integral to any understanding of risk and political confrontation in action art:

> There is no risk without the presence of the other. The simple act of crafting a presence in action, however small it may be, can be a real shock for some.
> Walking on the street will always be a risk. Going out to do an action in a public place penetrates the "hidden dimension of intimacy"—for the artist as well as for the witness or the "living" of the work. There are no political frameworks except within each individual's authenticity and the artist's ability to listen to and carry out a dialogue, without underestimating or denigrating her interlocutor, this at a time when discourse is so looked down upon by many performers (p. 23).

[443] "The Trace of the Other" continues:

themselves put into question, as seems to have happened throughout history? How could so many humans act with unmoving blindness to the faces of those of a different class, tribe, or race, as seems to happen every day?

Contrary to Levinas's appeal to the irrecusable command activated through the face of the other, Santamaría's approach does not take this "auto-signifyingness" of the face as a given.[444] For her, the acknowledgment of the other is a proposition that must be continually tested against a notion of individual human freedom. One must first cross a threshold of awareness that makes it possible to accept or reject an invitation to enter into dialogue. In *Everyday life words in progress*, for example, audience members could choose to watch from the street, without any more substantial commitment than the flâneur who drifts past a shop window. A more active engagement on the part of the viewer required the explicit action of knocking on the door and requesting admittance. For the duration of the performance, the gallery served as the equivalent of what Levinas (1969/1961) identifies as a home when he argues for the importance of hospitality: "No human or interhuman relationship can be enacted outside of economy; no face can be approached with empty hands and closed home" (p. 172). As a space that Santamaría not only occupied but also inhabited and animated, the gallery offered a contained and sheltering site where she could construct and share a world. The key divergence from Levinas's formula, however, was the nature of the invitation; rather than actively inviting the other into her "home," the onus rested on others to identify themselves *as others* by requesting entry.

Entering the close quarters of gallery, however, was not sufficient to catapult the viewer into a face to face interaction with the artist. In *Everyday life words in progress*, Santamaría's

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The presence of a face thus signifies an irrecusable order, a command, which calls a halt to the availability of consciousness. Consciousness is put into question by a face. The putting into question is not reducible to becoming aware of this being put into question. The absolutely other is not reflected in consciousness. It resists it to the point that even its resistance is not converted into a content of consciousness. The visitation consists in overwhelming the very egoism of the I; a face disconcerts the intentionality that aims at it. It is a matter of the putting into question of consciousness, and not of a consciousness of a being put into question. The I loses its sovereign coincidence with itself, its identification, in which consciousness returned triumphally to itself and rested on itself. Before the exigency of the other, the I is expelled from this rest, and is not the consciousness of this exile, already glorious. Every complacency would destroy the up-rightness of the ethical movement (pp. 352-353).

[444] In "Language and Proximity," Levinas (1998/1967) refers to the face as "the auto-signifyingness par excellence" (p. 120).

actions often seemed to deliberately thwart the possibility of face to face exchange—a relationship that at its most simplistic level configures humans as talking heads. The artist frequently positioned her body as a faceless presence among the materials and texts she was animating.[445] One of Santamaría's gestures, for example, was to sit in her chair and tilt forward so that her dark hair, which extended below the bottom of her shoulder blades, would cover her face. This keeled-over position, held as a tableau, emphasized her presence not as a human agent, but as sheer material form. In another repeated tableau, she would place the chair on its side on the floor, its back to the audience, and nestle her body into it, as if the room had been titled by 90 degrees. Indeed, most of her actions were oriented away from both the front window and the audience members inside the gallery, rarely taking a presentational or proscenium stance in relation to her witnesses. Frequently, audience members would find themselves looking at her from behind, either watching her back or peering over her shoulder at whatever action she was doing, whether sitting at the table or working against one of the white gallery walls.[446] In her

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[445] *Performing as an object* can be understood as an overtly political act. In his book *Embodied Avatars*, Uri McMillan (2015) describes a performance strategy that he refers to as "*performing objecthood*," which he examines as "a means for black subjects to become art objects" (p. 7). McMillan explores how certain female black performers—many of them working outside of an art context—have found ways to negotiate a culture that has often denied them their subjecthood by specifically performing *as objects*. His analysis offers a challenging juxtaposition to Levinas's claim for the other, acknowledging the undeniable reality that the world is rife with examples of humans who fail to acknowledge the ethical demand in the face of the other, apparently seeing only race, ethnicity, gender or other monolithic social constructions that somehow obscure the "anarchical" impact of a face. When the other's face remains unacknowledged, then, what agency might one be able to mobilize through one's objecthood? Noting how "black performance art's usage of the black body as its artistic medium is especially loaded when confronting a historical legacy of objectification and the generations of slaves who did not legally own the bodies they acted with" (p. 8), McMillan explores how these performers, "wielding their bodies as pliable matter, […] become objects, often in the form of simulated beings, or […] 'avatars'" (p. 7). His project seeks to "reimagine black objecthood as a way toward agency rather than its antithesis, as a strategy rather than simply a primal site of injury" (p. 9). Reversing "Michael Fried's spirited polemic on the overt theatricality of minimalist art," (p. 8) McMillan argues that the performers he cites are able, through their performance as objects, to capitalize on the agency of an art object's theatricality. As he describes his project, "I celebrate objecthood's ostensible staginess and the ability of these art objects to get in the spectator's way—like the 'silent presence of another person'" (p. 9). Surely the dominance of discourses of objectification and subjectivity among those who have found themselves marginalized within society due to constructions of, for example, gender and race speaks to the overwhelming role that culture plays in determining whether or how one is perceived and approached as an other.

[446] Some actions were performed at the window, although I never saw her deliberately catching anyone's eye or gesturing toward someone through the glass. One repeated tableau used a broadsheet entitled Public Notice—a local activist pamphlet she had found in her wanderings of Toronto—printed on thick paper,

black clothes, she invoked the "silhouette" or "profile" of form that Levinas associates specifically with objects.

This emphasis on the materiality of her own body was evident from the very first action of Santamaría's performance, in which she took a section of her hair and used it to pin herself to the wall. Her body was not only an animate form capable of action; it was also a manipulable material. Similarly, the remnants of her body were highlighted as materials, as she collected her loose hairs and draped them over a fishhook on the wall. Some of these hairs would occasionally be used as threads to suspend words and phrases she had cut out of the newspapers. Such actions point toward a rejection of a traditional Western philosophical viewpoint—reflected in Derrida's critique of Levinas noted earlier—that configures physical bodies as instances of alterity to a self configured exclusively as consciousness. Physicality—our materiality, and also, crucially, our animateness—is both the primary manifestation of being and our primal point of commonality and connection with both a world and others.[447] As has been previously argued, we are not

which she curled into two tubes that were placed against her eyes as she pressed toward the window, evoking the image of looking out through a set of binoculars. Although she could presumably see out through the cylinders, it was not possible to see her eyes in this pose, either from inside the gallery or from the street. It is also perhaps worth noting that in the dark of the early morning and evening hours, the reflected light from the gallery lights made the internal surface of the glass as much a mirror as a window, so that looking at the window from inside the gallery meant seeing a reflection of oneself.

[447] This dissertation tends to traverse a spectrum of concerns delimited by ontology and epistemology, but Vivian Sobchack (2004) notes that philosophy also encompasses a third, axiological branch: "Where ontology is the study of being (what is) and epistemology the study of knowledge (how we know what is), axiology is the study of value (how we evaluate and judge what is)" (p. 294). She uses an axiological approach to propose a "phenomenology of interobjectivity" that pays attention to the *reversibility* of our perception of subjects and objects. Following Merleau-Ponty, she argues,

> although the body-subject and the objective world are *differentiated* and *noncoincidental* in their particular modes of material existence, Merleau-Ponty suggests both are reversibly capable of *acting upon being* and *being acted upon*, and each provides a reversible *ground* for the *figure* of the other (p. 294).

In her view, this reversibility, which allows for "recognition of and care for ourselves not only as *objective subjects* who are capable of grasping and feeling the alterity of other worldly objects but also as *subjective objects* that can be experienced in such a way by others" (p. 290) primes us for an understanding and valuation of the various "whos" and "whats" that we find populating our world in both registers:

> as intersubjectivity is a structure of engagement with the *intentional behavior* of other body-objects from which we recognize *what it objectively looks like to be subjective*, so interobjectivity is a structure of engagement with the *materiality* of other body-objects on which we project our sense of *what it subjectively feels like to be objective* (p. 316).

consciousnesses that happen to have bodies; we are *thinking bodies*, and the experience of being an animate, material form is in no way foreign to the way we experience being. Recognition of an other as a being begins with an awareness of that entity's physicality—its material and animate presence. This understanding returns us to Maxine Sheets-Johnstone's (2009) assertion of a "*kinetic bodily logos*" that is inherent to animate forms and subject to both evolutionary development and experiential refinement.

In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas (1969/1961) links the manifestation of the face to language, arguing, "The 'vision' of the face is inseparable from this offering language is. To see the face is to speak of the world. Transcendence is not an optics, but the first ethical gesture" (p. 174). By *Otherwise than Being*, however, Levinas (1998/1974) had refined this idea by positing in the face "a saying prior to language" (p. 16). His phrase suggests a communicative meaningfulness that precedes speech and language per se, but he rejects any possibility of finding the foundations of such a meaningfulness in a solidarity made possible by a *recognition* of similarity; instead, he argues, it can only stem from a pre-rationally *felt* sense of responsibility.[448] Levinas seeks to reverse the commonly accepted notion that communication founds the possibility of solidarity, arguing that it can only be the reverse: solidarity must found the possibility of communication.[449] Yet how is it that an other's face speaks, that it is able to "say" in

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This axiological approach resonates with my earlier claim that the moral summons of the other can only have force if the self somehow recognizes the other's world as being like one's own in its *value* (see footnote 426).

[448] In "Meaning and Sense," Levinas (1998/1964) describes the meaningfulness of the other by using the term *sense* rather than signification, evoking the idea of an intelligibility generated in the interstices of a self's perceptive and cognitive awareness. He writes that the other "is *sense* primordially, for he gives sense to expression itself, for it is only by him that a phenomenon as a meaning is, of itself, introduced into being" (p. 95). Nevertheless, Levinas (1998/1967) continually posits this meaningfulness in affective terms, arguing in "Language and Proximity" that obsession—which he equates with "the very proximity of beings [….] is a responsibility without choice, a communication without phrase or words" (p. 120). Levinas's determination to place the relationship to an other beyond consciousness, before the self's rational intentionality, otherwise than being and essence, inevitably seeks recourse to an emotional register of responsiveness that conditions the very appearance of the self. In this same text, Levinas describes the "saying" of proximity—an utterance of contact that delivers nothing but the contact, with the power to "invoke or recall fraternity"— as "a sign […] given from one to the other before the constitution of any signs, [before] any common place formed by cultures and sites" (p. 122).

[449] Levinas (1998/1974) suggests that "thinkers"

> do not take seriously the radical reversal, from cognition to solidarity, that communication represents with respect to inward dialogue, to cognition of oneself [….] They seek for

a way that allows a self to feel responsibility toward an other as also being a self, an entity with its own world? Sheets-Johnstone's (2009) observation that living bodies are semantic templates infused with kinetic bodily logos, as was outlined earlier in Chapter 3, offers a more detailed and nuanced phenomenological description than Levinas's abstracted notion of the face is able to provide. By considering meaningfulness in evolutionary terms, as something that concerns not only humans but also other species, Sheets-Johnstone expands the possibilities for recognizing otherness, broadening the range of entities that might be viewed as inhabiting their own world. Sheets-Johnstone details how an animate form manifests an innate kinetic understanding that allows it to decipher the meaningfulness of what it encounters as constituting and occupying its world: what poses a threat to one's self, what offers an opportunity for enhancement of a self's existence, what counts as an entity, or what presents itself as a self in its own right—including what one recognizes as a like or similar type of self.

Some of these kinetic recognitions appear to be universal; we understand many aspects of material and animate interaction among entities to be governed by physical "laws" of causality that operate independently of what we configure in human terms as being consciously directed. Even in the nonorganic world, however, scientists have discovered a certain leeway or unpredictability at the subatomic level that suggests a possibility for worlds to manifest in multiple ways.[450] The concept of an other appeals to a different order of recognition and freedom of action. Levinas's ethics of the other rests on the claim that the approach of a face makes it impossible to fail to feel the force of the other's claim to having a world—that is, not simply a physical environment that one occupies as an object, but a system of meaningfulness and imaginative potential that one inhabits. If one kills an other, one cannot deny that one is

communication a full coverage insurance, and do not ask if inward dialogue is not beholden to the solidarity that sustains communication (p. 119).

[450] Karen Barad (2009) describes, for example, the notion of a quantum leap, in which "an object disappears from one place and winds up in another without being at any point in between. For example, electrons are only ever found in one of the discrete orbitals, not in spaces between orbitals" (p. 432). This description points to the mysteriousness—from the point of view of human consciousness and logic—of how subatomic particles interact, since our unaided senses do not encounter or perceive objects as behaving in such a way. It is worth noting, however, that even this "leeway" or sovereignty of an electron's position has its boundaries, suggesting a coherent framework of universal intelligibility: an electron only appears at a location corresponding to one of a limited number of mathematically describable trajectories—i.e., not any old place, but within a set range of possibilities.

committing murder—violating a law dictated not by physics but by one's felt responsibility for an other. At the same time, Levinas places the signifyingness of a face and the comprehension of its saying as occurring beyond and before the knowing consciousness, which then finds itself with a choice to heed or violate the strictures that a face in its infinite unknowability commands. Despite this purportedly essential structure, however, the track record of human relations appears to suggest instead that in practice, our capacity to feel the approach of a face as a command of responsibility to an other involves both cultural and cognitive elements, as indicated by the evolving legal definitions of what constitutes a "person." An animist sees faces in all manner of material entities, while a psychopath is apparently incapable of feeling the sway of any other's face, human or not—which suggests that an other does not have a face until it bestowed not by a command of saying, but by an occasion of recognition.

The performance technique of the still tableau, used frequently in Santamaría's *Everyday life words in progress*, emphasized her body's "objective" materiality, creating moments of strangeness that also call into question Levinas's notion of the face to face.[451] An immobile form offers up not its face, but its surfaces for closer examination.[452] When something does not move, we can focus our awareness on the sheer expressiveness of its form, take stock of the intelligibility of its mass, volume, colouring and textures, discover narratives and patterns in its

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[451] Rebecca Schneider (2011) reminds her readers that theatre has a long history of staging tableaux vivants (living pictures), which she characterizes as "rituals of reenactment." Her interest in thinking through the practice of tableaux vivants is to trouble "the habitual line of binary opposition between 'the live' and the 'archival remain'" (p. 144). Schneider points out the way such enactments hearken back to archetypal images and often replicate previously painted scenes, as well as providing live studies for painters wishing to depict historical events. One can thus also consider the way a staged stillness prompts viewers to "read" a human form in historical and archetypal terms as specifically enculturated, not unlike the way Adina Bar-On describes her use of tableau to Martin Zet, referring to various poses as "'woman in landscape,' 'woman with vehicle,' 'woman with flag'"—see Chapter 6 above.

[452] In *Body Art*, Amelia Jones (1998) offers an extended consideration of the pose as a specific strategy of feminist art production. Her reading of the "rhetoric of the pose" focuses particularly on the work of Hannah Wilke, although, unpacking the dictum that "conventionally speaking, men act and women pose" (p. 153), Jones also sees this as a key strategy used by many women artists. She argues, "by taking on the pose rather than attempting to escape it (they had no choice, really), women body artists more directly interrogated the fundamental alienation of subjectivity-as-projected-image than did the majority of men body artists" (p. 122). In her analysis, the pose not only calls attention to and ultimately resists the male gaze (here she is extending an analysis put forth by Craig Owens in an article about Barbara Kruger's work entitled "The Medusa Effect, or The Spectacular Ruse"), but also speaks to the way human bodies are always already representational—in her reading, both conditioned by the gaze and conditional in their alienation from any purely self-contained selfhood.

composition and its spatial relationships with its surroundings. The uncanniness of a tableau, however, stems from our awareness that although an animate body is capable of standing still, such a feat requires a deliberate effort and directed concentration.[453] We know this from the experience of our own bodies, which constantly move, often independently of our conscious attention or control. We breathe, we blink, we shift our weight, our muscles contract and relax in various ways. The cessation of movement requires effort, and creates a tension that can heighten our awareness and sensory acuity, a tautness that can amplify our responsiveness. In waking moments, we tend to freeze primarily in situations of deep concentration or profound emotion, such as fear. Stillness is an event. Seeing another animate body deliberately stilled directs our attention in multiple ways, given that we expect a like body not only to be shaped like our own, but also to move like our own. Exteroceptively, we are drawn to note the details of surfaces and spatial relationships that are normally in flux, and quite possibly to search for causes of this unusual behaviour—is there a threat, for example? Interoceptively, we are reminded of the liveliness of our own bodies, experienced as a kinetic world of sensations, emotions and thoughts. This reflexivity does not require us to see the face of the other; it is enough to know that we are looking at the surface of a living body that we take to be like our own, a body whose general form and ways of moving we gauge against our own.

Levinas (1998/1974) argues that subjectivity manifests not as intentionality, but as a responsibility that comes "through the other and for the other" (p. 114). We discover ourselves affectively, in response to a felt exposure and obsession motivated by the proximity of the

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[453] It is with this physicality of animate bodies in mind that I would argue against the tendency of both Schneider and Jones to read a live tableau as interchangeable with a still photograph in its communicative valence. Holding a body in stillness demands a felt effort that is not evident—not *present*—in the same way in a photograph. A *live* rendering of a static but living body is imbued with a physical tension that holds the dynamic trajectory of its arrested motion within it; even our stillnesses can thus convey a kinetic style, to use Maxine Sheets-Johnstone's term. In recognizing deliberate, directed stillness as a specific manifestation of movement in its own right, one might also consider its communicativeness as a gesture in relation to Carolee Schneemann's observation, as cited by Jones (1998), that

> the performative body "has a value that static depiction won't carry, representation won't carry" and that the performance of the body is precisely a means for [Schneemann] to cut through the "mostly male . . . mythology of the 'abstracted self'" (p. 301, citing "Carolee Schneemann," a 1991 interview with Andrea Juno in *Angry Women* (Re/Search Press), pp. 72 & 69).

other.[454] In Levinas's formula of substitution, the psyche is not the "as-for-itself," but "the-one-for-the-other," and it manifests as a passive and involuntary susceptibility rather than as a wilful commitment (p. 138). It is difficult, however, to match such a charged rendering of human subjectivity to our everyday interactions with those around us. We often fail to recognize or fully respect an other's "humanity," caught up as we are in our own worlds and interests. Stories in which a protagonist places an other's life above one's own are notable precisely because they are extraordinary.[455] We are not necessarily accustomed to encountering others in their destitution, or to experiencing an other's gaze as challenging our being. Levinas is aware of this, of course, and cautions, "The implication of the subject in signification [… is not equivalent] to its reduction to what is called a subjective lived experience" (p. 131). In contemporary human culture, the face to face approach of the individual other that he describes is, at best, an uncommon rarity. Our subjectivities—not simply unique, but complex, ambiguous, fragmented and contradictory—are formed and transformed by myriad influences, not exclusively by the felt proximity of a human other; and furthermore, numerous systems, reflecting both human and nonhuman agencies, arrange and inscribe all of our interactions.

Levinas, in describing the play of being and essence against which he struggles to uncover and describe his "otherwise," offers a remarkable passage that pinpoints how meaning in the form of intelligibility functions as a series of relations in a system:

> If in the quiddity of the beings that show themselves their visibility and their being is not inscribed in the form of an attribute, it is their grouping, their co-presence, that is—and this is new!—the position of the one with regard to the other, the relativity in which the one makes a sign to the other, the reciprocal signifyingness of the one with respect to the other, that is equivalent to the coming to light of qualified quiddities themselves. The

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[454] Levinas expresses this in dramatic, confrontational terms: "The subjectivity of a subject is responsibility of being-in-question in the form of the total exposure to offence in the cheek offered to the smiter" (p. 111). The being-in-question that the other imposes on the self is what provokes the appearance or discovery of one's own subjectivity. Levinas asks, in order to emphasize his argument, "Does not the self take on itself, through its very impossibility to evade its own identity, toward which, when persecuted, it withdraws?" (p. 112).

[455] Here, one might also consider the resonances of Gilles Deleuze's (2001) "Immanence: A Life," in which he recounts the Dickensian story of care for a singular life as opposed to an individualized one. In this story, the characters devote themselves to an other not because of his particular, despicable *self*, but in spite of it, doing what they would want to see done for any *one*.

regrouping of all these significations or structures into a system, intelligibility, is the

disclosure itself (p. 132).

It is this intelligibility—understood not as Levinas attempts to argue, in terms of a trace marking

a preconscious approach of the other that provokes the appearance of a human ipseity even as it is

covered over by essence, but as a meaningfulness founded in co-presence that need not manifest

in exclusively human cognitive terms—that this dissertation seeks to bring into focus and

recuperate as presence from the point of view of a thinking body. With this in mind, I would like

to consider how Santamaría's performance, which specifically tackles the system of intelligibility

and discourse that we call language—our everyday life words in progress—offers an

understanding of how the individuated presence of the other appears to a self within, through, and

along with the relational horizon or system of a world.

Everyday life words in progress's discourse with objects

The previous section detailed some ways in which Elvira Santamaría's *Everyday life*

words in progress works against the Levinasian notion of the face to face by asserting the

intelligibility of the artist's being as an other through her material and animate physicality. The

performance was designed to draw the audience's attention not to Santamaría's "subjective" face,

but to her "objective" surfaces and actions. There is another aspect, however, to Santamaría's

refusal to privilege the face to face in her performance. Humans tend to read faces for their

emotional content. Popular references to eyes as the window or mirror of the soul aside, when we

look into another person's eyes, we do not confirm an other's "world" so much as seek an

indication of their mood and intent. We are cognitively attuned to read the emotional expressivity

of human eyes, an evolutionary trait that also carries over to our perception of the eyes of other

species, particularly mammals.[456] Traditional acting places a strong emphasis on the affective

register and the emotional expressivity of the eyes and face, whereas action art as a genre often

tends to de-emphasize personality or persona, an approach I previously characterized as "don't

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[456] This perceived expressivity is apparently due in large part to the musculature that surrounds the eyes.
For a discussion of how the facial muscles dogs have evolved through domestication, and how this affects
human-dog bonding, see Juliane Kaminski et. al.'s (2019) article, "Evolution of facial muscle anatomy in
dogs."

look at *me*, look at *what I am doing*." This is certainly true of Santamaría's work, which often has a dispassionate, intellectual tenor.

Santamaría's vision of discourse, evident in *Everyday life words in progress*, is not the confrontational, emotionally directed, one-on-one stance of the face to face, communicated in the melodrama of the gaze,[457] but a *discourse with objects*, engaging an over-the-shoulder perspective that invites others to enter into dialogue by looking at and potentially contributing to what Santamaría is doing. In an interview with Óscar Benassini (2016) for the Mexican cultural magazine *La Tempestad*, Santamaría makes the bold claim,

> I dare to state that I don't use objects in a performance but instead enter into a dialogue with them. This idea is a framework for action that can reveal something about reality, both to me and to someone else. In this same way, and with even more reason, I refuse to use another human being (n.p).[458]

Santamaría specifically contrasts the idea of *use* with that of *entering into dialogue*, offering a comparison with two important implications. First, there is the suggestion that Santamaría approaches objects as others in themselves, worthy of respect and capable of speaking, if not in human language, in a way that nevertheless has meaning and can open onto a world distinct from her own. Second, Santamaría's approach suggests that human discourse is not a direct exchange of content transmitted and received between individuals, but an intricately mediated shaping and

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[457] There is a vast literature, exemplified by Laura Mulvey's (1975) "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," that links the "gaze"—usually the male gaze—with objectification, expressed in terms of a psychoanalytic notion of *pleasure*. That one human should encounter an other as an object rather than as a subject by reading her in pointedly affective terms invokes a specific signifying power of emotional desire. Avoiding the tendency to immediately read an entity as as a thematized "signified"—in Levinasian terms, recognizing that entity as an other—may be more of a cognitive accomplishment than an innate and involuntary obligation. Feminist scholarship points to the idea that respect for the other as other—i.e. as a subject rather than an object—is an analyzable and learnable technique that requires demanding work. The over-the-shoulder perspective of dialogue with objects that I outline here in relation to Elvira Santamaría's work similarly seeks a rigorous and fastidious comportment that is founded in part on acknowledging the other's *objective* material and animate physicality—the first point of recognition that connects a self to an other—rather than fixating on an immediate emotional appeal. To see an other requires looking beyond one's own desire, fostering points of intersection among the agencies of the self's and the other's distinct worlds. Paradoxically, this may also demand an effacement of the strictly personal and affective, an erasure of the face, as suggested by Santamaría's decision to remove the faces from the obituaries that she gathered together, resulting in an index of a human life marked only by words.

[458] Translated from the Spanish original with the assistance of Francisco-Fernando Granados. I consulted Granados to verify that he, as a fluent Spanish speaker, reads the same nuances in this passage that I do.

rearranging of temporal, spatial and material conditions and relationships that brings various entities, including humans, into co-presence.

Santamaría elaborates on the idea of dialogue with objects as a performance method in Gustaf Broms's *9Questions* (2018), writing that she seeks

> to get to know materials in a non-ordinary way, to dialogue with them to discover what they can mean or how they can be something different and nevertheless, to explore the internal logic that connects their existence (too little explored) with our mental processes. Therefore, I am also interested in them as a vehicle of poetry in action and as recipients of emotions or anxieties to be transformed creatively in the joy of the experience (p. 24).[459]

This short passage conveys something of the complexity involved in dialoguing with objects. To know objects in a "non-ordinary way" is to move beyond how we first encounter them *as* objects, whether by personal habit or established cultural expectation. This is in line with Viktor Shklovsky's idea of art's role as defamiliarizing or "making strange." Understanding this process as a dialogue suggests something more, however; it positions a material not simply as strange, but as a *stranger*—an other with its own stories to tell or world to reveal. Materials, according to Santamaría, have their own "existence," even when the exploration of that existence is set against a backdrop of interactions aimed at or witnessed by a self and by like others, that is, by other humans. Even though one's role in the dialogue with an object takes place from a human perspective—in relation to one's "internal logic" and "mental processes"—this is more than an anthropomorphizing of the object. Much as we can manipulate or rearrange materials, there is a clear implication that materials have agency to affect and transform the human interlocutor, mentally and physically.[460]

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[459] Santamaría's remarks are in response to the question, "What motivates you to introduce MATERIALS/OBJECTS into your work?"

[460] Nevertheless, one might fairly criticize my reading of Santamaría's dialogue with objects by suggesting that while she does not necessarily anthropomorphize them, she chooses to work with objects that are specifically human artifacts, or that have particular resonances within human social life. In her interview with Óscar Benassini (2016), she explains,

> Every object is loaded with meanings and values related to its function, utility, origin, and linked to our affections or emotional memory, history, etc. I approach them with the conceptual influence of the art of our time, but also of philosophy, as a form of reflective inquiry of humanity (n.p.).

Santamaría also references the notion of "poetry in action," a phrase that evokes a kinetic expressiveness that can communicate as forcefully as any verbal language: a language founded not on words, but on gestures, movements, and actions. The over-the-shoulder perspective offered in Santamaría's work prompts its audience to consider that we cannot look into or through others' eyes to discover their worlds. Instead, we must pay close attention to the way an other manifests in and moves through the material realm—the four-dimensional field of *timespacematter*—that it, like the self, inhabits, and of which it, like the self, is a part. This almost certainly entails observing the other's material surfaces, but also requires a consideration of the ways in which an other's animate negotiation of its surroundings reveals its world.[461] Others' worlds unfold for the self through their responsiveness. To experience or witness an entity in action, whether that action is initiated by the entity itself, or as a response to a provocation, is to confirm that it has a world of its own, a world that seldom conforms in absolute accordance with the anticipations of one's own lived world. In a rare verbal conversation with an audience member during *Everyday life words in progress*, Santamaría referred to the "aleatory" nature of this way of working, which, she says, "keeps me aware and interested. […] When I do performance I create a problem, but I don't know if I can create the solution."[462] This points to the open-ended nature of dialogue, emphasizing that Santamaría is more interested in learning something from her engagement with a material than with achieving a particular result or turning it into an end product.

Many of Santamaría's performances involve materials and actions without ever including verbal or written language. *Everyday life words in progress* is notable within her oeuvre for the way it engaged with written language as a material, entering into dialogue with words that, as the contents of a newspaper, already reflected a highly determined set of communicative intentions and representational structures. For Santamaría, Toronto newspapers offered foreign viewpoints and dealt with unfamiliar local contexts. This otherness was heightened by Santamaría's

Thus, when she engages with objects, it is largely as an enquiry into how those objects give humans a world, and how they impact human lives.

[461] Levinas (1998/1964) offers a version of this idea in "Meaning and Sense" when he writes, "The body is the fact that thought is immersed in the world that it thinks and, consequently, expresses this world while it thinks" (pp. 81-82).

[462] My transcription from the video documentation I recorded of the performance. These comments were made on the third day, during the March 18 session.

incomplete knowledge of English, which is not her mother tongue. Working with a small pocket Spanish-English dictionary and once or twice asking native English speakers for clarification, she would occasionally have to verify the intended meaning of particular words or colloquial idioms, such as the expression "gun shy." Santamaría often found humourous ways to highlight this strangeness, as when, on the first day, she glued various versions of the word *Canadian*, in different headline sizes and fonts, onto the gallery window so that they could be read from the street. Amid these iterations was one word not like the others, also taken from a newspaper headline: *Martian*. This word-collage referenced alienness and identity while shifting the conversation to an unexpected perspective. How Santamaría entered into dialogue with the newspapers and their contents as materials—articulating, arranging and rearranging components into discrete objects and configurations—is instructive of the way entities are defined within, through, and as a part of larger systems of meaning, or, to use Karen Barad's agential realist terms, boundary-making apparatuses of intelligibility.[463]

 Everyday life words in progress explores how words as a material share a plasticity with objects; there is a close relationship between the hand that shapes and the mouth that speaks. Many, Santamaría included, might call her process deconstructive in the way it called attention to the material and discursive resources that constitute a newspaper by isolating and reconfiguring them.[464] Here, however, deconstruction should be viewed more as a methodological starting point

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[463] "Systems of meaning" is a broad term, which can reference such diverse structures as language, world, and horizon. In "Meaning and Sense," Levinas outlines Husserl's phenomenological project by equating the idea of a horizon with that of a world, writing,

> This notion of horizon or *world*, conceived after the model of a context and ultimately after the model of a language and a culture—with everything that is historically adventitious and "already happened" involved—will be the locus in which meaning would then be located (p. 77).

Curiously, Levinas goes on to write that "the structure of the world resembles the order of language, with possibilities no dictionary can arrest" (p. 79). Surely this analogy is backwards, for a world must precede and supersede language as one of a world's potential components. One might speculate, rather, that language takes its form by resembling the world that consciousness already finds before it and shapes into a representation. Of course, following Barad (2007), one should note that language also asserts its own agency in creating a world, since for agential realism, boundary-making is a conjoined and ongoing material-discursive process in which the entities that appear are also agencies.

[464] In the Óscar Benassini (2016) interview, Santamaría asserts, "I am interested in deconstructing objects by dialoguing with them, with their physical qualities, functions, history, values and my own projections onto them" (n.p).

than an overall philosophical approach. While Santamaría's physical interactions with the newspaper texts—isolating and reconfiguring individual words, phrases, passages, and articles—certainly exposed some of their inherent contradictions as linguistic and conceptual constructions, her process of responsiveness and articulation was more generative than hermetic. Her interventions were at least as much constructive as deconstructive, placing the texts, as snippets of language meant to convey a particular content, but also as physical and kinetic materials—ink printed on paper, black against white, with shape, volume, mass, depth, surface, smell, and so forth—into relationship with other objects and distinct, sometimes contradictory approaches to meaningfulness. Each action or textual construction was both an articulation and a proposition.

Dialogue in this context cannot be relegated to a single way of working. Santamaría employed numerous strategies, ranging from quiet contemplation, as when she tacked a square with the headline

> Birth and
> Death
> Notices
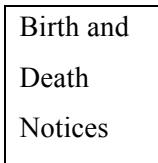
to the wall and sat quietly facing it for an extended period of time, to a less deliberate form of address, as with another square bearing the headline

> High
> contrast
> living
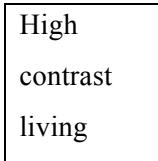
which was placed in various locations over the course of the performance, sometimes sitting among other phrases on the card table, sometimes sitting on the floor and held in place by two sinker weights that were simultaneously part of another suspended sculptural construction. While the first text prompted a formal period of focused solemnity, the second evoked a more random, mercurial interaction that might suddenly coalesce in one's field of vision like a Zen flash of awareness. Similarly, the phrase High hopes was attached to a lower portion of wall, visible to visitors sitting on the floor through Santamaría's legs when she sat working at the card table. Another word, Anesthesia, could be found jutting out like a flag from a weighted thread hanging between ceiling and floor, while many individual words or phrases, like Not Art or

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➔➔FUTURE, fluttered delicately from fishhooks suspended throughout the space. Several constructions used threads strung across portions of the space that had words hung on them with fishhooks to evoke a progression, as when the words Birth and Death from the square headline noted above were isolated as individual words and hung at opposite ends of a thread, with another word, RELEASE, dangling in between. In the final days of the performance, Santamaría bisected the gallery by stretching strings across the front third of the gallery space at eye level, like a clothesline. The strings were joined at the centre by the word EVOLUTION, forming a horizontal banner that audience members would have to duck underneath as they moved about the space. Several other newspaper constructions were also hung on this line at different times.

Some constructions formed elaborate shapes. One newspaper page, tacked onto the wall the first day—where it remained for the duration of the performance—had some of the columns of its lower half articulated to look like an unravelling sweater. Santamaría cut into the spaces between each row of print from alternating sides, so that the column of type became a continuous, trailing ribbon of words that hung down from the mounted page. These paper ribbons would drift across the gallery floor whenever the door was opened. Another newspaper article was transformed into a hanging mobile, each row of type carefully cut and stacked one atop the other, threaded through the centre and suspended in midair off the lighting grid to form a delicately drooping mass balanced by a sinker counterweight. Other passages of text were cut into rows and joined at one end to create arrangements that could be tacked to the wall like a spread fan or suspended from threads or strings like a tassel.

In the final few days of the performance, Santamaría occasionally read portions of text aloud. A passage detailing "How man is classified as homo sapiens," its original column rows pasted together to form a continuous, unbroken ribbon of words and hung like a streamer, was read in reverse, beginning with the final word and progressing toward its origin, so that the author's intended narrative could only be grasped by its listeners through a painstaking process of mental retention and reconstruction. Another text was cut into strips and formed into a loose ball that Santamaría held in her hands and massaged with her fingers to isolate different fragments that she would then recite, evoking the image of a soothsayer gazing into a crystal ball.

Some actions used the newspapers in entirely non-textual ways. One newspaper had each of its sections rolled into tight tubes that were then placed on the floor to be used like

architectural building forms or spatial measuring devices. Also, not all of Santamaría's actions involved a direct manipulation of the newspapers. Some days, Santamaría chose to end the session by impaling one of her small candles on a fishhook suspended near one of the walls, setting it alight and watching it burn as it cast a shadowy glow over the text constructions and collages until, after a time—more than five but less than ten minutes—the candle fell to the floor and went out. She also marked the passage of the days using her numbered thumbtacks to track the number of hours (18, 16, 14 …), adding a new tack each day in a descending column, each new numbered tack separated by a hand's width. Alongside each would be pinned the day's newspaper dateline. A string was also tied to the tack marking the current day, extending upwards in a diagonal to a hook near the corner of the ceiling and attached to a sinker weight. After setting the day's tack, Santamaría would stand upright facing the growing column, one arm raised with the string held between her middle and index finger. She would swing her straightened arm to one side, arcing it between zenith and horizon line like the hand of a clock. This action would lift the opposing weight, making an almost imperceptible mark on the wall as it was dragged upward. Then she would tie the string to its new lower position, which raised the weight by a comparable hand's width toward the ceiling.

It is difficult for me as an audience witness to assert with certainty what Santamaría's motivations for these particular actions might have been if we take the performance's title, *Everyday life words in progress*, as the index by which all of her actions should be read. Were they responses to specific content found in the particular words and articles she had read? Were they meant to be understood as metaphors for the particular agencies and workings of words: providing illumination like a lit candle, causing what we see to flicker before us, asserting an ephemeral presence? Should words be appreciated for the way they facilitate the marking of time, or as inscribers of surfaces? Or, could Santamaría's gestures best be understood not as communicative actions aimed at reaching human witnesses, but rather as strategies for entering into dialogue with the words themselves as Santamaría's pertinent others?

The atmosphere of the gallery, like the changing actions and installation works, was in constant flux, affected by the arrival and departure of visitors, the changing light and weather conditions, and the unpredictability of what would appear in the daily newspapers. Santamaría's dialogue aimed at a responsive cohesiveness that could acknowledge and account for these varied

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and unpredictable parameters. In the documented conversation cited above, she told the inquiring visitor,

> I am looking for a balance […] among what I'm finding in the newspaper, the conditions of this space, the people who come in… For me, this [*pointing to the gallery walls*] is a world—even [if they] are very simple things, and fragile—but it creates a world.

Perhaps the balance that Santamaría sought included a balancing of just who or what she was in dialogue with at any one time. Addressing what she found in a newspaper meant sometimes concerning herself with its materiality—the way the paper could be folded and cut, the degree to which the paper could maintain its stiffness when hanging, the sound a sheet would make when it was flapped or crumpled, the way the newsprint rubbed off onto her fingers, which would regularly become black with ink; sometimes, with its formal construction and conventions—its size, its standardized sections devoted to particular topics, the inclusion and placement of pictures and graphics, advertising, crosswords, horoscopes and other "non-news" content; sometimes, with its language—isolating particular words or phrases; and sometimes, with the ideas of individual authors or with larger societal assumptions and issues expressed or reflected in articles.[465] Addressing the conditions of the space meant adapting to its small floor area and generous height, attending to the placement of objects in relation to the entrance and window, adjusting the track lights as the installation elements shifted, and absorbing and responding to the muffled city soundscape as well as the changing light and temperature. Addressing the visitors required a range of decisions about how to position herself, when to speak, and how to move in relation to their negotiation of the space, since those entering the gallery were as likely to move about inspecting the installation elements as they were to stand against a wall or sit on the floor to watch what she was doing.

Everyday life words in progress models the idea that even a carefully limited and sharply focused dialogue is never fully contained within the face to face of two absolute, discrete and solitary entities of self and other, save by the fiat of an idealizing consciousness that chooses to selectively recognize specific entities and messages as mattering. In our daily lives, we might find

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[465] One article given particular prominence, for example, was a column by Sheila Copps, former deputy prime minister of Canada and at the time a regular columnist with the *Toronto Sun*, entitled "Stop allowing immigrants to flood our big cities."

ourselves in dialogue with people, animals, objects, or even our environment. Sometimes we enter into dialogue with an idea, which need not take place as a conversation with another human or humans. This suggests that a dialogue may sometimes not engage with a material entity at all, but with something more pervasive than tangible. We can find ourselves rebelling at the "world," caught up in the discourse of a particular culture, or testing the expectations of society, responding to processes that cannot be attributed to one specific cause, whether "human" or "natural," or seeking counsel with forces or agencies perhaps named as an amorphous, seemingly omnipotent, and occasionally anthropomorphized grand cause, like "the gods" or "God."

If dialogue need not be with a human other, it also need not take place as speech. Exchanges between a self and an other are effected not as a direct transmission of data, but through interventions into the interlocutors' shared four-dimensional environment. We communicate by altering the fabric of our surroundings—through sound, through gesture and movement, through the reshaping of matter. As we enlist the temporal, spatial and material resources of our environment, we also involve other entities, other agencies, other agents of worlding, to return to Donna Haraway's term, and other modes of individuation, as Deleuze and Guattari have chosen to describe the relationalities of co-presence that signal a shared meaningfulness.

Of course, understanding otherness in this way utterly undoes the imperative of the human other that Levinas works so hard to uncover through the face to face. Asserting that *every other has a world*—not just every human other, not just every thinking body, not just every living thing, not just every stone or rock or mountain, not just each subatomic particle, but even hybrid, ephemeral configurations that might coalesce as artefacts, institutions, systems, events, or processes—shows up what is implicit in most of Western philosophy: that what is meant by having a world generally equates to an entity we understand as having a human consciousness, or, to use a more religious term, having a soul.[466] We do not approach all "others"—even those we

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[466] This is certainly and particularly true of Levinas, who ties all meaning to human experience. His answer to the classic philosophical thought experiment, "if a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, would it make a sound?" would surely be that it might sound, if sound belongs to the same ontic realm as the tree, but it would not "resound." Levinas (1999/1964) makes this clear in his essay "Meaning and Sense," in a passage entirely antithetical to the position of this dissertation:

> things […] by themselves do not leave traces, but produce effects, that is, remain in the world. When a stone has scratched another stone, the scratch can, to be sure, be taken as a trace, but in

are able to imagine as having a world—with the same degree of investment, care, and concern. We do not seek to discover or respect or preserve their worlds in equal terms, nor do we imagine that they are all invested in their worlds in the same way that we are invested in ours. Most of us have a deeply ingrained set of ideals that recognizes human lives generally, or at least some subset of lives whose "humanity" we have encountered or experienced in a personal way, as having special value. That we can share our world with a "whom," a someone else we believe has the capacity to understand our world as we do, who has the capacity to appreciate the textures of our experiences and stories as a human self, is profoundly important to us. After all, some unlikely other—let us say, a rock, or an air current—may be impacted in some unfathomable way by this dissertation, but these words will never be "meaningful" for an air current in the way that they might be for a human reader who can translate them into a particular constellation of human percepts, affects and concepts. If I were to suggest that the writing of these words is directed toward something as removed from the discourse of written human language as a rock, surely any person reading this manuscript would take such an intention as patently absurd or surreal.

Human language is a very specialized form of dialogue developed among—and intended to exchange ideas among—human interlocutors. Nonhuman others that get drawn into the networks required to effect this human exchange through language are viewed as irrelevant or secondary to the significant and signifying exchange, at best considered to be supporting players. Often, even human *bodies* are thought to take on a secondary role in what is framed as an exchange between two human consciousnesses understood as subjects or subjectivities. While a *thinking body* experiences the enactment and consequences of dialogue somewhat differently,

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> fact without the man who held the stone this scratch is but an effect. It is as little a trace as the forest fire is a trace of the lightning. A cause and an effect, even separated by time, belong to the same world. Everything in things is exposed, even what is unknown in them. The traces that mark them are part of this plenitude of presence; their history is without a past. A trace qua trace does not simply lead to the past, but is the very passing toward a past more remote than any past and any future which still are set in my time—the past of the other, in which eternity takes form, an absolute past which unites all times (p. 106).

Putting aside the linguistic inconsistency that allows Levinas to reference both "the world" of cause and effect that harbours or is occupied by things—a four-dimensional setting where self, others and objects already dwell together in a way that allows them to rub up against each other as somethings, a backdrop of shared sameness from which we can begin to discern distinctions and differences—and "a world" of traces that belongs exclusively and in singularity to human others, it is at the very least a troubling tendency of Western thought that we should be unable to recognize the worlds of nonhumans.

perhaps reacting with an unbidden shrugging of shoulders at the very imagining of an exchange between disembodied consciousnesses, Western philosophy continues to toil under an interlocking complex of assumptions that divide mind from body, equate human consciousness with being, and model human thought as language.

Levinas's *Otherwise than Being*, for example, characterizes what is beyond essence as a saying that precedes consciousness and makes language possible—as if the representing of existence to the self through language *were* being itself, even as he sets forth to separate the concepts of meaning and experience.[467] Just as Heidegger mines etymology for disclosure and Derrida accretes a deconstructive methodology from the concept of metaphoricity, Levinas (1998/1974) turns to two ideas tied to language, *kerygma* and *apophansis*, to develop a dichotomy between the saying and the said that provides a formal logic for his philosophical project. As he summarizes in *Otherwise than Being*, "The said in which everything is thematized […] has to be reduced to its signification as saying, beyond the simple correlation which is set up between the saying and the said" (p. 183). His attempt to get beyond essence translates into an attempt to get before language, to find an "already said" in the very act of saying itself that precedes what is established *by* what is said. The concept of kerygma, or proclamation, had been previously explored in some detail in Levinas's (1998/1967) essay "Language and Proximity," in which he outlined his vision, following Husserl, of how the naming of beings—their thematization—is the a priori that brings them into appearance.[468] For Levinas, the kerygmatic function of language places all phenomena squarely in the domain of signification and discourse: "The *appearing* of a phenomenon is inseparable from its *signifying*, which refers to the proclamatory, kerygmatic intention of thought. Every phenomenon is a discourse or a fragment of a discourse" (p. 112).

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[467] He makes this position absolutely clear, writing "To enter into being and truth is to enter into the said; being is inseparable from its meaning! It is spoken. It is in the logos" (p. 45).

[468] Levinas (1998/1967) argues, in relation to Husserl's notion of intentionality that "intentionality is […] the *naming* of the identical, the proclaiming of something as something." In fact, he goes so far as to claim that it is this very thematization that enables experience:

> The setting forth of meaning […] must first name beings, proclaim them as this or that. In this setting forth all experience and all ulterior affirmation will take place. The a priori of the a priori is a *kerygma* which is neither a form of imagination nor a form of perception.

In this formula, "The ideal is […] set up by virtue of the kerygmatic word. The identity of a term consists in its very ideality" (p. 111).

Having linked being to language in this way, Levinas's task in *Otherwise than Being* is to find a way to situate the other—and by extension, the self—beyond the totalizing inevitability with which objects make their thematized appearance "as this or that" to the self.[469] To do so, he attempts a close reading of the structure of the language itself, in which he purports to uncover a layer of meaningfulness that operates within language beyond its signifying function, in an apophantic structure of proposition that enfolds subject and predicate.[470] If, in the kerygmatic function of recognition, "the word at once proclaims and establishes an identification of this with that in the *already said*" (p. 37), then apophansis, the propositional structure, shows "language to be an excrescence of the verb" (p. 35), holding together "the ambiguity of the verb and noun that scintillates in the said" (p. 36). Levinas argues that the apophantic equation "A is A" also bears within it a silent, hidden corollary, that "A As". The verb "is" does not serve simply as a function of the sign, as the designative "equals." Rather, it reveals something about A's existence, the *be-ing*—here to be read as a verb rather than a noun—of A. The verb *to be* points back to A's enduring A-ness that, as its be-ing, always carries an implicit predicate content: A permeates A, A resonates A, A *is* A.[471] A, the noun, is invested within itself with the verb in a way that is essential to its being:

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[469] He outlines this in his introductory argument, when he describes how

> the exception of the "other than being," beyond not-being, signifies subjectivity or humanity, the *oneself* which repels the annexations by essence. […] A unicity that has no site, without the ideal identity a being derives from the kerygma that identifies the innumerable aspects of its manifestation, without the identity of the ego that coincides with itself, a unicity withdrawing from essence—such is man (p. 8).

[470] While the term *kerygma* refers to language's power of proclamation—this *as* this—*apophansis* outlines an Aristotelian understanding of the proposition that consists of a subject and a predicate—*this is* or *this does*… As Thomas Greenwood defines the term in Dagobert D. Runes's (1942) *Dictionary of Philosophy*, apophansis "makes explicit the internal luminosity of its subject by positing against it as predicates its essential or accidental constituents" (n. p.).

[471] It should perhaps be noted that Levinas's argument is somewhat uneven. Parts of his proposition are quite elegant, as when he suggests that if a noun already has a kerygmatic function—already offering up designation or signifying equivalency—then the propositional content, the addition of a predicate, must offer something more:

> The effort to reduce verbs to the function of signs naively presupposes the division of entities into substances and events, into statics and dynamics, to be original. But the connection between the said and being is not simply reducible to designation. The imperative kerygma of identification over and above the sign, is already visible in a noun (p. 39).

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The noun that doubles up the entity it names is necessary for its identity. And so also the verb: not only is it not the name of being, but in the predicative proposition it is the very resonance of being understood as being. Temporalization resounds as essence in the apophansis (p. 40).

In Levinas's view, language's grammatical ambiguities reveal "*the history that the said imposes*" (p. 43) by separating noun from verb, entity from movement, while retaining a glimmer of what lies beyond or before the sedimentation into temporalized essence:

in the said, the essence that resounds is on the verge of becoming a noun. In the copula *is* scintillates or sparkles an ambiguousness between the essence and the nominalized relation. The said as a verb is essence or temporalization. Or, more exactly, the logos enters into the amphibology in which being and entities can be understood and identified, in which a noun can resound as a verb and a verb of an apophansis can be nominalized (pp. 40-41).

This glimmering leaves open the possibility of a "reduction" in which the oneself, on "the hither side of the comprehending activity or passivity in being" (p. 43), appears by virtue of an *already said*, through an obsession felt as the proximity of the other and posited as a signification of the very giving of signs. Later in *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas describes this signifying of the sign function as a "dissimulation" between the said and the saying that "is its very veracity." This dissimulation, he argues, is found in the underlying signification that announces a sign as a sign: "in the midst of the information communicated to another there signifies also the sign that is given to him of this giving of signs. That is the [...] inspiration or prophecy of all language" (p.

His actual example, however, playing on the word red—"red reddens" (p. 38), or, in the French original, "*rouge rougeoie*"—seems a bit of a semantic cheat. First, the noun he chooses, "red," is not an entity so much as a quiddity, a quality already tied to the idea of essence rather than a material thing, which calls into question the validity of his assertion that "the said, as a verb, is the essence of essence." Furthermore, he is at great pains to explain that the way one must read the verb *to redden*

does not signify an event, some dynamism of the red opposed to its rest as a quality, or some activity of the red, for example, turning red, the passage from non-red to red or from less red to more red, an alteration (p. 39).

Yet this describes exactly what *to redden*, as a verb, means, designating a transformation or passage toward a changed state of redness. A second example he offers, "the sound resounds" (p. 38)—"*le son résonne*"— is perhaps even more problematic, since the suggestion of repetition in the verb—*re*-sound—is weighted with the spectre of representation.

152). In this convoluted equation, being is bestowed by language, in a saying that, *as saying*, *carries* within itself an *already said*. It is as if Levinas has forgotten that what really carries meaning are bodies: thinking bodies. He appears to have been led astray by a relentless linguistic logic that cannot loosen itself from the grasp of an all-in-one, philosophical trinity that combines thought, signification and language. This, despite Levinas's (1969/1961) own observation in *Totality and Infinity* that "one might say thought operates in the 'I can' of the body. It operates in it before representing this body to itself or constituting it. Signification surprises the very thought that thought it" (p. 206).

Western philosophy's preponderant tendency to link and even—albeit in nuanced ways—conflate being, human consciousness, and language is tremendously generative, but this appeal to language as thought and being fails to reflect, from a thinking body's perspective, the enduring breadth and depth of intelligibility for an animate form. Enacted philosophy like Elvira Santamaría's *Everyday life words in progress* offers a different set of lessons. To be sure, there are countless ways that language can illuminate Santamaría's actions and constructions with delightful, metaphorically literal descriptions: suspended words, hanging words, weighted words, drifting words, progressive words, words that frame one's view. These descriptive metaphors, however, which in *Everyday life words in progress* are enacted precisely by a kinetic and sculptural materialization of words as individualized entities made from ink and paper, are not simply namings of proper nouns. Rather, they are indexes of relationality and actional effect; they *mean* nothing except as they are formulated, reconfigured and acted upon within a shared, four-dimensional world, actualized through the enacting and enacted agency of intra-active relationality that is presence.

Santamaría's performance enacts dialogues that both enlist and address multiple others by intervening in a shared four-dimensional world. Dialogue among humans is modelled not as a direct transmission from me to you as the passive already said of the face to face, but as an active looking over each other's shoulders. "Saying" is elicited through and as engagement with the resources of our shared world. Others are discovered as agencies and entities that populate or move within and through this shared world. Words are revealed as one type of manipulable and appropriable kinetic material among many that can express content in various material-discursive systems and registers of signification, not only those of conventional human language. As kinetic

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materials, they are attached to various individual and collective histories and experiences, but they are also adaptable to new histories and experiences, new contexts and new intra-active relations effected as co-presence. Not only kerygmatic as nouns proclaiming their identity, not only apophantic as combinatory propositions declaring temporality, kinetic materials are linked to myriad dynamic configurations and relationalities that establish the borders whereby entities appear: whereby meanings happen. In this vision of discourse, properly understood more broadly as material-discursive practice, not only words, but every agent enlisted into or appearing through discourse—the sayers, the said-tos, the said-withs, and the said-abouts—the self, the world, the other—all manifest meaning as instances of individuated presence.

Everyday life words in progress's action

  Everyday life words in progress demonstrates how discourse is an activity rooted in our intra-active engagement with the resources of our shared world rather than being the exclusive domain of human speech. Returning to Hannah Arendt's (1998/1958) schema of the *vita activa* can be helpful to outline some of the consequences of this understanding of discourse more clearly, and to consider how this approach intersects with the project of rethinking presence as a thinking body. The preceding chapters read Marilyn Arsem's *Meridian* and Adina Bar-On's *Disposition* against Arendt's configuration of the activities of labour and work; this section focuses on the activity Arendt defines as action in relation to Santamaría's *Everyday life words in progress*.

  First, it is important to identify some of the ways in which Santamaría's understanding of her art practice aligns with the activities Arendt associates with action. To review, Arendt's understanding of action stems from the Greek notion of praxis as human activity undertaken— unlike labour—not out of necessity, but in freedom, with the express purpose of enacting associations with other free humans. Crucially, action is a political activity that makes the public sphere possible and initiates new processes in the world. Santamaría's (2017) observations in "Your Risk Is Not My Risk" can be seen as closely aligned to Arendt's ideas when she describes the political nature of action art. She writes, "This discourse, which involves awareness of our actions insofar as it revolves around the movement of things in the world, makes politics possible" (p. 23). In her unpublished e-mail interview with Josefina Alcázar, Santamaría (2013)

roots her work in a belief that "in the creative act, spontaneity and improvisation give rise to an authentic encounter with the other." Initiating new relationships, achieving an "authentic encounter," is Santamaría's underlying goal, which indicates why, as a visual artist, she prefers initiating performance actions to a studio practice dedicated to making objects. It is clear that her use of the term *other* in this context is intended to address specifically human others, as she goes on to write, "Encountering people in an illogical situation can unmask the humanity of those who live the experience." Describing the performance situation as *illogical* signals its novelty and unexpectedness, an act of bringing something new into the world, initiating a beginning aimed at disclosure of "who" we are. If this strays from Arendt's understanding of action, it is only by its insistence that an action reveals the humanity not only of its doer, but also of its respondents. Through their reactions and interactions, those who are enlisted in or affected by action can also be swept up in its revelatory potential.[472] In case there is any doubt that this revelatory capacity is at the heart of Santamaría's understanding of her art practice, she adds, "Performance is the art of creating experiences and awareness of finite life, of human life" (n.p.).

A similar sentiment can be found in Santamaría's (2017) essay on risk, in which she describes the risk inherent to action art in terms of a search for or confrontation with one's human identity and purpose: "One opens on a quest for humanity, which is none other than a quest for oneself" (p. 22). For Santamaría, an emphasis on what it means to be human is critical to action art, which has the potential to awaken its practitioners and audiences to their uniqueness: "Action art instills value in human presence and singularity" (p. 22). Santamaría's writing often returns to this concern about what it is to be a singular human, for good or ill. In response to Gustaf Broms's (2018) question, "Where do you see the greatest CHALLENGES in your future process?" Santamaría responds, in part: "We never know when we are going to doubt, to be weak to be human, but we have to be prepared to be exactly that: human" (p. 24). This concern for

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[472] This is more a matter of emphasis than of divergence. Arendt (1998/1958) describes reaction in terms of a cascading effect triggered by an initial action:

> Since action acts upon beings who are capable of their own actions, reaction, apart from being a response, is always a new action that strikes out on its own and affects others. Thus action and reaction among men never move in a closed circle and can never be reliably confined to two partners. [… O]ne deed, and sometimes one word, suffices to change every constellation (p. 190).

expressing one's humanity clearly places Santamaría's understanding of performance or action art in the public realm of human praxis that is so crucial to Arendt's idea of action.

Santamaría is focused on action art's life-defining and life-changing potential. While Arendt is concerned with the power of action to reveal the agency of its initiator, Santamaría (2013) emphasizes how actions also ultimately act upon the self: "I create a situation and the situation creates me" (n.p.). Santamaría (2017) also sometimes frames this process of developing one's identity in terms of a self-creation made possible by the decision to step outside societal norms and expectations, initiating an act that reshapes the public sphere—or at least rejects its expectations—in order to discover and assert one's selfhood:

> The idea of creating myself and knowing myself through acts that are expressed outside known, acceptable or viable codes of behaviour provided the frame of reference that allowed me to begin to work on myself, because, in a framework without a frame, who can know himself? (p. 23).

Thus, while action art as a practice reveals the uniqueness of the self, Santamaría also sees it as offering a powerful opportunity to nurture and develop that uniqueness.

Santamaría's (2013) understanding of action art also echoes Arendt's view of action when she writes, "I never know what each person projects in my works" (n.p.). This corresponds to Arendt's argument that the disclosure that comes from action cannot be known or controlled by its initiator. According to Arendt (1998/1958), "nobody knows whom he reveals when he discloses himself in deed or words" (p. 180); this is something that can only be determined by others. Arendt notes that one of the hallmarks of action is that it produces stories, but these stories must ultimately be told by others. Stories "reveal an agent, but this agent is not an author [….] Somebody began it and is its subject in the twofold sense of the word, namely, its actor and sufferer, but nobody is its author" (p. 184). Being the initiator of an action does not bestow any certainty or omniscience in regard to its outcome. We cannot know how action will be taken up by and affect others, and this is part of what fascinates Santamaría (2013): "I am interested that my work is an experience for people and that I live it as only each person can live it" (n.p.). Even as a protaganist, we only ever know a limited part of what becomes our story. This should not be taken to suggest, however, that one is not present to one's own circumstances. Nor does it preclude the importance of acting in order to gain greater self-understanding. When asked by

Gustaf Broms (2018), "If you had to use WORDS to describe what you do, what would those words be?", Santamaría's response was:

> Trying to know myself by the means of live art. Today, more than ever, this fundamental human task has been devalued. Performance art, as the art of creating experiences, can generate the right questions within the experience, like living koans, not only to others but also to ourselves. However, it is always through others that we get the right questions, even if the others pose no question at all (pp. 24-25).[473]

What it does suggest is that presence, as the enacting and enacted agency of intra-active relationality through which entities and identities are instantiated as intelligible, is an ongoing and encompassing process that extends beyond the appearance or involvement of any one entity.

As has been previously noted, for Arendt (1998/1958), action is the defining aspect of the public sphere, "the only activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter" (p. 7). Like Levinas's idea of a "saying" that is unique to human interactions—understood in terms of the approach of an other to a self—Arendt relegates action to the privileged domain of human discourse. Arendt enfolds speech, or *lexis*, into the activity of action, insisting, "Speechless action would no longer be action because there would no longer be an actor, and the actor, the doer of deeds, is possible only if he is at the same time the speaker of words" (pp. 178-179). For Arendt, action discloses an actor, a "who"—and the question of who is a concern exclusive to humans. Setting aside the unquestioned assumption of what constitutes a "who," Arendt's formula suggests that intention and thought can be shared only through the medium of language (see footnote 237 above).

Some passages in Emmanuel Levinas's (1969/1961) *Totality and Infinity* appear to be in direct response to Arendt's theorizing of action. Levinas opposes action to language, arguing even more directly than Arendt that only language has the power to reveal and express a "who." For Levinas, "actions, gestures, manners, objects utilized and fabricated recount their author [….] only if they have been clothed with the signification of language, which is instituted above and beyond works" (pp. 175-176). He goes on to assert, "The *who* involved in activity is not

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[473] One of the conclusions that can be drawn from Santamaría's reply, then, is that for her, knowing oneself and expressing oneself authentically is less a matter of having ready answers than it is of engaging with the right questions.

expressed in the activity, is not present, does not attend his own manifestation, but is simply signified in it by a sign in a system of signs" (p. 178). For Levinas, the essence of language is its signifying expressiveness, and "language is possible only when speaking precisely renounces this function of being action and returns to its essence of being expression" (p. 202). Santamaría (2017) proposes an almost diametrically opposed understanding from her position as an artist who finds expression through action. For her, action becomes its own language by virtue of its expressiveness: "The action, when it is not a writing in action (conceptual), is a poem in action (symbolic) or a quasi-passage to an act on the body itself" (p. 22). Seen in relation to both Levinas's and Arendt's appeals to speech, Santamaría's understanding of a communicative or communicable meaningfulness tied to the expression of movement and bodies makes clear that for all of the underlying support of physical bodies that grounds both Arendt's and Levinas's thinking—evidenced in Arendt's schema of the *vita activa*, which aligns labour with bodies, work with hands, and action with mouths[474] as much as for example, in Levinas's meditations on savouring as revealing the character of our senses—neither is able to fully recognize the kinetic bodily logos that precedes speech and undergirds any possibility of signification, human or otherwise.[475]

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[474] Arendt's body/hands/mouth division in the *vita activa* can be found in her citation of John Locke, who, she notes

> founded private property on the most privately owned thing there is, "the property (of man) in his own person," that is, in his own body. "The labour of our body and the work of our hands" become one and the same, because both are the "means" to "appropriate" what "God . . . hath given . . . to men in common." And these means, body and hands and mouth, are the natural appropriators because they do not "belong to mankind in common" but are given to each man for his private use (p. 111).

While Arendt does not explicitly tether action to the mouth, except insofar as she associates it with speech, there are numerous references that equate labour with the body and work with hands. This extends to artistic production, where she emphasizes the manufactured quality of artistic works over their imaginative or conceptual genesis. She writes,

> [t]he reification which occurs in writing something down, painting an image, modeling a figure, or composing a melody is of course related to the thought which preceded it, but what actually makes the thought a reality and fabricates things of thought is the same workmanship which, through the primordial instrument of human hands, builds the other durable things of the human artifice (p. 169).

[475] Arendt and Levinas are far from unique in their tendency to attribute a signifying power to language that somehow overlooks the animate bodily experience that must support any such agency. One way to overcome this shortcoming—as this dissertation attempts—is by reframing human consciousness as not

Arendt (1998/1958), however, takes a different approach than Levinas to the question of otherness, arguing, "In man, otherness, which he shares with everything that is, and distinctness, which he shares with everything alive, becomes uniqueness." For Arendt, speech and action rather than the face are the markers of this uniqueness, serving as "the modes in which human beings appear to each other, not […] as physical objects, but *qua* men" (p. 176). Action, coupled with speech, discloses one's selfhood to others and is characterized by Arendt as a practice of "beginning something new on our own initiative" (p. 177).[476] Arendt frames this capacity to initiate something new as a uniquely human trait that allows us to step outside the cyclical, repetitive rhythms and automatic processes of the natural world, going so far as to suggest, "Action is, in fact, the one miracle-working faculty of man" (p. 246). She does not fully address, however, how this differs from the observable tendencies of other species, objects, and even so-called "natural" processes—such as evolution—to also follow unpredictable courses or unfold in unexpected ways. Arendt's reasoning aligns with a rationalist perspective that attributes what appears to humans to be aleatory in our environment to a simple lack of knowledge—believing that as we increase our understanding, the workings of all nonhuman processes become predictable and explainable—while simultaneously asserting a human free will that grants us an exclusive purchase on choice and on individually directed intentionality.

To her credit, Arendt balances this miraculous human power with a compelling burden of responsibility. Human action, which is irreversible in its outcomes and unpredictable in its consequences, is mitigated by two other powers within the "web of relationships" that defines human political life. Irreversibility is tempered by the human power to forgive, while unpredictability is mitigated by the power of the promise. Arendt states plainly:

> The possible redemption from the predicament of irreversibility—of being unable to undo what one has done though one did not, and could not, have know what he was doing—is the faculty of forgiveness. The remedy for unpredictability, for the chaotic

only grounded in but inseparable from a thinking body. For a different approach that contrasts Arendt's vision of action with Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action, but comes to a comparable conclusion about the importance of recognizing the role lived experience plays in facilitating intersubjectivity rather than simply attributing an autonomous communicative function to speech acts, see Couillard (2014), "From Strangers to Rosa: Manoeuvring in the *Vita Activa*."

[476] For his part, Levinas (1969/1961) equates even this capacity of new beginnings with language, arguing, "Speaking implies a possibility of breaking off and beginning" (p. 88).

uncertainty of the future, is contained in the faculty to make and keep promises. The two

faculties belong together in so far as one of them, forgiving, serves to undo the deeds of

the past […] and the other, binding oneself through promises, serves to set up in the

ocean of uncertainty […] islands of security without which not even continuity, let alone

durability of any kind, would be possible in the relationships between men (p. 237).

Arendt also notes, citing the teachings of Jesus, that the power of forgiveness is predicated on an

understanding that often the negative outcomes of action are attributable not to a deliberate intent

to harm, but to inadvertent trespass: "the reason for the insistence on a duty to forgive is clearly

'for they know not what they do' and does not apply to the extremity of crime and willed evil" (p.

239).

Framing the faculty of action against those of promise and forgiveness—all of them

human powers which we read as mattering only to others specifically like ourselves, i.e., powers

that find their meaningfulness in the values of a human community—brings clarity to the stakes

involved in recognizing the otherness of nonhumans. Action, for Arendt, sets up a different

relationship to our environment than that enacted through either work or labour. If the only

reliable safeguards against action's unpredictable and irreversible outcomes are human agencies

that cannot be attributed to nonhuman actors, then we recognize and treat nonhuman entities as

actors at our own peril:

Modern natural science and technology, which no longer observe or take material from or

imitate processes of nature but seem actually to act into it, seem, by the same token, to

have carried irreversibility and human unpredictability into the natural realm, where no

remedy can be found to undo what has been done (p. 238).[477]

Arendt takes this tendency to act into nature as a modern phenomenon. What she does not

account for is the fact that while the *intention* of human action may be directed toward other

humans, this does not guarantee that in practice it takes place "directly between men without the

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[477] Arendt is equally concerned by the intrusion of the values of work as an activity into the methods of
science and technology, given what she sees as work's inherent violence:

Similarly, it seems that one of the great dangers of acting in the mode of making and within its
categorical framework of means and ends lies in the concomitant self-deprivation of the remedies
inherent only in action, so that one is bound not only to *do* with the means of violence necessary
for all fabrication, but also to *undo* what he has done as he undoes an unsuccessful object, by
means of destruction (p. 238).

intermediary of things or matter." As my description of *Everyday life words in progress* has tried to demonstrate, action, which is linked closely to discourse, is never unmediated in the way that Arendt imagines. Rather, action enlists and affects nonhuman others; action enfolds into the processes of nonhuman others; action can be affected by nonhuman others; and, as Arendt's warning about modern science and technology suggests, action may even be directed toward nonhuman others. For a thinking body that understands consciousness as a manifestation inseparable from the body and world it inhabits, the "artificial" world of humans—its political fabric no less than its economic or industrial accomplishments—has no other resources than those of our shared four-dimensional environment. When we act, our actions take place in a world shared with nonhuman others, and those others affect and are affected by our actions. Acknowledging this inseparability brings a different set of responsibilities to bear on Arendt's insight that "action, [...] no matter what its specific content, always establishes relationships and therefore has an inherent tendency to force open all limitations and cut across all boundaries" (p 190).

If actions, by virtue of their irreversibility and unpredictability, entail risks of trespass that require mitigation, it is incumbent upon us to begin to recognize and to value the worlds of nonhuman others.[478] If one wishes to avoid the trespass of intruding on or transgressing an other's world, one must first acknowledge its existence. This means paying attention to the ways in which others express the meaningfulness of their worlds through their inhabitation of our shared four-dimensional environment, rather than simply defaulting to the most common ways we have treated nonhuman (and not-recognized-as-human) others in the past: as threats, as obstacles, as exploitable, or as irrelevant. This is not to suggest that we anthropomorphize these others or their worlds, but rather, that we learn to acknowledge and respect their uniqueness, to use Arendt's term. Further, if nonhuman others do not share the human redemptive powers of forgiveness and promise that are meaningful for us, we are also well advised to more closely attend to the task of discovering what sorts of mitigating responses might be available to nonhuman others (including

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[478] Not to mention the compelling task of valuing the diversity of other *human* worlds by, for example, offering protections under a rubric of human rights, which stands in contrast to a human history of actions that have only affirmed the value of others whose worlds the actors cared about because they fell within narrow subsets of familiarity defined by subjective markers such as race, nationality, ethnicity, faith, gender, ability, sexuality, income, class, family, etc.

those that might imperil our own worlds), as well as what mitigating human faculties we possess that might be impactful in the context of those others' distinctly meaningful worlds.

While this argument for recognizing nonhuman worlds may seem antithetical to the schema outlined by Arendt, part of the urgency of *The Human Condition* stems from Arendt's somewhat corollary fear that we have lost sight of what she frames as human uniqueness. Arendt characterizes this shift in attitude as a move to apply "the Archimedean point [...] to man himself and to what he is doing on this earth." Under this equation, humans are no longer valued as actors with free will, able to initiate new beginnings; instead, "all [human] activities, watched from a sufficiently removed vantage point in the universe, would appear not as activities of any kind but as processes" (p. 322), governed by statistically predictable laws and therefore open to manipulation and control.[479] While Arendt's argument is original, it resonates with Heidegger's concern that we have begun to see other humans through the lens of technology, as standing reserve: as manipulable resources for use rather than as precious, singular lives of the sort Deleuze identifies in "Immanence: A Life."

Undoubtedly, the notion of human free will has been co-opted and commoditized in the modern era through concerted efforts on the part of marketers and propagandists to both exploit and shape human desire and emotions. Elvira Santamaría (2017) writes cogently about this in relation to risk in action art. Risk, as she understands it, is a double-edged sword. If approached

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[479] Consider this extended passage from *The Human Condition*, which skewers both the move to equate nonhuman events with human behaviour, and the concurrent tendency to understand human behaviour in mechanistic terms:

> How deep-rooted this usage of the Archimedean point against ourselves is can be seen in the very metaphors which dominate scientific thought today. The reason why scientists can tell us about the "life" in the atom—where apparently every particle is "free" to behave as it wants and the laws ruling these movements are the same statistical laws which, according to the social scientists, rule human behavior and make the multitude behave as it must, no matter how "free" the individual particle may appear to be in its choices—the reason, in other words, why the behavior of the infinitely small particle is not only similar in pattern to the planetary system as it appears to us but resembles the life and behavior patterns in human society is, of course, that we look and live in this society as though we were as far removed from our own human existence as we are from the infinitely small and the immensely large which, even if they could be perceived by the finest instruments, are too far away from us to be experienced (p. 232).

By appealing to human experience, Arendt is, in her own way, asking us to attend to the texture of presence as it is felt from the vantage point and scale of a thinking body.

thoughtfully, risk can open up new possibilities and make room for more expansive and authentic subjectivities, but she is well aware

> of an expanding performative ideology where risk has become a powerful but artificially toxic ingredient because of its capitalist objectives. Commercial advertising—through competitiveness, entertainment, market profits, hyperconnectivity, and addiction to adrenaline and other biochemical stimulants—uses art-inspired formulas to push the wants and needs of individuals toward new forms of consumption and control (p. 20).

Like Arendt (1998/1958), who is wary of a modern valorization of pleasure as the ultimate life goal—an attitude the philosopher associates with a "self-centered and self-indulgent egotism with its infinite variety of futile miseries" (p. 311)—Santamaría (2017) seeks to disentangle action's privileging of an authentic self from a cultural encouragement of narcissistic individualism:

> The great current challenge is to distinguish one's rebellious principles from the individualist current of market ideology and the trivialization of principles that no one questions, but which are articulated very well around rather egocentric rights destroying society and leading to alienating solipsisms: "Be yourself"; "The private is public"; "Everyone has the right to have an opinion".... We take these terms for granted; they are even accepted as noble, but they are part of a narcissistic ideology that does not question these principles. I sometimes wonder if we are not co-opted to act according to these same principles without realizing it (p. 22).

We are at a juncture where it is still possible for thinking bodies like Arendt and Santamaría to recognize and deplore both a devaluing of humanity and a cynical replacement of the careful and questioning search for authentic selfhood with a relentless self-centredness—trends that can be linked to a pervasive instrumentalization and commodification of our human relationships. What this points to, however, is more than just a problem with the way humans care for and about themselves and their fellow humans; it can also be heard as a call to reconsider how we respect and treat all of the others, human and nonhuman, that populate our worlds—and *whom*, therefore, we are in intra-active relationship with.

Stated in such basic terms, this approach to others and their worlds sounds, if not clichéd, at the very least simplistic. Realizing such a project at the scale of a thinking body's *Umwelt*, however, is a complex if not impossible challenge. *Everyday life words in progress*'s dialogue

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with objects offers a glimpse of these complexities and ambiguities, which inevitably entail an engagement with overlapping, sometimes contradictory, and often competing intra-active forces and entities. This was evident in Santamaría's "dialogue" with an article written by Betty Brightwell that she came across in the March 19, 2007 edition of one of the newspapers.[480] Titled "There was a lot of bull in the ring," the article chronicled a visit to a Mexican bullfight, a colonial import from Spain that has been practiced in parts of Mexico since the sixteenth century. A cutline below the headline read, "I covered my eyes a great deal. Was it because I was preconditioned to think the bullfight was cruel?"

Almost certainly, Santamaría's attention was drawn to this story in part because it was the most prominent reference to her native country of Mexico to be featured in the newspapers she worked with during her nine-day performance. How, then, does one begin to unpack the dense and intersecting confluence of visceral, affective, historical, and symbolically charged meanings and reactions attached to the idea of a Mexican bullfight? A 2020 internet search of the phrase "Mexico bullfight" produced a lengthy and fraught list of competing results, ranging from tourist travel guides—many of them noting that despite the practice's origin in Spain, Mexico City currently has the "world's largest bullring" (e.g. https://rove.me/to/mexico/bullfights)—to news about animal rights protests and opinion pieces aimed at abolishing a practice regarded by many as brutally cruel and barbaric. As a highly ritualized "sport," bullfighting is well established in the Western popular imagination. Even those who have not paid much attention to the practice are likely able to conjure an image of a bloodied bull, its back pierced with long spears, being goaded by an elaborately costumed matador waving a brightly coloured cape. The matador's well-known script is to entertain the assembled audience by provoking, exhausting and ultimately killing the bull while flirting with the peril of being gored or mauled by a large, powerful, wounded animal. Though I have never attended a bullfight, I can remember, as a child, playing the parts of both matador and bull, either waving a towel with extended arms and yelling, "Toro, toro," only to

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[480] I have been unable to verify the identity of this particular "Betty Brightwell," but some readers might recognize the name as matching that of the late Victoria-based peace activist and co-founder of the Raging Grannies, a group famous for their satirical agit-prop protests that parlayed their self-identified grandmother status to draw attention to, among other issues, the presence of United States nuclear warships in Canadian waters. The ironic title of the article Santamaría was engaging with is certainly in keeping with Brightwell's style; she co-authored a 2004 book about the Grannies entitled *Off Our Rockers and into Trouble*. See https://49thshelf.com/Contributors/B/Brightwell-Betty.

sweep it up out of the way as someone else charged at it, or stamping a foot and snorting, bending my head down and running at a cloth being waved by a companion.[481] For me, the compulsion of this play had nothing to do with any idea of slaughter; its magic was in the dazzling allure of the cloth, presenting a dancing target that could appear broad and solid, only to suddenly move in ways that were impossible for a flesh body, however powerful, to follow or counter; and yet, the fabric's movements were controlled by just such a fleshly creature.

Bullfights certainly provide a complex opportunity for considering questions of otherness. It seems obvious to me as a thinking body that a bull is an animate form with a recognizable level of consciousness, capable of feeling pain, as well as emotions such as rage and bewilderment. Individual bulls have their own character, and display a range of unpredictability in their reactions; if this were not so, what would make a bullfight captivating to human viewers? The bull's behaviour is compelling to watch precisely because in the bull's movements and reactions we detect the glimmerings of a world, undoubtedly foreign but nonetheless discernible. Abundant references in human mythology attest to bulls' symbolic appeal, with associations that include vitality, fecundity, masculinity, and raw force. We can recognize the bull as having at least some modicum of a world—but while we may respect its strength or aggressiveness, many apparently do not extend this valuation to an empathy for its suffering, even as they are affected in various ways by witnessing it.

Of course, there was no bullfight in *Everyday life words in progress*. No matador, no bull, no slaughter. Whatever presence bullfighting had was only evoked by a newspaper article— by words. No matter what one might feel seeing a bull pierced with spears and swords, provoked to frenzy by a waving cloth, no viewer of Santamaría's performance would have been likely to experience anything even remotely similar if, for example, she had stabbed the word "bull" printed on a piece of newsprint. If a word printed in a newspaper has a world, it is undoubtedly of an entirely different order than that of a living bull. As a non-organic, human-made artifact, whatever world or life it has is not that of a living creature, nor even an elemental object forged independently of human intention, but one measured in terms of its human authors, publishers,

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[481] I was also familiar from an early age with the story of Ferdinand, the bull who preferred smelling flowers to fighting—through my memories more likely come from cartoon adaptations than the original illustrated children's book by Munro Leaf and Robert Lawson.

and readers. As an instance of language, its content appears as something exclusive to human worlds, and the meanings attributed to any one word can be unpacked quite distinctly from that word's materiality as a pattern of ink on newsprint clipped from a newspaper. As language, words do not, in themselves, perform (*pace* Austin); rather, *humans* act by uttering and giving meaning to words.

This appears to accord with Arendt's parsing of language and action, and one does not need to look very far to find examples of the breathtaking communicative powers of language. Consider the double entendre in the headline, "There was a lot of bull in the ring," which plays on the metonymy of bull and bullshit, using a popular idiom to suggest hypocrisy or deception, but simultaneously offers quite a different sense if one considers the visceral effect of being in a confined space with an agile, wounded creature weighing up to a 1,000 kilograms with sharp horns at its disposal. This deft associative ability of words in combination may not be unique to language, but there is no doubt that language is particularly adept at both revealing and creating such linkages. Human thoughts are not formed exclusively through words, but words have proven to be a most effective shorthand for communicating human thought. Words also do more than this; they can condition thought.[482] They facilitate thought's advancement and enable new conceptual relationships, new associations—so much so that it is easy to conflate language and thought. Certainly, too, language can be integrated into thought, with stunning ramifications for

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[482] This is a definitively different view from that expressed by Levinas (1969/1961), who takes language to be the body or flesh of thought, as it were. He writes:

> Merleau-Ponty, among others, and better than others, showed that disincarnate thought thinking speech before speaking it, thought constituting the world of speech, adding a world of speech to the world antecedently constituted out of significations in an always transcendental operation, was a myth. Already thought consists in foraging in the system of signs, in the particular tongue of a people or civilization, and receiving signification from this very operation (pp. 205-206).

There is no doubt that language as a culturally shared system of signs significantly influences and contributes to human thought, but language as an abstract notion is as disincarnate as the "thought" that Levinas imagines. Here Levinas's metaphor of incarnation is ironically apt. What *incarnates* thought—and eventually, language—is a thinking body. To say that language conditions human thought is to affirm that language is woven into human thought, and in that sense becomes an essential part of its animate tissue. This, however, is a developmental process in which thought, manifested and expressed through perception, emotion, conception and motion, precedes language and is not exclusive to humans. That a system of significations could be *shared*, relayed from one entity to another and integrated into thought as language, is of fundamental concern to this dissertation—but such a concern cannot be answered by theorizing language as the primal substance of thought.

the way humans find themselves able to conceive and shape their worlds. What I have worked to demonstrate, however, is that while language is more than simply a human cultural artefact, it should not be confused or equated with the consciousness of a thinking body. Nor, for that matter, should an abstracted notion of language—expanded through ideas such as code to encompass and render manipulable myriad nonhuman processes and entities—dazzle us into a reduction of all material and discursive configurations to writing. Language can, however, produce entities: words and phrases—whether uttered, written, or simply thought—taking on the form of instantiated presences or things-in-themselves that are, to return to Massumi, the sum of all of their possible connections or inclusions in a world (see footnote 64 above).[483]

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[483] One way of stating this might be to say that each entity that appears within a self's world—even as humble an entity as a word clipped from a newspaper—has its own world. This admittedly odd-sounding statement formulates the concept of a world in completely different terms than those meant by most of the philosophers I have cited, who use the term to denote a particular meaningfulness bestowed by the workings of a human consciousness. If, instead, one understands a world in terms of the dynamic systems concept of *emergence*, then one might suggest that the meaningfulness that confers a worldly status is not contained in any one consciousness, but is a result of intra-active relationality; an entity's "world" reflects its unique agency and situatedness among all of the intra-active influences of its becoming. Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (2011), citing the dynamic systems approach of Esther Thelen and Linda B. Smith, discusses emergence and ties it to the formational role of movement in infant development in *The Primacy of Movement* (pp. 230-234).

If this is what constitutes a world, however, one might also be called to reconsider the boundaries of what constitutes an entity or "body" capable of thinking—as Deleuze hints at in defining his interest in different types of individuations. In a chapter entitled "What Are We Naming?", Sheets-Johnstone (2009) writes about some of the conclusions of another dynamic systems theorist, J. A. Scott Kelso, around "the tendency of nature […] to self-organize"—see footnotes 193 and 353 above. In this case, the intelligibility that defines the boundaries of an entity is linked to the homeostasis achievable by a system that exerts its own overarching dynamics. As Sheets-Johnstone parses Kelso's observations,

> in a biological system, change is not brought about only by *circonstances*, that is, by something external; it is brought about equally by the self-organizing dynamics of the system itself, a dynamic *tendance intérieur*, we might say, to follow through with a remarkably applicable Larmackian vocabulary (p. 334),

referencing the French eighteenth century biologist and evolutionary theorist. Sheets-Johnstone's description attempts to make an agential cut, her point being to define the boundaries of intra-active relationality, expressed in terms of dynamics, within a particular apparatus or "dynamic system" independent of a brain but corresponding to an organic body. Another reading is equally available, however. If human consciousness can be seen as intra-active relationality's evidentiary marks on a thinking body, other bodies, other animate forms, configured on different scales than those we are adaptively suited to recognize and experience as humans, may also manifest evidentiary marks through their own animate instantiations of self-organization and self-awareness. To state it in a bolder manner, systems as boundaried bodies exhibit their own processes not only of intelligibility but also of consciousness, expressed as dynamic, self-organizing systems.

The world of a printed word is very different from the world of a human, and the ways the being of a printed word as an entity matters—as well as the ways its world mobilizes, enfolds, and transforms—are of course very different as well.[484] This impacts how one expresses care for that word and respect for its world.[485] For most of us, cutting a word out of a newspaper has a very different significance and set of consequences than, say, removing a child from its family. One of the ways Santamaría worked with Brightwell's article was by cutting out its individual rows of type, carefully preserving the dropcap H of the initial line "Here I am with the other gringos"—an opening phrase that already signals a particular self-consciousness around constructions of otherness—and making a series of fanlike sculptures, each an individual paragraph held together by a pin at one end. At least one of these fan shapes was then pinned onto a gallery wall, Santamaría carefully separating each line of type so that the text could be more easily viewed. Later, the separate paragraphs were recombined to form a larger, tassel-like object that was suspended from threads. The content of the words, referring as they did to a bullfight, added associations to Santamaría's textual sculpture. Hanging off of a fishhook, the sculpture could be understood as a lure—a dangling, animate invitation to draw the viewers into particular ideas, issues, internal or interactive conversations. The idea of a matador's cape adds another inflection to the strips of text not only as a lure, but also as a provocation. This physical metaphor

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[484] Here one might also consider how a cut-out newspaper word should be approached as an individualized material entity. Cutting the word from the newspaper determines particular boundaries for its appearance as an entity, isolating it from some of its material and functional relationalities—the context in which, as a word, it was selected for use within a newspaper column, for example; or its placement within systems of manufacture, production, and dissemination whereby it was "produced" as ink, as newsprint, as printed newspaper, etc., not delineated so much as an individualized entity but as part of some other "thing"— while stabilizing others (after all, it is still legible as a "word"), and also creating new ones as a performance and installation material. Was the text of the newspaper "butchered" to produce this entity? Are its meanings as a word utterly transformed from those conveyed by its placement within the coherency of an author's text? Does its perceived disposability change when it becomes part of a unique sculpture rather than part of a mass-produced newspaper? How do its prior materializations, its history, shape its context in *Everyday life words in progress*? Should we try to account for its post-performance life, perhaps decomposing in a landfill? What of its ongoing impact as an *image*, held in my memory and resurrected in the text of this dissertation?

[485] How one cares for an object as seemingly inorganic as a word can also be culturally determined. In 2006, Satu Kali, a performance art festival in Kuala Lumpar, Malaysia that I participated in, was shut down after an Indonesian artist, Arahmaiani, smashed a series of plates with "beautiful words" that had been suggested by the audience written on them. One of the words was *Allah*, a word whose usage the Malaysian government has seen fit to regulate (see, for example, Roughneen, 2013).

of text-as-lure could be extended to view Santamaría's role in the performance space as either fisher or matador, but it need not be taken so literally; the audience was not a school of fish that might bite down on the lures and unwittingly embed their flesh in the hooks, nor were we captive bulls being impaled and enraged for the benefit of an assembled audience.

Audiences might well have reflected, however, on the relationship between the content of the text and Santamaría's intentions. Was she making connections to the ritual drama of a bullfight as she worked, comparing her role in the performance to that of a matador, a bull, or perhaps even both together, undergoing a public ritual of danger and sacrifice? In her article on risk, Santamaría (2017) takes some time to consider the subgenres of performance art that intentionally stage public displays of physical suffering, endurance, and trauma, noting "we are all, to a lesser or a greater extent, subject to the trauma that the body is in culture. Pain in performance is a bodily stress that without the other—a witness, an audience—would remain commonplace" (p. 22). Unlike some performance artists, however, she has little interest in nihilism:

> it is clear to me that I do not want to suffer or injure myself physically, but I know that, perhaps, I will be able to resort to risk, not as an end in itself nor so that it influences my work, but as a way to regenerate my desire to live and let the resources of my subjectivity flow (pp. 22-23).

Alternatively, was she drawn to the symbolic associations of bulls? In her interview with Óscar Benassini (2016), Santamaría discusses her interest in how we react to the symbolic power of objects, evoking a set of relationships more animistic and less avaricious than those she equates with our contemporary consumer culture:

> In the course of the everyday that wears out, standardizes and automates, (especially in a world that is rapidly accelerating to automate the human species), "objects" such as flowers, whose symbolism could date back 60,000 years, still resonate in us. And if we give them that framework of necessary importance, the experience with them reaches a

richer and more humanizing dimension than that offered by this life of desacralization of everything and sacralization of the self, money, comfort and power (n.p).[486]

As a participating witness of *Everyday life words in progress*, I was struck by the fact that the Brightwell article was almost the only one in which Santamaría focused not only on the text, but also on the two accompanying images.[487] One was a large, full-colour picture of a tool-worked leather hide that featured a painted image of a bull in a central cameo. The image, in black, reddish brown and sepia tones, conveyed a vintage, artisanal aesthetic—steeped in the irony of having been inscribed onto the skin of the very type of animal it portrayed. Santamaría accorded the picture a prominent, isolated position on her table in the gallery for several days, where it was visible both to the artist as she worked and to any visitors drawn to examine the materials and texts laid out on the table. The second, much smaller image, scaled to the width of a single newspaper column and printed in black-and-white, was a side view of a bull's head, with a grainy documentary look as if the author might have taken a close-up snapshot of the bullfight action she was describing. This photo was much less conspicuous than the large colour image, but it remained even after Santamaría removed the other after several days. It was placed in line with the strips of headline words and phrases Santamaría had neatly positioned at the top of the table, the strips held in place by a red thread anchored at either end of the table by pushpins. These strips of words appeared to form a central bank of source materials that was constantly being edited and re-ordered, occasionally finding their way into circulation as part of Santamaría's sculptural collages and body actions.

A picture, the saying goes, is worth a thousand words—an expression that both acknowledges and belies the distinct ways in which words and images communicate or evoke

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[486] In Broms's (2018) *9Questions*, Santamaría notes, "I remember having read with big excitement about the possibility that the Neanderthals could already have made burials with flowers as a symbolic gesture" (p. 24).

[487] The only other pictures Santamaría worked with were those she removed from the obituary columns. These were placed in a plastic baggie and hung, briefly, on one wall with the sideways image of a woman's face visible, but even that picture was soon obscured by the addition of the words Birth and Death, which were wrapped around the photographs so that anyone who had not seen the earlier appearance of the face would not know what was inside the baggie unless they opened it up and removed its contents. While I saw many audience members finger lines of type on the hanging sculptures to read what was written on them, I saw none intervene so directly with the wall works.

human meaningfulness.[488] Apparently, Santamaría found these two images relevant to her material-discursive inquiry into the play of language. Something about them was helping her to "get the right questions." One might draw one's own conclusions about the messages conveyed by these particular images—considering in relation to the larger one, for example, the way we have come to understand bodies as texts, and body surfaces as sites of inscription; or perhaps noting how one, as a handcrafted image, can be seen to correspond to either the fictional or symbolic-poetic possibilities of language, while the other, as a photograph, is reminiscent of language's documentary or conceptual-prosaic possibilities—but it is difficult as an observer to say precisely what questions the two images might have been helping Santamaría to formulate in relation to "everyday life words in progress." Although they were prominently displayed during the performance, the images were not subject to the same degree of physical working-through and juxtapositioning as many of the blocks of printed text. Santamaría did not integrate the images into any of the ephemeral collage or sculptural works. Other than placing the images in a visible location on the table, the only direct action I saw Santamaría undertake with them was her careful placement of the black and white image in the centre of the line of text strips at one end of the

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[488] This dissertation has repeatedly argued that we should not conflate thought and language. Like language, visual images, or images in combination with other sensory data, are often used as descriptive models for human thoughts (see footnote 383 above)—perhaps even more so since the development of motion pictures. Speculative fiction that imagines telepathic communication, for example, often presents another's thought in the form of coherent monologues, but also frequently portrays thoughts to be more inchoate entities that appear as disjointed impressions, emotions, sounds or visual images. Both language and images, as this dissertation has explored in various ways, have been extensively considered as forms of representation in models that also formulate consciousness as consisting of or at least engaging in processes of representation. This suggests a correspondence with Friedrich Kittler's (2010) thesis that "we knew nothing about our senses until media provided models and metaphors" (p. 34), an assertion that asks readers to consider the extent to which technologies provide a useful analogy for explaining things one already knows or believes about oneself or, conversely, the extent to which technologies provide an image that influences the way one constructs an understanding of self and cognition. Kittler's most striking example is Socrates' description, in the writings of Plato, of the human soul being like the wax slate used for writing. Lee W. Bailey (1989) has intriguingly argued that René Descartes' image of a mind separated from its bodily existence came from his observation of the operations of the camera obscura. The advent of photographic images, motion pictures, and digital technologies has almost certainly opened up new metaphors for imaging and imagining consciousness—human or otherwise. For an intriguing consideration of some of the ways "perceptive technologies […] changed our sense of ourselves in radical ways that have now become naturalized and transparent" (Sobchack 2004, p. 135), see Vivian Sobchack's chapter "The Scene of the Screen: Envisioning Photographic, Cinematic, and Electronic 'presence'" in her book *Carnal Thoughts*. What is salient here is that images, like words are highly evocative in their appeal to human consciousness.

table. Periodically she would move the texts around, removing some and adding others, changing their order and sometimes their orientation: looking at them from Santamaría's sitting vantage, some read top to bottom, others from bottom to top. More than once, Santamaría slid the image of the bull's head out of the array, only to return it to its central position. The photo was also positioned near another slightly anomalous clipping, this one featuring characters in a foreign script—perhaps Arabic—that took on a more image-like character in relation to the surrounding words using the contemporary Latin alphabet, albeit in a range of fonts and sizes.

If Santamaría's sculptures and collages drew attention to the *objecthood* of words by placing them in isolated and relatively static material, sculptural combinations, this more processual table configuration pointed to some of words' possibilities as *representational* entities. While some of the newspaper clippings featured individual words—e.g. Martians, Quebec, Toronto, immigrants, multiculturalism, vision—most were descriptive and relational phrases— from the simple inclusion of quotes in 'MEANINGLESS' to Space transformed, Wrong message, The true meaning, mentally ill, a fine balancing act, striving for peace, MySpace gets political, Time for action, path to diversity, Creating a personal sanctuary—including awkward or dangling clusters such as stop allowing, identity back, desperate for win, No passport, but, confused by contemporary?, I DON'T USE THE, into playroom for, or of bull in the ring. In many cases, the ambiguity of the phrases can be linked to the vagaries of newspaper layouts, which often flow headlines over multiple rows. Santamaría tended to edit her clippings to single rows, which could produce odd or incomplete word combinations. Her editorial decision to isolated single rows highlights some important aspects of language, at least in printed form.[489]

First, Santamaría's clippings make obvious that language consists of more than the naming of things, or even of actions. Nouns and verbs are of course very important components of language, but relegating adjectives, adverbs and prepositions to a secondary role as parts of speech obscures the very reason we tend to so fluidly equate language with thought: a key aspect

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[489] As has been previously noted, various scholars including Walter J. Ong have theorized important distinctions between written and oral text, suggesting that these two manifestations of language may in fact condition broad cultural and societal differences (see footnote 336 above).

of language's agency is its capacity to reveal, describe, and facilitate *relationality*.[490] Relational concepts like *for*, *by*, *of*, and *into* are crucial indicators and producers of meaningfulness. Second, the clippings point to an important aspect of our human conceptual processes, which have a fluency and fluidity that allows us to recognize multiple "wholes": an individual letter can be understood as an entity, but in combination with other letters can form a word that can also be understood as a coherent, singular entity. Words in combination can also form singular entities in remarkable ways, whether by refining an abstracted category of entity—a Platonic idea or a Husserlian essence, for example; thus, "wrong message" defines a distinct subset of the abstract conceptual entity *message*—or by describing an occasion or event, as in "MySpace gets political." Some words in combination create entities that we struggle to make sense of, like "into playroom for," with borders that seem inapt or incoherent in their openness; they demand a larger context in order to make sense.

Santamaría's "table talk" points to the linear and combinatory agencies of words: humans are drawn to bring words into relationship with each other, to discover what new meanings are produced when words and word clusters are brought together. Seeing the words lined up in rows along the table, my immediate impulse was to read them in sequence to form passages of prose or poetry. We are equally primed to understand words' representational content in relationship with images, a facility that is central to the way children's books are used to teach literacy. We can even combine textual and visual literacy in various ways. Seeing the words "Martians" and "immigrants" placed beside each other in opposing directions, for example, linked them in an arrangement that made them stand out from the rest of the assembled clippings and gave them a new context and content as "mirror" images forming a single conceptual whole.

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[490] Levinas (1969/1961) argues, "The word that designates things attests their apportionment between me and the others" (p. 209), which, if one considers the phrase closely, suggests far more than simply the naming of things. Santamaría's performance tests the lie of Levinas's statement, seeking both its generativity and its limits by manifesting words as objects, as actions, *and* as relations and configurings. She further combines and shapes words not only as discursive but also as material entities to construct objects, actions and relationalities that function as significations in themselves. If words are able to attest apportionments, they cannot do so solely by designating *things*.

Martians	immigrants
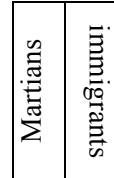
Printed words thus have a visuality that is not only legible, but also can work intra-actively with their language-content. One might therefore take the image of the bull's head as belonging together with the headlines as a unit of representational and discursive content—coherent by itself or in combination with other units. Whereas Santamaría's actions combining words with objects such as fishhooks and weights emphasized the words' materiality as objects with weight and texture, combining them with a printed image emphasized their visual representationality, just as manipulating their spatial placement emphasized their linear and combinatory capacities.[491]

While it is clearly possible for words and images to be part of the same dialogue, however, this does not account for why Santamaría privileged these two specific images of bulls

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[491] This does not fully address, of course, what might constitute a specifically visual representationality—a subject worthy of many treatises in its own right. Roland Barthes (1981) has suggested that photographs, in particular, have at least two distinct types of representationality or expressive "genius," which he labels *studium* and *punctum*. The attraction of the first element, *studium*, he equates with "a kind of general, enthusiastic commitment […] but without special acuity" (p. 26). The second element, *punctum*, he associates with a kind of arousal related to particular, sharp details that cause the viewer to respond in a very personal way. He tells his readers, "to give examples of *punctum* is, in a certain fashion, *to give myself up*" (p. 43). Barthes posits the *punctum* as being unique to photography's essence as a form of representation whose referent has a "That has been" quality, which he also names "the Intractable" (pp. 76-77). As carefully and delicately reasoned as his arguments are, I am not entirely convinced either that this captures the unique essence of photography, a medium whose specifically documentary qualities have been widely debated and challenged, or that what Barthes labels the *punctum* is unique to photography. I believe there is a different clue to be found in the narrative of how he came to define the elements of *studium* and *punctum*. He was alerted to the particular, beyond-semiotic, affective power of the *punctum* by a quality of the photograph that evoked a *world*, or more precisely, the co-presence of discontinuous worlds. He writes,

> Did this photograph please me? Interest me? Intrigue me? Not even. Simply, it existed (for me). I understood at once that its existence (its "adventure") derived from the co-presence of two discontinuous elements, heterogeneous in that they did not belong to the same world (no need to proceed to the point of contrast) (p. 23).

What he later identifies as giving himself up, then, is perhaps better understood as giving oneself over to the obligation to acknowledge and respect an other's *world*. If we can take Barthes' observations as pointing to the particular efficacy that photography *can have*—for he certainly does not find the same *punctum* in all photographs—for evoking worlds, distinctive environments that have been intractably inhabited, then we can at least imagine that Santamaría might have been drawn to these particular images of bulls precisely for the way that they were able to "prick" her consciousness by conveying the irrefutable recognition of an entity that carries with it its own world.

as interlocutors in *Everyday life words in progress*. For me, their prominence is best understood in the context of their link to a story about a Mexican bullfight, with all of the attendant associations to histories of both colonialism and human-animal relations. The "right questions" that they generate are questions about whom we as thinking bodies recognize and acknowledge as others—perceptively, affectively, and cognitively—as well as questions about how we act according to the particular agencies of intra-active relationality that humans as thinking bodies lay claim to as we come into proximity with others: what we call our "freedom," along with, if Hannah Arendt is correct, its mitigating responsibilities of promise and forgiveness.

Levinas (1998/1974), who understood others in exclusively human terms, argues, "Proximity […] has to be conceived as a responsibility for the other; it might be called humanity, or subjectivity, or self" (p. 46). For him, our humanity or our subjectivity—different names for a singular manifestation—is inspired by an encounter with an other that produces the self through an affective resonance. This dissertation argues for a more encompassing understanding of presence as the enacting and enacted agency of intra-active relationality that simultaneously and continually produces self and others, nonhuman and human alike. Adopting and expanding his ethical stance, one might therefore suggest that presence and worlding also must be conceived within the framework of our responsibility for nonhuman others. This responsibility—an individualized, instantialized human agency—can only be undertaken according to the shifting scale of our humanness, the scale of thinking bodies. Many of Santamaría's actions were small, undertaken with care and concentration, in the presence of witnesses who were invited to look over her shoulder, to look out at the worlding world from a position in close correspondence with her own. As a dialogue with others whom she sought to meet with an ever-deepening awareness, *Everyday life words in progress* followed a process of evolution, and evolution is evident to a thinking body only through a careful reconstruction and reordering of appearances after the fact, coupled with a continual re-attunement to the forces of presence within one's perceptive, emotional, conceptual, and kinetic range—a range that is, in turn, affected by each new action or beginning—cavalier or careful, intuitive or habitual. Attunement demands an attitude of responsible, response-able, and responsive risk—in Santamaría's (2017) words, "a humanist activity that takes risks for its own subjectivity, by betting on its resonance with others and by opening spaces to what is authentically common by a dialectical dynamic like an Agora of

encounter" (p. 21). How else, after all, might one become attentive to the unknown worlds and potential mitigating powers of all the others one might encounter?

Part of what is made evident in Santamaría's play with words as action is the unruliness of presencing. Through intra-active relationality, a material-discursive process that exceeds both human intention and conscious imagination, new boundaries are enacted, instantiating new entities and identities—others with worlds, recognizable to a self—whose boundaries are a function of our mutual intelligibility. This intelligibility can be expressed materially—as marks on bodies, like a fishhook slicing into flesh—and animately—as movement, like an involuntary tremor accompanying the thought of a fishhook slicing into flesh. Intelligibility can also manifest at different scales, from subatomic entanglements to resonances in a human consciousness to the behaviour of complex dynamic systems. As thinking bodies, we experience presence according to particular scales and textures, coalescing within the ephemeral agency of an animate form with leaky, shifting boundaries, a being and doing which is neither absence nor finitude but an animate and meaningfully shared actualization.

CHAPTER 8: IN SUMMATION

Twelve emergent propositions

I have framed this dissertation as an inquiry into notions of presence, arguing for a recuperation of a much-maligned term that nevertheless points to how, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty suggests, *there is something*. To do this, I have fostered a description of being that is not tied to an idealized, static materiality, but rather is attuned to a sense of the animate becoming of knotted and intra-active *timespacematter* of which we are a part. The impulse to explore and articulate a fresh understanding of presence—which I have come to describe, following Karen Barad, as the *enacting and enacted agency of intra-active relationality*—comes out of my years of work in performance art as both a practitioner and a curator/organizer, but this is not a text about performance art per se. While I have drawn from works of three accomplished performance artists—Marilyn Arsem, Adina Bar-On, and Elvira Santamaría—to think through particular instantiations or dynamic configurations of presence, my approach has focused on transposing the questions I would normally bring to performance art into an entirely different forum. This inquiry has drawn from various Western philosophical texts and ideas, shaping an investigation through text as a scholar that I might otherwise explore as a performance artist by creating situations posited as interventions into the everyday world. Developing a text has been an opportunity for me to think differently and anew, alongside my more habituated ways of being and doing.

Questions of presence have always been central to my practice. My abiding interest in performance art stems from a compulsion to recognize how we share our existence and derive meaning from our engagement as, with, and through that existence. I am curious about what I am and can be as a body that inhabits a world; about what the world I find myself inhabiting is and can be through my involvement; and about what meanings shape the individuals, events, agencies, and instantiations that I encounter, along with the intuitions and values that arise. Over thirty-five years of working as an artist, I have approached performance art as an undisciplined but rigorous practice of enacted philosophy, creating performances as intimate and localized apparatuses for an active and intra-active process of engagement, inquiry and discovery. Borrowing a term from Natalie Loveless, I have named this aspect of what performance art is able to do as *practice in the flesh of theory*. To commit to an event as a performance is to move

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within presence, attending to its textures and inflection points—sensing it, feeling it, imaging it, being it, doing it. These astonishing experiences have convinced me that presence holds forth, if not a guarantee, at least a promise of the possibility of shared meaningfulness. Presence reminds us that we are *thinking bodies*, complex and dynamic configurations of animate form shaped in intra-active relationality and manifesting across varying scales and registers of inhabitation. Living as a thinking body, I continually rediscover that having a human consciousness does not sentence me to perpetual isolation; instead, it is one facet of a profound communion with an encompassing environment rife with fellow inhabitants. In presence, we are singular in myriad ways—but in presence we are not, and cannot be, alone.

This is a scholarly text, not a performance piece. Asking familiar questions in an unfamiliar context, encountering different interlocutors and developing new methodologies, is challenging work. Philosophy, as the branch of knowledge that claims to study the fundamental nature of existence, has much to offer on the topic of presence, but I did not want to engage in scholarship that would simply abandon the knowledge I had accrued as an artist; nor did I want to ignore what scientific inquiry might have to contribute about how we sense, feel, think, and matter. These concerns led me to an approach that has attempted to respectfully accommodate and integrate ways of knowing from several distinct disciplinary perspectives. Even my forays into Western philosophy have traversed numerous schools, drawing insights from thinkers aligned with, among other traditions, phenomenology, hermeneutics, existentialism, process philosophy, pragmatism, structuralism, deconstruction, political philosophy, agential realism, empiricism, and vitalism. I have been frequently surprised and consistently enriched by these encounters. As with my performances, which are not enactments of pre-scripted, rehearsed gestures but open-ended engagements within a carefully developed framework, I have tried to develop a text that does not cover its tracks. This document is not a report drawn up based on field research; the developing of the text *is* the fieldwork—asking, observing and reflecting all happening at once. Of course what remains has been polished and refined, of course there have been numerous false starts and re-written lines, of course the pages reflected here are a scant distillation of many years of sometimes bewildering research and labour, but I have been careful not to cheat the sequencing. True to my performance art practice, and to my understanding of presence's unfolding, I have tried to if not make visible then at least let be the dynamics of my

process. I have retained the progression and evolution of ideas, so that what is first argued might not always match what is later arrived at. Just as Maxine Sheets-Johnstone asserts that we often *think in movement*, I have attempted to think in writing, often discovering or honing my insights through the struggle to language them—a process that has constantly reminded me that expression in language and writing is a distinct if occasionally parallel trajectory to thinking with a body. Speech and writing are not the primordial, sole, or ultimate actualization of thought.

This working-through as writing has produced a document with at least two significant eccentricities—some might say excesses: first, a heavy reliance on quotation; and second, an extensive use of footnotes. I have quoted heavily not because it would be troublesome to summarize another's thinking in my own words, but because I find the words I have cited to be so much a part of the actualization of my interlocutors' arguments. Their language, albeit often translated, instantiates forms, textures, and movements that are critical to the content of their ideas.[492] Weaving their voices into this text, like the now common practice of sampling in music, speaks also to the intra-active nature of our shared existence in which borders, even borders we work rigorously to acknowledge and maintain through practices of citation, are leaky and permeable, constantly enfolding into new entities and becoming part of other animate forms. At the same time, my persistent use of footnotes reflects the rhizomatic nature and nested structures of being and doing. While the body of the text works to maintain a foreground of linear coherence, the footnotes offer a set of background details and inflections that have proven to be as integral to the overall text as the featured storyline. They did not come to be a part of this document as reflections or editorial commentary produced and inserted after the fact; they emerged, for the most part, of a piece with the rest of the text, presenting themselves as urgent thoughts or supplementary and sometimes alternate trajectories to be acknowledged and addressed in order for the narrative to move forward. Because being is always becoming, we are always at the cusp of divergences, and always finding ourselves called to pick up beats that have been (almost) dropped. *Wait—here, too, is something*.

This working-through of presence has produced a somewhat dense and sprawling document. It seems appropriate, then, to offer a few final pages of summation: not to retrace my

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[492] See Couillard (2019) for more on this "'cite-specific' strategy that privileges the original authors' voices" (p. 45).

steps, but to acknowledge the outlines of a series of propositions that, through this being and doing, are now emergent. These emergent propositions reflect the ongoing work of presencing: results specific to the material-discursive apparatus that produced them. As summation, they exceed reiteration, go beyond a purely causal telos, and are clearly not a conclusion. They are, rather, open-ended, intra-active becomings that appear as marks on the body of this text.

1. *We are thinking bodies.*

In *Truth and Method*, Hans-Georg Gadamer (2004/1975) offers a simple, obvious fact: "The being-in-itself toward which research, whether in physics or biology, is directed is relative to the way being is posited in its manner of inquiry" (p. 449). His intent is to remind us that *the way being is posited*—an organizing proposition rather than an incontrovertible truth—is precisely what creates the boundaries that allow a scientific "discipline" with all of its attendant discoveries to appear. Such structural decisions are generally so taken-for-granted that they are rendered invisible, doing their work unseen, behind the scenes, as it were, to determine what is seen and indeed what is see-able. Change the proposition, however, and one may see something no less true, but entirely different. Baffling conundrums lose their relevance, no longer constitutive of the borders of intelligibility that define one's world, to be replaced by new sets of questions requiring new methods of inquiry. One of the assumptions that has appeared to ground Western philosophy is that consciousness—human consciousness as an image of thought, at any rate—is a thing-in-itself. This mirrors a religious belief that we harbour souls somehow independent of our flesh. As an emergent phenomenon of a thinking body, human consciousness discovers itself not only as a self-awareness, but as an agency that appears to exert a dominion over the very body that engenders it, even as that same body also appears to hold secrets beyond its dominion. As awareness, consciousness is drawn to posit itself as a thing-in-itself that precedes and is independent of the body it finds itself unaccountably tethered to. A consciousness that happens to have a body, but exists independently of it, encounters all manner of difficulties in trying to reconcile its apparently immaterial existence—presumptively but irrefutably proven by its awareness of itself—with the dynamic, suspect evidence of a body—incomprehensible in its fleshy four-dimensional substantiality. If, instead of positing consciousness in these terms, we start with the premise that consciousness is a phenomenon or animation *of* a body—recognizing

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that bodies are not simply things we happen to have, but constitutive of *what we are*, we are led to an entirely different set of concerns in relation to being.

2. *Thinking is a bodily process*.

Thought and consciousness are closely linked ideas; we tend to use them almost interchangeably as abstractions that describe manifestations independent of the four-dimensional, dynamic configurations from which they emerge. We give them meanings as entities by delineating a noninnocent border that separates material from immaterial. For many of us, thought is further relegated to the exclusive province and product of a brain, hived off as the calculated contents of rational awareness. Asserting that there are several "ways of thinking"— that what the brain as the seat of thought *produces* includes not only concepts, but also percepts and affects—already necessitates an expansion of our valuation of what thought is. Going further, questioning not only the limits of what constitutes brain function but also the very borders of what counts as belonging to the brain, given its positioning or implication in numerous "open" systems, the distinction between a brain and the rest of the body of which it is a part begins to appear somewhat arbitrary. Computational models of thinking as an activity confined to an organ located in the cranium fail to recognize how thinking is dispersed throughout a body, manifested as much as expressed through movement, and supported by a will to live and a capacity to recognize and facilitate conditions for thriving that can be found operating at a cellular level, seemingly independent of any overarching brain structure.

3. *Awareness is dispersed across bodies.*

As humans, we put great stock in our self-awareness, the wonder that amidst all of the seemingly mute objects of the world, we are able to declare ourselves as subjects, to step forth and pronounce, "I am." Being, concerned with its own being. In rare moments, we might stop to wonder at all of the creatures we recognize as organic, as alive: not only capable, for a fleeting duration, of growing, reproducing, responding, and transforming, but clearly invested in undertaking and furthering those processes. This assertion of "I am" through the sheer ineffability of being alive can also be recognized as being concerned with its own being. Then again, we can look at the incendiary stars, or the configurations of planets that surround them, and see that even

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at such an unimaginable scale in relation to a human body, there appears a kind of vitality and design, a play of forces with their own coherence, their own styles and trajectories. Being, concerned with its own being. Even so humble an object as a rock is composed of countless atoms, distinct in their ever-animate configurations of subatomic particles, that somehow continue to cling to themselves in an elaborate manifestation of attractions and resistances that we perceive, at our human scale of awareness, as imbued with particular qualia, exhibiting characteristics, taking on a character. Being, concerned with its own being. One might argue that it is this very "self-concern" that allows us to see an entity *as* an entity, exhibiting an agency that, for a time, in a space, maintains recognizable borders and engages in recognizable behaviours. But self-awareness—at least in the form of dynamic but coherent organization—occurs at multiple scales, not just at the scale we recognize as delineating discrete objects, but at the scale of systems. Even our thinking bodies, which we experience as spatio-temporal-energic wholes, are complex, multiple systems, made up of countless other bodies, many of which we have come to acknowledge as independent, organic beings in their own right. One of the functions of a brain is to maintain homeostasis, but homeostasis itself, the movement toward and animate maintenance of equilibrium within a system, *is* manifest awareness. Awareness is the coalescence of a spatio-temporal-energic whole: being, concerned with its own being. And it only rarely involves a brain or a human consciousness.

4. *Presence is animate.*

One of our most primordial abstractions, idealizations or essences is the concept of a *thing*. It is a foundation upon which we construct understanding itself, transforming the inchoate into the recognizable. Against the unfathomability of not-being we find, rather, categories of discernibility: shapes, outlines, borders, delineations, name-ables with qualities of mass and texture, materiality and substance. Everywhere we search, we find entities. Empirically, the noun rules. We wonder at the world, and ask, why is there some *thing* rather than nothing? But we might equally ask, in the face of our consciousness's tendency to abstract matter, time, and space into distinct entities—which Theodor Adorno labels as paralogism (see footnote 89 above)—why is there movement rather than stasis? In a trick of Western languages, *being* takes the form of a gerund: a verb reified as a noun. It is the same for qualities, events, processes, systems: language,

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certainly, and perhaps thought as well, reach toward a continual reduction of dynamics, of actions, of agencies, of occurrences, of anything that can be found to exhibit a coherence that spans a space or a duration—which is to say all that is capable of appearing or being imagined in four dimensions—to things. Entities with borders and limits, extracted (and abstracted) from the unextractable relationalities of time and space in which their continuity is never determinable as absolute stasis. Things, nouns, entities: sentences with no visible predicate. Being is always becoming, always moving, always localizing. Being is a continual happening, flickering among multiple and—in the terms that we are able to experience on a human scale—competing coherencies that can only be described in relation to a transformative flux of intertwined and indivisible materiality, temporality, and spatiality. Though we know this animateness by living it, it seems there are no adequate words for speaking of it. Language buries this is-ness, leaving only traces, silent *différances*, and imprecise appeals to movement and inhabitation. Being, however, is animate, manifesting itself through, with, and as movement.

5. *Presence is being and doing.*

The abstract concept of the *thing* with its silent, invisible is-ness posits entities that do not *contain* or *exist as* time and space in the same way that they are understood to *contain* or *exist as* their materiality; instead, things are conceived as being *within* time and space, which are abstracted as separate, independent and mysterious domains of containment. This inflects being as a kind of passivity, and relegates animateness to an attribute of matter. Conceiving of matter in this way ultimately casts being as a silent trace that works behind the scenes, disrupting the idealized, static borders that secure our conception of matter by mysteriously adding an alien and destabilizing temporality and spatiality. Presence, however, is not simply a passive manifestation of entities; it is also an active poiesis of agencies. Presence is the relationality that establishes borders and produces time, space, and matter as a spatio-temporal-energic whole. Presence *is*, certainly. Presence also *does*. Movement is not only an effect, an attribute, a repositioning of objects in space. Animation, movement, doing, is mattering; it is at once a production and manifestation of four-dimensionality, of *timespacematter*. It acts in the spacing when the terms *time*, *space* and *matter* are held separate as sedimented abstractions, and it acts in the continuity that binds the neologism *timespacematter* as a single term. Doing is the fabric of presence.

6. *Presence is co-presence.*

We imagine *things* in a splendour of isolation, with solid, self-contained borders that can allow them to be coherently placed against any backdrop. Yet no thing appears unto itself, removed from its agential situatedness as time, space, and matter. A thinking-through of presence inevitably resorts to a consideration of particular instantiations of presence: this document has framed self, world, and others as specific manifestations of being-ness, each with their own claims to verifiable existence. Yet none of these configurations could be understood to exist if they were held in isolation, except by a forgetting or bracketing out of the very conditions by which they come to stand as individuated existences. Beings become discernible as entities only in relation to their surrounds, their contexts, their fields of not-this against which they can claim their thisness. Presence is pure relationality, coherent only in its knottedness. There is no way to understand presence by undoing and smoothing out the knot, removing the bindedness of a spatio-temporal-energic whole in order to discover what remains. Take away the enacting that is the knot, and there is no longer a knot. This curious relationality is at once enacting and enacted, agency and entity. A *this* becomes by holding itself or acting with and against a background (an impoverished spatial metaphor!) of *not-this*—at the same time that the *not-this* becomes by holding itself or acting with and against the foreground (an extension of the same impoverished spatial metaphor!) of the *this*. To be a *this* is to enact or actualize relationality, establishing a set of boundaries that constitute a spatio-temporal-energic whole.

7. *Presence actualizes.*

One of the marvels of thinking bodes is our ability to imagine. As a generator of awareness—a manifestation of being concerned with its own being—human consciousness does not confine itself to maintaining its body's system-wide homeostasis amid the immediate and proximate conditions that define its borders. Human consciousness reaches out beyond itself, actively testing and reconfiguring the limits of its permeable borders and of the immediacies and proximities within which it operates. Human consciousness integrates multiple capacities for moving, perceiving, feeling, conceptualizing, representing, remembering, and projecting, attuned not only to what is and what has been, but also to what could be and what might have been.

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Thinking is a powerful and animate intra-active agency concerned with the realizable, the compossible, and the virtual as much as it is with the actual. Alas, human thought is an awareness that is also partial and fallible, in no way exempt from the enacting and enacted intra-active agencies and entities it encounters through (and as) being. What we think, what we are consciously aware of, what we imagine, are not the whole of what we *are* as thinking bodies. They are parts of a larger awareness and intelligibility that thinking bodies manifest and express through and as their instantiation *as being and doing*—as animation and materiality.

Presence actualizes, enacting intelligibility as it accretes animate situatedness. The continual unfolding of *timespacematter* is this accretion and enactment. Being is condition-al, not a stasis but a homeostasis, continually evolving and becoming as it manifests, on a universal scale, its self-awareness as a spatio-temporal-energic whole made up of countless localized spatio-temporal-energic wholes in constant enaction and reaction. On a human scale of awareness, this often appears as ambiguity, as if our material-animate awareness somehow lagged behind its material-animate manifestation. This seeming lag is not evidence of a trace more primordial than being; it is simply one aspect of how being's durationality feels and manifests to a thinking body's emergent consciousness. As a spatio-temporal-energic whole, a thinking body lives a continuity that is always actual and always becoming.

8. *Actualization is shared meaningfulness.*

As thinking bodies, we are aspirational creatures. We seek experiences that allow us or even compel us to sense, feel and think in particular ways. We seek to know and understand the private self and shared world we find ourselves inhabiting. We seek others like ourselves whose actions and behaviours affirm that they are also selves with similar or complementary understandings of a common world. We seek purpose. Our everyday vernacular offers a wealth of relational expressions for the way a thinking body sometimes finds itself to be *in the zone*, *at the right place at the right time*, but can also find itself to be *out of sorts*, perhaps feeling *with it* in relation to some aspects of daily life but *at a loss* in terms of others. Sometimes we find ourselves *in sync* with those around us, and at other times we feel completely *out of step*. Perceptively, affectively, conceptually, we find ourselves in various dynamic states of alignment and misalignment as our body acts to maintain homeostasis while navigating a complex intra-active

relationality with an environment filled with agencies and entities that can leave us enthralled, bewildered or simply indifferent. Much of what happens seems random, beyond our control, irrelevant, unfathomable, or pointless. Sometimes, nothing seems real. Sometimes, we feel utterly alone or misunderstood. Much of the time, we are not even awake to the world. And nothing that we manage to achieve lasts.

Still, through all of this, our thinking bodies enact our individuated beings and doings as animate and material time and space, actualizing our selves as spatio-temporal-energic wholes alongside others as part of a world. When confronted with a situation, we may find ourselves confused or uncertain. We may hesitate. We may even completely misunderstand what is happening. Confusions, uncertainties, hesitations, misunderstandings—these may feel like glitches in the continuity of being and doing. Consider, however: time, space, materiality, animation—none of these things stop or disappear in these interstices. If our bodies are cut, they do not dither over the question of whether or not they have been wounded, whether or not they should bleed, even though our conscious awareness may not even register that we have been cut and are bleeding. Our individual cells continue to go about their being and doing. Returning to those feelings of confusion, uncertainty, hesitation, and misunderstanding—consider also that none of these are nothing. Each expresses a meaning; each is a *something*. Intelligibility, the inexorable assertion of being as the intra-action of relationality, is the animate continuity of *timespacematter* unfolding. Actualization is the pure manifestation of shared meaningfulness, distributed across and as the sum of the spatio-temporal-energic whole of being. Intra-active relationality, not perfectly reproducible representation, is the measure of our shared meaningfulness.

9. *Presence manifests as and through intra-active relationality.*

One of the most basic expressions of mathematics is the equation, a statement of calculation and equivalence in which a particular sequence of operations yields an absolute, infinitely reproducible set of results. The spectacular crux of an equation, its astonishing magic, is the equals sign, a symbol that boldly declares, "this is the same as that"—perfect, conclusive metaphoricity. The concept of metaphoricity appears to rest on a determination of likenesses: how closely does a representation or an essence reproduce, describe, or depict an original that is never

directly apprehendable as such, but must be expressed through equivalence? The agency of an equation, however, is not a matter of describing the identicality of two distinct entities, one an original and the other its perfect copy. An equation is an expression of relationality. Its entities, the *things* that it makes visible, are variables—abstractions that, when contained within the closed framework and enacting forces of a particular set of operations, produce a predictable and repeatable outcome. It is the relationality, not the equals sign, that does the work of producing an outcome, allowing a result to appear, accrete, or concretize. No matter how complex or simple the equation, in order to remain "true," the agency rests in the variables and the operations described, not in some mysterious movement of a symbol that seems to primordially precede and enjoin them. If a particular *variable* (entity) is fixed on one side of the equation, there will be direct and—if the equation is correctly formulated—calculable consequences for the opposite side. If a particular *operation* (agency) is fixed on one side of the equation, this too will result in direct and calculable consequences on the other side. The equals sign is a statement of the two sides' intra-activeness, affirming that each variable and operation within an equation has a verifiable relationship with and impact on the others. An equation is a statement of terms that are mutually defining not in terms of their identicality, but in their intra-active relationality.

10. *Thought ≠ language; consciousness ≠ writing.*

In *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, Marshall McLuhan (1994/1964) famously uses the term "media" to identify technological extensions of man's physical body and of his senses. For him, media include everything from the spoken and written word to electric light; from clothing to housing; from wheels to roads; from the phonograph to the television. Unlike Friedrich Kittler, who is interested in considering how the technologies we invent provide us with models or metaphors for understanding our senses (see footnote 488 above), however, McLuhan asserts that "the 'message' of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs" (p. 8), and that "any extension, whether of skin, hand or foot, affects the whole psychic and social complex" (p. 4). Thus, McLuhan suggests, to understand the impact of a technology, we should look at how it changes the organization of a culture rather than trying to analyze the "content" that an individual medium appears to deliver.

McLuhan's understanding of media as progressive extensions of human senses and capacities leads him to pair up technologies:

> The content of writing is speech, just as the written word is the content of print, and print is the content of the telegraph. If it is asked, "What is the content of speech?," it is necessary to say, "It is an actual process of thought, which is in itself nonverbal" (p. 8).

To think through how various media impact our being and doing as thinking bodies by enfolding themselves relationally into our ways of being and doing is quite different from abstracting media as metaphors that stand in for or describe the ways of being and doing that McLuhan argues become a medium's "contents." In his account, speech is not thought; thought is speech's content. One of McLuhan's key insights is that particular technologies privilege one sense over another, and the resulting alteration of our thinking bodies' "sense ratio" is formational in developing the patterns that shape particular cultures. In his view, "Any invention or technology is an extension or self-amputation of our physical bodies, and such extension also demands new ratios or new equilibriums among the other organs and extensions of the body" (p. 45). This accords with a dynamic, intra-active, relational description of being. McLuhan goes further, however, intimating the possibility that humankind is itself simply a medium for a larger consciousness: "Man is a form of expression who is traditionally expected to repeat himself and to echo the praise of his Creator. […] Man has the power to reverberate the Divine thunder, by verbal translation" (p. 57). Appealing to a Creator who stands outside relationality undoes the very work McLuhan so studiously attends to in his description of the relational agency of media as extensions of human bodies and sensoria. It asserts a divine entity or agency that precedes and controls its own emergence through and as a spatio-temporal-energic whole: a consciousness *without a body*. As an extrapolation of the pattern of intra-active relationality, his example over-reaches the observable limits of how entities emerge *within* the patterns of relationality. It seems that the media we invent and with which we intra-act cannot help but lay claim, at least in our thought and imagination, to the very heart of being, to meaningfulness itself. This over-reach of metaphor corresponds with what I have identified as human thought's concern with the realizable, the compossible, and the virtual. Our capacity to imagine new relationalities and to project not only the patterns, agencies, and entities that might *derive from* them, but also what patterns, agencies, and entities might come before them as causes is one of our key intra-active agencies as thinking

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bodies. It is a capacity that fuels what Hannah Arendt characterizes as the human freedom to act. Each of our imaginings, however accurate or inaccurate, folds into relationality and engenders consequences, altering not only our *understanding* of what is or is not possible—what we are able to see—but also *how* we find ourselves able to be and do. The twelve emergent propositions that I am offering here lay claim to a utility of metaphor that is not tied to a speculative over-reach of resemblance (positing, for example, that a divinely directed awareness as entity must surely precede any happening that actualizes as four-dimensionality—or, that the equals sign must surely be the magically agential producer of any outcome), but to how relationality enacts the becoming of intelligible agencies and entities. We cannot deduce that directed awareness *precedes* what happens; we can only discover how directed awareness *emerges* from, through, and as happening.

11. *Discourse is intra-active engagement with the resources of our shared world.*

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Michel Foucault (1989/1969) commits himself to "a task that consists of not […] treating discourses as groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (p. 54). While his intent is not precisely to move discourse beyond its situatedness in and as language, his arguments do move toward a multidisciplinary understanding of discourse that encompasses not only terminologies and signs, be they verbal or written, but also, more broadly, doings: acts and practices that bring entities and agencies into appearance. If Deleuze concerns himself with exploring new *images of thought*, then one could say that Foucault's arguments usher in a new *image of discourse*. While formal dictionary definitions may indeed mark discourse as verbal or written communication, discourse as *practices* suggests something more general. Discourse is an activity that attends to the particular contexts and relationalities that allow a constellation of agencies and entities to appear; put another way, it is an active tending of (and within) the webs or systems of relationality that bring specific worlds into view. Foucault is perhaps interested to show how language is capable of exceeding an exclusively "discursive" realm by *forming* objects that are then found to have made their appearance in the "material" realm. The *systematic* setting and defining of terms and focusing of sensory awareness that we call discourse is not confined, however, to a uniquely powerful chain of signifiers named as

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language. Maxine Sheets-Johnstone suggests that our thinking bodies as animate form are semantic templates primed to meaningfully apprehend particular forms and movements. Human language, though it plays a profoundly constitutive role in the proliferation of human culture, is not the only common, built-up, and evolving collection, repository, tissue, or system of relational meanings at our disposal. There are many ways for the selves that appear in a world to "speak" to one another. Language is only one specialized and therefore readily recognizable instance of thinking bodies' myriad capacities for and dispositions toward intra-active engagement with the resources of our shared world. We construct, reconfigure, and share meanings with others by grappling with the resources we discover as constituting our common world—in behaviours and actions we find ourselves already attuned to; in behaviours and actions we learn or become attuned to from the disciplining and disciplinary enactments and (re-)enforcements of our world and of the others who populate it; and through attunements that our grapplings themselves instantiate. Performance art has taught me that there are many ways to facilitate intersubjective apprehension, many ways to intervene in the dynamic configurations and actualizations of our shared four-dimensional environment in order to initiate or facilitate a recognition, affirmation, or complicity that can pass from one thinking body to another: *Ah, you experience (know/ feel/ perceive/ sense/ think) this too…*

12. *Who is a reckoning of what counts as having a world.*

  Western languages carry an embedded distinction between two types of material entities—nonhuman whats, that can be apprehended only in their objecthood, and human whos, beings accorded the special status of a subjecthood that allows them to account for their awareness as selves. As thinking bodies, we place a profound value on finding ourselves among others whom we can apprehend as selves: others we not only care for and about, but also with whom we can share the specifically human *meaningfulness* of having a world, which we experience and express through thought, language, and culture. Most of us feel a longing to have others with whom we can recognize a reciprocal or complementary understanding of how we sense and move through our worlds—a longing felt not simply as a desire, but as a necessity in order to thrive. To lack this very specialized relationship of mutual intelligibility is to face instead

a terrible, crushing loneliness. We have evolved as a tribal or familial species: none of us can survive entirely alone, and few of us would wish to.

Our worlds, however, are not enclosed by either our individual consciousnesses or even our collective cultures. They are worlds not only because we inhabit and are part of them, but also because they extend beyond our permeable borders to encompass many types of others—all of whom we find ourselves engaging with in intra-active relationality. This relationality impacts how our selves as entities and agencies manifest as it simultaneously shapes our shared world. In *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium,* Donna J. Haraway (1996) suggests that we refigure our relationships to all of the others that we find populating our worlds according to revised terms of kinship. While kinship traditionally refers to a common lineage determined by bloodline, a profusion of material-discursive practices, technological extensions, and hybridities contributing to the ongoing construction of our cyborg selves also determines who counts as our kin. In Haraway's figuration, "Kinship is a technology for producing the material and semiotic effect of natural relationship, of shared kind" (p. 53), and what determines that kinship is not the circulation of a shared blood, but the circulation of a much more permeable, mutable, and transposable common substance: data. Haraway finds herself asking:

> Who are my kin in this odd world of promising monsters, vampires, surrogates, living tools, and aliens? How are natural kinds identified in the realms of late-twentieth-century technoscience? What kinds of crosses and offspring count as legitimate and illegitimate, to whom and at what cost? Who are my familiars, my siblings, and what kind of livable world are we trying to build? (p. 52).

Moving from an anthropocentric conviction that only human language can express identity to a brave new world that posits data as the common language that "speaks" and therefore marks all entities as others (in the Levinasian sense of beings who have a world) is perhaps a bit of a leap within the contexts of this inquiry, a mixing of figurations, if not metaphors. Yet Haraway's embodied, partial view from a somewhere—her measurements as a partial observer describing an actualized and actualizable world populated by nonhuman and even nonorganic entities recognizable as kin—overlaps and resonates with the propositions emerging from this investigation into notions of presence. Determining who counts as kin—which by extension includes an attunement to a wider notion of what speaks, and how—is also a reckoning of what

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counts as a world: what *matters* as a particular instantiation of presence. We ignore the who-ness that determines others' worlds at our peril, for their proliferation or demise will undoubtedly have unexpected, unpredictable, and irreversible consequences in determining our own who-ness and our common world. Presence as the enacting and enacted agency of intra-active relationality brings us into contact with others and their worldings *as kin*, already speaking to us in animate and material ways that impact us—that matter—whether or not we are consciously attuned to their ways of speaking. We would be well advised to pay closer attention to the intra-active relationality that makes all entities our kin. To be attentive to their presence is to be attentive to how others have meaning for us, how they make us who and what we are, perhaps opening up possibilities for greater finesse in exercising the agencies we as thinking bodies bring to our own and the world's becoming.

Afterwords and otherwises

Because presence is always becoming, it can be difficult to decide what constitutes a fitting completion that draws a border around a particular instantiation of being and doing. Whatever state it achieves, *it is what it is*. But the aspirational thinking body imagines and projects otherwises: what it could be, what it might have been. We experience these hauntings as being's excesses and lacks, missed beats whose echoes resound in the play of our intra-active agency. There are words that were written as part of my working-through of presence that appeared for a time, only to disappear under erasure, to be altered beyond recognition, or to be relegated to other documents of notes that may or may not resurface in other forms. As the writing progressed, some words were pushed forward to be taken up in later sections: not now, but perhaps in a while. The in-a-whiles of this text as an individuation are nearing their end, but as I write this, there is still one bordered set of words that has so far persisted in its actualized incompleteness: a loose end, an untidy, unfinished bit of business. It reads as a questioning reminder to myself of a potential task, a road still open to be taken. The words appear to relate to a dictionary entry I must have consulted somewhere along the way—a common-enough research method to organize one's thoughts around a topic of study. What are the meanings of this term *presence* in daily usage? Somewhat perversely, it occurred to me that it might be fun to do this bit

of usually preparatory work at the end, after the terms had been laboriously organized, set, and explored rather than before.

I don't remember the source I consulted to produce this note, however. It is neither my trusty *Concise Oxford Dictionary* nor the dictionary resource loaded into my computer. It is not even my *New Roget's Thesaurus in Dictionary Form*. This enduring scrap is a ragtag presencing unmoored from its cite-able origins. As a listing of terms set down in an imprecise shorthand that is not only messy but also somewhat indefensible (why *categories*?) or undefined (what are the intended meanings of a right-pointed double chevron?), I find it to be an evocative bit of concrete poetry whose figurations of *presence* re-open the reading and remembering of all the working-through that now, in text form, precedes it.

> Look at the dictionary categories of presence: existence, attendance, bearing, demeanour, aura, ghost >> composure (*presence* of mind)? Or maybe save this for the conclusion?

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