

THE AFFECT THEORY READER

WORLDINGS,
TENSIONS,
FUTURES

2

*Gregory J. Seigworth and
Carolyn Pedwell, editors*



The Affect Theory Reader 2

BUY

ANIMA: Critical Race Studies Otherwise

A series edited by Mel Y. Chen,
Ezekiel J. Dixon-Román,
and Jasbir K. Puar

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THE AFFECT THEORY READER 2

WORLDINGS, TENSIONS, FUTURES

Gregory J. Seigworth and Carolyn Pedwell, editors

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In memory of Lauren Berlant, 1957–2021

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

GREG

By the time these acknowledgments are in print and before your eyes, it will have been thirteen years since the first *Affect Theory Reader* was released in fall 2010. Melissa Gregg and I honestly had no inkling of what was coming. In late fall 2015, when I hosted the Affect Theory: Worldings Tensions Futures conference at my home institution of Millersville University in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, more than seven hundred people (representing nearly every humanities discipline imaginable) submitted abstracts from over twenty-five countries. The whole event was so glorious—packed with such graciousness of spirit and generosity of intellect—that I almost did not want to contaminate its aura by doing another one. But three years later, after the launch of *Capacious: Journal for Emerging Affect Inquiry*, there was a second affect theory conference in Lancaster and then ssass (Society for the Study of Affect Summer School) in August 2019. Every time, it was the same joyous vibes! Something happens at gatherings around affect: an atmosphere of encounter, of receptivity, of connection, of disciplines slipping a bit past their bounds, of academia affectionately lived.

At the wrap event of the *Capacious* conference in August 2018, I told Carolyn that I was thinking about putting together an *Affect*

Theory Reader 2 and wondered if she would want to be coeditor. She did. And then she waited and waited (and wrote a great book called *Revolutionary Routines* and had a baby!) while I tried to get my arms around what kind of shape this project might take. In January 2021, in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, I sent Carolyn a draft of a book proposal that she approved and improved. We shared it with Duke University Press a week or so later. Our invite to contributors went out soon after, and by summer 2021 and into 2022, Carolyn and I were very busy editing chapter submissions, suggesting revisions to authors, and cowriting our introduction. We laugh now at the beast (at almost 22,000 words) that the introduction became, but it was simply a pleasure to write it together. Carolyn has a gift for getting to the point, staying on task, and producing the most remarkable insights by attending to the particulars of an argument (our own, someone else's) and its sweep at the same time. I tend to float and drift as a writer, picking up pieces of ideas, feels, and references, and seeing where they might go/where they might take us, lingering with the potentials for veering into the unanticipated and the otherwise. We found a rhythm and routine for bouncing the writing between us that worked to say something original about affect theory (or so we hope!) without shutting down alternate understandings and approaches. Carolyn put up with my relentless tinkering and fussing over word choice, argument coherence, and writing voice—particularly in the final stretch—with such good humor and a gentle pulling on the reins; there should be a coeditor medal of valor. Seriously.

I cannot fully capture the experience of serving as founding member and coeditor for *Capacious: Journal for Emerging Affect Inquiry*. Mathew Arthur, Wendy Truran, Johnny Gainer, and Bryan Behrenshausen: each of them is an indispensable part of the smartest and most beautiful journal in the world. Objectively so! Best of all, *Capacious* has contributed tangibly to the futures of graduate students and early career researchers. We are small but mighty and will continue to sand off the rough edges of the academic world as much as possible. I couldn't be prouder of what *Capacious* continues to do. Thanks, too, to my Millersville colleagues and administration for participating in reading groups, assisting with the behind-the-scenes work for affect theory conferences (2015 and 2018) and a summer school (2019), and generally indulging my passions. And my ten-

der appreciation to Randy Johnson, who facilitates a weekly online reading group with such grace, intellect, and good humor that it has become impossible to ever imagine leaving.

On a very personal level, Jackie and Kendall are my world. Affect sticks to everything. A final aside: John Turner—Please get in touch. It's been too long and I/we miss you.

CAROLYN

When I learned that there was to be a second *Affect Theory Reader*, I felt a ripple of excited anticipation to see what constellation of wonders the new book would unfold. When Greg invited me to join him as a coeditor of the collection, I was floored. It has been a pleasure to work with Greg, our extraordinary contributors, and the wonderful Duke University Press to bring *The Affect Theory Reader 2* to fruition. My appreciation goes to Melissa Gregg for conceiving the idea for the original reader in the first decade of the new millennium, when contemporary theories and studies of affect were still emergent and percolating, and to Melissa and Greg for curating such an astonishing collection of essays in 2010—which has been so important and generative to my own scholarship and to the work of so many interdisciplinary students, scholars, and practitioners of affect transnationally. I've learned a great deal from Greg in the process of putting together this collection and have been continually astounded by his ingenuity, clarity of thought, and uncanny capacity to translate the most complex theoretical and ethico-political dynamics into beautiful words that weave suggestive paths and establish potent connections I never would have expected—not to mention his masterful knowledge of, and infectious zeal for, all things affect. Greg is someone who genuinely loves, and is exceptionally talented at, bringing people together to establish the most generative relations and possibilities, and it has been inspiring to be part of the relations and possibilities underlying and reaching out from this reader. I will certainly miss our frequent and animated Facebook Messenger chats and video calls on all aspects of this collection—both the weighty and the entirely trivial!

My gratitude goes to my dear colleagues and friends and particularly Beckie Coleman, Angharad Closs Stephens, Mónica Moreno Figueroa, and Dawn Lyon for ongoing and vital conversations linked to affect, including so many of the concepts, themes, and issues addressed in

this volume, which have been pivotal to my own thinking and ways of inhabiting the world. Thanks, as ever, to my family for everything. Luis Cereceda and Sadie Cereceda Pedwell were excited to finally meet Greg in person when we held our first preview event for this collection, organized by the wonderful Tony D. Sampson in London, in July 2021.

GREG AND CAROLYN

Our contributors to *The Affect Theory Reader 2* were a dream come true. It was fascinating to read through chapter submissions as they arrived, send along feedback that was always taken into account during revisions, and then place these chapters into different constellations to discover what emerged from their interstices. It was in reaching across the chapters and their brilliant contents that we realized the introduction had to be called “A Shimmer of Inventories”—each contributor brought such a singular intensity to their work. Every one of them stirs up something that challenges and illuminates a particular angle or orthodoxy of affect study. Duke University Press is likewise dreamy and shimmery. Ken Wissoker is simply the best. Our sincere appreciation also to Ryan Kendall for shepherding us through the nuts and bolts of Duke’s forms, contracts, and so forth. Much appreciation also to our project editor, Jessica Ryan, and to Brian Ostrander and colleagues at Westchester Publishing Services. Thanks to the four anonymous reviewers at Duke for very insightful advice on the draft document and the final submission, which strengthened it immensely. We wish to also express our gratitude to the series editors at Anima (Mel Chen, Jasbir Puar, and Ezekiel Dixon-Román) for inviting this book to join their amazing lineup. Delighted to be in such good company! Finally, thanks to Claire Giblin for allowing us again to use one of her gorgeous artworks on the cover.

Last week, Lauren Berlant’s *On the Inconvenience of Other People* arrived at Greg’s house hot off the press from Duke. Lauren, as readers will see, never left our minds while pulling this project together. What to say? Lauren is all-around. Working with the Berlant estate to sort out the publishing of some of her/their final writing was an honor. Ian Horswill and Laurie Shannon are superb at maintaining Lauren’s vibrancy. Thanks also to Katie Stewart for assisting us with securing the rights to publish these final pieces by Lauren Berlant. Other people are not always inconvenient.

INTRODUCTION

A Shimmer of Inventories

Gregory J. Seigworth and Carolyn Pedwell

So perhaps there is not a monoaffective imaginary.
—Lauren Berlant, “Affect and the Politics of Austerity:
An Interview Exchange with Lauren Berlant,” 2014

In October 2010, *The Affect Theory Reader*—coedited by Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth—was released into what feels like a wholly different world historical moment. Now, a little over a decade later, we (Greg and Carolyn) have assembled this follow-up volume of entirely new chapters. Whereas *The Affect Theory Reader*’s preface writing wrapped up on the eve of (literally the night before) Obama’s first inauguration, this new reader enters the world in the enduring aftermath of Trumpism and the transnational rise of authoritarian populism, the urgency of #BlackLivesMatter writ large, the unrelenting forces of worldwide ecological devastation, the *bios* insecurities exacerbated by the global coronavirus pandemic, the unconscionable humanitarian crises in war zones like Palestine, Syria, Ukraine (and too many more), the visible increase in violence against women protests, the intertwined predicaments and pleasures wrought by new technological interfaces, artificial intelligence, and social media, a radical rethinking of the operations of “care” through trans/queer/crip/feminist lenses, and, well . . . name your event, pick your adventure, navigate whatever calamity. By the time this reader is in your hands, who knows how this world will feel? Where will old/new promises and threats be located? But beneath such big events, affect—in its often

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supple and subtle evental unfurlings—is always impinging, accreting, shuffling, and reshuffling: in, among, and alongside the myriad ripples and miniscule skin pricklings and contact surfaces of the thoroughly mundane.

One of the chief aims of the original *Affect Theory Reader* was to capture without closing off an undulating, albeit never-to-be-cohesive, field of inquiry in the midst of its coming-to-bloom. Providing a few foundational affect coordinates—such as “forces,” “encounters,” “in-betweenness,” “capacity,” “intensities,” and their “passages”—avoiding any bold proclamations about an affective turn (not a turn but rather a cluster of attunings!), and recognizing much longer traditions and trajectories (maybe eight? always more) of affect orientations, the volume featured many of the most vibrant voices in affect’s study, strung them together along a few threads of commonality, but also did not mind too much if the seams showed. The first book arrived as its own kind of encounter with intensities.

In the decade plus since the first volume landed—and not without some amount of scuffling and pushback—affect theory continues to open invigorating paths for intellectual inquiry, reshape long-standing disciplinary debates and conceptual formations, and inspire imaginative cross-contaminations of academic and aesthetic genres, even televisual ones. What better evidence of this than the moment in Netflix’s series *The Chair* (2021–) when Dr. Ji-Yoon Kim (played by Sandra Oh) refuses to provide David Duchovny (played by David Duchovny) with a quick tutorial on developments in the humanities since his undergraduate days at Princeton, finally saying exasperatedly, “A lot has happened in the last thirty years!” Duchovny demands to know, “Like what?” And the very first words out of Sandra Oh’s mouth? “Like, affect theory.” (Yes, Oh’s character then offers a litany of other theories, but let us allow this tiny shimmer for “affect theory” to linger for a bit longer in the atmosphere of its emergence.) This new reader gathers together more than twenty people doing some of the most interesting and challenging work informed by a capacious understanding of affect’s doings: drawn from a diverse (often divergent) set of disciplinary orientations and methodologies, uniquely contoured critical and conceptual formations, variously lived-ongoing situations/experiences/histories, and with specific political, ethical, and world-building (and unbuilding) commitments. If 2010’s *Affect*

Theory Reader brought, at least, a modicum of coherence to a twinkling constellation of multidisciplinary shimmerings, we hope that this collection manages to shake a few things loose by injecting elements of disquiet, tension, ambiguity, obstinacy, oversaturatedness, cruel-esque optimism, and sometimes unmitigated pessimism into any too ready acclamation of affect theories' taken-for-granted presumptions, procedures, and palpabilities.

This book does not pretend to offer anything like a comprehensive survey of full-fledged, far-flung affect theory in its various modes,



Figure I.1. Still of David Duchovny "Like what?" from *The Chair* (2021).



Figure I.2. Still of Sandra Oh "Like affect theory..." from *The Chair* (2021).

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moods, and guises. That has become an even more impossible task. Affect studies continues to evolve and mutate as a rangy and writhing poly-jumble of a creature (with far more than eight tentacles). Indeed, we have a mutual friend who confessed somewhat frustratedly that capturing the contemporary state of affect theory was not unlike entering a “fugue state.” But to us, this only indicates how there is no universal key for transposing affect and its study into harmonious attunement across the conceptual/disciplinary territories of academic inquiry and practice. There will never be a single overarching critical-methodological magnetic force that magically consolidates all the touchpoints, vectors, and ambiances of affect study into any representative totality. And we would not wish it otherwise. Here, we fall happily in line with dearly departed (yet forever present) Lauren Berlant: there is no monoaffective imaginary.

Somewhat more modestly, *The Affect Theory Reader 2: Worldings, Tensions, Futures* is intended to reorient and sometimes disorient its readers, once more with feeling (even unfeeling), to the past, present, and future state(s) of affect study. What is at stake in the contact encounters or singular *worldings* of affect as sensed through and between sometimes quite differently directed disciplinary (as well as ill-disciplined) registers and atmospheres? How have inevitable *tensions* (political, aesthetic, ethical, theoretical, and more) catalyzed debates over the utility of theories of affect for established and nascent fields of knowledge and practice? Where are the *futures* of affect study pointing? In the latter case, such a move might necessitate stretching back to regain or trace anew neglected roots in the routes that tend and bend toward and through affect study.

Many of our contributors engage with how the conceptualizations and potentialities of affect have shifted since the first volume—whether that takes the form of provocations to reject or depart from particular affective lineages or lenses, imaginative reinterpretations and/or dishabitations of past sites and sources of affect theory, or speculative visions of new foundations and formations for the study of affect. Several confront affect studies’ occlusions and omissions—around matters of race, indigeneity, decoloniality, alternative genealogies, methodological fuzziness, conceptual cul-de-sacs, and all of those inevitable ossifications of citational practice and argument structure that almost inevitably follow in the uptake and popularization of any emerging theory.

Several of our authors directly address critiques of affect theory as #AffectSoWhite—often by confronting the ongoing historical persistence of Eurocentric blind spots in affect inquiry and the lived deracinated equivalences between the capacities to affect and to be affected. In the substantial blowback against “critical race theory” that arose in the United States, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere (especially in mid-2021) as conservative politicians and far-right media outlets stoked white-hot grievances and sought public retribution for the previous year of Black Lives Matter protests following the murder of George Floyd, the matter and mattering of race and racisms must be further foregrounded and far better addressed across theories and studies of affect. Moreover, as several of our contributors emphasize, these processes involve complex ontopolitical, biopolitical, and geopolitical dynamics that require transnational and transmaterial affective approaches.

One of our aims throughout this collection, then, is to point to some of the ways that historical formations, present formulations, and future countenances of affect inquiry must be redrawn and “unlearned.” Each chapter offers an encounter with affect in the midst of some manner of resonance, coagulation, scatter, fight, or flight—tangled up variously in the next, the not yet, the never quite, and/or through acts of outright refusal or negation. If there is already a potted history of affect studies that affixes or regulates the rhythms and flows of affect’s theoretical trajectories (and undeniably the first reader could not help but lay down some markers as it surveyed and inventoried various shimmerings), then one of our chief desires this time is to knock *sideways and back* any and all orthodoxies, conceptual calcifications, received histories, and prescribed futures within and surrounding affect theory. At least a little bit.

What we hope to have collected between the covers of *The Affect Theory Reader 2* is a proliferation of feels, a supple set of minor (and often more than minor) affect provocations, an ambitious passel of living/other-than-living encounters that delineate themselves—collectively and singularly—to show how theories of affect are never a matter of “anything goes” (indeed, it very much matters what goes and how) while simultaneously denying closure around any notion of a monoaffective imaginary. Given affect theory’s ongoing state of diffusion, its atmospheric densities, and extra-/infradisciplinary contaminations, we would much prefer that this collection be read as

offering an abundance of pluri-affective imaginaries. Inverting the first volume's introduction "An Inventory of Shimmers," we have come to think of this one as a shimmer of inventories.

Conjuring Up Affective Inventories

How might a shimmer of inventories work? And how might it be different from the few already existing shorthands for aggregating and typologizing different forms of affect inquiry as they come to manifest and move across a range of ontological and para-ontological registers? Although affect study and its theories can always be provisionally compartmentalized from various perspectives, this should only be done with some caution and a big dollop of contingency. For instance, if we turn to one rather obvious primary source, Spinoza's "lines, planes, and bodies" in his *Ethics* (III preface) can offer a geometrically elegant architecture for formatting approaches to affect, for, that is, inventorying affect's shimmerings under different types of light: bodies (*affectio*), lines (*affectus*), and planes (*immanence*) (Sharp 2011). *Affectio* or affection—initially and somewhat mistakenly translated as "emotion"—focuses on a body's (and/or bodies') doing or undoing at the point of contact/encounter/impingement. *Affectus* concerns how forces or intensities rise and fall over the course of action undertaken by a body/bodies—focusing on relationality and process as continuous lines of variation, always in the midst of ongoingness. *Immanence* is the pure capacity of all things, all bodies (a world) to affect and be affected, to connect and disconnect: emphasizing the infinite potential for connectedness and relationality stretched to its widest as a single plane (God, nature, substance).

With this set of coordinates, one can begin—almost grid-like—to locate scholarship that is fundamentally oriented by, say, phenomenology: post- (Don Ihde), queered- (Sara Ahmed), and otherwise (Calvin Warren) as *affectio*; process philosophies and vitalism, from Lucretius's swerve to José Muñoz's cruise as *affectus*; and aesthetico-political ecologies of incorporeality, materiality, and animacy akin to Isabelle Stengers's cosmopolitics or Edouard Glissant's "Relation" or Kathleen Stewart's "ordinary" as *immanence*. Having such a map at hand—it's a point! A line! A plane!—can reveal something about the conceptual-material terrain to be covered in one's writing and about

the stakes in shifting from one register to another; for instance, how moving from contact/encounter (point/body) to matters of capacity (immanence of a world) could lead to questions of ability/debility surfacing in ways that might not have happened otherwise. Such a flexy grid likewise might allow us to discover what is happening in those moments when different affect theorists seemingly talk past one another, such as scholars who experiment with the potentials that circulate in the space of worldly relation/nonrelation (immanence) versus those who attend to the powers that permeate and shape that same space (lines/of force, of variation). Who is doing the *real* politics here? Who is neglecting the aesthetic dimension? And so forth. Suddenly, a site of friction can emerge. But quite often, differences can be attributed to a particular emphasis, following a different door of affect entry, how one comes to navigate the scene of affect inquiry, and then where/how one exits (Anderson 2014).

Chances are that an entry point through one of these portals (*affectio/affectus/immanence*) will inevitably drift across, rub up against, and perhaps exit through one of the other ones. Witness, for example, how Katherine McKittrick's (2021, 127) loving invocation of "black livingness" and her devotion to methods in the making are intensely processual and relational (*affectus*) as she draws from Frantz Fanon/Sylvia Wynter's sociogenic principle of/for an immanence of blackness that steadfastly rejects the overdetermined critical attention to impingements on the Black body (*affectio*) as a site that too often becomes "the target (the bullseye and the objective) of hate and racist violence." Or see how Mel Chen (2012, 209–11) draws a vivid distinction between how they encounter a table, not exclusively through phenomenological touch or contact (*affectio*) as Ahmed would have it but as an ingestion of molecular particles of sloughed-off skin surfaces that reveal an immanence of "mutual imbrication, even at the most material levels." Again, however, even a deceptively straightforward yet modulatory schema like "lines, planes, and bodies" cannot provide a catch-all inventory for every genre or gesture operating across affect theory: not even Spinoza can achieve that sort of grace.

So when inventorying, while there is something to be said—certainly—for wishing to get momentarily tidy and heuristic versus going fugue and getting playfully pragmatically experimental, it ultimately depends on what you are after. Here is the key thing: although

affect theory remains forever open to operational closure (whether by way of disciplinary technique, political expediency, or deadline panic), one should refrain from too immediately hanging a “this section closed” sign over any particular clearing in affect theory’s *open*. Making a shimmer of inventories while being mindful of how any particular organization of contents should not preclude an openness to rescrambling the sequence, we have placed the twenty chapters that follow into five subsections: (1) Tensions, In Solution, (2) Minor Feelings and Sensorial Possibilities of Form, (3) Unlearning and the Conditions of Arrival, (4) The Matter of Experience, or, Reminding Consciousness of Its Necessary Modesty, and (5) A Living Laboratory: Glitching the Affective Reproduction of the Social. Along the way, we toyed with a multitude of alternate section headings and considered other thematic dis-/entanglements (and readers will, of course, always choose their own paths no matter what we editors intend).¹

We are reminded, here, of the fictitious taxonomy of animals that Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges attributes to a Chinese encyclopedia—the notorious inventory that delighted Michel Foucault (1970, xv), in his introduction to *The Order of Things*. With a half wink, we believe many of the encyclopedia’s designations could swap in as our subsection titles, too: “(f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) *et cetera*, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies.” Or at least we would like to see our organization of this book’s contents as animated by a similar spirit. As Foucault enthused, such inventorying is about “breaking up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things . . . the thing we apprehend in one great leap, the thing that, by means of the fable, is demonstrated as the exotic charm of another system of thought, is the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking *that*” (xv). Escaping any monoaffective imaginary must, by necessity, rely on composing and continually decomposing a shimmer of inventories, one that raises the “stark impossibility of thinking *that*,” of feeling *this*.

Sometimes an inventory can be rendered as an itinerary, as a travelogue of entrances and exits into and out of theories of every stripe. As David Duchovny now knows, a lot of significant theory shifts have

transpired over the last thirty years. In the next section, we will (1) address a few of the critiques of affect theory in its more recent history, (2) consider the relation of theory and practice through affect, and (3) shimmy, if not exactly shimmer, through a short dance number (actually more like a game of musical chairs) about how to get off on the right/wrong foot in theories of affect.

Of Balloons and Flailings

Silly Theory. Stupid Theory. Sexy Theory. Seething Theory. Stuck Theory. In his book *Avidly Reads Theory*, literature professor Jordan Stein (2019) takes readers on a deliciously funny and insightful five “feeling chapters” jaunt across the 1990s theories of his graduate school days. It is a fast-paced zigzagging series of detours until the end. In the last chapter, “Stuck Theory,” Stein reaches affect theory after passing through, among other things, a serious fling with Jacques Lacan’s *Écrits* and a “trauma”-themed graduate seminar with Ruth Leys. In the wake of the private and national traumas that followed September 11, 2001, Stein finds that writings from Lauren Berlant, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, and Eve Sedgwick offer crucial illuminations into the nature of stuckness: theoretical, political, and personal all at once. It is not so much that affect theory unsticks him or the world but rather that it provides a means for putting theory and practice together and thus for making a home among “the things that one could not find the words to say” (117). Although not exactly a lament, Stein is convinced that his own sense of theory stuckness would have played out differently if he had only encountered affect theory earlier. For Stein, affect theory is “less a theory proper and more of an ongoing interdisciplinary conversation” (115). And he goes on to note that affect theory has seen a “ballooning interest” over the past decade.

Although it appears that affect theory is going to be sticking around, it is also apparent that, in its ballooning, affect theory has (inevitably) become not only a thing that dwells often in stuckness but also something to be stuck, say, with a needle or a dart. Prick the affect theory balloon and watch it pop! That is, affect—as an intense encounter or minor impingement, as an area of study, as a theoretical practice—has found itself enmeshed in its fair share of intellectual consternations

and pan-disciplinary controversies. In the time that has passed since the publication of the first *Affect Theory Reader*, pinpoint and full-scale critiques of affect theory have come from many angles, with varying rationales and backstories, staking diverse claims and counterclaims about the fields' presuppositions, blind spots and (in)coherences, its political or apolitical valence(s), its critical-methodological purchase, and, sometimes, its very worthiness as a respectable scholarly pursuit.²

Part of the problem of mounting a critique—or for that matter, a defense—of affect theory is, it is not one single theory (or two theories . . . or eight theories); affect theory is not about simply bridging or sludging disciplinary lenses and procedures together but rather rendering one more sensitive and highly attuned to the singular nature of disciplinary processes already underway. That is, one of the lingering side effects of spending serious time wandering in and through “the affective” is its capacity to render the act of theorization itself (whatever its basis) haptic, multisensory, synesthetic. Feeling through the circumambience of a particular encounter's intensities, sticking with its reverberations, puzzling out the tiniest feelers that feed into and out of a situation, finding a way to convey worlds through words and/or other forms of expression to produce some fraction of a difference to how *this* world registers: grasping (if only sometimes dimly) how theory has dimensionalities other than linear, how it is textured by the shape and rhythms of your study (not bending the objects of analysis to fit one's theory), to find what is singular and yet render its singularity shareable through a theorization that serves as a relay or a friction that opens onto other existences, other worlds. Of course this is easy to assert *in theory* but much harder to pull off *in practice*. This occurrence is not instantaneous or magic—it takes time, it takes care and labor, it takes dwelling, duration, or as Lauren Berlant (Berlant and Edelman 2014, 117) would say, dilation: “This is what it means to live, and to theorize, experimentally: to make registers of attention and assessment that can change the world of their implication, but also model the suspension of knowing in a way that dilates attention to a problem or scene.” And needless to say, how the outcome of such an endeavor turns up as something that counts as doing “affect theory” varies discipline to discipline, case by case, scene after scene.

Perhaps, then, theories of affect, at their best, are uniquely (non)positioned to deflect, navigate, and/or reintegrate all manner of disciplinary claims, counterclaims, and contestations. Or, anyway, let us not get too reactive or overly policing about the capacities of affect theory to itself be affected, knocked around, or knocked down. After all, who wants to be part of an affect studies that cannot feel some shiver of appreciation regarding those who have invested the time and energy to seriously poke at affect theory's presumed hyperinflation, to pop and then pry apart its cases, concepts, and theories to argue that the present state of affairs could be something more, something less, or something completely otherwise? Why not pursue a "ruthless criticism of everything existing" (as, in his own way, Marx wished) in, through, and of affect theory? Why not develop a finely drawn line of critique, perhaps neither reparative nor paranoid, that lands and sticks in ways that refuse to be accommodated or assimilated, in ways that scramble the coordinates and orientations of affect studies' continued existence, and that propose options for engaging affect very differently or indeed advocate navigating a wide berth around nearly the whole of it?

Here, we will whisper something into your ear: we (this book's editors) sometimes entertain the potentiality and, yes, the reality that affect inquiry can always be thoroughly redrawn, undone. Radical contextualism, rigorous attunement to felt singularity, and an unshakable belief in historical contingency will do that to you. Affect theory has never been one (theory), never had a telos, never been nor taken a "turn." The exploration of affect has, from the get-go, been all fits and starts, do-overs and do-again-and-again, flailings and flailings-better, flailings-worse.

Although the slings and arrows directed toward affect theory have not always struck their target, we do wish to address a few of the most resonant (and sometimes ages-old) critiques, not in an act of defensiveness, we hope, but with just the right amount of playfulness necessary to dodge, duck, and/or dignify the aims of particular pins and needles. Let us dance this mess—scattered darts and busted balloons alike—around! These few initiating steps are directed as much to affect theory's acolytes and adopters who earnestly start off or end up on the "wrong foot" somewhere along their affective route (although that does not preclude arriving at moments of serendipitous insight too).³

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Getting on the Good Foot: Affect Theory/Practice

The original source for setting off on the most seriously wrong of all possible feet still haunts: occupying one side or the other of the Cartesian split of mind/matter. Perhaps it would have been better if, like Alfred North Whitehead, affect theory stated more directly that it wished to explore the “nonbifurcated” nature of material realities and speculative inquiry. Thus, affect theory’s penchant, for example, of adding prefixes like “pre-,” “non-,” “more-than-,” and “other-than-” to words like “human,” “consciousness,” “intentionality,” “representation,” “discursive,” “linguistic,” “personal,” “cognitive,” and so forth might not have led to such a flurry of misunderstandings. But if you understand affect theory’s talk of “pre-”/“non-”/“other-than-”/“more-than-,” let’s say, “consciousness” as privileging matter, body, ontology, and exteriority to the exclusion of mind, thought, epistemology, and subjectivity, then your affect theory dance is already off-kilter.⁴ If you are operating by split dualities to exalt the less privileged side of any particular affectual-conceptual pairing, stop right now. Stand up. Push those chairs closer together until everything touches everything else. Recommence the music!

Yes, in part as an early reply to the Cartesian mind/body split, Spinoza said, “We don’t yet know what a body can do,” but he also clearly showed that we were (and still are) a long way from knowing all that thought can do. Beyond that, bodies *and* thoughts—in their inseparability—are simultaneously immersed in their own particular worlds *and* in the wider world. What can a world do? In affect theory, the potentials (as forces that can incline or decline) and producibilities (as well as improducibilities) of a world, of an event, of a scene continue to reside right alongside its/their actualization. And this means bringing into account the adjacency and imbrication of intensities (of all sizes and shapes) where affect is palpable as an array of “causes” always on their way to “effect,” while also insisting/persisting/subsisting as resonant force residues on the other side of any particular encounter’s end result. This, for instance, is not merely about making room for the inclusion of thought or sensation as, say, “located” in foldings of brain matter or then extending the brain into a proprioceptive body-schema but also continuing through to the nonbifurcated wider matters of existence. Studying affect means pay-

ing attention to how matter comes to *matter* by way of intensity (immense to miniscule), force relations (weak to strong), density (high to low grade) while in context (geographical, historical, sociomaterial), in contestation, as matterings and rhythms of resonance and dissonance. Although this may sound like the most extraordinary task, we suggest that it is not as difficult as it seems; affect theory just asks that you attend to how the “extra-” appends itself to (interpenetrates and circulates through/about) the ordinary (in other words, see everything that Katie Stewart has ever written).

Luckily, the “extra-” also serves to remind you that one—whether analyst, event, object, theory—is never alone (autonomous, sovereign) in any of this. That is, affect is generatively foundationally relational (which is not to say that what happens in the relation “to affect/to be affected” is always reciprocal). Affect emerges through relations—often in tension—of inbetweenness. This is where movement, subtle changes, and not-so-subtle disturbances happen. Differentiations? Yes. But differences that are understood as mutually exclusive and oppositional? Generally no. Differings by degree that slide and shift and shimmy and shade without rising to (or falling into) full eclipse? Absolutely. Field all the relations of forces, bodies, encounters available, and there is, needless to say, never any fielding them all—then treat this “whole” gathering-up as one part, alongside all of the other parts in their uniquely situated specificity. But do not see “the whole gathering-up” or fielding (the French word is *agencement* as in layout or arrangement) as a place where everything is sutured up, closed off. Further, this is by no means a flat ontology; there are scales and proportions to account for and, of course, the matter of exactly who/what is doing the affecting and who/what is being affected. The scene is never tipped entirely one way or the other. There are contextualized differentiations in the shape, textures, rhythms, and histories of encounters that bear on the ratios of capacities and incapacities to affect and be affected. It all always depends.

As you might guess, this same view toward worldly nonbifurcation and ways of attending to the “extra-” of the ordinary has profound implications for how affect theory understands the relation of “theory” and “practice.” You are never just doing one and then the other. This is not about theory now, practice later, or a detour through theory, or practice all the way down, or theory all the way up. That is, affect as

theory should not be presumed to occupy the role of “abstraction” in relation to affect as *practice* (especially if practice = method as preset procedures). Following Raymond Williams’s (1983, 316) tracing of the etymology of the word “theory” in his *Keywords*, we will note that “theory” first coincided with “the speculative” before it (“the theoretical”) became a separate space—bifurcated, set aside—for some manner of pure mentalist abstraction or reflection. Theory/speculation and practice were initially grasped as operating together in mutual imbrication, phasing into and out of each other, constitutively saturating. Theory and practice need not shout to each other across a bifurcated gap of self-to-world/world-to-self reflection (extension versus thought) that is supposedly required to achieve proper critical-interpretive distance.

As if finessing the aforementioned gap, Berlant helpfully offloads the work of theorizing directly onto the affect theorists’ senses.⁵ Wait, *is* this helpful? After all, in the next moment, Berlant (2011, 31) adds, “Then again, maybe we did not really want our senses to be theoreticians: because then we would see ourselves as an effect of an exchange with the world, beholden to it, useful for it, rather than sovereign at the end of the day.” Yet with this notion of the affect theorist’s theorizing senses, Berlant does not conceive the senses as unmediated worldly receptors (this is not Hegel’s “sense-certainty”), nor as fully corporealized nodes operating in secret somewhere beyond the reach of consciousness (this is not an appeal to the fibers of a body as an inherently preconstituted and liberatory force). Rather, an affect theorist’s visceral literacy is nonbifurcated and labor intensive: “the visceral response is a trained thing, not just autonomic activity. Intuition is where affect meets history” (52). Or, back to Williams’s (1977, 131) “structures of feeling”: “It is the kind of feeling and thinking which is indeed social and material, but each in an embryonic phase before it can become fully articulate and defined exchange.” Theory practice as sensorial training is immersed in the ever-emerging historical torsions of the material and the social, feeling *and* thinking, in ordinary and sometimes revolutionary routines of habituation and dehabituation.

Senses become viscerally historically situated theoreticians by staying within the scene, “with the trouble” (as Donna Haraway says), by continually and speculatively recalibrating around particular objects,

encounters, and atmospheres in an attempt to move with (and sometimes against) what is taking shape—socially and materially—as normative and non-, as fixed or “in solution” (Williams 1977, 133). It goes without saying that habituations and unhings of these sense theoreticians do not come with any kind of guarantee (How many times around the chairs? When to start and stop the music?)—if only providing a predetermined number of reiterations and a rising cadence for stepping off could make it so! There are no ready-made guidelines for how and when the subtle shiftings of matter and habits in formation suddenly transition from recursively recommencing their own wobbly loop to then tip into intuition’s uncanny capacity for remembering forward. As Berlant and Williams both maintain in their own ways, theory’s offloading onto the senses is never going to yield readily compartmentalized procedures and sequential steps to trace out; there are always overdeterminations, ambiguities, entanglements, incoherences, blockages, noise, and more that must be accounted for. That is *not* because these kind of clusterings are leftovers or lie in excess after one’s analysis has wrapped up, but because ambiguities, overdeterminations, clots, tensions, and stuckness are the initiating condition of affect theory, the “extra-” that gives ambience to the ordinary. These obstinate and restless features are the very mess that constitutes affect theory’s weather.

If the antagonism of foundational bifurcations—as a set of gaps that holds everything in its right place—is what gets your system moving, then the clamorous ascent of affect theory is only going to confound and frustrate. Where is the properly manicured space-time required for critical reflection, public deliberation, symbolic efficiency, and the “intact person with his or her intentions and meanings” (Leys 2017, 16)?⁶ A contrarian might point out here that Silvan Tomkins was a serial bifurcator—a proliferator of polarities in tension: weak/strong, surprise/startle, interest/excitement, shame/humiliation, and many more. Tomkins’s affect theory barely ever holds steady at “one,” and indeed, at almost any moment, it instantly multiplies into affect *theories*: like someone who sneakily adds another chair every time the music stops instead of taking one away. But at its core, Tomkins’s drive system and affect system are deeply enmeshed with cognitive processes.⁷ Maybe in affect theory or *theories*, the issue is less the whole matter of splitting into twos and more about how

this bifurcation comes to play out as a duality. In studies of affect, “difference from” or “difference between” often do not offer as much traction. But difference in itself will tease and tug in all directions: registering the shifts in gradations or degrees, attending to the line(s) of variation where just a moment before there was only a single remarkable point (of contact, of encounter)—say, as when, in a glitch of unlearning or an out-of-sync dance move, one catches a glimpse of an adjacent but previously unnoticed world—or perhaps it is a set of points, the barest outline of a curve or sense of a swerve (maybe a swoon). Soon, however, there is a fuller scene or atmosphere, a lay-out, an *agencement*.

The *theory* of affect theory is an index of this effort expended in sensorially attending to and carrying along these continually shuffling intensities, lines of variation, and the persistence or dissipation of worlds. It can become quite a crowd: this “extra-.”⁸ The bad news, we suppose, is that affect theory in practice is not the kind of thing that arrives fully formed or unfolds like magic. The good news is that “practice” is already at hand, underfoot (even a wrong one). To engage this endeavor of nonbifurcated affect theory practice is no great mystery or mystification: say you have an encounter with a genre of music to which you have been little exposed or join a collective undertaking that pushes toward a specific form of action. Invariably, there are affective points, lines and planes to venture along, to risk, to find and lose yourself at the same time. When something sticks, practice begins to turn to saturation—or maybe almost nothing sticks, then it is all on the fade—or sometimes, you are left half-suspended and middling through. Chances are high that you will bring some gathering of sense theoreticians (if only embryonic) to such situations: viscerally speculative theoreticians that must remain pliable in practice. But there are not any immediate or easy assurances to offer here; it takes time and experience/experimentation.⁹

In what seems almost like a throwaway line in *Cruel Optimism*, Berlant (2011, 52) writes, “You forget when you learned to *use your inside voice*—it just seems like the default mode, even to write in it. But it is never the end of the story.”¹⁰ But for us, this moment captures quite succinctly how practice, as affect theory’s *inside voice*, comes to bleed through to the theory side of the affect theory practice equation: extension and intension in co-resonance. This inside voice signals the

labor-intensive, cumulative arrival of an intimately embodied landscape of exterior encounters. That is, for affect studies, theory and practice are hinged or folded into one another (similar to how habit/experience and intuition/experiment come to lean on each other) as irreducible engagements with the speculative and the material simultaneously. But not so fast, as Berlant says: acquiring an inside voice “is never the end of the story”; one persists along the evolving seam of intimate and exterior. This affect saturation of theory and practice means that their entwining is not so much waiting to be activated as the origin point of impingements and encounters with intensity; rather, it emerges out of them. When the outside finds its way inside, this is not a mere “default mode” but a transformational shift to a different register of expression and an opportunity to engage and move (through) one’s world otherwise.

Despite this attention to “voice” (inside and out), however, we want to swerve from any too immediate conclusion that affect is fully tied to the personal and the human when, in fact, theories of affect are generally more closely aligned with the impersonal and the social. The *capacity* “to affect” and “to be affected” is not strictly or only personological. Capacity does not inhere in things or in bodies like a property relation (capacities are not properties). Not vacuum-packed in the capacity of a body (the capacity of a person, a brain, a balloon [McCormack 2018], a whatever), affect is instead engaged in capacities *to* and incapacities *to*. If capacity/incapacity or debility are to be located anywhere in particular, it is in the interstices and thresholds of relation. Jasbir Puar (2017, 19–20) articulates this clearly with what she calls an “amendment to affect studies”: “Debility and capacity are not properties or attributes of a discrete body or a representational grid certain bodies are placed into. Debility may well simultaneously appropriate bodily capacities closing off, perhaps to give rise to a new set of bodily capacities. Capacity is not discretely of the body. It is shaped by and bound to interface with prevailing notions of chance, risk, accident, luck, and probability, as well as with bodily limits/incapacity, disability, and debility.” In short, when the whole matter of affect is misunderstood as the capacity of things, of consciousness, of bodies, of a world (and especially the capacity of affect theory itself), your argument is almost definitely going to land on the wrong foot.

Meanwhile, there are also critiques of affect theory's own "capacity to" that begin from compositional questions about the limits and paradoxes of addressing the insignificant, the nonrepresentational, and the extra-/a-signifying through language, argument construction, and poetically performative academic discourse. In other words, many of these criticisms argue that affect theory's attunement to what goes on beyond, below, alongside language/meaning/representation/human is confounded by an inevitable reliance on language, meaning, and representation when sharing one's findings. This is easily one of the dreariest critiques that one can make of affect theory: that it is somehow caught up in an act of performative self-contradiction. Because language and representation are a frequent means (although not the only means) of communicating the results of an affect studies project, it is claimed that one can only vaguely gesture to the feely, nonrepresentable, and extralinguistic because it is all preordained to end up pinned to the grid of interpretative decodings in language, rhetorical modes of argument, conveyed as meaning to be interpreted by a conscious mind. But this critical maneuver assumes that language and the symbol and the material and meaning and the concept and human consciousness are somehow free of any contamination from the realms of feeling, sensation, potentiality and impotentiality, processuality, gradations of intensity, and so on. As affect theory amply demonstrates, however, a nonbifurcated world is most definitely aswim in floaty ambiguities and knotty entanglements of mattering and meaning.

Because affect studies regularly focuses on the question of "what a body can do," others have occasionally stepped forward to unhelpfully reaffix the perceived waywardness of such investigations by stating with blithe assurance that they know the precise boundaries of what thinking, language, materiality, objects, and subjects can do (again, as if we established all that "thought can do"). And affect inquiry has overstepped all these bounds. Time to corral! But by denying the full fixity of such things, affect theory is *not* actually the one holding up the mirror of infinite regress or falling into the swarming incrementalisms of Hegel's bad infinity. Sometimes in order to step off on the *right* foot (which could be a left foot) in affect theory, you must be capable of acknowledging the historically derived, situationally specific boundedness of things (like thought, bodies, disciplines, language) while

also taking into account the muddiness, contamination, ambiguities, incoherences, and auratic flux that are *right there too*. Language, representation, and consciousness are, themselves, always fringed with and permeated by affective forces (often subtle, always modulating), perpetually in the midst of generating and regenerating their unique ratios and rhythms of boundedness/boundlessness. One is perpetually engaging with those thresholds of mattering-meaning that come to slide between worlds and words.

We could go on, foot by foot, but this is beginning to sound, as Berlant would say, too much like a “genre flail”—in this case, an unholy mixture that tries to be both a jaunty rejoinder to mostly nameless critics and, even more so, a cautionary tale aimed at affect theory’s acolytes and adopters. Despite our efforts to carry it off with some amount (we hope!) of levity, this dance has gradually come to feel increasingly pedantic, leaning more and more toward humorlessness. Berlant (2018, 157) defined genre flailing as “a mode of crisis management that arises after an object, or object world, becomes disturbed in a way that intrudes on one’s confidence about how to move in it.” Whatever surefootedness we might have managed to display above, it is always undercut, as you might have sensed, by a thousand and one wiggly disturbances, anxiously troubled by under-nuanced vibrancies of feeling and knowing and experiencing—of which, of course, Berlant was well aware: “whether the writer is trying to open up the object or close the object, extend a question or put it to rest. It’s impossible to distinguish a defense against knowledge from its production, and here’s the thing—you can never know” (156). But then, that’s the thing about affect theory: although it is by no means fiercely prescriptive or procedural (Do this! Don’t do that!), it can set up shop rather nimbly in crisis modes: ordinary and extra-. Why is that? Because bruises and blisses, intensities and slackenings, assemblings and fraying are what set worlds into motion or push them toward collapse and everything in between: for better *and* for worse.

If Jordan Stein is right (and we think he is), we are living and dying in times that, more than ever, call for a “stuck theory”: one that acknowledges ambiguities and tensions as both inescapable and absolutely necessary while tracking forces and feels through their most capacious and/or utterly decapacitating orbits. In affect theory, tensions do not so much move toward permanent resolution, but instead, they remain in

solution. And not surprisingly, that is precisely what the first section of chapters in this volume opens up to deeper elaboration.

Tensions, In Solution

Rather notoriously, the first volume of *The Affect Theory Reader* pointed to two essays, both published in 1995, as constituting “a watershed moment” (Seigworth and Gregg 2010, 5) for the rise of contemporary affect theories: Eve Sedgwick and Adam Frank’s (1995) “Shame in the Cybernetic Fold” and Brian Massumi’s (1995) “The Autonomy of Affect.” In the years that followed, these pieces came to stand as two key pathways informing writing on affect, emotion, and feeling: the Tomkins-Sedgwick line and the Spinoza-Deleuze-Massumi line. This bifurcation has been useful to some extent (it worked to clarify two ascendant paths, among many) but also unhelpful in lots of ways. It was never intended to be so definitive or as apparently divisive. In the Australian context, especially on evidence in the first reader (see chapters by Anna Gibbs, Elspeth Probyn, and Megan Watkins), Tomkins/Deleuze are regularly and intimately intertwined in theorizing affect. And needless to say, Sara Ahmed (2004, 2010, 2017) (who has the opening chapter in the first reader) has always moved outside/beyond such orbits. Yes, there are plenty of productive *tensions* to be drawn out of the use in combination of these two theoretical pathways alongside bridges still to be made (or burned down) but also, very different spannings and intersections that might yet lead us into altogether different districts and genealogies of affect theory.

As the contributors to the *Affect Theory Reader 2* illuminate, the foundations of affect studies are inherently contingent and contested (as well as multiple), in part, because “affect theories are animated by revisiting and revising concepts, through putting them to work in multiple circumstances, and by *working with the tensions that ensue*” (McCormack, this volume; our emphasis). Confronting this challenge directly in the reader’s opening chapter, “The Elements of Affect Theories,” Derek McCormack sidesteps the Tomkins/Deleuze “divide” to revisit a concept that certainly feels very familiar: Raymond Williams’s (1977) “structures of feeling.” McCormack’s focus on “the elemental imaginary” that Williams’s concept evokes, however,

enables us to attune to it anew. For Williams, he suggests, the way social experiences are “in solution” in everyday life is “analogous to how a solute is dissolved in a solvent, or to how water vapor may be held by air that is not yet saturated.” Moreover, if structures of feeling’s most vital contribution to affect studies relates to its concern with how the present is experienced affectively *as it unfolds*, this is “akin to the technique of sounding as an ongoing process of testing variations in elemental milieus (depth, pressure, temperature etc.) using devices, technical and corporeal, of different kinds.”

Yet if Williams implicates the elements *as analogy*, McCormack argues that thinking beyond the analogical is necessary to confront the climate emergency and related ecological and sociopolitical conditions and events, including “fires, heat waves, floods, storms, glacial retreat and melting, and air pollution”—a challenge that requires recognition that “not all bodies, lives, or worlds weather in the same way,” particularly in the midst of racial capitalism. In this vein, drawing on Hortense Spillers, Sylvia Wynter, Saidiya Hartman, and others, the geographer Katherine Yusoff (2019, 2) considers, in her *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, how accounts of the Anthropocene which employ the language of species life to invoke a “universalist geologic commons” often elide the histories of racism that are closely bound up with histories of geology. Relatedly, for Christina Sharpe (2016, 104), weather is the “totality of our environments; the weather is the total climate; and that climate is anti-black.” In turn, for the Indigenous writer Billy Ray Belcourt (2020, 8), weather can, following Sharpe, encapsulate the “asphyxiating conditions” of racist and settler colonial oppression but also a precipitating desire to “shore up another kind of emotional atmosphere.” What is essential to confront in any elemental engagement with affect, then, is how climate and weather are more than analogies; they are, in McCormack’s words, “forms of violent envelopment and exposure in mixed elemental milieus that bear the traces of earlier forms of violence.” Attending to the elements, from this perspective, not only expands the range “of objects with which affect theories are concerned,” but it also compels consideration of “the conditions in which theory takes place.”

In this vein, other affect scholars have explored how Williams’s analogue vision of media and culture might be reimaged for our digital age. In her book *If, Then: Algorithmic Power and Politics*, Taina

Bucher (2018, 157) glimpses an emergent transnational structure of feeling animated by the growing presence of algorithms within “the fabric of everyday life.” Rebecca Coleman (2017), moreover, develops the concept of “infrastructures of feeling” to address the temporal qualities of affective experience as mediated by digital platforms like Netflix and Twitter. It is this algorithmic element of current affective ecologies that animates Susanna Paasonen’s chapter in this reader. In the context of global data capitalism which strives to turn all human activity and affect into data points for the generation of capital—(re)producing reductive typologies of emotion through social media’s options of “like,” “love,” “ha-ha,” “sad,” or “angry” alongside other computational techniques such as sentiment analysis—Paasonen foregrounds the differences that *affective ambiguity* make for analysis.

Resonating with McCormack’s interest in the tensions that emerge from re-visiting “familiar” concepts, Paasonen shows how working with ambiguity involves “holding on to mutually conflicting meanings and impacts without doing away with irreconcilable differences and tensions that cut through them.” Importantly, for Paasonen and other contributors, this imperative applies as much to our objects as to the theories that emerge through them. Although Tomkins and Spinoza have (too) frequently been presented as oppositional coordinates for affect theory, Paasonen suggests that both thinkers “foreground indeterminacy, unpredictability and ambiguity in how bodies affect and are affected by one another.” In different ways, that is, Tomkins and Spinoza each insist that there is “no uniformity to what things excite, how and whom”—a claim that is particularly salient in relation to the affective dynamics that fuel compulsive attachment to digital apps and social media platforms.

To approach social media through the lens of ambiguity is thus to operationalize this shared insight; to appreciate, in Paasonen’s words, “how the same objects—be they platforms, apps, threads, posts, comments, links, or something else—come to mean and effect distinctly different things, depending on how they materialize in encounters between human and nonhuman bodies.” When we inhabit affective ambiguity in this way, we begin to see how mediated intensities cannot be fully generalized or predicted in advance and, in turn, how what Shoshanna Zuboff (2019) calls “surveillance capitalism” and what Wendy Hui Kyong Chun (2021) terms “discriminating data” can

often yield “forms of agency and social organization irreducible to [their] logics” (Paasonen, this volume). In amplifying the “critical edge of ambiguity” to address how affect escapes easy containment in neat categories of emotion, then, Paasonen’s chapter both extends and critically exceeds Tomkins’s basic emotions paradigm.

Part and parcel of revisiting and revising affect theory’s foundations is, in this view, not only thinking beyond “the usual suspects” but also reencountering the possibilities of theories and concepts we think we already know in order to put their tensions back into solution. Helpfully, in *A Silvan Tomkins Handbook: Foundations for Affect Theory*, Adam Frank and Elizabeth Wilson (2020, 8) do precisely this. They consider, for instance, how Tomkins’s account of weak theory can open up binary configurations of affect studies to a wider methodological ecology including, but not limited to, the “psychoanalytic, phenomenological, Aristotelian, empirical, biochemical, and, of course the myriad traditions of thinking about emotions beyond the West.” In their chapter here, Frank and Wilson explore what it means to view Tomkins’s affect theory as “in tension” with psychoanalytic theories of mind from Sigmund Freud to his more recent interpreters in the Kleinian tradition. Beyond demonstrating the continued relevance of psychological and psychoanalytic theories to interdisciplinary affect studies, Frank and Wilson, similar to McCormack and Paasonen, also indicate how we might approach the “tensions among affect theories as something other than simple antagonisms.” All three chapters, then, respond in their own ways to Sedgwick’s (1996, 2003) call for more reparative intellectual practices—not necessarily (or only) as an imperative to approach our research objects with an orientation of care or nurturance but rather (or also) as a practice of *inhabiting*, rather than transcending, affective tension, conflict, and ambivalence.¹¹

Addressing tensions through *and within* affect theory also demands grappling directly with the unfolding biopolitics and geopolitics with which both affect and its study are entangled. As Kyla Schuller (2018, 13) argues in *The Biopolitics of Feeling: Race, Sex and Science in the Nineteenth Century*, affect theory’s central (Spinozist) formulation of “capacities for affecting and being affected” is not neutral; it is implicated in racialized, gendered, and classed “animacy hierarchies” produced through “unevenly assigning affective capacity throughout

a population.”¹² Consequently, as Jasbir Puar (2017) illustrates in *The Right to Maim: Debility/Capacity/Disability*, articulations of affective capacity always have an underside: debility—forms of slow death that assume particular significance within the aftermath of colonialism and contemporary neo-imperialism and racial capitalism. Taking up these and other critical engagements with affect, Tyrone Palmer’s chapter, “Affect and Affirmation,” considers how affect theory’s predictions, especially in its Deleuzo-Spinozist variations, for generativity, the affirmative, and “productive capacity” lead to “curious silence and universalizing gestures offered in the face of (anti)blackness.” With the everyday prohibitions on Black life, alongside the immanent possibility of Black death that Claudia Rankine (2015, n.p.) calls “the quotidian operations of antiblackness,” Palmer asks what explanatory power affect theory can retain “in the face of a mode of being that signals ‘incapacity in its pure and unadulterated form?’” (Wilderson 2010, 38, cited in Palmer, this volume).

Rather than foregrounding negative affects or the affects of the killjoy and then considering how these might be redeemed or mined for their generativity or potential, Palmer considers “what might be gleaned from a fidelity to the negativity which blackness brings to bear on the World of possibility and the possibility of world(s).” By squaring off with affect theory’s often underproblematized championing of generativity, creativity, potentiality, and affirmation, he introduces tensions into what has, for some, become affect theory’s default position: a decided tilt toward joyful abundance, capaciousness, and potentiality as an unalloyed good, as an ontoethical/methodological virtue.¹³ In doing so, Palmer contributes to ongoing dialogues transpiring through and between a variety of perspectives found across Afropessimism/antiblackness/social death and Black joy/optimism/Black livingness in Black studies scholarship¹⁴—and simultaneously strikes, quite directly, at the pasts, presents, and futures of affect theory.

Writing at the intersections (and intertensions) of feminist, queer, trans, critical race, and decolonial thought, Kyla Schuller addresses the affective politics of (in)capacity from a different, though resonant, perspective. Her chapter, “Unfuckology: Affectability, Temporality, and Unleashing the Sex/Gender Binary,” turns to the gendered and racialized legacies of American sexology to consider how affect is

“bound up with the history of biopolitical fantasies that scientists and reformers [use to] shape the direction of human growth itself.” As Schuller’s analysis of the mid-twentieth-century making of “gender” underscores, pace Palmer’s discussion, “models of affective capacity and bodily plasticity are not innocent spheres, removed from the political”; rather, they can function as technologies of biopolitical differentiation and regulation. Affect theory, however, might help us to conceptualize, she suggests, “less brutal systems of gender.” Hence, Schuller explores how a redrawn understanding of affect (and affect theory) might shift the tenses and tensions of the sex/gender distinction away from the biopolitical violation of bodies toward ways that “sex/gender can be reimagined affectively to capture how power acts on the body over time, while keeping close to mind how the origins of gender lie themselves in a form of medical control and prosecution that understood the physical body and sexed identity as malleable entities coiled together with the practitioners’ grasp.”

Indeed, what is vital, ontoepistemologically and methodologically, to affect studies’ ability to grapple with tension, ambiguity, and (in)corporeal complexity is, for a number of our contributors, a finely tuned capacity to sense, appreciate, and shift between differences in the textures, rhythms, and contours of time, space, and tensions in solution, while also addressing the implications of their entanglements. It is all too rare, Paasonen argues, that analyses of “the dynamics of data capitalism, the algorithmic polarization of sociability, and the political economies of targeted advertising in social media get to meet careful analyses of the micro: the quotidian, the messy, and the felt.” Yet what inhabiting the affective ambiguity central to contemporary ecologies (digital or otherwise) urgently requires, she contends, is attention to the imbrication of “diverse scales”—so that “big data analysis meets the care necessary for qualitative inquiry” and “abstract musings of society, culture, and politics are faced with the acuteness of the singular.” Relatedly, in McCormack’s view, while an elemental approach to structures of feeling might be seen to privilege “a kind of localism or an affirmation of the feeling of [the] present as an immediacy that precludes any grasp of something more planetary,” it actually assumes “a much more multivalent role for thinking across the elements of affective life.”

All of the chapters featured in this opening section exhibit the myriad tensions, never to be fully resolved, not only in affect theory's established lineages and coordinates but also within and across a diverse array of affective routes, resources, and rhythms. As they show, complicating and transforming the "taxonomies of what affect theory feels and knows today" (Frank and Wilson 2020, 9) demands not "doing away with the mess but [rather] working with and within it" (Paasonen, this volume). This calls for ongoing efforts "to grasp the feeling of the presencing of the present" while holding open different space-times for "minor projects of collective world making" (McCormack, this volume). Elements, tensions, and mess in solution—they can make worlds and/or destroy them. This can feel rather immense (and it is), so let us shift the compositional scale. In the next section, our authors take up the affective role of "the minor."

Minor Feelings and Sensorial Possibilities of Form

A focus on the tonalities and possibilities of "the minor" has become increasingly vital to the development of contemporary affect theories. Erin Manning (2016) argues in *The Minor Gesture* that the minor is not simply what is seemingly insignificant or happening at a micro level, nor does it necessarily correspond with the figure of "the marginal"—although it might well encompass any and all of these. Rather, following Deleuze and Guattari's articulation, the minor names those continually unfolding, yet often un(re)cognized, dynamics that "open up experience to its potential variation" (1). If the major is identified according to predetermined principles of value and significance, the minor loosely indexes the unpredictable, aleatory forces that run through it all, creating or signaling possibilities for established formations and tendencies to materialize differently.¹⁵ Engaging with minor affective registers, in this view, requires attending to experience as it feeds forward—a practice that resonates not only with the so-called Spinoza-Deleuze-Massumi tradition but also with Sedgwick's (2003) call for honing our capacity to sense change as it is actually happening. It is, as Williams (1977, 134) puts it, about becoming oriented to that which "hovers at the very edge of semantic availability" or perhaps akin to Bergson's (1999) "intuition"—an immersive form of sensorial engagement with the richness and flux of material life, which operates in excess of analytical thought.¹⁶

As our contributors highlight, however, other crucial resources for thinking affect and the minor move beyond Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy to engage cultural theory, feminist, queer, trans, and critical race studies, and Black thought. Sianne Ngai's (2005, 1) *Ugly Feelings* beautifully assembles a range of minor and otherwise politically ambiguous affects—envy, irritation, anxiety, stuplimity, paranoia, and animatedness—associated with “the politically charged problem of obstructed agency” (32). For Ngai, the analytic advantage of engaging the minor is that “the unsuitability of weakly intentional feelings for forceful or unambiguous action is precisely what amplifies their power to diagnose situations” (27). In this way, Ngai's account intersects with Berlant's (2011) diagnosis in *Cruel Optimism* of our affective “impasse” within crisis-ordinary conditions of deteriorating political and economic possibility, or more recently, Cathy Park Hong's (2020) rendering in *Minor Feelings* of the involuted affects that arise when one, as Asian American, lives “under a softer panopticon, so subtle that it's internalized, in that we monitor ourselves, which characterizes our conditional existence” (202). There is also, of course, Sara Ahmed's exploration of these histories—whether through her foundational account of *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004) or her suggestive engagement with the more minor (and often less affirmative) affects of happiness (2010).

Particularly compelling is the way that these inhabitations of the minor are linked to a multiplicity of moods and modes of experimental inquiry drawing on affect theory's penchant for doing academic writing otherwise. Think, for instance, of Kathleen Stewart's (2007, 4) carefully honed attention to “things that are in motion and that are defined by their capacity to affect and be affected” in *Ordinary Affects*; Ann Cvetkovich's (2013) mixing of memoir and critical essay to explore depression otherwise to medical models; or Heather Love's (2010, 375) mobilization of Erving Goffman's and Bruno Latour's microsociology to outline an alternative approach to interpretation that is “close but not deep.” In *The Hundreds*, Berlant and Stewart (2019) experiment by imposing the creative constraints of precise hundred-word limits (100, 200, 300 . . .) and techniques of “amplified description” to attune to how affect comes to take form (or not) across contemporary scenes. Consider also the haunting force of Saidiya Hartman's account of the Atlantic slave trade articulated through her own journey along the slave route in Ghana in *Lose Your Mother* (2007), as well

as her genre-defying fabulation of the inner lives of Black women in post-emancipation New York and Philadelphia in *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (2019). In pushing forward the sensorial possibilities of form, these authors all channel “the power of writing to engender new forms of life” (Berlant and Stewart 2019, n.p.) and engage the minor in ways that evade the pitfalls of what Sedgwick called “paranoid critique.”

Taking these affective legacies in new directions, the authors featured in this section explore how affect transforms written expression across the public and scholarly domains, with a range of aesthetic and politicoethical implications. In her chapter “Minor Feelings and the Affective Life of Race,” Ann Cvetkovich follows the recent migration of critical race theory and feminist and queer affect theory into creative nonfiction and other experimental genres of public writing, as exemplified by Claudia Rankine’s *Citizen* (2014) and Maggie Nelson’s *The Argonauts* (2015). Of particular interest here is how the genre of the nonfiction essay is transforming, and spawning new categories such as “creative nonfiction,” “lyric essay,” and “autotheory” through efforts to convey the racialized and queer ordinary as structures of feeling. Focusing on Cathy Park Hong’s *Minor Feelings* (2020) and Billy-Ray Belcourt’s *A History of My Brief Body* (2020)—works that respectively weave personal narrative with affect scholarship to encounter Asian American and queer Indigenous experience—Cvetkovich explores how these authors mobilize a “complex web of citationality” to address minor feelings beyond “Black-white binarisms” and in ways that “expand what counts as theory.” The result is an intersectional affective praxis of the minor that scrambles the juxtaposition of “positive and negative affects, or critique and reparative strategies” so that “mourning and joy, pessimism and utopia, are not distinct.”

Extending this scholarship to confront the affective ambivalence and “trauma ordinariness” that pervades contemporary trans experience, Hil Malatino, in his chapter “Resisting the Enclosure of Trans Affective Commons,” addresses the “ensemble of bad feelings”—anxiety, rage, fatigue, exhaustion, anger, fear, and loneliness—that makes trans folks especially vulnerable to emergent forms of predatory capitalism, such as venture capital-funded hormone subscription and telehealth services. For Malatino, the proliferation of such

services points to a troubling “nexus of trans precarity, economic predation, and negative affect” alongside a cruelly optimistic investment in “capitalism’s reparative capacity” (Berlant and Greenwald 2012, 77). In this way, Malatino’s chapter pushes forward Ngai’s, Berlant’s, and Ahmed’s legacies, while also articulating with Puar’s (2017) powerful account of “debility” as the underside of claims to affective capacity, whose minor graspings and rhythms demand but often fall beneath recognition. Across this work, the minor pulses through the mundane, the ordinary, and the everyday to illuminate the ongoing injuries and foreclosures of neocolonialism, neoliberalism, racial capitalism, and induced precarity—while also striving to open up the not-always-visible potentialities for alternative modes of affective social life.

Yet as several contributors to the reader underscore, tarrying with minor registers of feeling can also disclose the residual and exclusionary humanisms of affect theory itself. Thinking with Toni Morrison’s novel *Beloved* (1986) and Charles Burnett’s film *Killer of Sheep* (1977), Rizvana Bradley’s chapter, “Too Thick Love, or Bearing the Unbearable,” locates an indeterminate genre of feeling characterized by the racially gendered modes of slowness, exhaustion, bitterness, and perseverance, which she suggests reveal the impossibility of a universal grammar of fatigue in an anti-Black world. If Williams’s structures of feeling are frequently animated in affect studies to explore the possibilities of inhabiting affective duration as it unfolds, Bradley considers how centering *Black affect* demands engagement with “a temporality without duration.” As “blackness confronts a nexus of stolen pasts, of protracted presents without presence, of futurities withheld,” Black experience, as conjured too in the *Killer of Sheep* and other Black cinematic invocations, “unfolds in the absence of the temporal horizon that freedom bestows to the human” (Warren 2018, 97, cited in Bradley, this volume). Bradley is particularly concerned here with the affective life of the Black maternal—a figure who, as horrifyingly enacted by *Beloved*’s Sethe, “is fated to *reproduction* of fugitive survival as well as social death.” Too thick love, in this context, is the Black (feminine) affect that registers in the world as “bitterness, obsession, or madness” but is precisely where “the accumulations of the nonevent of Black existence *remain*.”

Whereas Bradley figures too thick love as a maternal genre of Black affect in the violent aftermath of transatlantic slavery, Omar

Kasmani's chapter, "Migration: An Intimacy," addresses his own version of "thickness" as an affective manifestation of European colonialisms. Thickness, he suggests, is European history's pervasive and suffocating sense of mastery, certainty, and knowingness—against which migrant affect is inevitably "marked by a sense of thinness," a sense of "being forever short of history in the city." But as Kasmani shows through a vivid, third-person ethnographic scenography of queer Muslim migrant "(be)longing" in Berlin, thinness may also take shape as a mode of resistance to persistent Eurocentric demands for transparency and knowability. Kasmani's sensuous writing functions less to reveal or magnify particular affective experiences than to create atmospherics of the "hazy, not entirely knowable, opaque." Thin, in this way, conjures the porosity of bodies and scenes that touch briefly to then slide in proximities that do not quite stick in the usual ways, that come up short but leave traces nonetheless. As an affective genre of the minor, thinness signals how migrant affects "be they partial, personal, or permeable forms that evade public gaze and scrutiny, even intelligibility—*infrathin* in Erin Manning's terms—bear political and outward resonance all the same." By weaving lived experiences of porosity and opacity with haptic texturings of affect, Kasmani approaches the intimate "beyond the confessional," while assembling "archives, journeys, and genealogies foreclosed by a largely Christian and Western Europe and North America centering grain of affect studies."

As the chapters in this section illustrate, approaching the minor involves not only attuning to emergent processes active beside or "beneath the surface of everyday life" but also addressing how "embodied habits are (re)produced through dominant modes of social intelligibility which often work in exclusionary and violent ways" (Pedwell 2021, xvii, 7). And yet, across these contributions, what constitutes the minor in and for affect theory is not only a realm of indistinct, marginalized, or neglected feelings but also "the conduit, the orientation, that angles otherwise" (Manning, this volume) enabling relationalities and tendencies in germ to sprout in unexpected—sometimes fugitive—places and times. Although there is no one way to anticipate such arrivals or to prefigure their flourishing or withering, the next section of the reader addresses how practices of "unlearning" can contribute to an ethicoaesthetic that attunes to pedagogies of event care.

Unlearning and the Conditions of Arrival

Throughout her book *Unthinking Mastery*, Julietta Singh is committed to undoing discourses of colonial mastery by returning, over and over again, to dehumanized practices of learning. By evacuating the place of the master (whether an external figure, an institution, a particular discourse, or one's self), Singh believes that nothing of great significance is being subtracted from the educational process; instead, the swirling circumambience of everything that had not been previously admitted in the pedagogical scene *begins to show up*. As she puts it, "Education in this sense is a transformative act of becoming profoundly vulnerable to other lives, other life forms, and other 'things' that we have not yet accounted for or that appear only marginally related to us" (Singh 2018, 67). Such a reimagining of pedagogic practice is never straightforward or guaranteed to produce measurable or positive (un)learning outcomes. So much can and does run astray, go haywire, backfire spectacularly. It goes without saying that unlearning will always transpire simultaneously with learning, and exactly who or what inhabits either side of this equation is dependent on the embodyings of lived experience in and across specific contexts.

As Ariella Aïsha Azoulay (2019, 17) argues in *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism*, "Unlearning is a way of assuming that what seems catastrophic today to certain groups was already catastrophic for many other groups, groups that didn't wait for critical theory to come along to understand the contours of their dispossession and the urgency of resisting it and seeking reparation." This is one of the reasons why Azoulay advocates for unlearning "with companions"—because we are going to absolutely need each other (including non-human others) if we are to "reject the effectuated" (15). But here, we will add, this also requires learning to reject or reinfect what has been and continues to be *affectuated*. In this section of the reader, our authors address various modes of coming to know, of coming to *unknow*, of the *feelings* that precede/accompany/linger in the contextual matterings of knowing and unknowing, of the care required in tending to knowledges and how knowledge travels (whether in classrooms, across time, between cultures, among and through bodies), *and* when/where learning must entail unlearning.

M. Gail Hamner's chapter, "Unlearning Affect," calls directly "for unlearning the racial logics of enclosure by unlearning affect." In the midst of the racialized impasse associated with what has been called "cancel culture" or "consequence culture" in the United States (and beyond), Hamner draws on the scholarship of Denise Ferreira da Silva and Sylvia Wynter to illustrate how racial privilege sediments in the affectively attuned philosophies of J. G. Herder, G. W. F. Hegel, and C. S. Peirce. In doing so, she frames our contemporary impasse as rooted in what Ferreira da Silva calls "onto-epistemological presumptions" and what Silvan Tomkins understands as "scripts": "elements of personal-social being that are structured, intangible, and resistant to change" (Hamner, this volume). Although intensely polarized public and social media discourses may "succeed in public shaming, in speaking truth to power, or rallying one's base," genuine transformation, Hamner argues, depends on "the task of unlearning our affects." And this task is concomitant with unlearning whiteness.

The kind of undoing and unlearning of racialized universalisms that animates Hamner's contribution is materially situated by Nathan Snaza in his case study at his home institution of the University of Richmond. In his "Why This? Affective Pedagogy in the Wake," Snaza addresses Richmond's racialized histories and their "conditions of arrival" into our present moment. His pedagogical orientation is attentive to how method and "event care" can resist and/or disrupt humanist (and disciplinary and institutional) enclosure. Mobilizing Christina Sharpe's *In the Wake* (2016), a book powerfully focused on the destructive wake of transatlantic slavery, Snaza's chapter considers what "wake work" might entail—in our classrooms and far beyond—for subjects variously oriented to "the ongoingness of antiblackness as it shapes the ongoing mattering of the world." For white people in particular, Snaza contends that the pedagogical imperative is to shift what is framed as "background to foreground, to notice the hum, pay 'maximal' attention, and bring what you can to the *event*." In the writing of both Snaza and Hamner, then, at stake is "how to care for *this* event such that whatever it is we bring to it tends somewhere otherwise than coloniality and antiblackness" (Snaza, this volume). How, they ask, can affect inquiry help us to register those forces that perpetually sift through the matter of "what counts as human, as kin?"—in classrooms, university architectures and site markers, curricular and disciplinary formations, and other deeply embedded colonialisms—

to reveal “the multidirectional violence that saturates the situations we move through?” (Snaza, this volume).

Processes of learning/unlearning always transpire in the midst of enclosures and disclosures of all sorts: institutional, architectural, interpersonal, historical, habitual. Calling a class to order (or not). Using that textbook and those old notes (or not). Trying to get a “read” on the evolving classroom atmospherics. Anticipating the conditions of arrival and/or the lines of departure. Realizing when a particular set of disciplinary practices or knowledges must be shed, reshaped, contracted, or expanded. As Singh (2018, 119) writes, “If we can learn how to recognize our own surprising complicities with dehumanization, we can also learn how to abide with others (human, inhuman, and dehumanized) that have enabled us to become particular kinds of masterful subjects. Precisely in this abiding, in consciously reading ourselves and attaching ourselves to that which we have [been] subjected, we can begin to learn how to become differently relational with others.” To abide—by rejecting the affectuated in order to become differently relational with others, to hold on to each other (or some thing), to find companions within and across difference and otherness that is not based on resemblance or species or even on drawing a distinction between living and nonliving.

A moment of pause, though: mere appeals to “care” and “relationality” that often follow in the task of unlearning will, of course, never be enough to save us or our worlds—indeed, such appeals can sometimes act to further perpetuate harm and violence. Crucially, Snaza (alongside others in this section and across this reader) works to contest any sort of one-size-fits-all affective solutionism or universal applicability into other events/episodes, into *your* situation—what Rebecca Adelman (2015) has called, in a different context, the maneuver of the “affective auto-complete.” For Snaza, the pedagogic force of the deictic (Why *this*?) operates as a wedge into the singularizing *this-ness* that “is hyperindexical, oriented toward exactly what is happening *here, now* without assuming or requiring that the deictic situation homogenizes.” As we have said above, it all always depends.

Perhaps this is why unlearning X nearly always requires a profound wrestling with the *feeling* that inevitably accompanies knowing, especially in those circumstances in which knowing presents itself as omniscient mastery, as universal applicability. Upending the under-examined acquisition of saturated/situated forms of music expertise,

disciplinary training, and mastery, Dylan Robinson and Patrick Nickleson want to open up the ears of music studies to otherwise “listening positionalities” by troubling what counts as the “feeling of knowing music.” Their chapter asks, “How should we name the mechanism by which music scholarship builds disciplinary knowledge on top of or in relation to shared affective and loving experiences of music?” Robinson and Nickleson wish to reshape the textures of the music encounter by redirecting music listening from the realm of object dissection, resource extraction, and settler colonial-derived possession. They ask us to, instead, consider music and sound in the context of “animate relations” in the sensory spaces of listening and music making. What moves in the slivers and expanses of sensory mixity and wonder that Indigenous epistemologies of music studies can disarticulate and reanimate in ways that are *otherwise* to the persistent automaticities of settler colonial listening practices? This generative querying of the commonplaces of bodily receptivity (as never entirely natural or neutral) and then tuning into what is present but viscerally unavailable within normate listening positionalities epitomizes the themes that organize this section of the reader: utilizing counteraffectuating techniques as unlearning in order to foster more capacious conditions of arrival.

The chapters here explore what processes and politics are involved in (un)learning affective autocompletions and (re)inhabiting everyday modes of knowing, feeling, and receptivity (Highmore 2011) in radically other ways. Although many of the chapters in this section attend primarily to the psychic, pedagogical, sociobiological, and politicoeconomic force relations that figure *human* affective life, in the next section we offer a parallel body of affect scholarship that emphasizes what transpires in encounters with what is “more than human” and “other than conscious” and that resists any ready assumptions that such matters are simply another “construct of the human” (Masumi 1995, 100).

The Matter of Experience, or,
Reminding Consciousness of Its Necessary Modesty

In his preface to the twentieth-anniversary edition of *Parables for the Virtual*, Brian Massumi (2021, xiii) does not mince words: “I have never identified what I do as affect studies or identified myself as an

affect theorist.” Yet it is not as if Massumi is trying especially hard to run away from what has transpired as affect theory after his profoundly significant book (stepping off as it does with “The Autonomy of Affect” essay as its first chapter). Indeed, Massumi’s new introduction is immediately followed by two glossaries on . . . affect! Massumi is, however, primarily reacting to two irksome matters in the study of affect: (1) treating affect like an object, a thing, a noun when affect is, instead, in motion, in solution, processual, of the event, and (2) subsequently treating this mistakenly stilled concept of affect as an object of thought, as an area of study that gives rise to a disciplinary practice known as affect theory. We hope that it is already clear from our opening arguments about “getting off on the wrong foot in affect studies” that Massumi’s misgivings engage in a similar dance with our own. And although Massumi holds that his insights into “movement,” “sensation,” and especially “the virtual” are his most pertinent contributions to contemporary critical-aesthetic philosophy, we would insist that these generative operators are rather thoroughly co-immersed with the processuality of affect.

In his essay “The Autonomy of Affect” (published a few years before its inclusion in *Parables*), Massumi (1995) sought to develop a framework for affective and material life attuned to processes of emergence and potentiality (i.e., the virtual) at work both above and below “the subject.” Often misunderstood, “autonomy” is not a mystical beyondness but rather the diffuse everywhere/everywhen-at-onceness of intensity. Autonomy is not an immutable locale or residence but is made and remade through the cyclings of affect as precipitate and producibility, as bodies and worlds recursively engage each other. But these intensities, especially through their pulsings and cyclings, are not “in” a body (or, at least, not “in” a body any more than “in” a world); they are “in” the coming-into and falling-out-of encounter or contact, of mutual and myriad impingements. Autonomy is the name that Massumi (2002, 36) gives to the nonplace (because it is potentially *every* place) where relationality is affectively strung between/within/among bodies and worlds: “continuous, like a background perception that accompanies every event, however quotidian.” Autonomy does not transcend the given but is immanent with it, continually shuffling, reconfiguring, and smudging points of intensity and rejiggering modes of relationality (including nonrelationality). Again, this is not

some otherworldly or fantastical hypothesis, but it is “speculative” in the sense of daring to address what gives shape and texture to intertwining emergent and residual conditions of moment-by-moment existence by attending to what perceptually (and perpetually) passes beneath notice, along or just beyond the fringes of awareness.

Extending this more speculative route, various affect scholars have increasingly turned to the writings of Alfred North Whitehead. Massumi (2021, xiii) himself acknowledges that following the publication of *Parables*, Whitehead’s work would exert a greater influence across his subsequent writings. Whitehead, in books like *Process and Reality* (1929), *Adventures of Ideas* (1933), and *Modes of Thought* (1938), questioned the anthropocentrism central to modern Western rationality and offered a view of the world as composed of fundamentally inter-related processes and events. His desire to harmonize the insights of mathematical physics and the intuitions of sensory empiricism led him to offer an account of affective life as at once patterned and open ended and always more than human.

Throughout his career, Whitehead was particularly concerned to interrogate (as we mentioned above) what he called “the bifurcation of nature”: that is, the artificial separation between nature itself and our sensory awareness of it. His concept of “process” sought to reconcile this divide by offering a framework in which “the red glow of the sunset” and “the molecules and electric waves that compose it share the same ontological status” (Whitehead 2004, 29). We might say, then, that for Whitehead, affect is what signals and provides access to the imbrication of ontology and epistemology central to an aesthetics of material experience. In this view, as Steven Shaviro (2014, 3) puts it, “I do not come to know a world of things outside myself. Rather, I discover—which is to say, I *feel*—that I myself, together with things that go beyond my knowledge of them, are all alike inhabitants of a ‘common world.’” For many scholars, one particularly rousing implication of Whitehead’s framework is the opportunity to relinquish any persistent investment in accounts of agency centrally premised on human intentionality.

These and other worldly developments have translated, for some affect theorists, into a fundamental redirection of human experience in relation to processes which “operate predominantly, if not almost entirely, outside the scope of human modes of awareness” (Hansen

2015, 5). Engagements with affect across a number of fields—from speculative realism and object-oriented ontology to various new materialisms, posthumanisms and engagements with computational media—have insisted on this move beyond anthropocentric ontologies. Engaging the complexity of such interventions, this section considers the risks and possibilities of aligning affect more decisively with “anthro-decentric thought” (Chen and Luciano 2015)—whether via the “nonhuman,” the “inhuman,” the “unhuman,” the “more than human,” or other conceptual categories—as well as the implications of this for theorizing thought, matter, and (non)consciousness.

Opening this section with his chapter “Nonconscious Affect: Cognitive, Embodied, or Nonbifurcated Experience?” Tony Sampson considers how the growing focus on “the nonconscious” across interdisciplinary literatures acts to “disentangle experience from a problematic human-centered perspective.” In recent writings, an array of affective and new materialist interventions has expanded “the capacity of affect to an inclusive human and nonhuman world of agential organic and inorganic matter.” Yet influential posthumanities work, in this case N. Katherine Hayles (2017) in her *Unthought: The Power of the Cognitive Nonconscious*, can go astray when consciousness is seen “as the end product of a leveling-up process” (Sampson, this volume). This is a leveling up that saws off each rung of the ladder as it climbs in order to make a firm distinction between higher level cognizant actors and lower level noncognizers (Hayles and Sampson 2018). For Sampson, affect theories and new materialisms do not presume the progressive winking-out of such noncognizers through a gradual ascent to consciousness but instead must retain them—as ongoing force encounters—in nonbifurcated imbricatedness.

This is not meant to elide the role of cognition, as Hayles claims, but rather to adopt an approach to worldly “experience” in which cognition is understood as a “foothold” and not a command post (Sampson 2020, 38). Not dissimilarly, Nietzsche—as Deleuze (1983, 39) notes—believed that one must “remind consciousness of its necessary modesty.” To this end, Sampson explores the potentialities of a Whiteheadian nonconscious in which “there is no dichotomy between the human and what is experienced.” In line with Whitehead’s rejection of any bifurcation between mindful experience and matter, what is crucial to the study of affect and (non)consciousness within this ontology “is that mind

and the liveness of matter only become analyzable when they are taken together in the temporal thickness of events” (Sampson, this volume). It is not, in other words, human consciousness that draws attention to experience. Rather, experience is untethered from human embodiment and cognition; it unfolds “outside of thought, *in the event*” and culls consciousness into modes of attention.

Yet in the face of this radically more-than-human perspective, other scholars insist that now is precisely the time to return to “the human”—to interrogate the biopolitical and geopolitical processes through which hierarchical forms of life continue to be (re)produced and subsequently to address their material and ethical implications. As many of the contributions to this reader illuminate, some of the most powerful and insightful engagements with the contemporary affective politics of “the human” emerge from the tradition of radical Black thought engaged with the work of W. E. B. Du Bois, Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Sylvia Wynter, Hortense Spillers, Denise Ferreira da Silva, Saidiya Hartman, and others. Although some accounts of affect and “the nonhuman” advocate a deprivileging of epistemology, many of the above thinkers insist that epistemology remains crucial to how a particular genre of the human—*homo economicus*—has been ontologized as natural according to Western imperialist viewpoints. Sylvia Wynter traces, in this respect, how “the empirical and experiential lives of *all* humans are increasingly subordinated to a figure that thrives on accumulation” (Wynter and McKittrick 2015, 9). Rather than approaching the human as “an ontological *fait accompli*,” Wynter theorizes *being human as praxis* to open up possibilities for “thinking and living enfleshment otherwise” (Weheliye 2014, 8). In different ways, then, this scholarship explores the potentialities of a radical *counterhumanism* that asks how humanness might inhabit a different future.

What these interventions underscore emphatically is that a guiding tendency within much affect theory (as well as other modes of critical thought) to reflexively abandon androcentric narratives may be both problematic and premature if it fails to address the histories of dehumanization *present within* articulations of nonhuman agency and potentiality. As Zakiyyah Iman Jackson (2015, 15) maintains, the vital question to ask in response to posthumanist, object-oriented, and new materialist calls to move beyond the human is “what and crucially *whose* conception of humanity are we moving beyond?” In her view,

such philosophical injunctions may also entail fraught attempts to “move *beyond* race, and in particular blackness” that “cannot be escaped but only disavowed or dissimulated” in such frameworks (16; original emphases). Because speculative engagement with what exceeds the human is one key feature of affect theorizing, the need to finesse these matters—within their highly particular conditions of arrival and across their persistences—will, needless to say, always be crucial.

One way of figuring these conditions—in which racialized, sexualized, and gendered pasts and presents are entangled with more-than-human temporalities, forces, and genealogies—entails, as Mel Chen and Dana Luciano (2015, 189) maintain, holding (at least) two inflections of the nonhuman together: one that invokes the possibility of “trans-material affections” and the “proliferation of difference” and one that recognizes ongoing forms of “indifference and brutality.” This ontoepistemological challenge points up, among other things, the need to attend to how “the impersonal” is entwined, immanently, with sedimented relations of force across shifting ecologies of life and the nonliving.

With such worldly entanglements in mind, Erin Manning’s chapter, “Catch an Incline: The Impersonality of the Minor,” explores the textured resonances of Black sociality in proximate relation to the process philosophies of Whitehead, Bergson, and Deleuze. Expanding the account of “minor sociality” she offered in *For a Pragmatics of the Useless*, which brings together matters of Black life and neurodiversity, Manning (2020) suggests that new modes of sociality are required to address those affective tendencies that persist beneath and beyond any sense of self-sustaining subjectivity: by *not* parsing the intelligible, productive, or useful—particularly when “neurotypicality and whiteness combine to form a normative baseline for existence” and hence, for the dominant figurations of “the human.” In Manning’s chapter, it is “the force of the impersonal” that links Black thought and process philosophy via a “logic of approximation of proximity” which also “recognizes gaps and moves through them.” That is, between Black thought and process philosophy, responses to the questions “How are we made?” and “What makes the field through which we recognize ourselves” begin “not in the personal but in the world?” (where, as Sampson also reminds us, Whitehead located “experience”). Instead of foregrounding “the self-serving individual who leads existence” or “the colonial narrative that places [the] subject—whiteness—in

advance of the world,” these overlapping modes of feeling-thought start from “process, open field.” To begin with the impersonal, then, is not to leave race or racialized histories behind but rather to approach the endurance of blackness as “being of relation” and “in the layerings of so many carryings” rather than as “identity.” It is also, Manning argues, to appreciate how, amid ongoing forms of biopolitical, geopolitical, and ontopolitical violence, “living otherwise *begins* in the relational field” where “there is no separation between who we are and how we world” (our emphasis).

Extending these discussions of the (contested, fugitive) place of the impersonal, the (non)conscious, and the (non)human in contemporary affect theories, Lisa Blackman’s chapter focuses on technologies of the nonrational in the wake of Trumpism and its affective post-truth politics of disinformation, gaslighting, and disbelief. Blackman’s archive offers a litany of contemporary forms of domestic and extradomestic abuse (at once, personal and impersonal, social and inhuman/e), focusing primarily on strategic deception and coercive power. Through a writing style that mirrors the chapter’s contents, she homes in on the role of counterfactual reasoning amid the swirling concatenations of “registers and modalities for attending to the world that exceed conscious rational thought and that are shared and distributed across the human and more than human.” In seeking to retroactively change the past in order to preemptively induce a future where alternate realities can “*feel true*,” counterfactual techniques of persuasion, influence, and governance have a close kinship to what Blackman calls “emotions and affects of convolution.” These are strange affects that work to disorient, confuse, bewilder, and knock off-kilter. In casting domestic abuse assemblages in light of the waking horrors of the Trump presidency, Blackman’s chapter raises important questions concerning Trump’s uncanny ability to “exploit, coerce, manipulate, and frame reality such that conspiracy theories, lies, and other forms of mis- and disinformation become contagious and infectious.” It is affect studies that, Blackman believes, is “best placed to apprehend, diagnose, and intervene” within such fraught settings—to trace how a domestic scenario for traumatic encounters and forms of nonphysical abuse spirals out of and in to “military, colonial forms of power, media power, [and] soft power.”

Situated within a similar set of coordinates but from an altogether different direction, Cecilia Macón’s chapter, “Haunting Voices: Af-

fective Atmospheres and Transtemporal Contact,” begins with the recorded testimonies of survivors of state-inflicted violence and torture. In her pursuit of the qualities of transtemporality that pervade the oral archives of state terrorism in Chile and Argentina, Macón looks to how social memory and digital media intersect to create atmospheres and materialities of encounter. If Blackman examines how counterfactual modes of reasoning rewrite the past in ways that are often dangerous and damaging, Macón explores how the sound atmospheres of terror, as described by survivors of those traumatic pasts, signal forms of “archival agency” that offer the potential to generate affirmative “political change in the present.” As such dynamics underscore, affective atmospheres are “not inert, ghostly things but are entities with agency affected by the practices they generate”—such that “the present can affect the past that is never merely past nor does it survive in an unaltered state.” In unfolding the logics and possibilities of “transtemporal contact” in this context, Macón is concerned with the workings of nonhuman agency in which matter not only provides “evidence of external events” but also acts as “witness beyond the realm of the human” (see Schulppie 2020). In this chapter, nonhuman agency is associated with “voices that persist unattached to their original bodies,” and archival agency moves across temporal thresholds to, at once, connect and separate (while also coinciding with) the processual passages between past, present, and future of these haunting soundscapes.

Each of the authors in the section ventures into various “beyonds” (of the more-than-, other-than-, non-) to explore what counts (or does not) as fitting under the category of the human: eschewing any ready-made bifurcation of human and nonhuman, accounting rather for what happens when we presume the body to be processually extended into mind and matter at once. Nonbifurcated. We will return to Brian Massumi to wrap up here because, after all, he cannot quite quit affect theory nor are particular theories of affect ready to quit him. Quoting from his “missed conceptions” supplement to *Parables for the Virtual*: “Affect theory does not reduce the mind to the body in the narrow, physical sense. It asserts that bodies think as they feel on a level with their movements. This takes thinking out of the interiority of a psychological subject and puts it directly in the world: in the co-motion of relational encounter” (Massumi 2021, xlvii). The final section of this reader pursues the “co-motion of relational encounter”

with a focus on how experiential/experimental procedures are becoming ever more targeted on the capture and control of relational encounter often through affective governance and algorithmic datafications of social reproduction.

A Living Laboratory: Glitching the Affective
Reproduction of the Social

In the background of the four chapters that comprise this reader's final section, we would like to imagine a question that hovers, one that sends us back, full circle, to this book's first chapter: What ingredients might be included in a periodic table of elements for affect study?¹⁷ As Derek McCormack suggests, such a table of elements would form "part of an expanded affective empiricism for thinking about, attending to, and where necessary, resisting and reworking the interactive, influential relation between subjects and worlds." One such element uniting the quartet of contributors in this final section of the reader is the *body politic* and, more specifically, how bodies are collectively enlisted, voluntarily and involuntarily, in affective processes of social reproduction, often quite traumatically: to their detriment, their immiseration, their maiming. Turning (directly sometimes) to Gilles Deleuze's remarks on the rise of "control societies," the authors here interrogate the different roles played by the "body" in our contemporary body politic: a body—rendered as skin, as flesh, as data—that is neither a priori resistant/rebellious nor merely acquiescent but strung along and among, as McCormack states, all manner of "forces and bonds through which worlds cohere and dissolve or become variously toxic and nourishing."

Deleuze sketches out his control societies argument in two places: "Postscript on the Societies of Control" and in an interview with Antonio Negri, "Control and Becoming." With "control," Deleuze (1995) extends Michel Foucault's broad periodization of two earlier logics of sociopolitical formation into a third phase:

- | *Sovereign societies*—a period roughly from the end of Dark Ages to the Enlightenment in which the sovereign's body itself secured the force of law while, correspondingly, the subject's body can be made to suffer a range of spectacular (public) physical punishments if determined to violate the sovereign body/law.

- 2 *Disciplinary societies*—a period from the Enlightenment to the mid-twentieth century of governmentality and subjectivation that expected citizens to conduct themselves through various, institutionally derived identities/molds (patient, student, worker, spectator) in order to conform to routinized practices of embodied docility that work to preserve and reproduce social cohesion.
- 3 *Control societies*—a period beginning around the 1950s and continuing today characterized by the rise of multinational corporate capitalism and its near-eclipse of the nation-state as the prime organizer of sociopolitical dynamisms, the arrival of computational culture and cybernetization, and the ascent of the modulation of consumer/debtor as suturing modes of subjectivation.

As we will see in Ezekiel Dixon-Román's chapter in this section, it is crucial to draw attention to how Sylvia Wynter's descriptive statements or *genres* of "Man 1" (European man's shift from theological to secular) and "Man 2" (*homo economicus*) align with Foucault "on the selection of the markers of the epistemological transformations that constitute modern thought" (Ferreira da Silva 2015, 96), but also foundationally center race and coloniality in any thoroughgoing account of the long history of the Human.¹⁸ How these operational logics of power and domination continue today are addressed in the chapters by Dixon-Román, Jasbir Puar (who speaks of a "sovereign right to maim" in the Palestinian territories), and Michael Richardson. There is no clean break between these transformations and no uniformity or stability across variously lived subjectivities within and beyond them; they precede at different tempos and with vastly different affective configurations across global spaces and times, persisting/subsisting within and alongside each other.

However one might consider or dispute control societies as an analytic, it seems undeniable that new twists in the reproduction of the social perpetually rise and fall at the level of affect. The authors in this final section unfold these machinations in order to discover where there might be a glimpse or glitch of potentialities that could disrupt, diffract, or disorder societies' most perniciously iterative practices (see also Amoore 2020; Clough 2018). Centrally, it is the work performed by algorithmic architectures that receive our authors' closest examination. Control societies are less invested in molding subjectivities to align with particular institutional forms and more driven

by the churn of wealth-and-flesh extraction potentials unleashed through algorithmic modulation: in the composition of both the social field itself and of the individual. Hence why, quite often, daily existence can feel more akin to maneuvering through the shape-shifts of a recursively tailored environmentality (as innumerable facades of “you” refract and circulate in a real-time orbit alongside the mobile trajectory of one’s scene changes), rather than in negotiation with the temporal lag of governmentality. In other words, disciplinary societies are almost always disciplining you after the fact, whereas control societies (think “recommendation engines,” or the profiling algorithms used by police departments, like PredPol [Benjamin 2019, 83]) nudge a more supple or fungible “you” toward an opening in space-time prepared slightly in advance of your arrival. Deleuze (1995, 180) terms this affective sense of immersive and undulating subjectivity “the dividual”—animated through the calculative processes that disassemble and reassemble infinitely fragmentable bits of self/interest/body/desire/fear/world (all to be parsed but then strung together again in ever-new data configurations). If the individual is ideological and representational with a relatively circumscribed interior/exterior, the dividual is affective, algorithmically enmeshed, and distributed, webbed in relations that can feel half-voluntary and half-enforced (although the scalar dynamics of what appears as “voluntary” and “enforced” can tip ever so gradually or in an instant, depending on the particular force encounters of bodies, histories, scenes).¹⁹

While Dixon-Román, Puar, and Richardson each engage with the dividual, algorithms, and control societies, this final section leads off with Jason Read’s contribution, which reckons with the organization of affect (or the affects) as a unique vantage point into social reproduction and thus willing/unwilling participation in this churn of relations and forces. Beginning with Spinoza’s vexing question “Why do people fight for their servitude as though it was their salvation?” Read pursues the ways that Spinoza’s query has been updated and reframed, first psycho-socioeconomically by Deleuze and Guattari in 1968 and then more recently by Frédéric Lordon around the matter of labor and social relations, in order to demonstrate how “the intimacy of the economy” is bound up with “the way that work and consumption restructure our desires and joys.” Here, Read describes a telling shift in the reproduction of social relations through the body politic:

“it is capital more than the state that organizes common desires and fears in the twentieth and twenty-first century.”

Grasping this shift in emphasis is hardly earthshaking (indeed, it is taken for granted these days), yet what is less noticed is how this signals a profound cross-wiring in the affectual composition of subjectivity: flipping the polarities between the contingency of capital’s “investment in abstract indifference” and the necessity of the state’s investment in securing “identification in specific identities.” Hence, with the coronavirus pandemic and the revaluation of (and, perhaps, the “great” resignation from) working life that followed in its wake, something became unsettled in how people live and locate the relation of necessity and contingency as individual/collective laboring bodies. Could this provide a glimpse into some newly resonant configuration for the everyday organization of affect, perhaps an emerging counterlaboring body-politic flashes on the horizon? Or are these threads momentarily left dangling along the frayed edges of subject formation only going to be restitched via newly contoured fears and desires into the sociopolitical fabric?

It is with another kind of sideways hopeful glimpse that Ezekiel Dixon-Román, in his “Algorithmic Governance and Racializing Affect,” calls attention to the “indeterminacies of blackness” that exceed capture in algorithmic profiling. Might this excess become a resource for pushing the regenerative capacities and debilities of racialized capital into more open-ended loopings that slip beyond algorithmically shaped autopoietic enclosure? Through the more-than-material immanence of flesh, Dixon-Román considers how the fugitivity of blackness might provide unforeseen opportunities for glitching the performative force of calculative spatiotemporalizations. His argument—with its deployment of Sylvia Wynter’s sociogenic principle and Denise Ferreira da Silva’s critique of the “transparent I” of Eurocentric philosophy—could be productively read alongside M. Gail Hamner’s chapter earlier in this reader, especially as both seek critical approaches that might cause racially debilitating narratives and computer protocols to jump their tracks.

The recalcitrant and reconstituted fleshy dividual serves as the source of both promise and threat for Black futurity, or as Alexander Weheliye (2014, 40) argues, flesh is “the ether that holds together the world of Man while at the same time forming the conditions of possibility

for the world's demise."²⁰ From the perspective of bodily inhabitation, Michelle Ann Stephens (2014, 201), in her *Skin Acts*, writes, "In the experience of living in, being in, one's skin, the flesh is an aspect of the self one discovers on the edge, on the hide just as it is being shed, just as one enters the symbolic order to stand before the Other's gaze." For Dixon-Román, flesh haunts, as overflow and abundance on the cusp of entry to and exit from the dividuating order, as a "potentiation of value" coursing through the machines of algorithmic governance. There are, however, no ready-made assurances in such "a radical recursive praxis," just potentiation (that might not even be "just").

Then Jasbir Puar, in her chapter, "Dividual Economies, of Data, of Flesh," looks to the intricate and porous relations among flesh, calculation, and the marking of time itself, especially as enmeshed in the lacerating, excruciating slownesses of Palestinian life. How does the indeterminacy and the uncertain calculus of datafication become "a folded-into-the-flesh condition of possibility, an ontology of flesh as felt?" Algorithms, as Puar shows, are not only operationalized through machines and/or at a distance but also manifest up close in the physical arrangements of the material world and in movements through heavily monitored and cordoned landscapes that work, alternately, to capacitate and incapacitate. Looking at how architectures of containment and performance-based art installations converge on "an art of quantification," Puar's chapter shows "how dividualization is both digital and of the flesh, involving series of recursive relationalities as well as a way of 'unseeing' and reseeing corporeality." Reminiscent of Hortense Spillers's (1987, 68) vital insights into how "the divided flesh" of the captive body becomes a "living laboratory" for all shape and manner of procedures for objectification, mutilation, and atomization, Puar indexes the brutal parsings of contemporary dividualization: how it acts to contain not only movement undertaken but "what movement is imagined to be" and how body parts (eyes, knees, ankles) "float free of the human form" so that maiming can be justified as humanitarian. But also, what do the practices of living through the pandemic in places already dwelling in precarity, like Palestine, have to teach us about "inhabiting temporalities askew" and about "the potentiality in dividual economies"? Puar argues that answers to these questions cannot adequately be divined through techniques or strategies of representation but instead must engage with nonrepresentational critique.

Michael Richardson concludes this section by weaving between and through the layerings and modalities of trauma induced by the algorithm. If Puar shows how algorithmic logic wends beyond its black box to modulate physical infrastructures as well as prehend the potential for movement, Richardson asks, how do the world's movements and the recursive jitterings of algorithms themselves rebound back onto this process as a whole? Richardson writes, "Algorithms are instruments of worlding (Stewart 2007), their affective ensembles pulsing into operative form within and between computational architectures and fleshy, social bodies alike." What would it mean to understand the affectability of the algorithm itself as shot through/saturated by trauma and not only the capacity of the algorithm as stirrer of trouble and instigator of trauma?

Trauma is now transmediated across the entirety of the social field by algorithms in ways that more traditional media—say film, radio, newspapers, television in the time of disciplinary societies—could really only dispense within the space-time of their particular mode of individuating enclosure. As trauma becomes automated (capturing, calculating, and feeding data forward in real time), it impinges "on the human sensorium" in massive and dividualized ways, immense to miniscule: from the full-scale rupture of the traumatic event to the slimmest registerings of microdynamics of bodily adjustments and rupturings, bundled together and affectively interpenetrating. Here, algorithms themselves can be as troubled as much as they are troubling (see also Amoores 2020). Richardson maintains that "algorithmic systems cannot be corrected away from the production of trauma because they are always already traumatic, constituted on the one hand by the trauma cultures from which they arise and on the other hand by the radical disjunctures in their own operative, determinative processes." Just as Puar calls for nonrepresentational critique, Richardson advocates for an "affective politics" that addresses algorithmic trauma by rejecting its "computational rationality" and its hyperefficient, problem-solving mythos and rather, wrestles with all the trouble and trauma—the psychoses, contingency, viscosity, and unknowability—of messy, fleshy-worldly entanglements.

What kind of methods might be adopted by an affective politics that addresses algorithmic trauma? We are reminded of the Wytterian methodologies of Katherine McKittrick (2021, 106n9) and her

discussion of blackness and algorithms from the chapter “Failure (My Head Was Full of Misty Fumes of Doubt)” in *Dear Science and Other Stories*.²¹ Here McKittrick catches the essence of the messy, fleshy-worldly entanglements of this “living laboratory” section in a single footnote: “If black life is the nonuniform problem, we might sit with this and its attendant noncomputability. If entered (recorded, logged), within the context of computation, black life might offer us multiple ways to unthink the problematic enfleshment of algorithms because it is an irresolvable variable, if entered (recorded, logged) into the equation, and within the working with and working out stages, the unsolvable also provides the opportunity to sit with unpredictability-entropy as this relates to the potential, not only for death-dealing, technologies of human life” (2021, 106). Throughout her poignant unfolding of this problematic, McKittrick tries to make her way toward an algorithm that ends anywhere other than Black death. She fails at every turn. So much of mathematics, like the training sets used to build algorithms, has only ever reckoned with Black livingness as a problem, with Black as always already marked for death. Deploying an algorithm within existing systems of racialized knowledge only arrives at this conclusion faster.

If we are to get elsewhere, then we need to start somewhere else. “What happens,” McKittrick wonders, “to our understanding of black humanity when our analytical frames do not emerge from a broad swathe of numbing racial violence but, instead, from the multiple and untracked enunciations of black life?” (105). McKittrick reflects then on her own practice, her methods, and how the questions that she asks over the course of her research “emerge from difficult and unbearable encounters” and do not yield any “predetermined codified answer” (120). This encounter of intensities produces “an unfinished mess and a still-worried and still-curious person who continues to be suspicious of how we come to know, where we know from, and the ways in which many academic methodologies refuse black life and relational thinking” (120). Those immeasurabilities that escape the algorithm are among the “unfinished mess” of elements that must come to populate any real or imagined periodic table for affect studies: relationality, encounter, mess, flesh, body politic, the minor, unlearning, force, ambiguity, and more. “What happens,” McKittrick wonders, “if the groove or the song gives insight to the theoretical frame?” (119). Beyond divining what escapes the algorithm and its re-

production of Black death and blank repetition, McKittrick proposes that theory and research and method expand their explanatory/disciplinary frames for understanding and change by starting elsewhere, by finding alternate and otherwise ways to get on the good foot.

Taking our cue from McKittrick, we would like to believe that her methodological interventions work along a similar groove as our desire to foster a shimmer of inventories for affect theory. And further, it is this decidedly other, capacious revisioning of a laboratory for living-ness that our contributors highlight both in this section as well as previous ones. These vital encounters with affect's most basic elements and most expansive worldings inevitably get tangled up in the always unfinished mess of aesthetics/politics, ontology/epistemology, material/immaterial, human/nonhuman/extrahuman.

May these encounters with shimmers and intensities keep opening out to futures, to pasts, to irresolvable tensions and ambiguities that, as Lauren Berlant wished, will never come remotely close to constituting a monoaffective imaginary.

Coda

Our reader finishes with "A Note" from Katie Stewart and a collection of prose poems from Lauren Berlant's final writings titled "Poisonality." In the spirit of Lauren's experiments with Katie in the sensorial constraints and possibilities of form in *The Hundreds* (2019), we will end with this resonant inventory of all things Lauren:

LAUREN: AN INVENTORY

- 1 Lauren admits, in "Final Words," the penultimate entry in the "Poisonality" collection, that when it comes to the affect word *shimmer*, she/they²² cannot relate. Lauren is less of a shimmerer, more of an inventorier: "a dog in a sea of crotches."
- 2 Like anyone making an inventory, Lauren enumerates elements: sometimes with numbers, sometimes in lists, sometimes with notes. Witness "Funny Story." What makes a funny story? Lauren initially sniffs out a few of its inherent properties, often by way of analogy but mostly by encircling the genre of the funny story with all it is not. Not an anecdote. Not magical. Not demanding. Not really memorable

or forgettable. Not generalizable. Not intimate. Not a psychological genre. Not a treasure. Not a trauma. This is not a process of elimination, though. It is a process of becoming attuned, of resonance conducting. Each of these nots carry their own shimmer of inventories, leaving faintly affective traces that generate a collective undertow as one means for feeling around a scene or a thing. Or as Lauren concludes “Poisonality’s” opening vignette, “feeling around the middle for a tug in any direction that can seem like an intention.”

- 3 Lauren attunes best to ripples in the social fabric of the ordinary, not rents. Episodes, not events. Episodes can foster a pedagogic embodying of capacities for being affected, for converting passive endurance into active, collective participation in the world’s continued unfolding. “I am training for a feeling I don’t have yet.” Events, though, can suddenly heave up and rupture a world in ways that obliterate episodic attunings, in ways that scramble the capacity to caption, in ways that induce genre failings. What happens when the event of death arrives episodically? Lauren is writing from inside its room. “Can you feel your receptivity? Where is it, can you put your hand on your body where it is?”
- 4 Lauren works to forestall post-death misreadings. At one point, Lauren writes, “I need phrases to fuel alternative worlds” but then immediately acknowledges that using “alter worlds” would be preferable since it better “suggests how a small shift can open up the image of another world” whereas the use of “alternative worlds” is ill-fitting, too baggy, generically imprecise. How to adequately fit worlds to words that are going to arrive after the author has departed? How to register and cast forward the writerly dimensions of this room right now—where/when Lauren’s body can still “quicken to anything: the whatever, the x, all the beloved placeholders”—in order to finesse the receptivity of future readers? “Outside, there are empty shoes at the door that happen to be your size. Inside, there are blocks of time set out for you plural to bullshit and brainstorm collectively, until a problem loses its corset.” When inventorying goose-bumps up against its limits (its relative flatness, its tendency to list or enumerate), analogy is the other mode that Lauren employs to do affect’s heaviest lifting. The capacity of analogy to open up the image of another world, an alter world, cannot be overstated.
- 5 In the section titled “Waiting,” Lauren makes an inventory of the mood shifts and prehensive adjustments that multiply in the space-

time of awaiting the latest test results from scans and cancer treatments. The list begins:

- 1 Nothing changed.
- 2 Everything changed.
- 3 Everything's better.
- 4 Some things are. . .

What are we to make of the fact that Lauren's listing includes an entry for the number 13 both before and then after "12"? What is happening to the sequence, to the flow, here? The corralled number 12 on this list is "remains." Earlier, Lauren defines a remain as "what gets left behind without a plan for it, marking the place of the radically useless." But maybe there is no mystery to unravel here. Maybe it is just a mistake from too much waiting, too much multiplying, too much revising. Of all possible numbers, did it have to be 13 twice, though?

- 6 But Lauren is not a noun: neither a remain nor remains. And certainly not radically useless. In the vignette "You Have a New Test Result," Lauren retells a story from *Sum: Forty Tales from the Afterlives* by David Eagleman (2009). In the story, people who have died enter a waiting room "where they are stuck until no one on Earth remains to say their name. People who had built monuments to themselves were therefore the last to enter the afterlife, because tour guides and lecturers had a duty to repeat the story of how they had mattered. Death's finitude hovered over them like a blinking cursor." We have, however, taken a different lesson from this story. There are reasons why we have repeated Lauren's name here, repeated "Lauren" again and again. There are reasons why this coda is written in the present tense. Lauren remains. (800)

Notes

The epigraph at the opening of this chapter comes from Helms Gesa, Marina Vishmidt, and Lauren Berlant's "Affect and the Politics of Austerity: An Interview Exchange with Lauren Berlant" in *Variant* 39/40 (Winter 2010).

- 1 Case in point: Omar Kasmani's gorgeous chapter on affect, belonging, and migration could have easily shimmered into almost any of the other subsections (and did, as we kept turning its facets over and over). Likewise, other chapters, if shuffled and resequenced, could unfold distinctive trajectories into and across affect that reveal ready alignments as well as jabbing counterpositions.

- 2 The best book-length critique of affect theory to date is Ashley Barnwell's (2020) *Critical Affect: The Politics of Method*. From the perspective of social science, Barnwell looks to both method and genre for ways that affect theory overplays its hand: trumpeting creativity (and the new) over historical continuity with earlier modes of inquiry, too readily caricaturing all that smells of positivism and critique for the boundlessness of poetry and mess. For a few other pertinent critiques with varying degrees of balloon popping acuity, see Andrejevic (2013), Bollmer (2014), Culp (2016), Galloway (2017), Grossberg (2015), Hemmings (2005), Leys (2011, 2017), Martin (2013), Palmer (2017), Papoulias and Callard (2010), and Wetherell (2012, 2015).
- 3 Greg has learned so much from graduate students and early career scholars as editor at the open access journal *Capacious: Journal for Emerging Affect Inquiry*, <http://capaciousjournal.com/>.
- 4 For more on the role of pre- and non- in affect studies, see Seigworth (2014, 2017).
- 5 Berlant is riffing on Karl Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (1964, 141): "The forming of the five senses is a labor of the entire history of the world down to the present." See especially Berlant's lengthy quote from Marx's 1844 manuscripts and his direct theoretical appeal to the senses—"The senses have therefore become directly in their practice theoreticians"—in the first chapter of *Cruel Optimism* (2011, 31).
- 6 For debates around intentionality in relation to affect theory, see Pedwell (2020) and other pieces in the "Review Symposium on Ruth Leys's *The Ascent of Affect*," *History of Human Sciences* 33 (2). See also Schaefer (2022). Or as Katie Stewart (2017, 124) frames this whole affair in a deliciously succinct clapback: "Meanwhile, back at the academic ranch, the death maws of humanist critique just keep snapping at the world as if the whole point of being and thinking is just to catch it in a lie."
- 7 Nothing in Tomkins's work hints at the necessity of holding the world at arm's length in order to unlock its rightful meaning so as to simultaneously affirm one's own solidity: not when you could go in for a bear hug (actually, it is a kitten named "Bambi" [Sedgwick 2003, 95]) in an attempt to still all that trembles in the wake of feeling (whether too much or its absence).
- 8 Our thanks to contributor M. Gail Hamner who read the first draft of our editors' introduction and gave us this very helpful and inspiring response: "It feels to me that the words you craft in your opening, before framing and canvassing the chapters, attempt to do for the *study* of affect what you also assert about affect itself, that it, to position it not as a thing or line of inquiry or subdiscipline, but as an *effort*. Because the *study* of affect indexes *effort* and not a stable thing or method, it is floppy, diffuse, profligate, without being abstruse, undecidable, or elusive" (personal communication, July 27, 2021).
- 9 At the end of *Sex, or the Unbearable*, Berlant (2014, 116–17) writes back to Lee Edelman:

I insist . . . on a less austere materialism of a continuously contemporary ordinariness, in which beings try to make do and to flourish in the awkward,

riven, unequal, untimely, and interesting world of other beings, abstractions, and forces, and in which we therefore have a shot at transforming the dynamics and the costs of our negativity and appearance. . . . This is what it means to live, and to theorize, experimentally: to make registers of attention and assessment that can change the world of their implication, but also model the suspension of knowing in a way that dilates attention to a problem or scene.

- 10 To our knowledge, Lauren Berlant never wrote throwaway lines.
- 11 For more on Sedgwick, reparation, and ambivalence, see Berlant (2019), Pedwell (2014, 2021), Stacey (2014), and Wiegman (2014).
- 12 See also Chen (2013) and Chen and Luciano (2015).
- 13 In a similar vein, see Andrew Culp's (2016) *Dark Deleuze*, which advocates for a reading of Deleuze's take on affect as focused on cruelty rather than intensity, as an anti-phenomenology rather than a body's becoming.
- 14 See, for example, the congenial but carefully delineated position takings between Fred Moten (2018) in *The Universal Machine* and Jarod Sexton (2012, 2017). For something less congenial, see Jesse McCarthy (2021) on Frank Wilderson.
- 15 See also discussion of affect, habit, and the minor in Pedwell (2021).
- 16 For an account of the resonances among Bergson's intuition, Deleuze's affect, and Williams's structures of feeling, see Seigworth (2006).
- 17 See, as one example, Gumbs's (2018) wonderfully realized experiment with the use of the periodic table of elements to chart the movement of energies and elements in M. Jacqui Alexander's and other Black feminist works.
- 18 See Ferreira da Silva's examination of the overlaps and divergences between Wynter's and Foucault's thought-architectures (2015); also see her critique of Foucault's engagement with the discourse of race in *Unpayable Debt* (2022, 131–35). For an essay that casts Wynter's framework in light of Deleuze's control society, see Hantel (2020).
- 19 For more on the interrelations of control, affect, algorithms, and the dividual, see Amooore (2020), Beller (2021), Chun (2021), Clough (2018), Clough et al. (2015), Hansen (2015), Massumi (2015), Parisi (2019), and Parisi and Dixon-Román (2020).
- 20 "Flesh," writes R. A. Judy (2020, 208) in his *Sentient Flesh*, is "an irreducible elemental level of existence." In their *All Incomplete*, Stefano Harney and Fred Moten (2021, 82) address the elemental stakes of the flesh of Black studies in light of Deleuze's appeal to Spinoza:

Deleuze says we don't yet know what a body can do. Can we imagine what we don't know that flesh can do? Because flesh won't do, it does. Flesh senses extra while, with transatlantic slave trade, capital "invents" a collectivization of broken, working "bodies." Such invention, such bad sociological finding, can't know that flesh was working, sensing, before capital and its concepts got there. Capital wants to master that mystery, but the incalculable is invaluable no matter how much you count on it, no matter how many times you put a price on it, no matter how regularly and regulatively you lock it up or shoot it down.

- 21 John Law's *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research* played in the background as we (Greg and Melissa) considered the place and role of method in the first *Affect Theory Reader*. For this second one, Greg and Carolyn have found McKittrick's *Dear Science* to be, along with Lauren Berlant, an ideal soundtrack for providing feedback to our contributors as well as so helpful to our writing of this introduction.
- 22 Finally, a key detail about Lauren and pronouns. Lauren's estate has provided Duke University Press and us a brief statement on this matter, from which we quote here: "Lauren's pronoun practice was mixed—knowingly, we trust. Faced with queries as to 'which' pronoun Lauren used and 'which' should now be used, the position of Lauren's estate (Ian Horswill, executor; Laurie Shannon, literary executor) is that Lauren's pronoun(s) can best be described as 'she/they.'
"She/they' captures the actual scope of Lauren's pronoun archive, and it honors Lauren's signature commitment to multivalence and complexity. It also leaves thinkers free to adopt either pronoun, or both of them, as seems most fitting in their own writing about *her/them*."

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