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The Anthropology of Becoming

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PLATE O.1 Alice Neel, *James Hunter Black Draftee*, 1965

Foreword

UNFINISHED

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Alice Neel's 1965 oil painting *James Hunter Black Draftee* is an arresting portrait. Hunter's pensive face and supporting hand are richly filled in, while his ears and the rest of his body are only loosely sketched. The uncompleted image exposes how lifeworlds enter into the work of art: the artist had been inviting passersby on the New York City street into her studio to sit for her. Hunter, who said he had been drafted to fight in the war in Vietnam, never returned for a second sitting.

We don't know what happened to Hunter.[1] But we know who wanted war and what war did, and how old and new wars make plain the transience and value of all things. Outlined by Neel in the spur of the moment, the seemingly invisible body of this fleeting subject is now a powerful reminder of the perennial struggle of minorities in the United States and elsewhere for full political recognition of their personhood. Hunter's detailed, expressive face also evokes his singularity and the concerns that weigh on him, while revealing little of who he is. Yet it is Hunter who punctuates the representation. So the painting seems unfinished, and this transfixing unfinishedness—the worlds on edge and the open-endedness of people's becoming—is the very stuff of art.

With its receptiveness to and incorporation of the accidental and the unknown, Neel and Hunter's artwork (not possible without each other and the

world's ongoingness) leaves us with a haunting, incomplete aesthetic and a challenge to further inquire into the multiplicity of lifeworlds and the plasticity of anthropological figures.

So, how can we ethnographically apprehend these worldly fabrications and the lives therein, constituted as they are by that which is unresolved, and bring this unfinishedness into our storytelling?

How are long-standing theoretical approaches able—or not—to illuminate emergent political, economic, and affective realities?

How can the becomings of our informants and collaborators, and the movements and counterknowledges they fashion, serve as alternative figures of thought that might animate comparative work, political critique, and anthropology to come?

Ethnographic creations are about the plasticity and unfinishedness of human subjects and lifeworlds. And the essays in this book are themselves unfinished views of people (including anthropologists, scientists, and artists) in the process of becoming through things, relations, stories, survival, destruction, and reinvention in the borrowed time of an invisible present.

The notion of becoming, which organizes our individual and collective efforts, emphasizes the plastic power of people and the intricate problematics of how to live alongside, through, and despite the profoundly constraining effects of social, structural, and material forces, which are themselves plastic. Unfinishedness is both precondition and product of becoming, and we chose our title—*Unfinished*—as a way to draw attention to this important feature of all of the book's characters and inquiries, its attempts at open thinking and experimental writing. Unfinishedness is a feature as generative to art and knowledge production as it is to living.

We work with an expansive definition of unfinishedness. Our ethnographic work always begins in the midst of social life, its rhythms, affects, surprises (from the trivial to the tragic), and urgencies. The categories and books we bring to our investigations are continually challenged by the figuring out, disfiguring, and refiguring of lifeworlds and subjects. Desire follows world-historical trajectories, and ethnographic subjects have their own ideas of and relationships to the constraints and unfinishedness of their lives and milieus. Becoming troubles and exceeds our ways of knowing and acting. It pushes us to think against the grain, to consider the uncertain and unexpected in the world, and to care for the as-yet-unthought that interrogates history and keeps modes of existence open to improvisation. We are tasked with the otherwise.

To attend to the unfinished, we need a conscientious empiricism wedded to a radical analytical openness to complexity and wonder. For critical analysis, writing, and social engagement, the rewards of staying with formations that exceed us and exploring the incomplete are far from trifling. We can better understand how political forces and capital expansions exhaust existing (not ideal) forms and absorb some of the qualities and textures of individual and collective experiments with relating and knowing—lived tensions between power and flight, mortality and vitality, history and invention, creation and ruination, care and disregard, and belonging and fugitivity. As we seek to articulate a human science of the uncertain and unknown, we can also restore movement and possibility to ethical thinking and political practice: a countertechnique, a continual capacity for recalibration that the ethnographic craft and theorizing enable.

Engaging a range of pressing contemporary problematics—including war and its aftermath, economic transformation, racial inequality, gun violence, religiosity, therapeutic markets, animal rights activism, and abrupt environmental change—the authors of *Unfinished* foreground the malleable nature of human-nonhuman interactions and demonstrate how people and social forms partake of and are shaped by multiple systems and forces, themselves contingent and shifting, all with variable degrees of agency.

We work at a granular level of ethnographic description and interpretation, following people and things—those deemed ex-human, canny artists and wounded animals, forest firefighters and climate scientists, embattled neighborhoods, inks and pharmakons, sites of prayer, the bones of missing war victims. We listen carefully and notice swerves, follow leads and trajectories, and translate these movements into thought and writing. Each essay in *Unfinished* finds its way to an arresting encounter, image, concept, or kernel that enters into a series, always midway, providing prismatic points of contact with assemblages of force and form in multiple worlds.

An anthropology of becoming demands more than the flat realism that comes with standard practices of contextualization and historicization, and it must not simply mimic or echo the dark determinisms that mark much of social theory. The authors of *Unfinished* insist on the indispensable moral and analytical value of the micro, the singular and partial, which requires a different, more fine-grained, and humble logic than that of a generality subsuming all things into aggregates, repetitions, and models. Thus we take a situated, cartographic (rather than archaeological) approach to self-world entanglements and leaking social fields.

Here, objects are milieus in themselves; worlds are at once material, social, and symbolic, simultaneously precarious and in motion; and individuals and collectives are constituted as much by affects and intensities as by structural forces. We trace people's trajectories as they grow out of themselves, fold in exteriorities, and become other. In attending to orientations, directions, entries, walls, and exits, our combined ethnographic essays produce a geography of becomings: maps of the microdynamics of living and the new configurations of thought, affect, solidarity, and resentment that create tears and exclusions—but also openings, however minor—in macro-level realities and scaling projects.

To grow closer to our anthropological subjects—and to build a form of critique concerned more with identifying crossroads and opening up possibilities than with making judgments and enforcing totalizing analytical schemes—each of the chapters in *Unfinished* embraces the literary expressivity and exploratory potentials of the essay genre. Our "Ethnographic Sensorium" introduces the book's main ethnographic characters and lifeworlds and articulates the methodological and analytical significance of an anthropology of becoming. Throughout *Unfinished*, the authors offer a rich spectrum of the ways that becoming emerges in specific lives and milieus and against the backdrop of world-historical forces—all experimenting with writing and grappling with the incompleteness and open-endedness of fieldwork and cultural theory. In the book's afterword, Michael M. J. Fischer lovingly rereads the essays, teasing out their generativity and what they reveal about the becoming of anthropology and the problematics of futures on the horizon.

We tell stories that are as much material and political-economic as personal and ethical. We are always working outward: pulling into line with our subjects, moving sideways to follow them, getting out of their way, returning and sitting with them, drawing out characters, probing philosophical questions, bringing certain concepts into focus, and letting others emerge only partially, but meaningfully so. Our storytelling destabilizes hierarchies of expertise and confuses the distinction between the finished and the unfinished, illuminating the ethnographic open systems in which anthropologists and subjects are entangled, folded into lives, transformations, and thinking across time and space.

Unfinished's ethnographic essaying is an invitation to readers to open their own thinking to the unpredictability, multiplicity, and incommensurability that animate lives and realities—and the ethnographic craft itself—and to find resonances, keeping critical thought engaged and multiplying.

NOTE

1 Alice Neel's painting *James Hunter Black Draftee* was shown in the 2016 exhibit *Unfinished: Thoughts Left Visible* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. "We don't think [James Hunter] died because his name is not on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, in D.C.," said Kelly Baum, one of the curators of the exhibit. "But we don't know what happened to him" (quoted in C. Swanson, "What Happened to 'James Hunter Black Draftee'? A Mystery at the Met Breuer"). See also Baum, Bayer, and Wagstaff, *Unfinished: Thoughts Left Visible*.

Introduction

Ethnographic Sensorium

JOÃO BIEHL AND PETER LOCKE

Hear the loud crack of gunfire, followed by Mrs. Lana's piercing scream. She has just seen her son fatally shot in their neighborhood in gangland Chicago. Mrs. Lana goes mad, and in the weeks and months that follow, she keeps screaming at passersby. As neighbors look after her and continue to hold her in high regard, they too reflect on the countless young black lives lost. With and through Mrs. Lana's unanswerable cry, the community itself becomes aggrieved and contemplates what form of life might be livable in the American city today.

Picture Catarina writing her dictionary, her ailing body struggling to inscribe the words that form her from within: "What I was in the past does not matter." Abandoned as a meaningless leftover in Vita, an asylum in southern Brazil, she invents a new name for herself—Catkine—from the drug Akineton, one of many that have mediated her social death and supposed madness. As Catkine tries to disentangle herself from the forces that led her to Vita's endpoint and holds onto what could have been—"mine is an illness of time"—she seeks vitality in an exhausted present. Years later, her daughter Andrea, who was given up for adoption by her father, reaches for ties to a lost mother. Andrea calls on the anthropologist, who has also become a part of his characters' metamorphoses.

A political demonstration in Mexico City: feel the crowd, the rage as thousands protest the devastating violence of the drug war and demand that the government find the forty-three students who have recently disappeared. As the demonstration unfolds, security forces are descending on *anexos* in the

surrounding barrios—religiously inspired drug rehabilitation centers for the poor, where violence is inseparable from healing. What will come of their sudden takeover by the state?

In southeast Turkey, just across the border from Syria, where the threat of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) looms: another crowd in another world on the edge. Notice the movement of thousands of pilgrims congregating at a mosque on the holiest night of the year. Look closer: you will see Özlem and Zuhal, young students of Islamic theology, growing agitated by the crowding, the noise, and the garbage strewn across the sidewalks, ill at ease with the supposed healing power of the site's sacred waters. Amid revivalist reforms and the upheaval of war and displacement, the faithful confront new challenges in relating to ritual space and practice—becoming, in the process, new kinds of religious subjects.

In a bright Rio de Janeiro studio, the artist Adriana Varejão is making ink for each of the more than one hundred skin color terms that Brazilians use to describe themselves and others. Collaborating on a project inspired by Brazil's complex history of race and racism, an anthropologist finds her own thinking on "the spectacle of the races" unpredictably cannibalized by the artist. Along the way, she comes to a new understanding of works of art as lively agents that combine, reconfigure, and reinterpret the materials and ideas that make up people and shape time's passage.

An encounter with a wounded horse on a crowded Indian road turns an onlooker into an animal rights activist, its bleeding eye sockets a call to witness and surrender. This meeting marks a rebirth of sorts for the witness and others, the surrender of the self to working against futility for a life of responsibility to nonhumans. It also propels movements: an opening of the social skin and a thickening of worldly relations. What becomes of both human and animal in these multispecies intimacies, these encounters with unfree suffering others? Does becoming animal subvert or reinforce our human-centric visions of ourselves and our worlds?

Elsewhere, there is waiting: a meantime haunted by unresolved legacies of violence and dispossession, by unimaginable loss, by longing for transformation.

Post-war Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina: pockmarked façades are smoothed over, and shopping centers rise in place of hollow ruins. Two hours to the east, world leaders speak of hope and regret as newly identified remains are interred on the twentieth anniversary of the genocide at Srebrenica. As thousands of desperate refugees from the Middle East make their way through the Balkans, Bosnians live with the unresolved legacies of their own violent conflict. Here Sarajevo's urban poor—and the civil society groups that support

them—await a still uncertain transformation, finding ways to get on with life and change themselves amid a stagnating transition.

Peer over shoulders at the gloved hands of forensic anthropologists sorting and identifying human bones under the glare of laboratory lights—applying and tinkering with techniques pioneered in the aftermath of the Bosnian war. In Cyprus, the remains and belongings of the missing transform experiences of time and loss for families and scientists decades after the violence of conflict has subsided. Recovered and identified against a painful backdrop of paranoia, rumor, and unsettled grievances, these troubling objects trigger new personal and political struggles at the collapsing frontiers of past, present, and future.

Paraguay: in the dense forests and cleared pastures of South America's Gran Chaco, Tié and Cutai whisper stories by firelight. Aasi, once a warrior, became a peacemaker and later, after encounters with missionaries, a Christian. His nephew Pejei thrashes against the ropes binding him, gripped by *urusoi*, a madness wrought by the soul fleeing the body. They are Ayoreo, members of one of the last bands in the Chaco to be "contacted" and ushered violently into brutal interpersonal and regional economies. To endure world-ending violence and ravenous deforestation, many radically disavow their precontact ways of life—here self-negation is a technique for reproducing moral life in a world of death. The anthropologist is not immune; in his witnessing, he, too, is caught up in the delirium.

Time-lapse images, clear and breathtaking, show the rapid retreat of enormous Arctic glaciers over just a few years. Far away in the American Southwest, as megafires blaze, first responders grapple with the failure of predictive models in the face of new and frightening wildfire dynamics. As scientists struggle to anticipate forms of environmental calamity that elude prediction in the borrowed time of an invisible present, extinctions continue, and models for remediation must be continually rescaled. As we face dire tipping points, how can communities and policy makers prepare for the unknowable futures of our planet and maintain its ability to sustain life?

PLASTICITY

These moments and stories are incomplete views onto subjects and lifeworlds in the process of becoming. Taken together, they make up an ethnographic sensorium: a multifaceted and affective point of contact with worlds of inequality, hovering on the verge of exhaustion while also harboring the potential for things to be otherwise.

Indeed, the realities in which we are all entangled today, and in which the becomings of our characters unfold, are on the edge: of financial collapse, infrastructural breakdown, and environmental calamity; racial violence, right-wing populism, and alarming new regimes of security and surveillance; and chronic warfare, mass migration, and deadly health disparities. In the meantime, people may find ways to endure the intolerable and struggle to repair and heal, untangle themselves from the known and establish new relations (or not), negotiate threatening detours and the newly uncertain, and make use of these very realities to craft viable forms of life and project themselves into a future—or simply remain in suspension amid the collapse of messianic structures. Yet amid today's alarming global political shifts, it is also obvious that people's plasticity—shaped as much by fear and resentment as by hope and desire—carries destructive and violent potentials.

The anthropology of becoming is about the plastic power of people, worlds, and thought—that is, "the power of specifically growing out of one's self, of making the past and the strange one body with the near and present."[1] In this book, we are concerned with the ways in which our ethnographic subjects, their bodies, the material and symbolic worlds they inhabit, and the structural forces they must navigate all grow out of themselves, becoming other and unpredictably constructive or perilous in their entanglements and over time.

As ethnographers of the contemporary, we always begin our work in the midst of social life, within asymmetries and constraints of all kinds, traversed by myriad flows that are of indeterminate origin and destination, both vital and deadly. Above all concerned with plasticity and with the unfinishedness that emerges through intensive work with people and their trajectories, we break open totalizing abstractions; pursue lives that are bifurcated, stagnating, or in flux; chart the worlds and abrupt changes that our characters are caught up in; and record the granularities of the ongoing, shared episodes that shape life stories and horizons—our subjects' and our own. We are interested in the human subject as always under construction and in the unforeseeable concepts that can be generated through fieldwork. In attending to these processes, we find materials for a critique of today's evolving dynamics of knowledge production, political economies, and social control that are themselves plastic and have real human and material consequences.

This plasticity does not exist independently of contingency and death. Omnipresent materially and figuratively for the characters and scenarios in the essays that follow, resistance to destruction and death in all their forms—historical oblivion, social abandonment or political exclusion, accidents, sick-

ness and the end of biological life, or the loss of an imagined future—is woven into all processes of becoming, activating and shaping people's trajectories. As Angela Garcia puts it in chapter 3, in considering the brutal toll of the War on Drugs in Mexico, "the darkness of the present moment is the very condition that might generate the possibility of moving beyond it. It is the site of hope and the precondition of becoming."

In contrast to judgments of intellectual stagnation and futures without anticipation, this book's ethnographic sensorium opens new channels of communication and conceptual work, calling attention to the plethora of existential struggles, improvisations, ideas, and landscapes that shape what life means and how it is experienced and imagined in splintering and pluralizing presents. People's becomings and their varying forms of dissent and flight are fundamental to both how ethnography unfolds and its own potentialities. They drive our craft's capacity to map alternative fields of immanence and to illuminate new ethical terrains and politics in the making.

In this way, ethnographic inquiry brings us closer to the world's matters of fact and people's simultaneous movements away from and toward material structures and relational fields, unsettling established forms of thought and invoking both alternative conceptual frameworks and figures of what is yet to come. "Like a bullet," Laurence Ralph writes in chapter 2, Mrs. Lana's voice "was an intrusion that ruptured the present. Symbolically reinstating the violence that had taken Jo Jo, she drew an audible line, every day, between life and death." And as Adriana Petryna reminds us in chapter 9, "tipping points—points that, if crossed, mean irreversible change—exist and require a countertechnique, a continual capacity for recalibration, a horizoning work" on the part of scientists, policymakers, and communities all over the world.

UNFINISHEDNESS

The anthropology of becoming can be understood through three distinct, though related, dimensions. First, it emphasizes the plastic nature of human-nonhuman interactions and acknowledges that people belong simultaneously to multiple systems that themselves are made up of people, things, and forces with varying degrees of agentive capacity.[2] Attuned to "the mutual constitution of entangled agencies" and the unstable nature and malleability of all social fields and subjectivities, the anthropology of becoming acknowledges how power and knowledge form bodies, identities, and meanings, and how inequalities disfigure living, while refusing to reduce people to the workings of such forces.[3]

Instead of viewing people in terms of core principles or as fully bounded by structure or form, the anthropology of becoming attends to people's transformations and varied agencies, and to the ways in which power itself is shifting and contingent—less a solid, stable entity than a product of manipulation, systematic falsehood, and ongoing struggle, and constantly punctured and put to flight by people's becomings. In this way, anthropology makes space for unfinishedness, and bodies, power, and things do not remain frozen in place.

The second dimension has to do with experiences of time, space, and desire. Lived time is not reducible to clock time, and people inhabit multiple temporalities at once. Becoming occupies its own kind of temporality that unfolds in the present: a dynamic interpenetration of past and future, actual and virtual. Distinct from potentiality and not reducible to causality or outcomes, becoming is characterized by the indeterminacies that keep history open, and it allows us to see what happens in the meantimes of human struggle and daily life. Becoming also attunes us differently to the shifting cultural and material particularities of the spaces our interlocutors must traverse: cartographic rather than archaeological, becomings "belong to geography, they are orientations, directions, entries and exits."[4] The very materialities of space affect and impinge on the subject, encouraging or constraining possibilities for movement and adding further texture to lived experiences.

These meantimes and interstitial spaces are not stagnant vacuums: they overflow with shifting aggregates of desire and power, the emerging sociopolitical fields and intersubjective entanglements produced as people imagine and attempt to make real what they need and long for. Desire does not seek a singular, decontextualized object, but a broader world or set of relations in which the object is embedded and becomes meaningful.[5] Attending to this aggregating capacity and the operative fields in and through which institutions and social processes combine and collapse, the anthropology of becoming approaches the interplay between the motions of becoming different and moments of impasse or plateaus of stabilization.

The third dimension involves an attentiveness to the unknown, both as a critical feature of people and material worlds and as a productive force in research and conceptual work. Through its relentless empiricism and radical analytical openness, anthropology creates the conditions of possibility for moments of surprise and the sustained, open-ended engagements that wonder, itself always historically and locally situated, precipitates. Whether through the classic anthropological realization that other systems and ideas organize life elsewhere, or the recognition that our own presuppositions often

prove inadequate in describing the complex realities of the lives of others, fieldwork moves us away from entrenched categories and expands the perspectives—on other cultures, space-times, and species—from which we can perceive and understand the world (if only always partially). Ethnographic subjects are, in a sense, both life experimenters and figures of surprise—not knowable ahead of time, unpredictable, and capable of shifting something in our own thinking. Remaining open to the unfathomable complexity of layered entanglements of biology, environment, social life, and material forces of all kinds, and acknowledging—even embracing—the unknown can inspire scholars to produce a more humble, tentative social science, keeping our theory more multirealistic and sensible and our modes of expression less figurative and more readily available for swerves, breaks, and new paths.

Together, these three dimensions challenge the craft of anthropology to continue to cultivate forms of field research and expression that can bring us closer to the plasticity and virtuality, the transformations and dead ends, of our ethnographic subjects and their worlds within worlds and languages within languages—none of which can be known in the abstract or ahead of time. Such a commitment to ethnographic empiricism, we hope, can help illuminate how older dynamics of difference-making and violence are reinvigorated and the conditions under which something new might be produced.

BECOMINGS

In working toward an anthropology of becoming, we have drawn on the work of French philosopher Gilles Deleuze (in dialogue with his longtime collaborator Félix Guattari), whose particular empiricist sensibility and attentiveness to the constructedness of both subjects and power lends itself to ethnographic inquiry and to a more humble and creative form of critique and conceptual thinking. For us, Deleuze offers one opening into the multiple theoretical and disciplinary lineages that work with and from this plasticity and inventiveness of people, and he attunes us to ongoing, diverse exchanges between anthropology and philosophy.[6]

In Deleuze's writing we find approaches that seem refreshingly ethnographic and unabashedly open-ended—cartography as opposed to archaeology, rhizomes as opposed to deep structures, leaking social fields as opposed to enclosed systems, and lines of flight and deterritorialization forever breaking through the impasses imposed by totalizing forms of power and knowledge. The tension between empirical realities and theories is permanent and irresolvable,

and these approaches allow theory to be always catching up to reality, always startled, making space for the incompleteness of understanding that is often a necessary condition for anthropological fieldwork and thinking.

One of the key terms of Deleuze's thought, *becoming* embodies such sensibilities and has been particularly productive in our own work. As deployed by theorists, the concept of becoming destabilizes the primacy of being and identity in the Western philosophical tradition in favor of attending to shifting sets of relations and the ongoing production of difference in the world. Becoming moves through every event, so that each is simultaneously the start, end, and midpoint of an ongoing cycle of production. In this Nietzschean eternal return of change and difference, the worlds and histories we traverse are both products and conditions of becoming, and the human subject is not an autonomous, rational individual or a stable self but an always unstable assemblage of organic, social, and structural forces and lines of flight that at once shape and are shaped by their milieus.[7] The nonlinear space-time and the extensive, contingent itineraries of becoming cannot be permanently closed, completely deciphered, or planned in advance.

In the essay "Many Politics," Deleuze articulates more precisely how becoming fits into his larger theory of individuation and the forming of social fields. "Whether we are individuals or groups, we are made up of lines," he says.[8] These lines fall into three main kinds.

The first kind of line is segmentary, defining and sorting people according to categories: "binary machines of social classes; of sexes, man-woman; of ages, child-adult; of races, black-white; of sectors, public-private; of subjectivations, ours-not ours."[9] If these ordering and classifying "molar"[10] lines are part of Foucauldian normalizing apparatuses of power,[11] then the second kind of line is "supple,"[12] charting the actual lives and social worlds that depend on the rigidity of forms, categories, and boundaries while never quite corresponding to them. Ever crossing thresholds, these molecular lines are the means and materials of meandering transformations that cannot be engineered by arts of governance. Many things happen on this second kind of line: "becomings, micro-becomings, which don't even have the same rhythm as our 'history.' "[13]

The third kind of line—the line of flight—is both distinct from and of a piece with the molecular lines that jostle with the molar lines, more radical and mysterious: "as if something carried us away, across our segments, but also across our thresholds, towards a destination which is unknown, not foreseeable, not preexistent."[14] Above all, the point is that "all these lines are tangled" as they make

up concrete social fields; mutually constitutive and dependent, each type of line comes with its own openings, dangers, and dead ends.[15]

To write, says Deleuze, is "not to impose a form (or expression) on the matter of lived experience."[16] Literature (and ethnography tuned to becomings, we hope) instead moves "in the direction of the ill-formed or the incomplete . . . it is inseparable from becoming."[17] Becoming, as theorized by Deleuze, always happens "in the middle": people moving along and amid multiple lines, pushing the boundaries of forms, escaping and inventing new forces, and combining with other fluxes.[18]

To become is "not to attain a form" but to find "a zone of proximity, indiscernibility, or indifferentiation where one can no longer be distinguished from *a* woman, *an* animal, or *a* molecule—neither imprecise nor general, but unforeseen and nonpreexistent, singularized out of a population rather than determined by a form."[19] Beyond mere resemblance or sentimental identification, one can enter into such a zone of deep proximity with anyone or anything—"I is an other," in Arthur Rimbaud's formulation[20]—"on the condition that one creates the literary means for doing so."[21]

Always singular yet ever producing multiplicity, the work of becoming is inherently a work of creation. It invokes the capacities of people to endure and live on as they reckon with the overdetermined constraints and resources of the worlds into which they are thrown, while also, crucially, calling on their ability to approach the open-ended, to imagine worlds and characters that do not—but may yet—exist. One of the guiding principles of Deleuze's conceptual work is that the real and the virtual are always coexisting, always complementary, two juxtaposable or superimposable parts of a single trajectory: "two faces that ceaselessly interchange with one another, a mobile mirror" that bears witness until the end to a new vision whose passage it remains open to.[22]

Training anthropology's focus on people's becomings across forms and scales and over time highlights the extent to which a bounded concept of society, culture, or politics does not neatly align with empirical realities. "For me, society is something that is constantly escaping in every direction," Deleuze said in a conversation with Paul Rabinow in the mid-1980s: "It flows monetarily, it flows ideologically. It is really made of lines of flight. So much so that the problem for a society is how to stop it from flowing. For me, the powers come later."[23]

To draw on this productive unmooring, we might need to let go of some venerable assumptions about the human condition and about where we locate political action, instead asking what life-forms, collectives, and new kinds of politics are on the horizon, brewing within the leaking excesses of existing

force fields and imaginaries. Becoming, thus, is a style of noticing, thinking, and writing through which to capture the intricate relations, movements, and dynamics of power and flight that make up our social worlds.

The time of becoming is the real time in which life struggles are waged, in which stasis is sustained or transformation plays out, fragmented and uneven. As Deleuze argued in an interview late in his life, "becoming isn't a part of history; history amounts only to the set of preconditions, however recent, that one leaves behind in order to 'become,' that is, to create something new."[24] While ethnographic work bears out Deleuze's insight that becoming unfolds at a different tempo of change from the seemingly linear march of historical events, it also troubles the philosopher's sense that becoming unequivocally "leaves behind" the force of the past. Even as becoming cannot be reduced to history and our subjects often carve out unexpected paths, history remains folded into the present and the contingent, both imposing limits on and furnishing resources for people's social and material labor.[25] In Bridget Purcell's words in this volume, "layered histories persist—not only as material traces, but folded, also, into perception, practice and sensibility."

Indeed, if the concept of becoming provides important openings for anthropology with its emphasis on transformation and its attention to the constant reworking of lives and worlds, in its typical philosophical renderings and uptake it may be too distant from experience, missing something of the various constraints and conditions that shape how becomings actually unfold.[26] These conditions beg for a distinct perceptual capacity and critical understanding and are themselves rich starting points for alternative theorizing, holding off what the anthropologist Kathleen Stewart calls "the quick jump from concept to world—that precarious habit of academic thought."[27] Attending to life as it is lived and adjudicated by people produces a multiplicity of approaches, critical moves and countermoves, and an array of interpretive angles as various as the individuals drawn to practice anthropology. At stake is finding creative ways of not letting the ethnographic die in our accounts of the contemporary.

Ethnography is not just protophilosophy, but a way of staying connected to open-ended, even mysterious, social processes—a way of counterbalancing the generation of certainties and foreclosures by other disciplines.[28] Ethnographic subjects like Mrs. Lana and Catarina/Catkine, who open this sensorium, embody complex realities in unforeseeable ways, neither fully constrained by nor fully detached from the legacies of historical patterns and systemic violence. Mrs. Lana's mourning emerges from stubborn structures of inequality with deep roots, yet it also triggers new conversations and solidarities in her com-

munity. In Cyprus, the remains of the missing do not freeze the past in place but renew it, in all its uncertain tragedies and crimes, as a symbolic and material excess that lends political and social force to the intertwined grievances of the bereaved. Crowds in Mexico City protesting the enormous human toll of state and drug-related violence and turn the intense affect of personal loss into a fierce collective demand for accountability and will for political change, however fleeting.

The ethnographic sensorium, in other words, shows us social aggregates not as givens that must be embraced or resisted, but as temporary collectives that—whether they evaporate or congeal into lasting forms of change—reveal transformative visions and potentials emerging from unexpected corners. Indeed, ethnography has a knack for apprehending and mediating changes in people's lives that are not only political-economic and material but also ethical, interpersonal, and singular.

Like the Ayoreo in Paraguay, whose negative existence emerges through traumatic encounters with dominant forms, people in the field show us the extent to which becoming is always excessive and unruly. To be unformed is a kind of active (if unanticipated) resistance. The political subjects of ethnography are ambiguous, creative, and unpredictable, always pushing the boundaries of our abstractions. They act, borrowing Michael M. J. Fischer's apt phrasing, as "pebbles and labyrinths in the way of theory,"[29] calling on anthropologists to resist synthetic closure and totalizing explanation and to keep our focus on the interrelatedness and unfinishedness of all human life—indeed, of all life and of the planet itself—in the face of precarity and the unknown.[30]

Grounded in this candid empiricism and emancipatory openness, attentive to deadly impasses as well as to abrupt—even catastrophic—forms of change, ethnography can generate empowering social and political critique with our subjects rather than about them, illuminating the rationalities, interests, and moral issues of our times and the shifting horizons against which they unfold.[31] In the anthropology of becoming, "relationships with our subjects," as Lilia M. Schwarcz puts it in chapter 6, "transform, create, or suggest new forms of communication and perhaps understanding."

PEOPLING CRITICAL THEORY

Nearly a century of critical theory emanating from anthropology and related fields, including feminist and postcolonial critiques, has dislodged the sway of crude universals in favor of attending more closely to the

specificity and world-historical significance of people's plasticity and everyday experiences.[32]

In the early twentieth century, Sigmund Freud wrote of the "allo-plastic" capacity of his neurotic patients to alter reality through fantasy,[33] while Bronislaw Malinowski argued for the "plasticity of instincts" under culture.[34] In the same era, Marcel Mauss articulated his famous concept of *l'homme total* to highlight the malleability of the human subject at the interface of psychology, social relations and modes of reciprocity, and culturally ingrained routines and "body techniques."[35] A few decades later, in his seminal exploration of mental health under the French colonial regime in Algeria, Frantz Fanon demonstrated that the "I" is a material of politics, the platform on which agonistic struggles over inequality, domination, and human dignity are waged. To the question facing the colonized subject—"In reality, who am I?"—Fanon's answer is one of deconstruction: which and whose reality is this?[36] More recently, Judith Butler has written incisively of the self-empowerment afforded to the subjected by ambiguity. She denaturalizes gender norms and highlights people's capacities to defy and rewrite cultural scripts, while exploring the specific forms of vulnerability and grievability that shape precarious lives.[37]

Since its emergence as a research methodology, ethnographic fieldwork has been essential to understanding how this plasticity of people and social fields unfolds in historically and culturally contingent worlds. In their classic work among the Tswana of southern Africa, for example, Jean and John Comaroff highlight how colonial encounters confronted Europeans with the possibility of other forms of personhood. For the Tswana, they explain, "the person was a constant work in progress," referring "not to a state of being but to a state of becoming. No living self could be static. Stasis meant social death."[38]

In its emphasis on understanding personhood in context and through field and archival research, the Comaroffs' work exemplifies how anthropology and critical theory can attend to processes of becoming as empirical realities of societies past and present: the labor of making oneself and one's life, always already in relation to others and to the values and imperatives of the social—and, in the Tswana case, against a background of colonial domination. In such contexts, anthropologists have also explored what Michael Taussig, drawing on the work of Frankfurt school thinkers such as Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin, calls the "mimetic faculty"—that human capacity to "copy, imitate, make models, explore difference, yield into and become Other."[39] Subjugated communities, Taussig shows, blur subject-object divides, instrumentalize

misrecognitions, and sustain capacities for alternative becomings, even amid the violence of colonial power relations.[40]

Indeed, the notion of becoming—or some close analogue—has long been familiar and helpful to anthropologists, and innovative scholars have foregrounded kindred ideas as guides for peopling critical theory through fieldwork and ethnographic writing. For example, Michael M. J. Fischer has brought ethnographic groundedness to science studies through his attention to the "emergent forms of life" that arise through and in contrast to the technologies, networks, and infrastructures of contemporary bioscience, the media, and humanitarianism.[41] How, Fischer asks, can anthropology build new ethical terrains of decision making and new landscapes of political assemblages within, around, and beyond older frameworks? Fischer draws our attention to new and challenging "ethical plateaus" (a term that comes from the anthropologist Gregory Bateson, via Deleuze and Guattari) on which multiple technologies interact, showing that our ethical and analytical models are failing amid fast-paced revolutions in our technoscientific worlds ranging from big data to genetics.[42] Fischer argues that by carefully attending to what he calls "switching points"—moments when technoscientific innovations or political maneuvers make possible alternative forms of life and citizenship—and by staying close to how new technological and social infrastructures are lived with, ethnographic work helps ensure that our analyses keep pace with the times and remain able to imagine new institutions and forms of protection for the vulnerable, and to deflate dehumanizing theoretical abstractions and universals.

As the work of Fischer—and that of many other critical anthropologists of science, technology, and medicine—continually remind us, the categories of supposedly objective scientific nomenclature always carry real political, ethical, and bodily stakes.[43] Consider the ways in which the notion of a new "Anthropocene" geological era—the term was first coined by the Nobel Prize–winning chemist Paul Crutzen in 1995 and has been gaining popularity ever since—may continue to mystify the global workings of power and inequality even as it adds much-needed urgency to the work of recognizing human responsibility for environmental change. "The formal definition of the Anthropocene," as two earth scientists write in *Nature*, "makes scientists arbiters, to an extent, of the human-environment relationship, itself an act with consequences beyond geology."[44] The universal humanity of *anthropos* obscures the ways in which specific politics and ways of living have contributed to the climate crisis, painting as universal and somehow innate to our species the highly contingent—and devastatingly destructive—patterns of consumption and

production that characterize the world's wealthiest capitalist societies. "Ours is the geological epoch not of humanity, but of capital," writes one ecologist.[45]

From vast planetary timescales and transformations to cells under the microscope, scholars are increasingly identifying power and inequality at work even in the most ostensibly natural—read "apolitical"—processes. In their book *Biosocial Becomings,* for example, the anthropologists Tim Ingold and Gisli Palsson draw on the work of heterodox biologists, the new field of epigenetics, and a post-Darwinian understanding of evolution to perceive a world not of discrete life-forms transforming through linear pathways of descent, but a "developmental unfolding of the entire matrix of relations"—inevitably conditioned by history, culture, and power—"within which forms of life (human and non-human) emerge and are held in place."[46]

Indeed, even at the molecular level, epigenetic researchers now find that specific politics and histories shape the intertwined becomings of people and ecosystems, both within the individual life course and across generations.[47] Such findings hold out the promise of lending broader legitimacy to existing social scientific concepts that emphasize entanglements between bodies and the worlds they live in—from the biosocial[48] and the ecosocial[49] to the mindful body[50] and local biologies.[51] Yet while epigenetics has the potential to make space for the social in conversations about the biological body, it might also, as Margaret Lock warns in her recent writings, serve as a new form of "somatic determinism" by reifying social determinants as static variables that can be clearly distinguished from biological processes.[52]

Ingold and Palsson draw on anthropology's long tradition of critiquing reductive nature-culture dichotomies to highlight how the biological and the social are always bound together in a process of mutual becoming and transformation—a process in which genes are exchanged between organisms, historical traumas alter what is inherited, and what might first appear as an individual organism (the human subject, for example) is in fact an aggregate of numerous life-forms existing in symbiotic cooperation and evolving together.[53] "Humans become human through relations with other becoming organisms and species and the environments within which they are embedded," writes Palsson,[54] evoking the fecundity of new work in the burgeoning area of "multispecies ethnography."[55] "Becoming," as Deleuze suggests, "is "always 'between' or 'among.' "[56] The entanglement of the human, the animal, and the material produces the shifting matrix of relations through which one "becomes-woman, becomes-animal or vegetable, becomes-molecule to the point of becoming-imperceptible"[57]—this, in Deleuze's words, is what "makes a world."[58]

Building on this and related notions of becoming-animal, multispecies ethnographers are broadening the scope of their projects to study the "mutual ecologies" that develop between humans and other beings.[59] In a time of discouraged, apocalyptic theorizing about the accumulating consequences of man-made environmental transformation, Eben Kirskey finds that new and promising relations between people, environments, and other species are "flourishing in the aftermath of order-destroying disruptions."[60] Such "emergent ecologies"—crucially, perceived only through the nimble deployment of ethnographic fieldwork far from centers of ivory tower expertise—challenge both the social and natural sciences to attend to the ways in which "a multitude of tinkerers and thinkers are transforming feelings of futility into concrete action, cynicism into happiness and hope," even amid destruction and extinction.[61]

Here the promise of multispecies ethnography lies not in casting aside anthropology's strengths in learning from people in context as somehow obsolete; instead, it makes the tinkering of everyday eco-bricoleurs a source of insight and inspiration for imagining how alarming forms of environmental change may yet reveal new opportunities for the mutual becoming-other of human societies and the "swarming multitude" of nonhuman life forms with whom we share the planet.[62] Yet even as we consider emerging forms of hope, to understand the limits of life in local worlds and on our shared planet—and the kinds of politics and policy that are possible or desirable—it remains crucial to address questions of history, political economy, the theorizing of difference, and the uneven global distribution of risk and vulnerability.

As Anna L. Tsing notes, we are "surrounded by many world-making projects, human and not human."[63] The challenge, it seems, is to integrate interspecies relations and shifting ecological contexts into our understanding of "biosocial becomings" without obscuring[64]—in the pursuit of, for example, an "anthropology beyond the human"[65]—the unavoidable fact that the fields of our fieldwork are both peopled by human communities in their multiple engagements and perspectives[66] and shaped by the forces and flows of global capitalism.[67]

In *The Mushroom at the End of The World*, Tsing shows what it might look like to attend to the broad weave of life—human and nonhuman—in the increasingly precarious "blasted landscapes" of our "worldwide ruination" without losing sight of political economy (or assuming its totality).[68] Rejecting strongly held beliefs about progress (economic, scientific, or otherwise), the anthropologist calls on us to cultivate our "arts of noticing" and to "look around rather than ahead."[69] While highlighting the precarious yet vital "possibility of life in capitalist ruins," her capacious forms of attention bring nonhumans into the

fold without hiding from capital or the state: "assemblages," she insists, "drag political economy inside them, and not just for humans."[70]

Shifting from living beings and ecosystems to material objects, how might an anthropology of becoming also address the vibrancy of matter without losing sight of the human? As Elizabeth A. Davis's work with the bones and belongings of missing war victims shows, objects work through and on us. They do not exist outside of sociohistorical worlds, and thus they come to be infused with multiple, sometimes contradictory, human meanings and signs. As Davis writes in chapter 8: "The force operated by the artifacts of the missing lies in their capacity not to exceed but to slip between semiotic captures, to condense multiple temporalities and thus to accommodate discrepant meanings. They are in the right place at the right time to make things happen." Or, as Schwarcz's reflections in chapter 6 on her collaboration with the artist Adriana Varejão demonstrate, things themselves—in this case, paintings and sculptures—are inscribed in multiple systems of meaning and reference that shape their production, their legibility, and their effects on us: "instead of using images as illustrations," Schwarcz suggests, "the idea [is] to understand how works of art can interfere in reality, creating and destroying customs, values, and symbols."

In *Vibrant Matter,* the political theorist Jane Bennett proposes a dual philosophical-political project that takes nonhuman things as its object of analysis.[71] Writing against the "idea of matter as passive stuff, as raw, brute, or inert" and the supposed "partition of the sensible" that divides "dull matter (it, things)" from "vibrant life (us, beings)," she argues that matter itself is vital, lively, and—in its own way—agentive.[72] Things, she argues, possess vital powers, serving "not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own."[73] Yet if, as Arjun Appadurai has cautioned, the "new materialisms" of contemporary social theory sometimes leave little space for "questions of ethics, accountability, normativity, and political critique," focusing less on objects as givens and more on their trajectories and milieus allows us to see the crossroads and configurations that work on human subjects and the worlds they occupy.[74] In this way, as Davis's and Schwarcz's work shows, we might read things as lively not only ontologically or in themselves, but as material artifacts or "mediants" (to use Appadurai's word) that are entangled with larger social, political, and economic forces.[75]

While fieldwork among people and attention to the "imponderabilia of actual life" remains, for us, the indispensable foundation of anthropological thought and inquiry,[76] we are not out to reiterate a problematically anthropo-

centric humanism that cuts off people's becomings from those of other species and our living and material environments. Quite the contrary, the humanism that grounds the anthropology of becoming assumes that the very boundaries and meanings of "human being" are porous and changeable, made and remade through eco-bio-social relations within political economies.[77] As Naisargi Dave shows us in her exploration in chapter 5 of the ambivalent and often excruciating journeys of contemporary animal rights activists in India, her subjects' becomings happen precisely through a vulnerability to other beings that explodes rather than reinforces a bounded conception of the human or the self—a vulnerability that thickens relationality by painfully "exfoliat[ing] the social skin," in the words of the anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli.[78] Can we, as Dave puts it, "become something other than the safely encased human self?" Citing Deleuze and Guattari,[79] the anthropologist reminds us that becoming turns the self "not into another kind of self, but only into a 'question-machine.'" This question-machine, in turn, is a part of social movements; they "are full of becomings: they are defined and made by them."

From social movements full of becomings to emergent ecologies in blasted landscapes, there is something about the concept of becoming that lends itself to snatching glimmers of hope from bleak horizons. Yet the anthropology of becoming may equally illuminate trajectories of loss and stagnation, grief and decay, and worlds on the verge of—or already enveloped in—ruin and disaster. Catarina/Catkine's writing, in the end, could not take her back home to the life she wanted. Postcontact Ayoreos' radical rejection of former ways of life, Lucas Bessire shows in chapter 7, might lead both to further destitution and misery and to "novel vital experiments and unsettling kinds of immanence." Becoming cannot be measured by outcome, nor is it necessarily about progress or even hope. In responding to unlivable conditions, experimentation with the limited resources of life is just as likely to lead to a deadly endpoint as to "actionable critique" and a liberating swerve. Understanding the fine nuances of these struggles, terms of transformation, and contradictions demands, above all, methods that immerse us in the worlds of our subjects over extended periods of time.

It is by holding onto close engagement with people that we cultivate new ways of understanding and relating to worlds and ecologies, social structures and biologies. In this way, ethnographic fieldwork can make visible the ideologies, maneuverings, and fabulations of power in which life chances are foreclosed and can highlight the ways desires can break open if not alternative pathways, then at least the possibility of imagining things otherwise as

one lives on. As Deleuze so poignantly comments in an interview with Antonio Negri in the early 1990s: "What we most lack is a belief in the world, we've quite lost the world, it's been taken from us."[80] Fieldwork and the encounters, texts, and modes of expression it engenders offer us a way back into worldliness.

WORLDS ON THE EDGE

What are the worlds, then, that fieldwork attuned to becomings draws us into today?

Two decades ago, scholars were preoccupied with the post–Cold War "world in pieces," in which nation-states were fragmenting along resurgent ethnic divisions.[81] Clifford Geertz ended his classic essay on the topic with measured hope in the capacity of Western political liberalism to adapt to this "splintered world," suggesting that liberal principles were still "our best guides to law, government, and public deportment."[82]

Yet this faith in the politics of liberal democracy has been hard to maintain. After the turn of the millennium, the specter of terrorism in the United States propelled an unanticipated intersection of new technologies with the antidemocratic surveillance concerns of the post-9/11 security state.[83] Late liberal rearrangements of state and capital have both dismantled regulatory regimes and implemented new ones, as well as strengthened older power formations, and traditional democratic politics have become increasingly oligarchical and divorced from the needs of the governed, even as public infrastructures and services crumble.[84] With the rise and increasing electoral success of right-wing populist movements across the world—from the United Kingdom's Brexit vote to leave the European Union in June 2016, to the election of the xenophobic demagogue Donald J. Trump to the U.S. presidency a few months later—we see anxious, resentful electorates embracing a hauntingly familiar politics of chauvinism and scapegoating.

What science and critical thinking could have anticipated today's acute struggles over inclusion and exclusion; white supremacy, race, and policing; gender and sexuality; socioeconomic inequality; chronic warfare; data and surveillance; and abrupt environmental change, so often addressed in rhetorics of recovery even as conditions stagnate or worsen? What entanglements of wishful thinking, denial, and privilege have marginalized voices of warning and amplified fantasies of linear progress?

Uncannily, the late American pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty seems to have anticipated the toxicity of today's growing backlash against progressive

agendas of diversity and inclusion, entangled as they have been with neoliberal globalization. Writing in 1998 and drawing on the fears of socioeconomic analysts of the day, Rorty cautioned that "fascism may be the American future. . . . The nonsuburban electorate will decide that the system has failed and start looking around for a strongman to vote for—someone willing to assure them that, once he is elected, the smug bureaucrats, tricky lawyers, overpaid bond salesmen, and postmodernist professors will no longer be calling the shots. . . . One thing that is very likely to happen is that the gains made in the past forty years by black and brown Americans, and by homosexuals, will be wiped out. Jocular contempt for women will come back into fashion."[85]

The present moment profoundly defies teleologies of progress: if in the 1990s, the fall of the Soviet Union allowed some to judge Euro-American democracy and capitalism as "the end of history,"[86] today faith in these systems as eventual guarantors of a good life for all is faltering. Austerity-based approaches remain dominant despite ever-accumulating evidence of their failure to resolve states of crisis and their contribution to exacerbating inequality. Progressives in the United States continue to fight—and surely face a period of heightened adversity and struggle—for the basic rights of women and racial and sexual minorities, highlighting the unfinishedness and precarity of the civil rights achievements of the 1960s.[87] Rubrics such as religion, long assumed to be falling away, have reemerged in the public sphere as enduring sites of politics and identity.[88]

From increasing doubts about the viability and efficacy of the European Union to the World Health Organization's bungling of the initial response to the 2014–15 Ebola epidemic in West Africa, the innovations in international political cooperation and accountability that once seemed to embody the highest promises of a liberal democratic globalism have come to appear toothless and inept, simultaneously revealing the exclusionary interests that have driven them all along.[89] While the continuing failure of major world powers and institutions to adequately confront the realities of climate change grows ever more alarming, affluent societies themselves—comfortable in their established patterns of consumption and waste and cynical about the possibility of change—fail to extend their sense of empathy and imagination to the impoverished communities who will feel the effects of environmental shifts most acutely.[90]

The notion of crisis has been a tempting, if problematic, lens through which to understand today's historically rooted forms of precarity and reactionary politics of othering.[91] Scholarly diagnoses of the present moment often, and understandably, convey a sense of dwindling possibilities. In *Undoing the Demos,* for example, the political theorist Wendy Brown argues that the

encroachment of neoliberalism into all spheres of life is destroying democracy and the broader political realm.[92] Her assessment is bleak: "neoliberalism is the rationality through which capitalism finally swallows humanity."[93]

The splash made by the French economist Thomas Piketty's ambitious work *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* is another sign of the times.[94] For Piketty, expanding inequality is inherent to the logic of an underregulated capitalism in which assets matter more than labor. Absent significant intervention, he argues, the ratio of wealth to income will continue to rise, steadily expanding gaps between rich and poor. Widely read and discussed in both academic and public spheres, the book has struck a chord in a post–financial crisis, post-Occupy America where income inequality remains a central fact of lived experience and, increasingly, a critical feature in public discourse.[95] If the American dream was premised on equal opportunity for class advancement through hard work, Piketty's demonstration that returns on capital matter far more than earned income from labor highlights the extent to which the system itself was rigged from the beginning.

The failure of this system is experienced both materially and affectively. In *Cruel Optimism,* Lauren Berlant explores the textures of fantasy and attachment in contemporary Euro-American capitalism. Concerned with the fraying of the so-called normative good life that promises upward mobility, stability, intimacy, and equality, she discusses the various ways in which these aspirations are simultaneously life-sustaining and self-defeating. This is the double bind that Berlant calls "cruel optimism": a relation in which the very object you desire is, in her words, "an obstacle to your flourishing" and "actively impedes the aim that brought you to it initially."[96] These attachments represent the very possibility of happiness even as they render happiness impossible; yet because they sustain us and anchor us to the world in ways that seem livable, losing them or letting them go is as much a threat as the destruction that holding onto them precipitates.

In Berlant's account, desire and the possibility of imagining alternative futures are somehow already in the service of—or only thinkable within—the logics of failed social systems. Yet might even the cruelest of optimisms open out onto something else? Is there also a kind of power in fabulation that tethers us to life in ways that are not only self-defeating but also generative, in small and often unexpected ways—through new configurations of thoughts, affective states, and solidarities, even in the face of futility? For Brown, we are "only and everywhere *homo oeconomicus*," and democratic citizenship has been thoroughly "hollowed out,"[97] but perhaps there is something too

totalizing in this account that begs for deeper specificity about what social life is becoming in present-day capitalism. What kinds of counterideologies and counterconduct might be at work that do not rest on an imaginary outside of capital? How can we make sense of the ways people are mobilizing in the present, making demands on the streets or online for equality and workable infrastructures, and forging tenuous and often subversive links between themselves, the state, and the marketplace?[98]

By engaging the granularity of these "dramas of adjustment"[99] and "public appearances"[100] in messy social worlds and particular lives, what might come into view within and beyond the impasse? In other words, how might close-up ethnographic attention restore our capacity to perceive the becomings of our subjects, even amid dire situations and against darkening political horizons, and how might it enlarge our sense of ethics and politics in crucial ways?

Where Brown, Piketty, and Berlant all rightfully highlight the very real ways in which our systems—and the hopes we invested in them—have failed us, attentiveness to becomings helps us see what else is emerging in everyday struggles, foregrounding the microdynamics of people's lives in a way that illuminates rifts, dangers, and possibilities, however minor, in macrolevel social and political realities.[101] While these openings may ultimately lead nowhere, and futurity always struggles with futility and a sense of the inevitable, people can simultaneously be stuck and do things, and this is not nothing.

The work of the French philosopher Jacques Rancière offers a helpful perspective. He defines a political sphere that resonates with the realities anthropologists encounter in the field: worlds peopled by the uncounted and the excluded, ambiguous political subjects who, as they "assert dissensus," doggedly resist the total triumph of any form of governmentality and sustain opportunities for change.[102] As João Biehl shows in his work on right-to-health litigation in Brazil, for example, low-income people are using available legal mechanisms to claim access to medical technologies and care and, in the process, turning the judiciary into a critical site of politics and state accountability.[103] In chapter 4, Bridget Purcell tracks the "overlapping normative orders that constitute people's lives" in Turkey, attentive to how "bodies, spaces, and subjects seem not to submit to the linear trajectory of discipline." A mother mourns on the over-policed streets of Chicago's inner city, and in chapter 2 Ralph learns how people in low-income communities "invert popular expectations of mourning, thereby developing a concept of 'becoming aggrieved' that does not merely lament death but also affirms life." Unlike Brown's *homo*

oeconomicus, who has lost even the barest capacity for democratic dreams, or Berlant's duped optimists, doomed by the pursuit of middle-class stability, these ethnographers of becomings perceive subjects who continue to resist normative regimes and to imagine alternative possibilities, performing dissensus and affirming the value of their chosen social worlds.

Politics and antipolitics continue to play out in the present in a range of vital forms, and the ups and downs of recent social movements (from the Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, and Black Lives Matter to their conservative counterparts) highlight the deeply felt tensions of the moment and point to the ongoing, creative ways that people mobilize against inequalities of all kinds and for the conditions of a livable life.[104] As economic injustice, racial violence, and the failed promises of democracy push people to precarious limits—including under the thrall of charismatic demagoguery—attending to the ethics of their exhausted bodies along with the processes of mobilization and the diverse kinds of politics being enacted in different forms of assembly, time frames, and scales helps us identify the edges where contemporary societies find themselves.[105]

While it is easy to write off failed social movements for their perceived lack of revolutionary outcomes, such denunciations miss something crucial, ignoring the vitality and experimentalism of new collectives as they assemble and disperse or transform themselves. Long-standing social grievances suddenly fuel mass protests and hopes for a "Bosnian Spring" of sorts, and then dissipate, though not without revealing possibilities for a more democratic and accountable political process; ongoing investigations of the missing in Cyprus both freeze time and restructure it, generating politically potent solidarities around grief and loss. Such plural embodied actions engender shifts for people and local worlds, if not in obvious ways, building new critical perspectives and understandings of the broader political-economic realities and scaling projects that they challenge.

The ethnographic sensorium produced by attention to becomings illuminates not only the plasticity of our subjects, but also the ways in which systems and forces that appear intractable were not always inevitable. Although capitalism has an inherent tendency toward spiraling inequality, the abstract, unimpeded free-market economy is a fantasy, and the system as it exists has been propelled and shored up by intermediate processes, ideologies, and political choices linked to particular values and interests. Restoring this intermediate analytic zone allows us to demystify the workings of capital and power, attending to destructive plasticities without assuming the machines and abstractions

to be natural or self-evident. This analytical move simultaneously brings us closer to worlds in flux, sheds light on what sustains entrenched systems, and maintains space for political engagement.

A HUMAN SCIENCE OF THE UNCERTAIN

In the early 1990s, Deleuze proposed that we were witnessing a shift to what he called "control societies."[106] Where Michel Foucault had famously illustrated a transition from sovereign to disciplinary societies,[107] Deleuze predicted a collapse of emblematic sites of confinement and biopolitical governance—prisons, hospitals, and factories—and foresaw the emergence of a new, dispersive, modulatory form of power. In this vision of the future in formation, the centralized panoptic gaze and the spatial confinement of bodies give way to flexible yet omnipresent tracking, normalized surveillance, and increased technological, digital, and market involvement in the regulation of life and labor. This breakdown of older institutions and familiar disciplinary modes heralds not liberation but another transformation in their hold on us: "it's not a question of asking whether the old or new system is harsher or more bearable, because there's a conflict in each between the ways they free and enslave us."[108] Subjects are no longer individuals but "have become 'dividuals.' "[109] The walls, so to speak, have fallen away, and discipline itself is no longer confined to its former institutional homes.

A quarter of a century later, Deleuze's brief account feels remarkably prescient in many ways. The explosion of the Internet—not yet a major social force in the early 1990s—and the wide range of new technologies, markets, and data it has generated have become crucial features in contemporary consumption, production, and sociality, enabling unprecedented tracking of both individual behavior and macrolevel patterns. The ongoing flexibilization and growing contingency of labor (itself linked to the decay of employee rights, benefits, and job security) and our increasing imbrication in diffuse, invisible systems of tracking (through our smart phones, online activity, and the no-longer-futuristic presence of wearable devices and facial-recognition technologies) have indeed left us subject to new, dispersed modes of control within and beyond virtual spaces. Analysts and policy makers have staked their hopes on the predictive capacities of quantitative and positivist sciences, even as these methods so often fail to anticipate coming challenges and to render the indeterminacies of our invisible presents and ever-shifting horizons knowable or manipulable. Meanwhile, Edward Snowden's revelations remind us of the

dark side of "big data," highlighting its mobilization as an instrument of control and surveillance underpinned by rhetorics of security.[110]

Critical for anthropology today is Deleuze's alertness to the canny workings of techno-capitalism and the plasticity of power, as well as his acknowledgment of the existence of counterknowledge—that is, understanding and critique that grows with being governed in a particular way, which has the potential to turn into an act of resistance or of making things otherwise.[111] Yet while much of Deleuze's description rings true, his brief sketch of a society to come does not answer the question of how social transformation happens; how people reckon with it; and what kinds of social spheres, sensibilities, and forms of self-fashioning come into being as changes take hold and forms of governance rework themselves.

An anthropology attuned to becomings asks how people engage with this modulation of their desires, this tracking of their behaviors and consumptions, and this imperative to continually craft and recraft their digital selves.[112] From clinics and courtrooms in Brazil where medical technologies and shifting legal configurations offer new possibilities for gender-affirming care,[113] to online platforms where new forms of community and solidarity emerge for those previously excluded from the mainstream public sphere, technology is never only controlling.[114] Recent work by Faye Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp in the anthropology of disability,[115] for example, highlights how digital technologies create "counterdiscursive sites of representation" for marginalized subjects, providing unexpected opportunities for "people with disabilities to engage in a first-person discussion of their world and experiences."[116]

In other words, people are actively deploying new technologies for their own ends, waging politics and challenging entrenched assumptions. Gabriella Coleman's work on the hacker collective Anonymous highlights a different form of counterdiscursivity playing out in contemporary digital worlds. "Their political tools," she writes, "emerge from the concrete experiences of their craft."[117] Coleman characterizes these "radical tech warriors," who are armed with technological savvy and computing skills, as revolutionary rogues,[118] simultaneously subversive and principled—a new kind of political subject facing the machineries of power in the twenty-first century.[119] More broadly, the corporate capture and commodification of the expansive data exhaust produced by social media activity raises questions for activists and social scientists alike about what unforeseen potentials—beyond surveillance, security, and personalized marketing—all these data might have.

If Deleuze's vision for the dawning control society overlooked the possibility that new digital media might become tools for social mobilization as well as for the management of criminality and political dissent, it also did not anticipate how old sites of confinement and punishment would not truly disappear.[120] Spaces of abandonment like Vita emerged as part and parcel of the dismantling and transformation of more centralized institutions of control and care in Brazil, and deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill engendered similar translocations from the asylum to streets and jails in the United States. Public hospitals, prisons, and schools have become private, profit-generating institutions that increasingly are embedded in other social domains and the domestic sphere and, as Garcia's work on Mexican *anexos* shows (see chapter 3), violence and religion are increasingly folded together in new regimes of care and security.

Such reconfigurations of power, discipline, and profit are apparent across domains. After the era of so-called white flight, for example, gentrification, housing and foreclosure crises, and debates over policing are all reshaping cities and their neighborhoods, both spatially and socially. In education, shady online universities and degree programs proliferate to mine profits and personal data by delivering the classroom to the laptop. In the United States, the enormous expansion of standardized testing in primary and secondary education—supported by a booming industry of for-profit exam production—monitors and modulates, ever more intensively and intrusively, the learning of new generations, conditioning young people for new forms of anxiety-driven self-governance. The privatization of prisons and the development of new technologies for monitoring offenders beyond the jail cell all seem to consolidate rather than disperse the brutal edifice of American mass incarceration,[121] still the default tool for containing the excesses and resistances produced by systemic racism and socioeconomic inequality; and in the meantime, new communities of grievance take root where the families of the incarcerated settle in to wait and hope.[122] In health care, the faltering or collapse of public systems in the era of neoliberalism has made way for worlds in which families become proxies for biomedical power and triage, nongovernmental organizations make up patchwork landscapes of care delivery, and patients must create new and agonistic forms of citizenship and medical self-management to live with the biosocial illnesses and vulnerabilities generated by severe inequality and toxic environments.[123]

If disciplinary society in the past was characterized by bodies known and governed by nation-states, today, as public infrastructures and institutions

falter, it is an assemblage of clandestine security agencies and multinational corporations that track (and profit from) our bodies and labor. In ways of which we are only dimly aware, our digital activity constantly produces value for corporations as they become ever more integrated with larger virtual systems that extract from us a new kind of alienated labor. All the while, new forms of high-tech profiling risk exacerbating disparities along lines of race, class, and gender. Yet the question of who can participate in this new form of society is intimately linked to the production of value. As Deleuze noted, "capitalism still keeps three quarters of humanity in extreme poverty, too poor to have debts and too numerous to be confined."[124]

What can be learned about social order and the political moment by closely attending to this impoverished "three quarters"? In contexts shaped by arbitrary neoliberal economic policies, myopic cultural politics, and unforgiving humanitarianisms, people like the Ayoreo of the Gran Chaco live in the dizzying, fraught spaces of postcolonial and neocolonial violence, overwhelming our assumptions of what counts as indigeneity and what modes of existence and transformation are conjured up in the ruptures of contact. How are today's poor entangled in the opaque and alarming realignments of governance, market, security, and citizenship, driven along altered trajectories of hypermarginality and survival that, in turn, may generate new dangers, sensibilities, and landscapes of possibility?[125] "Hunger, nothing, void," Garcia writes in chapter 3: "these are the negative forces that have the potential to move one forward, and to be able to find in chains something else." Broadening our view of contemporary society draws us into shifting dynamics of market inclusion, indebtedness, and dissensus. Such dynamics are linked to both emerging consumer desires and the "dreams and schemes"[126] of development and redistribution projects,[127] affecting ideas of equality, solidarity, and circuit-breaking and world-making capacities.

Deleuze's almost casual aside that the astonishing scope and severity of global poverty is connected to the shape and futures of evolving modes of control is an essential insight that calls for granular, daring, cross-disciplinary work. As ever, in exploring processes of social transformation we find power, interests, and domination. Only by insisting on a space where precarity is actually a mobilizing force and where those of no account are counted can we restore the place of the poor and most vulnerable in the political community.[128] Yet the metastories flowing from centers of thought and research today are often depoliticizing. From game theory, mathematical modeling, and randomization to the hype of big data's predictive potential, quantitative

approaches all too often treat societies like deterministic machines and assume that all we lack to anticipate their vulnerabilities and implement solutions are the right methods for generating and interpreting data—methods imagined to be just around the corner.[129]

Yet the very possibility of politics depends on scrutinizing the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in preposterous social orders, examining shared uncertainties about how best to confront looming challenges, and creating space for collective actions.[130] Perfectly predictive quantitative approaches would cast political action as the inevitable outcome of calculation (and therefore not really political at all), rather than a product of debate, discernment, and ethical reasoning informed by partial knowledges, mediated by plural acts of resistance, and oriented toward futures not yet anticipated. What would it take, as Petryna puts it in chapter 9, "to open up a conversation about what it means when we look into the future and say we don't know?" Exploring "the disconnects and ambiguities that characterize abrupt ecosystem dynamics for scientists and the rest of us," she shows how the making of imperfect scientific knowledge in contexts of radical uncertainty and "inexorable threat" is part of a "new kind of intellectual labor." As we grapple with "a complex future that is right at hand," Petryna asks, "how do temporal horizons themselves become political, or how do they demarcate (or dissolve) a space of political action?"

If we are reluctant to offer here a pithy name to label the transformed workings of power and inequality after "control societies,"[131] this hesitance to hurriedly abstract and simplify carries its own epistemic force insofar as it challenges—or altogether dismantles—the blinders imposed by more rigid, technical, or philosophical methods of knowledge production. Rather than establishing a final paradigm of knowing, the anthropology of becoming helps us track how the social itself is unmoored, and the shape of collectives and the right course of action remain undetermined. As Petryna suggests, the current moment seems to call less for the all-knowing hubris of totalizing analytical schemes than for a human science (and politics) of the uncertain and the unknown.

In the meantime, however, the dominant voices of economists and quantitative modelers acquire power, scientific authority, and resources by claiming to represent empirical reality with their opaque measurements and faulty predictions.[132] They alter social dynamics and political possibilities as they put communities in the service of evidence production—rather than the other way around.[133] Where in these calculations, polls, models, randomized trials, and projections is there room for the contingent political decision or policy swerve, the unexpected social movement or upheaval that sets events on an

unforeseen course? What algorithms and predictions generate insight about the moral and political dimensions of coming challenges or help navigate questions of accountability and responsibility—or, as Donna Haraway might put it, our ethical "response-ability"?[134]

FIELDWORK AND STORYTELLING

Exploring tangles of microdynamics and macroforces in the present day, the anthropology of becoming resists the binaries of inner/outer, individual/collective, human/nonhuman, and local/global, instead choosing to look at how lives, rationalities, social fields, and power relations are inflected in one another and in the enclosures, impasses, thresholds, and breakthroughs that are the materials of lifeworld and subject construction. The precariousness of our lives is not merely happy or sad happenstance; it is part and parcel of small- and large-scale assemblages and shifts that color our every experience. Yet desire is immersed in and shaped by world-historical trajectories; in facing the arbitrary and the contingent, people carve out footholds and surprising escapes, and we must find ways of attending to them.

Ethnographically attuned to the interdependence and plasticity of live forms across scales,[135] we can weave together the affective trajectories of singular lives and "tiny solidarities" with planetary-level political-economic, technological, and environmental dynamics.[136] As Judith Butler poignantly puts it, "perhaps the human is the name we give to this very negotiation that emerges from a living creature among creatures and in the midst of forms of living that exceed us."[137]

Tracking such negotiations is never only the prerogative of the anthropologist. Attuned to asymmetries of all kinds, we remain committed to speaking and writing with people and their worlds, learning how they understand and conceptualize their conditions and do the work of scaling and invention in their everyday lives. As Bridget Purcell shows in the attention she pays in chapter 4 to the "tentative, nonlinear ways that individuals orient themselves in a ritual landscape that exceeds their full control," people inhabit and negotiate "multiple, overlapping" realities in their material and moral lives. Open to wonder and to the various derailments that come with fieldwork, the anthropology of becoming is marked by this animated, worldly multiplicity "even in the person that speaks or acts."[138]

People and the worlds they navigate and the outlooks they articulate are more confounding, incomplete, and multiplying than dominant analytical

schemes tend to account for. Drawn to the unsettling of rationalities and ingrained commonsense, the anthropology of becoming thus eschews a sense of theory as a totalizing enterprise or as the privileged domain of elite knowledge makers self-appointed to speak for or on behalf of benighted populations. Upholding an equality of intelligences and rejecting the division between those who "truly" or "critically" know the world and those who merely possess the pragmatic know-how needed to survive in it, this book's ethnographic essays chronicle lived tensions between theory and practice. They invoke both alternative conceptual frameworks and new kinds of imagination, in the spirit of what the political economist Albert Hirschman might call "a little less straitjacketing of the future."[139]

Like our subjects, we tell stories to grapple with the world, and to understand and intervene in it.[140] While philosophers tell stories with concepts, the stories we tell in this book are crafted from instances of becomings.

In Ralph's inner-city Eastwood (see chapter 2), Mrs. Lana's screams are at once the shattering thrum of death and a means of creating "a public sphere in which oppositional voices are not feared, degraded, or dismissed but valued for the productive reflections they inspire." Affirmed by the anthropologist, these unforeseen "collective practices of care" speak to "locally salient ways of interpreting the human condition," evincing the worldliness and creativity of ethnographic theory. Such inventiveness also occurs at the level of the self. As Naisargi Dave illustrates in chapter 5 regarding animal activism in India, bearing witness to the suffering of others (in this case, animals) "might best be understood as a radical interpenetration of life and death" that "opens up a death" and "then compels a new kind of responsible life in a previously unimaginable skin." Fieldwork, theorizing, and writing thus emerge from and in conversation with this hard-to-pin-down multiplicity—practical and theoretical, real and virtual, and in bits and pieces—that places people, worlds, and thinking in motion.

The subjects of our ethnographies are themselves concept makers and creators. From Petryna's climate scientists, who navigate imperfect knowledge and an inexorable threat, to Schwarcz's cannibalizing artist, they actively interfere in reality, crafting ways of knowing and translating across scales and domains.[141] Petryna tells us in chapter 9 that scientists grappling with uncertainty carve "a space of decision making out of a line of inevitability," creating "new projective possibilities" while "sustaining space for action even in dire conditions." Such open-ended concept work grows out of the demands of the times and, as Schwarcz writes of Varejão's artistic reworking of the racial classification schemas she uncovered, may be "a tribute to the different possibilities

of discourse, the multiplicity that is a kind of common foundation of depiction in art"—and in world making.

Theories play a part in the realities they describe and imagine. They have traction in the world, becoming integrated into (for better or for worse) people's bodies, values, relationships, and the possibilities they envision for themselves and others. Ethnography can capture this active embroiling of reason, life, and ethics, and the anthropologist can learn to think with circulating theories, however fully articulated, that concern both large-scale social dynamics and people's immediate conditions, travails, and anticipations. It can also offer entry points into the plasticity of systems, theorizers, and norm makers themselves, making it possible to pursue new forms of anthropological thought and research.

As Catarina/Catkine told Biehl in Vita, "I began to disentangle the facts with you. . . . I began to disentangle the science and the wisdom. It is good to disentangle oneself, and thought as well." Through Biehl's work with Catarina, various forms of reason (psychiatric, familial, gendered, economic, and pharmaceutical) came into view, complicating the very concept of the human: "They want my body, my body as medication . . . Catkine rots." Still, Catarina crafted her own lines of flight: "When men throw me into the air, I am already far away" (see chapter 1). This work of detaching oneself from what is accepted as true is "philosophy in activity," as Foucault would have said: "the displacement and transformation of frameworks of thinking, the changing of received values and all the work that has been done to think otherwise, to do something else, to become other than what one is—that, too, is philosophy."[142]

Meanwhile, as Sarajevans confront the effects of the neoliberal rationalities implemented by international institutions of aid and governance—theories of reconciliation and democracy, market economics and the public good, trauma and humanitarianism, and dealing with the past and building anew—they work to craft their own temporalities of change and ways of navigating the vicissitudes of politics, both local and global. As the short-lived but explosive experiments in direct democracy that spread across Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2014 seem to attest, people often perceive both the forces that constrain them and the ways things might (or should) be otherwise. Amid the making and remaking of a divided postwar country, their becomings—narrated by Peter Locke in chapter 10—suggest alternative possibilities for living with difficult pasts and the uncertainties of rapid social transformation.

It is not only the ideas of political scientists, economists, biologists, and psychiatrists that shape the becomings of individuals and collectives in this book's geography of becomings; anthropology's own key terms and theories

travel and are taken up in unpredictable ways. In this regard, Bessire's critical approach to indigeneity in chapter 7 highlights the deep—and even deadly—afterlives of anthropological concepts as they become part of larger exclusionary and violent projects: "a politics whereby cultural legitimacy is increasingly used to distinguish who is worthy of exceptional protection and who is allowed to die." In contrast, he argues, the anthropology of indigenous becomings "challenges the sense of inevitability implied by many analytic tools and allows indigenous subjects to reappear not as ideal types known in advance but as always unfinished, incomplete, and open-ended."

Certainly, to carry out our analyses, we need models, types, and theories—abstractions of various kinds—and there is a rich and important history of engagement between anthropology and philosophy.[143] Yet can philosophy really transform the characters and realities we engage with and the stories we tell into figures of thought?

Our engagements with texts, theories, and philosophies occur in particular times and spaces, woven into our experiences in the field and in the world at large, and find their ways into our thinking and writing in a relationship that might be productively seen as one of creative tension and cross-pollination.

The authors in this book draw from and participate in multiple intellectual lineages, opening up ways in which we might, in Davis's words in chapter 8, both "coexist and fruitfully interact with other dispositions to knowledge." "In step with the intensifying violence in Mexico," Garcia writes in chapter 3 that she "found [herself] turning to [Ernst] Bloch's mystical and revolutionary writings," while for Davis, William Connolly's vision of complex time in a world of becoming offered "a vitalizing complement to the paranoid hermeneutics in which the violent history of Cyprus seems so deeply entrenched." Similarly, in making sense of the Ayoreos' senseless expenditure amid world-ending violence, Bessire draws from the work of Georges Bataille to highlight the subversive powers of life beyond utility. Meanings and concepts flow freely across fuzzy academic boundaries and change in the process, and these ethnographers further displace becoming from its philosophical origins and uptake.

Ethnographic theory emerges from and in conversation with unfinished subjects and lifeworlds, as well as books and various ways of knowing and relating. It is a way of staying connected to open-ended, even mysterious, social processes and uncertainties—a way of counterbalancing the generation of certainties and foreclosures by other disciplines. Keeping interrelatedness, uncertainty, and curiosity in focus, our theorizing is never detached from praxis but instead directly shapes and channels anthropology's entanglements

in processes of transformation. In this way, theory is multiple and multiplies, a "tool box" that can be actionable, in the world and in our writing: "it has to be used, it has to work."[144]

Marked by returns, ongoingness, and the meantimes that unfold while the anthropologist is in the field and afterward, ethnography also brings subjects into contact with each other in lasting, unpredictable, and transformative ways.[145] Through fieldwork, we become a part of ethnographic open systems and are folded into lives, relationships, and swerves across time and space.[146] These systems hold us in a kind of unfinished proximity with one another, retreating and reemerging, engendering unanticipated connections and reconfigurations, never definitively closed off nor decisively transformational. Ethnographic open systems tether us to other selves and worlds and destabilize the temporal and spatial boundaries of an imagined field we leave behind.

Like art, ethnographic theorizing and writing can push the limits of language and imagination as it seeks to bear witness to life in a manner that does not bound, reduce, or make caricatures of people and their lifeworlds but liberates, if always only partially, some of the epistemological, political, and aesthetic force of their circuituous paths, interactions, and stories.

Becomings create holes in dominant theories and interventions and unleash a vital plurality: being in motion, ambiguous, and contradictory; not reducible to a single narrative; projected into the future; transformed by recognition; and thus the very fabric of alternative world making. "We try to write about what is missing," as Schwarcz notes in chapter 6, "but in so doing we create new possibilities." The life stories we compose do not simply begin and end. They are stories of transformation: they link the present to the past and to a possible or impossible future, creating unexpected ties among subject, scribe, and reader.

For indeed the reader, too, is always implicated. And there is much at stake in different forms of reading. If one takes a book "as a box with something inside"—an ultimate meaning or truth—one's task is to interrogate and deconstruct what it contains.[147] In our times, criticism has largely been naturalized as an act of judgment and indictment—a habit of faultfinding, of reading as jaded consumers of knowledge—in a way that reifies ideologies, ultimately stifling curiosity and obscuring the realities we wish to better understand.[148] But there are also other modes of reading, less audit-like or prosecutorial.

"To have done with judgment,"[149] as Deleuze puts it, allows us to move away from criticism as condemnation toward more interesting, constructive questions: How do the stories and ideas and becomings that unfold in these pages work for

you, reader? What do they produce, open up, or foreclose? What possibilities—intellectual, relational, or political—do they illuminate and make available?

This form of engagement is "like plugging into an electric circuit. . . . It relates a book directly to what's Outside." A book, after all, "is a little cog in much more complicated external machinery."[150] What if we resisted the tendency to know too much in advance, and the drab and deadly power to condemn and exclude, and instead engaged in forms of reading that were productive and enlivening, multiplying instead of stifling?

This active form of reading—"reading with love"[151]—frees us from critique as combat in favor of critique as care: care of the self and others, of aspirations for less violent and more just ways of inhabiting and sharing the planet, and of the imagination and thought itself. It makes it possible to engage in what texts unleash, the forms of understanding that they open up, and the larger external machineries of which they are part.

There is an ethos of unfinishedness and an invitational quality to the ethnographic writings that compose this book: an openness to the knowledge and mystery of others, a curiosity toward how human ways of living are entwined with nonhuman modes of life, a desire to bring us closer to people rather than creating distance, a humility in relation to our own thinking. It is in this spirit of open inquiry and wonder, of not being governed too much, of creating relations and always probing their very natures and stakes, of becoming a mobilizing force in this world, that *Unfinished* ends with blank pages—after all, readers and the distinct publics they make up are also part of the writing and of how the story continues . . .

NOTES

1 Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History*, 10.

2 Connolly, *A World of Becoming.*

3 Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 33.

4 Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness*, 2.

5 Deleuze and Parnet, *Gilles Deleuze from A to Z.*

6 See Bataille, *The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*; Das et al., *The Ground Between*; Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*; Lambek et al., *Four Lectures on Ethics*; Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*; Rabinow, *Marking Time*; Wolf, *Europe and the People without History*.

7 See Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *The Will to Power;* Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy.*

8 Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness*, 124.
9 Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness*, 128.
10 Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness*, 124.
11 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, and *The History of Sexuality*.
12 Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness*, 124.
13 Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness*, 124.
14 Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness*, 125.
15 Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness*, 128.
16 Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, 1.
17 Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, 1.
18 Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, 1.
19 Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, 1.
20 Rimbaud, *Complete Works*, 101.
21 Rimbaud, quoted in Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, 29.
22 Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, 63.
23 Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness*, 280.
24 Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972–1990*, 170.
25 See Comaroff and Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*; Das, *Life and Words*; Fassin, *When Bodies Remember*; Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*; Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain* and *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*; Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*.
26 See M. Jackson, *Life within Limits*, and *Lifeworlds*; Malabou, *The Ontology of the Accident*.
27 Stewart, "Precarity's Form," 8.
28 Biehl, "Ethnography in the Way of Theory."
29 M. Fischer, Comment on João Biehl and Peter Locke's article "Deleuze and the Anthropology of Becoming," 338.
30 See Allison, *Precarious Japan*; Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*; Bessire, *Behold the Black Caiman*; Butler, *Precarious Life*; Davis, *Bad Souls*; Ralph, *Renegade Dreams*.
31 Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*.
32 See Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*; Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*; Malabou, *The Ontology of the Accident*; Morris, *Can the Subaltern Speak?*; Scott, "To Be a Wonder"; Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?"; Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*; Strathern, "Negative Strategies."
33 Freud, *Collected Papers*, vol. 2, 279.
34 Malinowski, *Sex and Repression in Savage Society*, 126.
35 Mauss, "The Notion of Body Techniques." See also Garces and Jones, "Mauss Redux"; Mauss, "L'expression obligatoire des sentiments (rituels oraux funéraires australiens)."
36 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 250.
37 Butler, *Excitable Speech*, *Frames of War*, and *Precarious Life*.
38 Comaroff and Comaroff, *Theory from the South*, 56.
39 Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, xiii.
40 See Good, DelVecchio Good, Hyde, and Pinto, "Postcolonial Disorders: Reflections on Subjectivity in the Contemporary World," 8.
41 M. Fischer, *Emergent Forms of Life and the Anthropological Voice*. See also Inhorn, *Cosmopolitan Conceptions*; Malkki, *The Need to Help*; Sharp, *The Transplant Imaginary*.

42 M. Fischer, *Emergent Forms of Life and the Anthropological Voice*, 30.

43 See Briggs and Mantini-Briggs, *Tell Me Why My Children Died*; Dumit, *Drugs for Life* and *Picturing Personhood*; K. Fortun, *Advocacy after Bhopal*; Gusterson, *Nuclear Rites*; Haydn, *When Nature Goes Public*; Helmreich, *Alien Ocean*; Kaufman, *Ordinary Medicine*; Jain, *Malignant*; Lakoff, *Pharmaceutical Reason*; Lakoff and Collier, *Biosecurity Interventions*; Livingston, *Improvising Medicine*; Lock and Nguyen, "Local Biologies and Human Difference"; Martin, *The Woman in the Body*, and *Bipolar Expeditions*; Petryna, *When Experiments Travel*, and *Life Exposed*; Prentice, *Bodies in Formation*; Rabinow, *The Accompaniment* and *Marking Time*; Sharp, *The Transplant Imaginary*.

44 Lewis and Maslin, "Defining the Anthropocene."

45 Malm, "The Anthropocene Myth."

46 Ingold and Palsson, *Biosocial Becomings*, 20.

47 Landecker and Panofsky, "From Social Structure to Gene Regulation and Back."

48 For a discussion of biosocial approaches, see Farmer, *Infections and Inequalities* and *Pathologies of Power*.

49 For a discussion of ecosocial approaches, see Krieger, "Theories for Social Epidemiology in the 21st Century."

50 Lock and Scheper-Hughes, "The Mindful Body."

51 Lock and Nguyen, "Local Biologies and Human Difference."

52 Lock, "The Epigenome and Nature/Nurture Reunification," 292. See also Lock, "Comprehending the Body in the Era of the Epigenome."

53 Ingold and Palsson, *Biosocial Becomings*.

54 Palsson, "Retrospect," *Biosocial Becomings*, 244.

55 Kirskey and Helmreich, "The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography." See also Deane-Drummond and Fuentes, "Human Being and Becoming"; Haraway, *When Species Meet*; Raffles, *Insectopedia*; Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*.

56 Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, 2.

57 Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, 2.

58 Deleuze and Parnet, *Gilles Deleuze from A to Z*.

59 Kirksey and Helmreich, "The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography," 545.

60 Kirskey, *Emergent Ecologies*, 217.

61 Kirskey, *Emergent Ecologies*, 217, 219.

62 Kirskey, *Emergent Ecologies*, 5. See also Povinelli, *Geontologies*; Connolly, *Facing the Planetary*.

63 Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, 22.

64 Ingold and Palsson, *Biosocial Becomings*.

65 Kohn, *How Forests Think*.

66 Viveiros de Castro, "Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism."

67 See Cadena, *Earth Beings*; Gordillo, *Rubble*; Li, *Land's End*; West, *From Modern Coffee Production to Imagined Primitive*.

68 Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, 19. See also Stoler, *Imperial Debris*.

69 Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, 22.

70 Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, 23.

71 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*.

72 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, vi.

73 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, vii.

74 Appadurai, "Mediants, Materiality, Normativity," 221.

75 Appadurai, "Mediants, Materiality, Normativity," 221.

76 Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, 16.

77 See Cadena, *Earth Beings*; Kelly and Lezaun, "Urban Mosquitoes, Situational Publics, and the Pursuit of Interspecies Separation in Dar es Salaam"; Nading, *Mosquito Trails*; Povinelli, *Geontologies*.

78 Povinelli, *The Empire of Love*, 179.

79 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 259.

80 Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972–1990*, 176.

81 Geertz, *Available Light*.

82 Geertz, *Available Light*, 221, 246.

83 Masco, *The Theater of Operations*.

84 Fennell, *Last Project Standing*.

85 Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, 89–90. This passage circulated widely on social media in the days following the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Other seemingly prophetic perspectives, in and beyond the academy, are sure to be recognized as critical thinkers and activists reckon with the election's significance.

86 Fukuyama, "The End of History?"

87 See Glaude, *Democracy in Black*; John Jackson, *Harlemworld* and *Real Black*. See also Dave, "Indian and Lesbian and What Came Next"; Greenhouse, *The Paradox of Relevance*; and D. Thomas, *Exceptional Violence*.

88 See Fernando, *The Republic Unsettled*; Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape*; Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back*; Mahmood, *Politics of Piety* and *Religious Difference in a Secular Age*; Sullivan et al., *Politics of Religious Freedom*. See also M. Fischer, "Receptions in the Revolution" and *Emergent Forms of Life and the Anthropological Voice*.

89 See Biehl and Petryna, *When People Come First*; Farrar and Piot, "The Ebola Emergency"; Lakoff, Collier, and Kelty, "Ebola's Ecologies."

90 See Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*; Sheikh and Weizman, *The Conflict Shoreline*.

91 Roitman, *Anti-Crisis*. See also Fassin and Pandolfi, *Contemporary States of Emergency*; Redfield, *Life in Crisis*.

92 W. Brown, *Undoing the Demos*.

93 W. Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 44.

94 Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*.

95 Graeber, *The Democracy Project* and "Occupy Wall Street Rediscovers the Radical Imagination."

96 Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 1.

97 W. Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 10 and 35.

98 Biehl, "The Judicialization of Biopolitics."

99 Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 3.

100 Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, 41.

101 See M. Fischer, Comment on João Biehl and Peter Locke's Article "Deleuze and the Anthropology of Becoming"; Livingston, *Improvising Medicine*; Mattingly, *Moral Laboratories*.

102 Rancière, *Moments Politiques*, 75.

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