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# ESCAPE ROUTES

CONTROL AND SUBVERSION  
IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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PASSPORT



# Escape Routes

Control and Subversion  
in the Twenty-first Century

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and VASSILIS TSIANOS

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*Joy is the ultimate proof.*

Oswald de Andrade

*All the acts of the drama of world history were  
performed before a chorus of the laughing people.*

Mikhail Bakhtin

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system was a combination of robbery and hunting–gathering – only possible in areas that had not been colonised. As their moral economy was partially based on theft, the pirates were not only economically dependent on a society they rejected but could also be easily criminalised. Piracy was not only tolerated for a long time but was in fact commissioned in the battle carried out among the colonial powers for influence, territory and political and economic power. England employed pirates in the Caribbean to weaken the Spanish territories and colonial trade. The pirates were only declared enemies when they increasingly began to reject this instrumentalisation and establish themselves as an alternative model to the forced labour and exploitation aboard the imperial fleet (Linebaugh and Rediker, 2000).

The wandering workers were not only an economic and political problem. They were a practical and symbolic threat to the dominant order. The fugitive communities of exodus, pirates, maroons, runaway slaves, vagabonds, wandering poor, uprising peasants and mobs in harbour towns and colonies made up the rebellious forces which, despite their ultimate decline, challenged the regime of labour and mobility control to the extent that it had to transform itself in order to become an effective tool for controlling the escaping mob. It is no coincidence that the word mobility not only refers to movement but also to the common people, the working classes, the mob. In the next chapter we examine how the subversive unruliness associated with the escaping mob functions and we consider how best to conceptualise this engine of social and political transformation.

## 5 OUTSIDE REPRESENTATION

### **The Subject-form and the Tension Between Escape and Representation**

The histories of vagabonds' mobility described in the previous chapter are histories of escape; they illustrate how the concept of escape changes our understanding of social conflicts and their biopolitical regulation. Social and political thought usually considers acts of escape – for example refusal, desertion, betrayal, sabotage, exit and subversion – as individual deviations from collectively organised forms of social conflict, or as uninspired, exasperated reactions to intolerable pressure (Jane Bennett, 2001). Escape is frequently considered to be a passive, weak and irresponsible way to deal with

an unfolding social conflict or one's own situation. We argue the opposite: escape brings us to the heart of social conflict, and it constitutes a form of creative subversion capable of challenging and transforming the conditions of power.

The vagabonds encounter a regime of control which functions by trying to impose immobility. Immobility disciplines bodies and renders them productive; it captures bodies and channels some of their potentials into the labour force. Bodies become territorialised; people become subjects of a specific territory, of a sovereign power. Their mobility is not a reactive move against territorialisation, rather the forces of territorialisation are imposed on people's mobility. What was previously sheer movement now exists as an energy traversing in a new field, it becomes escape. People moving – territorialisation – vagabonds escaping. So, although escape necessarily relates to the terms of control, it is not constrained by a given regime, the seeds and means of escape exist prior to control. In the case of the vagabonds, we saw that the regime of control becomes productive only through its capacity to seize on and capture the energies and forces stemming from unsettled bodies, from people's mobility. The relation between control and escape is one of temporal difference: escape comes first. Unsettled bodies move, they become vagabonds who escape, they leave the stage of forced immobility; power reorganises itself in order to respond to their exit.

Sovereign power mobilises representation to organise and contain social conflict. Representation is nothing other than a means to render the forces partaking in a social conflict visible to the gaze of power. Moreover, power relations operate by making social actors representable within a regime. As we described in the previous chapter, only when escaping people are represented as a dangerous class or codified as a mobile workforce do they enter the order of power. More precisely, in response to the wandering masses power is forced to reorganise itself. Control encounters escape with representation. This is the formula of power. Already in the first section of this book (in particular in the discussion of the double-R axiom in Chapter 1) we argued that the main target of the political machinery of representation is the production of particular kinds of subjects. It is through the process of representation that people become subjects amenable to being managed by power. If, for a minute, we distance ourselves from the immediate social, cultural and political conditions we have described in Section I and try to understand the

mobility -> territorialis. -> vagabonds escaping -> power reorganizes itself to respond, control (w/ rep. -> rendering the forces of social conflict visible to power's gaze -> prod. of subjects as manageable by power)

# manageable subject made up of series of recurring patterns (on 3 levels of rep.): as productionist, heteronormative, & majoritarian

escape! 57

very constitution of the subject in the historical time of national and transnational sovereignty, we can recognise a series of recurring patterns which make up this subject. These patterns pertain to the role of production, the relation between sexuality, social relations and the body, and finally the relation between people and polity. On the level of production, the subject is constituted by the very fact that he or she is the immediate producer of the material existence of society through labour activities: the productionist subject. On the level of the body, social relations and sexuality, the subject is constituted through his or her participation in a compulsory heterosexual matrix which sustains phallogocentric dominance: the heteronormative subject. Finally the relation between people and polity is constituted through subjects who understand themselves as capable of social transformation to the extent that they identify and strive to achieve a position which has predominance in society: the majoritarian subject. It is on all these three levels that representation turns people into subjects of power.

The conjoining of these three dimensions shapes the very idea of the subject, the *subject-form* as we call it in this book. The subject-form could be understood as the amalgamation of these three different historical determinants of social existence. Our argument is that escape is an attack on the productionist, heteronormative, majoritarian subject-form. It may be that certain forms of escape primarily work against one or other dimension of the subject-form, but the practice of escape is a force which challenges the very coherence of the subject-form. Power encounters everyday practices of escape from the subject-form by intensifying the inclusion of people through processes of representation. In this sense we could say that escape and representation are the centrifugal and centripetal forces revolving around the subject-form and securing its central role in the organisation of political power. Representation is a form of power organised as spectacle. For Debord (1994) the spectacle is not just a collection of images, representations and abstractions; rather these images and representations mediate every single social relationship. The subject-form is not an abstract category. It is steadily constructed and reconstructed through the continuous process of representation in every single social relationship, even those of the briefest, most uneventful kind. Escape attempts to break out from this fastidious construction of the subject and to dissolve the spectacle's domination through representation. This chapter traces the tension between congealed formations of representation and amorphous

3 levels combined into the subject-form -> escape is an attack on it -> power counters by intensifying inclusion through rep. (spectacle -> reps. mediate every social rel. -> steadily (re)constructs the subject-form)

## strategies of escape from the subject-form → possibilities for politics outside rep.

energies of escape which subvert the productionist, heteronormative and majoritarian subject. Our analysis of these strategies of escape from the subject-form enables us to identify possibilities for politics outside representation. These will be described at the end of the chapter as a means of introducing the exploration of contemporary politics of escape in the rest of the book.

### Exodus in America in the 1870s

Vagabondage was a system. The case of the escaping vagabonds is not unique. For example, labour was something of a paradox in America in the late nineteenth century. Migration meant that the country had to invest relatively little in the production of a labour force: it seemed as if America was receiving a constant stream of ready-made, adult workers. Yet, wages were high and it was difficult to find workers for waged-labour. 'The excess of people', according to Benjamin Franklin's diagnosis of the problem, followed their desires and moved away from wage labour and into agriculture (B. Franklin, 1840/1794; see also Virno, 2005). As long as land acquisition was a possibility, people pursued it. The mobile frontier of this young nation marched west with the people. In the last chapter of the first book of *Das Kapital* Marx (1988) asked what had been interrupting the logic of capitalist wage labour since the turn of the eighteenth century. All the right conditions seemed to have been imported from Europe with the colonisers, the money for investment, the technical and business expertise and the absence of a feudal hold on people. The people too were there. However, what had failed to take hold was their relation to the labour market; the subjectivity of the worker did not develop and take a secure hold in these conditions. The opportunities presented in this new land were many; one of them was the opportunity to escape from relations of dependence between workers and employers by acquiring and farming land. Thus Franklin, in the attempt to ward off industrialists' requests for assistance in setting up new businesses, wrote that 'labor being generally too dear there, and hands difficult to be kept together, every one desiring to be a master, and the cheapness of lands inclining many to leave trades for agriculture' (B. Franklin, 1840/1794, p. 467), thus preventing the growth of manufacturing industries.

There is an ordinary reflex on hearing this story about people's escape from labour: this is to see in the escaping worker the fate of a body which later will become subject to disciplinary power. The escaping workers seem predestined to be contained and punished.

escaping workers b/c their subjectivities did not develop securely in relation to the labor market → b/c opportunities to escape dependency by acquiring and farming new land

Such a reading could be easily bolstered by drawing on Foucault. As we said in the previous chapter, when Foucault looked at workhouses (1991) he saw vagabonds who tried and failed to follow the trajectory of escape, and became the raw material of disciplinary force. But looking at America's tales of labour exodus, Marx saw something different: 'The wage worker of today is tomorrow an independent peasant, or artisan, working for himself. He vanishes from the labour market, but not into the workhouse' (Marx, 1988, p. 756). For Foucault, mobility was constrained through the disciplining of bodies. Marx saw, in his momentary glance towards America, the failures of these efforts (Erickson, 1984). And efforts were made: slave labour; negotiations with the British colonial government to increase the price of land so as to force people back into wage labour; the introduction of contract work; finally, the coolie system of importing indentured slave-like labour. But after all these impositions had been introduced what was evident to Marx was the desire to move, not with industrialisation and the rationality of productivity, but with the frontier.

At this moment, for Marx, the rebellion against immobilisation is not only a search for a better future but a praxis of political significance which questions the very foundations of the conditions of production in this historical moment: wage labour. Of course no escape is constituted as a pure subversion. Escape is always a situated and ambivalently arranged process. Moving with a frontier takes people beyond the repressive character of the factory system, but at the same time it is a move which proceeded along a great racial divide in the brutal process of the American conquest (Allen, 1994; Todorov, 1984). In the words of Bernard Bailyn (1988, p. 114), 'it was the juxtaposition of the two – the intermingling of savagery and developing civilization – that is the central characteristic of the world that was emerging in British America'. Thus, escape is always singular, it is a local historical process, one which is variously connected to simultaneously creating new forms of oppression as well as freedom. The history of escape is plural; those who flee American capitalism are the colonisers of the West and simultaneously the forerunners of the contemporary 'cult of mobility' (Virno, 2005, p. 18).

## Refusing Work

In the 1960s and 1970s, the politics of everyday life fuelled various practices of escape – exits from hegemonic conditions of work, from patriarchal social and sexual relations, from national subordinations

rebellion against immobilisation. as a pol. praxis that questions the system of wage labor -> But escape is always situated & ambivalent -> escape with moving frontier tied with racial divide

## 60s politics of everyday life -> flight from work politicized as strategy of refusal -> cultivate ways of living in precarity -> provokes crisis in Fordism

of ethnic minorities to mention only a few. In Italy and some other Global North Atlantic societies at this time, the flight from work was politicised as a strategy of refusal (Tronti, 1966). Workers leave the factories, and seek new forms of work; part-time, flexible work (Bowring, 2002; Thoburn, 2003). Together with students and the jobless, they actively cultivate ways of living in precarious conditions. Their mobility destabilises hegemonic labour relations, provoking a political crisis in Fordist society. They refuse to assume and act in accordance with subjectivities based in work and productionism, escaping the disciplinary powers of the factory system and subverting the very idea of labour (see the magnificent work of Krahl, 1984). They constitute a social movement which tries to transform everyday life, rather than to gain representation in state politics. Their refusal is not simply a refusal to work, but a refusal to translate their social struggles into a set of demands addressed towards the redistributive capacities of the welfare state (Tronti, 1966). In this form of escape we see a direct link between the practices of refusal and the negation of representation, and with it the negation of the double-R axiom. The Italian movement (and a similar movement in Germany) was important for rethinking subversion not so much because it entailed escape from the factory, but because it refused to reconnect this escape from the factory to some form of representation which would reintroduce the struggles back into the national social compromise (discussed in Chapters 1 and 2). The refusal of work is in fact a refusal of representation. It is a refusal to re-enter the constitutive productionist dimension of the subject-form. The movement out of the factories explicitly severed assumed connections between state politics and everyday life. People were only able to participate in the national social compromise to the extent that they held, or aspired to hold, full-time normal employment. However, when people start investing in efforts to transform everyday life, in creating a multiplicity of modes of existence, trajectories and desires, the normalising function of the national social compromise becomes increasingly evident and with it the irrelevance of state-targeted politics. This brings Fordism to its limits and, even if it was for a very short historical moment, it exposes and challenges the very idea of productionism as a core moment of everyday existence.

Whilst the passage to post-Fordist labour conditions is often characterised as a transition initiated by employers seeking to expand the conditions of work, the story of the Italian Operaist (and later autonomist) movement suggests something else. Capital is creative

with refusal of rep. in the welfare state (which would resubmit struggles to national social compromise)-> challenge to productionism

(Hardt and Negri, 2000; Virno, 2003), it follows escape, using it as the engine of its own development (Tronti, 1966). This is why Moulier Boutang (2001a) describes the powers of refusal as 'terribly efficient' in fuelling the evolution of capitalism. The history of capitalism is a history of regimes of control being fragmented by escape, transformed and fragmented again.

Our interest in escape is not that it culminates in a *better* configuration of life. Rather, the concept enables us to examine the often neglected engine of transformation which occurs without a master plan and without guarantees. Escape is a means, not an end (Agamben, 2001). It is means without ends in action. Escape has no morality (the American runaways exit work by exterminating indigenous people). But it entails the desire to evacuate an oppressive morality; escape follows this desire. Not every 'no' constitutes an escape; passive or reactive departures change little. Escape is a creative, constructive move, one which radically alters the very conditions within which struggles over existence are conducted (Virno, 2003). This creativity entails working with the surplus of what has been harnessed by regimes of power (as the vagabonds did when they acquired licences to travel for the purpose of marrying and used them only to travel); by returning to potentials which have been neglected, misrecognised and remain unannounced (Irigaray, 1985b). Escape is about dissent and construction, it is not protest. It is made up of everyday, singular, unpretentious acts of subverting subjectification and betraying representation.

When looking more broadly at the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, the Italian experience of the autonomist movement and the refusal of work seem to be only one of the many elements of a wider strategy of escape (Neilson, 2005). Local historical contingencies rooted in the social and cultural idiosyncrasies of the Italian left movements, meant that the Operaist concept of exit was restricted to escape from the productionist, Fordist regime of work. But this refusal of work was part of a broader movement of escape from the subject-form prevalent in Global North Atlantic societies. And these acts of subversion entail forms of escape which are provoking a much deeper challenge to the very notion of the heteronormative, productionist, majoritarian subject-form.

### Escape from Phallogentric Modes of Subjectification

In feminism we find the most thorough discussions of the subject-form on the level of the material constitution of the body and its

escape is a means not an end – w/o morality – it follows the desire to evacuate an oppressive morality – creative: it alters conds. of struggles – working w/ surplus of what power has harnessed –

## Irigaray – sexual difference feminism – vs. liberal fem.'s fights for inclusion –> doesn't question terms of measure

discipline (Gallop, 1988; Scarry, 1985; Bordo, 1993) as well as on the level of the social and political meaning of escaping the masculinist, heteronormative matrix (Haug, 1992; Butler, 1990; De Lauretis, 1987; Rubin, 1984). Here, though, we want to focus on a particular feminist position which in the most radical way problematises the process or representation and the escape from its dominance. Writing in the 1970s and 1980s, Irigaray (1977, 1985b, 1985a) was part of sexual difference feminism which contested the attempts of liberal feminists (e.g. Steinem, 1992) to ensure the inclusion of women in public, political life. Demands for equality do not question the terms against which equality is measured. Through their eagerness to play the game of the double-R axiom, liberal feminism fails to contest the very representations which materially constrain the embodiment of the feminine. Thus, by attempting to fuel the radical social transformation necessary to subvert patriarchy, liberal feminism risks contributing to a 'power to *reduce all others to the economy of the Same*' (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 74). We understand the 'economy of the Same' as the function of the subject-form which sustains the continuity of dominant forms of representation and precludes attempts for radical transformation. This happens because woman, the feminine, is present in the phallogentric economy, but she is always represented as one of two positions sustained by the subject-form – phallic and masculine or passive and feminine. In contesting these representations, Irigaray moves to interrogate the function of representation altogether.

Whilst some subjectivities and bodily potentials are excluded in the social imaginary, some feminine potentials still flow through and materialise in the bodies of both men and women. This 'feminine' is distinguished from representations of the feminine in the social imaginary, which are constrained by phallogentric fantasies. Thus, sexual difference feminism seeks to address the chasm between the feminine potentials which circulate through everyday social spaces and relations and the misrepresentations of the feminine which are commonly deployed in attempts to describe or work on those spaces and relations (Whitford, 1988). The problem is to understand and contribute to these feminine powers to initiate change in the absence of forms of representation within which they can be recognised (Braidotti, 1993). This calls for the capacity to work with and continue creating amorphous, fluid modes of existence which, although they are lived, cannot be articulated at the present moment – a capacity, we argue, which is central to the politics of escape (see Chapter 9 for further discussion).

phallogentric 'economy of the Same' – subject-form which sustains the dominant forms of rep. -> I. contests rep. altogether -> chasm b/w feminine potentials and reps. of the feminine -> need work w/ fluid modes of existence

embodied exp. of the feminine -> disruptive excess to phalloc. economy -> feminine pleasures remain unrep. -> seeing oppression of women at bodily level

The embodied experience of the feminine acts as a disruptive excess to the phallogocentric economy. These feminine pleasures, embodied modes of relating to others and to the world, remain unrepresented. Working with these bodily potentials involves, first, tackling how the oppression of women is conducted at the level of bodily sensation and perception. To this end, Irigaray develops an alternate lens through which the body is sensed – and she does this without claiming to give a true account of feminine bodily sensations (Grosz, 1989a). One criticism of sexual difference feminism holds that it is founded in essentialist notions of the body. But this criticism entails reading Irigaray as attempting to represent the potentials inherent in female anatomy (e.g. Moi, 1985). However, any such endeavour is explicitly rejected by Irigaray, on the grounds that it could only ever play into the fetishised desire to reveal the truth of the feminine, to reinsert it into the subject-form, and would result in the ‘recuperation of the feminine within a logic that maintains it in repression, censorship, nonrecognition’ (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 78).

By turning to the multiplicity of auto-erotic sensory pleasures experienced by women – ‘*woman has sex organs just about everywhere*’ (Irigaray, 1981, p. 103, emphasis L. I.) – she refuses the patriarchal gaze which reduces women to passive objects of pleasure. The masculine ascription of the feminine as ‘not one’ is subverted without being negated. Irigaray presents here a central moment of the politics of escape: it is not about negation but about betrayal. It is about betraying all those representations which eternally bind us to the masculinist economy of the sexes. This betrayal cannot be accomplished simply by developing alternate representations of the feminine and by playing them against the masculine representations. Rather, by using representation against itself, Irigaray strives to develop a lens which can be attuned to absence, multiplicity, simultaneity and non-identity (Grosz, 1986, 1989b). The feminine is unrepresentable. The betrayal of the subject-form as a core moment of the escape from phallogocentric modes of subjectivity works by tracing the ruptures which emerge in current representations, by following the lines which expose their inability to address the suppression of the feminine. Irigaray’s work offers an account both of the mechanisms of representation through which a patriarchal regime of control disciplines the body and of the feminine potentials which exceed control and remain unrepresentable. By harnessing the unrepresented feminine, which arises in the tension between discipline and excess, she denaturalises phallogocentric notions of the body and renders them meaningless.

\*

betrayal: by tracing ruptures in current reps.

\* + w/ unrep. student potentials?

multiplicity of women's experiences of auto-erotic sensory pleasures – vs. patriarchal gaze's reduc. of women to passive objects of pleasure -> \*politics of escape is about BETRAYAL (not negation)– using rep. against itself

64 vs. inclusion as an expansion of patriarchy – But not a positive femn. project – \*think betrayal and escape as mat. forces creating new rels. b/w bodies

feminist politics goes beyond the fight for inclusion within a regime of control. Inclusion is exposed as inclusion within a patriarchal regime of control, an expansion of patriarchy. However, subverting existing representations of the feminine does not amount to articulating a positive feminist project. Subverting the phallogocentric construction of the body necessitates a radical move; it demands that we think betrayal and escape as forces which materialise in the creation of new relations between bodies (relations which exceed phallogocentric sexualisation) – Irigaray's work brings us to this point, but does not make this move. This move to materiality is simultaneously a move beyond the predominance of language and the symbolic. What is important, then, is not only to betray existing representations, but to escape them by constructing new bodily experiences and modes of connecting. As we already said earlier in this chapter, the practice of escape is not an abstract strategy, but a singular activity which accompanies us through the everyday.

\*

### **Bodily Constructions/Speculative Figurations**

In her investigation of possibilities for feminist politics, Donna Haraway makes the move beyond the realms of language and the symbolic by interrogating the very material constitution of bodies. The ubiquitous representationalism of the common dichotomies between sex/gender and nature/culture is contested as she relocates them into a non-linear intermingling of human, animal, and machinic bodies. In so doing she cultivates the conditions for exiting from the fixed and closed representations of the Global North Atlantic subject-form. The result is an ingenious exploration of the material processes of production through which bodies make themselves and construct their own relations to each other. Haraway's concept of the 'apparatus of bodily production' (1991a, p. 208) connects both the critique of productionism (as articulated in the escape from labour) and the critique of heteronormativity (as articulated in the escape from phallogocentric subjectification). Haraway's move against the fixed representations entailed in the subject-form is grounded on the level of everyday materiality: neither bodies nor objects nor their relations among each other pre-exist as such. Rather bodies, things, relations are in a continuous process of passionate construction through their own interdependent activities. This is the apparatus of bodily production, a process through which we not only create semiotic devices to deal with the world but also material bodies which exist and transform our lived worlds. The making of bodies is a matter of facticity and efficacy.

Haraway – relocating sex/gender, nature/culture in intermingling of human, animal, and machinic bodies – cultivates conds. for exiting subject-form – on level of everyday mat.-bodies, rels. in contin. passionate co-const.

**facticity – bodies entangle us in co-constit. action –  
intra-action – we can't avoid it – we must encounter  
it with concern (interest, care, and being concerned)**

Facticity means that these bodies are simply there and invite us to engage with them in a way which did not exist before. Their very existence entangles us in a process of co-constitutive action, a process in which we and other things do not simply inter-act with each other as external and autonomous entities, but each exists through the process of action. We, other bodies, things do not enter into the process of mutual action as pre-existent and pre-constituted entities; we exist because we are entangled in action with other bodies and things – Karen Barad (2007) calls this intra-action. Other bodies and things do not merely respond to human action. They are there *de facto* as part of a co-constitutive action. Their facticity is the result of the fact that they contain embodied and incarnated forms of actions, as Ernst Schraube (1998) says, which cannot simply be controlled or manipulated by an external observer. There is a 'still pedagogy' (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 128) which a social field – that is comprised of bodies, things, practices – exercises on people participating in it. Facticity means that we cannot avoid being part of or in the process of action. And it is through this process that things and objects are constantly incorporating and producing other things (and therefore the world we live in); in the words of Günther Anders, 'objects are thirsty' for more materiality and for more action (cf. Schraube, 2005). We cannot encounter the facticity of things and bodies other than with concern. Concern here has simultaneously a threefold meaning: interest, care and being concerned. We enter into the process of intra-action not as the knowing subjects or as abstract cognisers, but as interested, careful, concerned actors (Papadopoulou, 2005). The construction of new bodies, their facticity, is not an epistemological problem. It is an ontological one. The world appears not as an object to be known but as the ontological unity of intra-actions, as a wholeness of possibilities, involvements and mutual metamorphoses. The process of a material construction of other bodies, things, relations is indicated by the term efficacy.

We encounter the world in an immanent process of intra-action because the facticity of other bodies has a direct effect on us and our immediate relations, that is they change *de facto* the whole constitution of our existence. Haraway calls for an ethics of concern and accountability, not as an abstract moral principle of responsibility, but because of the very fact that our everyday engagements produce bodies and relations which have a certain efficacy on the world (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2008b). Haraway's apparatuses of bodily production are not simply manufacturing events, they are onto-political engagements with the world. They produce material changes which cannot be

**const. of new bodies is ontol. problem (not epist.) –  
efficacy – facticity of other bodies directly effects us  
and our immed. rels. – H.'s ethics of concern b/c  
our everyday actions produce bodies w/ efficacy**

other bodies change terms of our experience and create new sits. for ourselves – entangled – \*escape instigates intensif. of committed consts. and efficacious intervents.

avoided, negated, bypassed or simply neglected, because these bodies change the very *terms of our experience* and create new situations in which we find ourselves. The efficacy of other bodies and things does not result from the fact that other bodies and things act independently of us; rather, it means that through mutual action new conditions and configurations of experience emerge (see Chapter 8 in Stephenson and Papadopoulos, 2006; see also Middleton and Brown, 2005; Caygill, 1998). We become entangled; subjects and things merge in a new ontological unity, changing the fundamental structure of experience – in Whitehead's terms this is an actual occasion (Stenner, 2008). In this process we become inventive, creative, constructive. The escape of the subject-form is thus not a retreat and disengagement from the world; \* rather, escape instigates an intensification of committed constructions and efficacious interventions. Escape is not a ghost, merely a protean trickster. It is a means to experiment and to initiate speculative ways to deal with the immediate and concrete facts which dwell in our worlds, because our experience cannot simply neglect their stubborn persistence and their inescapable efficaciousness (as developed in Whitehead's speculative metaphysics, see Whitehead, 1979; see also Gare, 1999).

It is through this speculative process that Haraway creates new feminist figures which exceed representation, which 'cannot, finally, have a name; they cannot be native. Feminist humanity must, somehow, both resist representation, resist literal figuration, and still erupt in powerful new tropes, new figures of speech, new turns of historical possibility' (Haraway, 2004, p. 47). Going further than Irigaray, Haraway sees these new speculative figurations as emerging in literal, material processes of the creation of new bodies, relations, organisms, objects and things. These figurations are both literal and fictional (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2008a). Literality and fictionality, reality and imagination, reality and virtuality are always simultaneously present in experience. Thus Haraway's speculative figurations do not bluntly oppose given configurations of experience, they rather escape them by creating new actual forms of experience, in the Whiteheadian sense – in Chapter 9 of this book we call this experiential constructive form of escape *continuous experience* (see also Stephenson and Papadopoulos, 2006). Escape from compulsory representationalism is simultaneously real and imaginary. It is the creation of new speculative figurations, new deliberate actual constructions, which puts us right in the heart of new experiential configurations. Günther Anders' call to train our capacity for 'moral fantasy' and Walter Benjamin's 'speculative experience' are

H. creates new feminist figures which exceed rep. – but new tropes, hist. possibs. – in material creation of new bodies, rels. – both literal and fictional – escaping given configs. of exp. by creating new actual forms of exp. – continuous exp.

## Benjamin: 'speculative exp.' w/ rec. of immanent wholeness of life – incorporating speculative figs. into practices of escape

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behind the ideas presented here. In his book *The Outdatedness of Human Beings* (Anders, 2002, pp. 271ff.) Anders discusses the inadequacy (what he later develops as a philosophy of discrepancy) between our feelings and the unforeseeable effects of things, and demands that we train the elasticity and capacity of our imagination (see Ernst Schraube's exceptional analyses of this in Schraube, 2003, 2005). Walter Benjamin discusses also the magical and spiritual language of things in his text *On Language as Such and on the Language of Man* (Benjamin, 1996b) and develops a programme of a 'speculative experience' as a means of recognising the immanent wholeness of life beyond a naive utopian idealism or blunt versions of materialist dialectics (Caygill, 1998). Incorporating speculative figurations into the practices of escape undermines both the unworldly utopianism of many left traditions as well as the unbearable historicist realism which we encounter in many post-Marxist approaches, especially the traditions of refusal of work as described earlier in this chapter (see also Badiou, 2005b, pp. 42ff.).

By working with the imaginary and the fictional as a creative material sensibility, Haraway opens up possibilities to rethink the tension between escape and representation. If escape is the construction of experience on the ground of speculative figurations, then we can start developing a better understanding of how escape is blocked, policed and controlled. If escape hinges on the knot of fictionality and literality to construct and materialise new forms of experience, then it is exactly this knot which becomes the target of control. Escape is captured and controlled when the entanglement between literality and fictionality is interrupted by power. This happens by attempting to insert acts of escape into the process of representation. Representation attempts to excise escape's fictionality and virtuality by delegitimising it as impossible, quixotic or impracticable and, simultaneously, it tries to make its reality and literality productive (as we saw for example in the case of the vagabonds: see Chapter 4). Power works by policing the border between the fictional and the real, by interrupting their constructive force to harness and create actual occasions of experience outside representation. This policing of the speculative figurations of the imaginary is pervasive, so deeply has it been inserted into the very heart of politics that policing has become a substitute for politics.

\*

### Politics, Policing

Any project of escape is wary of co-option, the ever-present risk that efforts to initiate or participate in radical social change might be diverted in another direction and appropriated in the existing system

imaginary and fictional as creative mat. sensibility → rethink tension b/w escape and rep. – escape hinges on knot of fict. and literality – this knot becomes target of control – \*by inserting acts of escape into rep. (excising its fictionality while making its literality productive)

risk of co-optation – pervasively employed by sov. power – or misrecognized and translated into given terms of rep. – through policing

of representations. Co-option is not an anomaly, it is a mode of capture pervasively employed by sovereign power. As Wallerstein says, ‘the revolutions never worked the way their proponents hoped or the way their opponents feared’ (1998, p. 13). But co-option may not always be the result of an intentional act. It can be the outcome of misrecognition. The problem lies at the level of perception, or sensory experience (and, as we illustrated in the earlier discussion of Libeskind’s *Garden of Exile and Emigration*, different forms of sovereign power train the senses to perceive distinct modes of connectedness to the world). To say that the potentials of subjectivity and escape are unrepresentable means that they remain invisible to those whose sensibility can identify neither excess, nor absence, nor speculative figuration. Attempts to harness and work with these imperceptible potentials will be misrecognised and translated into the given terms of representation. And it is precisely this form of limited sensibility which proliferates through policing (Rancière, 2000).

For example, the terms deployed to speak of migrants (asylum seeker, *Gastarbeiter*, illegal migrant) constitute them as a homogeneous social group and function to police their insertion into broader society. The policing effected by these terms is historically situated. For example, the French term ‘immigrant’, has served to hide and expel the name ‘worker’ from political debates (Badiou, 2005b). ‘Immigrants’ are a rather new species of subject in France. They used to be called

migrant workers or just plain workers. Today’s immigrant is first a worker who has lost his second name, who has lost the political form of his identity and of his otherness. ... What he has lost is his identification with a mode of subjectification of the people, worker or proletarian, as object of a declared wrong and as subject giving form to his dispute. (Rancière, 1998, p. 118)

Certain social groups, such as migrants, are rendered visible and accountable through policing. Policing stands in for politics in contemporary times. It results from attempts to found political actions and decisions in an egalitarian principle which holds that all should be included as equals and partake in a majoritarian realisation of politics. But egalitarianism is, of course, only a principle, not a description of the societies in which we live (Rancière, 1998). All societies consist of different parts, of people who are seen to contribute different skills, forms of wealth or knowledge. The paradox of working with the egalitarian principle is that it demands that all should have an equal role in sustaining and governing society, but it cannot transform the fact that people’s capacities to partake in

policing effected by terms deployed to speak of migrants – constituting them as a homogenous social group – renders them visible and accountable – policing stands in for politics – paradox of egalit. prin.

peoples capacities are perceived as unequal, and some as undetectable – being included on equal. prin. compounds perceived lack

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naming  
& rep.  
restrain  
escape  
and  
reincorp  
it into  
power

society are perceived as *unequal* (Balibar, 1997). The capacities of the mother, the migrant, the worker may be simply undetectable for some. Moreover, being included on the basis of the egalitarian principle, rather than on the basis of what one can offer, compounds any perceived lack of capacity. Working with the egalitarian principle cultivates sensibilities which ignore what lies beyond immediate perception: society appears to consist of self-evident groups or parts – of people who occupy the space that has been allocated to them and no other. Naming and representing – the core moments of the egalitarian principle – are the primary political tools for controlling society. They reinsert excluded social actors into the subject-form by constructing them as majoritarian subjects. That is, they construct them as subjects who are entitled to participate in politics because their own position *might* become those of the majority in the governance of the social. Formal equality is thus a mode of inclusion which effectively creates social minorities with the promise that these minorities can aspire to become majoritarian subjects and to change politics. Naming and representing under the guidance of the political principle of equality are thus the main means of restraining escape and of reincorporating it into the workings of power. The result is that what typically stands in for politics in contemporary times is, in fact, policing: the realm where the normalising functions of inclusion and co-option are enacted.

### Outside Politics

To escape policing and start doing politics necessitates dis-identification – the refusal of assigned, proper places for participation in society. As indicated earlier, escape functions not as a form of exile, nor as mere opposition or protest, but as an interval which interrupts everyday policing (Rancière, 1998). Political disputes – as distinct from disputes over policing – are not concerned with rights or representation or with the construction of a majoritarian position in the political arena. They are not even disputes over the terms of inclusion or the features of a minority. They occur prior to inclusion, beyond the terms of the double-R axiom, beyond the majority–minority duality. They are disputes over the existence of those who have no part (and in this sense they are disputes about justice in a Benjaminian sense of the word, Benjamin, 1996a). Politics arises from the emergence of the miscounted, the imperceptible, those who have no place within the normalising organisation of the social realm. The refusal of representation is a way of introducing the part which is outside of policing,

escape policing by dis-identif. -> refusal of assigned places for partic. – escape as interval which interrupts policing – political disputes occur prior to inclusion – from emergence of the miscounted, imperceptible

## outside politics → escape contemp. politics/ policing – and experim. together w/ those who have no part – refigures the perceptible

which is not a part of community, which is neither a minority nor intends to be included within the majority. *Outside politics* is the way to escape the controlling and repressive force of contemporary politics (that is of contemporary policing); or else it is a way to change our senses, our habits, our practices in order to experiment together with those who have no part, instead of attempting to include them into the current regime of control.

This emergence fractures normalising, police logic. It refigures the perceptible, not so that others can finally recognise one's proper place in the social order, but to make evident the incommensurability of worlds, the incommensurability of an existing distribution of bodies and subjectivities with the principle of equality. Politics is a refusal of representation. Politics happens beyond, *before* representation. Outside politics is the materialisation of the attempt to occupy this space outside the controlling force of becoming majoritarian through the process of representation.

If we return to our initial question of how people contest control, then we can say that when regimes of control encounter escape they instigate processes of naming and representation. They attempt to reinsert escaping subjectivities into the subject-form. Outside politics arises as people attempt to evade the imposition of control through their subsumption into the subject-form. This is not an attempt simply to move against or to negate representation. Nor is it a matter of introducing pure potential and imagination in reaction to the constraining power of control. Rather, escape is a constructive and creative movement – it is a literal, material, embodied movement towards something which cannot be named, towards something which is fictional. Escape is *simultaneously* in the heart of social transformation and outside of it. Escape is always here because it is non-literal, witty and hopeful.

Of course, outside politics is embroiled in the very problem of representation it tries to contest. As we show in the following chapter, this is not a limitation in and of itself. However the question arises as to whether the figure of escape can activate the imaginary of outside politics. Because the figure of escape is indebted to twentieth-century politics and resides in twentieth-century fantasies, it invokes an agonising historicist realism in conjunction with a salvation-driven utopianism. Beyond this, we want to look for escape in the amphibious and alkaline transformations people make against the metallic melancholia of twenty-first-century postliberal sovereign power. In other words, following the trajectory cultivated by late-

regimes of control respond to escape w/ naming and rep.  
→ to reinsert them into subject-form – outside politics  
arises as people attempt to evade this – const., creative,  
literal, mat. movement toward something fictional

twentieth-century feminist work, we trace outside politics in the most intimate, we say imperceptible, niches of the everyday and the body – and this is the topic of the next chapter.

## 6 IMPERCEPTIBLE POLITICS

### The Predicament of Resistance

We find ourselves in a predicament in doing politics, writing about politics: the predicament of resistance. It is a timely predicament. From the beginning of the twentieth century until the 1980s the value of traditional forms of organising resistance (especially in the forms of party and trade union politics) was self-evident. But they no longer seem to offer a viable radical form of resistance. In response, the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s – identity politics, micropolitics and cultural politics, in particular – have had a major role in taking us beyond the state-focused terms of traditional forms of resistance and in re-energising our potentials for action in everyday life. But now resistance in these movements seems to be increasingly compromised by their entanglement in neoliberal forms of governance, by the crisis of multiculturalism and by the fact that some have become productive forces in the new capitalist economies of knowledge and culture in Global North Atlantic societies (we discuss these various forms of resistance more extensively in the next three sections of the book; see also Stephenson and Papadopoulos, 2006).

The 1990s was an important period of cross-fertilisation between familiar modes of resistance which target the state and struggles which seek to transform social experience. Strategies for resistance commonly employed in party and trade union politics were irrevocably exposed as reproducing inequalities by failing to question assumptions about universalist (and nation-oriented) notions of a good life. At the same time, the risks of an exclusive focus on the politics of the everyday became increasingly evident. Seeing *all* experience as political can fold back on itself and become a depoliticising move. This is particularly the case when recognition of difference stands in for redistribution of resources and reallocation of positions, muting the imperative to refigure radical alternative sensibility (Rancière, 1998; Santos, 2001).

We passed through the 1990s, all of us involved in various forms of organisation and resistance, and we exited the decade in a form

vs. seeing all experience as pol. -> can become depoliticizing -

of speechlessness. Experimental forms of subversion, new social movements, have emerged in the first few years of the new century (Chesters and Welsh, 2006). We are part of these experiments. This book is an experiment to think politics after the predicament of resistance; to think, with Hoy, of resistance as both an 'activity of refusal [and] ... an attitude that refuses to give in to resignation' (2004, p. 9). We find ourselves in a situation in which people participating in state-targeted forms of resistance do not want to go on in the old way and those involved in the politics of everyday life are unable to go on in their way. If the times were Leninist we would be on the threshold of a revolution which would revolutionise existing forms of resistance. But the times are not Leninist; they seem to be quiet. What is audible is the predicament of resistance and the indeterminacy of experimentation with various forms of subversion. Or maybe we could raise the volume on something else – a form of politics which employs modes of resistance that are already materialising in our current postliberal sovereign conditions: *imperceptible politics*. We use the term imperceptible politics to designate everyday cultural and practical practices of escape.

### **Imperceptible Politics Transform the Body**

We have an ally in writing this book: time. Writing at the beginning of the twenty-first century we are not simply making reference to the present. The current times allow the book to happen. In the beginning of the third millennium, we are precariously situated on a rather aseptic, sober, glamorous facade, with lots of neglected agony beneath. This book could easily be fuelled by mourning and lament (as criticised by Brown, 1995), or it could strive to culminate in some kind of genealogy (N. Rose, 1999) or critical deconstruction of the present (Žižek, 2005b). It could even attempt to refuse despondent visions of the future by promising that agony is, in principle, translatable into euphoria (a mode of engagement critically analysed by G. Rose, 1996). But we are writing not as active and watchful observers of our times; we are not even writing in the flow of time, as its loyal handmaidens. Rather, time – with all its stubbornness and smoothness, its warm reliability and its disorienting absence of synchronicity – fuels these micro-electrical firings which govern the muscles of our fingers on the keyboards of our sleek laptops. Time both writes us and yields material with which we can address the predicament of resistance.

## work on real conds. of the present by invoking imaginaries beyond the present – intensifying the present – imperc. politics works w/ the present

New tools of subversion are emerging, but they have not crystallised, they are ungraspable. This describes our encounter with imperceptible politics; it is not simply situated in our present conditions of postliberal sovereignty. Of course, imperceptible politics is demanded by our situatedness. But at the same time, it is imaginary and outside of the present historical chronotope. It is only possible to work *on* the real conditions of the present by invoking imaginaries which take us beyond the present. And this trajectory away from the present is achieved by working *in* time, by *intensifying* the present.

Imperceptible politics works with the present. Time is fractured and non-synchronous – the historical present can be understood both as containing residues of the past and as anticipating the future (Marvakis, 2005; Bloch, 1986). Yet it is impossible to identify either the past or the future by moving backwards or forwards in time. Neither move is possible. Time forces us to work in the present, by training our senses to examine what appears evident as well as what is absent. This sensibility enables us to perceive and imagine things and ourselves in unfamiliar ways, to follow open trajectories. Time contains both experiences of the world which have been rendered invisible and the seeds of experience which may be possible to realise (Santos, 2003). Imperceptible politics can be neither perceived nor conducted from a transcendent perspective; that is, elaborating a ‘metaphysics of the present’ (as criticised in Adam, 1995) can reveal nothing of the mode of engagement with the present we are describing. This engagement entails experiencing time in a subjective and embodied way, being forced to transform ourselves in order to deal with this current predicament of resistance. Situated in the present historical regime of control, imperceptible politics involves *remaking the present by remaking our bodies*: the ways we perceive, feel, act. Imperceptible politics transforms our bodies.

Loving the present, existing in the present, imperceptible politics is practised in the present. It works with social reality in the most intimate and immanent ways, recalling the whole history and practice of escape, as we described earlier, and rethinking it anew. Doing imperceptible politics entails the refusal to use our perceptual and action systems as instruments for representing the current political conditions of resistance. It functions through diffraction rather than reflection (Haraway, 1997, 1991c): diffraction creates ‘effects of connection, of embodiment, and of responsibility for an imagined elsewhere that we may yet learn to see and build here’ (Haraway, 1992, p. 295). In this sense imperceptible politics is more concerned

time forces us to work in the present – sensibility to follow open trajectories – imperc. politics requires remaking the present by remaking our bodies – through diffraction rather than reflection

## changing the bodily conds. of perception and action – for interrupting sensibilities shaped by sov. powers (vertical aggregates) – borders

with changing the very conditions of perception and action than with changing what we see. Only such bodily, lived transformations are sufficient for interrupting the pervasive sensibilities being shaped by sovereign powers.

### A Constituent Force against Postliberal Sovereignty

Postliberal sovereignty seizes power by creating vertical aggregates on a transnational level. In Chapter 3, we described these aggregates as hegemonising the transnational space of global flows. Aggregates cut across and absorb selected segments of traditional horizontal social structures such as class, gender, race, social position, economy, institution, the market, technology. Borders are inserted between people (often unobtrusively), actants who might previously have worked on a horizontal plane. These boundaries are not simply geographic; they do not delimit companies, industries, governments, NGOs or community alliances (Sassen, 2000), nor do they just scatter and isolate. Rather, they mark out the distinct elements of these different entities which are to be recombined in vertical alignments of power with each other.

Like capital, postliberal sovereignty is inherently unethical and opportunistic. In this unscrupulous enterprise, so characteristic of the Bush–Blair era, resistance becomes just another structural element contributing to the erection of postliberal aggregates. We already know that the very conditions for resistance are always directly entangled in power. But such entanglement, so brilliantly described by Hoy in his analysis of post-structuralist understandings of resistance (2004), does not necessarily block the development of effective strategies of subversion. Of course, sovereignty digests resistance: active forms of resistance are continually co-opted. But this twin movement of flight and capture only appears catastrophic if we insist that there must be an ultimate solution to social conflicts. We do not. Certainly, resistance is frequently absorbed by power after its initial eruption. Movement – co-option – resistance – capture happens all the time. The particular problem with the fate of state-targeted and everyday micropolitical forms of resistance in the era of postliberal sovereignty is that they lose their *constituent* powers. Their eruption no longer pushes power to reconsider and reorganise itself, to move to new directions (see also Chapter 14). While these familiar forms of political engagement can certainly trouble and interrupt the seamless unfurling of postliberal sovereignty, they lose their power to trigger change (Negri, 1999). And exactly this force is crucial for our

postlib. sov. → unethical and opport. – sov. digests resistance – movement; co-optation; resistance; capture – part. problem w/ resistance now is that they lose their constituent powers – no longer pushes power to reorg.

# primacy of escape is its constituent force of change – betrays regime of control → forces it to follow line of escape and reconst. itself

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understanding of escape. As we discussed in the previous chapters, the primacy of escape is that it is a constituent force of change.

Escape is not opposed to or against the regimes of control in which it emerges; escape betrays the regime of control by carefully evacuating its terrain; as it becomes a constituent force of social transformation it forces power to follow the line of escape and reconstitute itself. But how is this done in the everyday? What kind of cultural and material actions sustain escape? Earlier we called imperceptible politics the everyday practices which make up escape. Certainly imperceptible politics addresses postliberal sovereignty and entails developing strategies for exiting postliberal representationalism. But this is neither their main intention nor their main target of action. Their targets pertain to the specific social struggles and social conflicts in which they are located. Imperceptible politics changes sensibilities, it changes the immediate social realities of existence in these fields in ways that, after a certain point, become impossible to ignore. This is what makes it a constituent force. Imperceptible politics changes society without ever intending it. It becomes a constituent force because it constructs new material realities where it operates, not because it strives to erect a better society in general. Imperceptible politics does not believe in a future to come, it believes in its everyday actions, it loves the fields in which it operates, it traces the future in the present, it cunningly subverts everything which is there to maintain the integrity of a given field of power.

In this sense imperceptible politics does not necessarily differ from or oppose other prevalent forms of politics, such as state-oriented politics, micropolitics, identity politics, cultural and gender politics, civil rights movements, etc. And indeed imperceptible politics connects with all these various forms of political engagement and intervention in an opportunistic way: it deploys them to the extent that they allow the establishment of spaces outside representation; that is, spaces which do not primarily focus on the transformation of the conditions of the double-R axiom (rights and representation) but on the insertion of new social forces into a given political terrain. In the previous chapter we called this form of politics *outside politics*: the politics which opposes the representational regime of policing. Imperceptibility is the everyday strategy which allows us to move and to act below the overcoding regime of representation. This everyday strategy is inherently anti-theoretical; that is, it resists any ultimate theorisation, it cannot be reduced to *one* successful and necessary form of politics (such as state-oriented politics or micropolitics, for

anti-theor.

imperc. pol. changes sensibilities – makes it a constituent force – not intentional, utopian – traces the future in the present – \*connects w/ other forms of pol. in an opport. way: to extent they allow estab of spaces outside rep.

\*

empiricist – enacted as ad hoc practices that  
decomp. rep. strategies and comp. events  
that regime of control must answer

example). Rather, imperceptible politics is genuinely empiricist, that is it is always enacted as ad hoc practices which allow the decomposition of the representational strategies in a particular field and the composition of events which cannot be left unanswered by the existing regime of control.

If imperceptible politics resists theorisation and is ultimately empiricist, what then are the criteria for doing imperceptible politics? There are three dimensions which characterise imperceptible politics: objectlessness, totality, trust. Firstly, imperceptible politics is objectless, that is it performs political transformation without primarily targeting a specific political aim (such as transformation of a law or institution, or a particular claim for inclusion, etc). Instead imperceptible politics proceeds by materialising its own political actions through contagious and affective transformations. The object of its political practice is its own practices. In this sense, imperceptible politics is non-intentional – and therein lies its difference from state-oriented politics or the politics of civil rights movements, for example – it instigates change through a series of everyday transformations which can only be codified as having a central political aim or function in retrospect. Secondly, imperceptible politics addresses the totality of an existing field of power. This seems to be the difference between imperceptible politics and micropolitics or other alternative social movements: imperceptible politics is not concerned with containing itself to a molecular level of action; it addresses the totality of power through the social changes which it puts to work in a particular field of action. The distinction between molar and molecular (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 275) has only analytical significance from the perspective of imperceptible politics. In fact imperceptible politics is both molar *and* molecular, because by being local *situated* action it addresses the *whole* order of control in a certain field. Imperceptible politics is located at the heart of a field of power and at the same time it opens a way to move outside this field by forcing the transformation of all these elements which are constitutive of this field.

In this sense, imperceptible politics is a driving force which is simultaneously both present and absent. We described this in the previous chapter by exploring the importance of speculative figurations for the practice of escape. On the everyday level of escape (a level we called in this chapter imperceptible politics) speculative figuration can be translated into trust. This is the third characteristic of imperceptible politics; it is driven by a firm belief in the importance and truthfulness of its actions, without seeking any evidence for, or conducting any

criteria  
for I.P.:

object-  
less

address  
totality

trust as  
spec.  
fig.

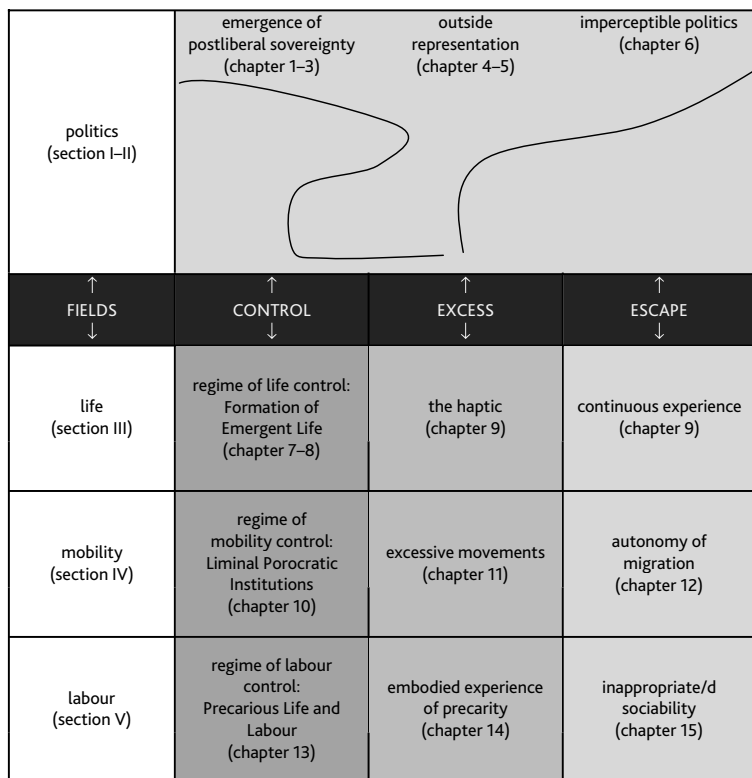
investigation into its practices. This is trust. Imperceptible politics is driven by trust in something which seems to be absent from a particular situation. Imperceptible politics operates around a void, and it is exactly the conversion of this void into everyday politics that becomes the vital force for imperceptible politics.

Before discussing further the question of the absent centre of political action and the problem of the void and trust, we want to describe how these three characteristics of imperceptible politics become a constituent force of change in the three fields of life, mobility and labour. In the second part of the book we trace the tension between postliberal sovereignty and imperceptible politics in these three fields (see Figure 11). A field crosses various disciplinary domains and social spaces, and these crossings are held together as 'boundary objects' (Leigh Star, 1991) which exhibit a relative autonomy in their constitution and function (cf. also Bourdieu, 1990). Pandemic influenza, for example (see page 127), traverses the terrains of biomedicine, public health, the pharmaceutical industry, international health agreements and organisations, farmers and agribusiness, border control and border activism, national and international security agendas, the management of the bodies and everyday lives of millions of people. All these different terrains make up the field of pandemic influenza.

We use the term *regime of control* to designate the conjuncture of different institutions and actors which operate in the attempt to control power in a specific field. A regime of control is an unstable but effective alliance between forces of power. It is always historically specific. For example, in Chapter 4 we described how the regime of mobility control emerged as a response to vagabonds' flight in the field of labour in pre-capitalist north European societies. But fields are not solely dominated by regimes of control. Fields are regions of the social world held together by a pervasive regime of control but also by distinct forms of social cooperation and expressions of social conflict. A field is not a coherent unified system of operations. Rather, it contains distinct, independent, sometimes conflicting elements.

Analytically a field contains all those institutions, discourses and practices which sustain a regime of control but also all those experiences and practices which escape it and force control to transform itself. As discussed in previous chapters, forces of escape are always located in and start from a concrete field. Escape is always grounded. But where is it grounded? There is a surplus of sociability produced in each specific field, an excess which lies outside the

existing forms of representation operating in that field. It is this excess of potentials that creates the possibility of escape. And more specifically it is imperceptible politics – that is, the everyday cultural politics of escape – which are practised in and fed by this excess of social relations. Imperceptible politics arises from the tension in a given field between the dominant regime of control and social relations of excess which emerge in that field. Excess is the necessary precondition of imperceptible politics. And imperceptible politics gives birth to lines of flight which attempt to escape the regime of control in a certain field. These are the relations of power which we will be analysing in the second part of this book in the fields of life, mobility and labour (see Figure 11).



11. Diagram of the relation between control, excess and escape in the fields of life, mobility and labour

What is important to highlight here is that while imperceptible politics is grounded in the unrepresentable relations of excess in a certain field, it simultaneously opens a way to move outside this field. This move is enabled by trust (which we discussed earlier in this chapter and expand on here). Where does imperceptible politics' trust in this fictional, imaginary, excessive dimension of escape come from?

### **Addressing a Void With Imagination: Subversion, Escape, Becoming Everyone**

Imperceptible politics is driven by imagination and fictionality – the imagination required to address an absence, as Santos (2003) describes it. As discussed above, representation diminishes the senses. Not only does representation dictate the terms of inclusion in political disputes of a certain field, it blunts our capacities even to perceive the multiple realities of bodies, people, desires – inappropriate/d forms of life (Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1987). These inappropriate/d modes of existence, this excess of social relations, remain after the existing regime of control has dissected and transformed subjectivities into controllable objects of discourse: bodies become identities, people become *demos*, desires become demands. Imperceptible politics starts from this excess of inappropriate/d modes of existence which from the perspective of the regime of control constitutes a void (Badiou, 2005a), a void residing in the political system of representation.

As Badiou (2001, p. 68) says about the void, it is the very heart of a particular situation around which 'the plenitude' of social and material relations making up this specific situation is organised. This plenitude is mirrored, managed and regulated through procedures of representation (it is policed, as we said with Rancière in the previous chapter). Consider, for example, the surveillance and control of highly patrolled passages of migrational flows through the porous borders of Global North Atlantic countries. There is a plenitude of laws, practices, institutions, customs, migration police and border patrols, rituals, detention centres, informal migrant networks, knowledges, life projects and much more, which makes up this situation. This abundance is structured around an absence: the embodied and unrepresentable desire which people follow as they cross borders despite the regime of control which tries to close them off or to constrain and control them. When they enter into the language of the plenitude, these people are called illegal migrants. They are treated as a problem, an economic, social or humanitarian problem, which has to be solved

through deportation, revisiting legislation or negotiations with other states. What is absent is their actual movement, what people become as they navigate the fissures of nation states and borders. The absences of the inappropriate/d migrants and their desire constitute a void, a void around which this situation is organised.

When all these inappropriate/d modes of existence beyond identity and passports become represented, it is only to be measured, policed, and finally, controlled. But they *do not always* become represented: when the void becomes an action, it does so as a force which challenges the existing organisation of plenitude in a certain field. Because it cannot be accommodated in the current situation within existing conditions of control, it is a constituent force pushing for a radical change. The imperceptible politics emanating from the void cannot be ignored. The millions of inappropriate/d bodies render borders permeable de facto, throw the current regime of control into disarray, force sovereignty to reassemble itself – everyday imperceptible politics becomes escape from a regime of control.

Imperceptible politics is the moment when the void of mobility (or labour or life, as we show in the next sections) becomes subversive. Some may want to use the word resistance instead. But here we understand subversion (or resistance if you prefer) in a positive way: as the desire to depart from the plenitude which organises control in a certain field. Or better, as the trust in something which is absent and unrepresentable, and yet operative and constitutive of a specific field. This desire comes from the very heart of the situation, but leads directly and unconditionally beyond it. Desire. Trust. Escape! This is the only understanding of resistance which is relevant for imperceptible politics, and it is indeed the only understanding of resistance which escapes the melancholic uptake of Foucault's work in neoliberal times. This is the reason why we prefer to talk of subversion instead of resistance in this book. Drawing on Johannes Agnoli's (1996) intriguing exploration of the historical metamorphoses of this concept, we understand subversion as the process of reclaiming a form of praxis which is there but is forgotten, suppressed and rendered seemingly absent. It is an act which cannot be understood as critique, or as a form of dialectical negation of negation, or even resistance but it stands there as 'negation sans phrase' (Agnoli, 1996, p. 16), that is conceptual and theoretical work which obtains its efficacy only through 'laborious mole-work' (Agnoli, 1996, p. 226). Subversion is that which is banished and eradicated through political representation, yet never completely. As an act of reclaiming, the

subversion entailed in imperceptible politics is located in the everyday and precedes and prepares the practice of escape itself.

Subversion remains imperceptible to the representational policing of a field and works with an excess of social relations which spring from the 'absent centre' of this particular field. This is the fictional and imaginary character of imperceptible politics. It is only by conjuring up the speculative and fictional qualities (see previous chapter and Haraway, 1992, 2004) of a situation that it is possible to address something which is absent and yet there, something arising from the core of the situation but which is yet to emerge. Imperceptible politics is here, always present within a regime of control, cultivating trust in speculative figurations of a radically different future in the present. Imperceptible politics is here.

Imperceptible politics unfolds as a continuous break from existing forms of representation. But how do people actually do this in their everyday lives? How do people deal with the constant pressure of policing and representation, undo their fixed positions and enter into processes of dis-identification? How do people move beyond themselves as they connect to each other in the situated process of escape? Becoming is a political practice through which social actors escape normalising representations and reconstitute themselves in the course of participating and changing the conditions of their material corporeal existence. This is not only a force against something (principally against the ubiquitous fetishism of individualism and against sovereign regimes of population control) but also a force which enables desire. Every becoming is a transformation of multiplicity into another, suggest Deleuze and Guattari (1987). Every becoming intensifies and radicalises desire, creating new modes of individuation and new affections. Becoming is a drift away from representation, but neither a wild, arbitrary move nor a teleological progression along a chain of hierarchically organised transformations (as Patton points out in commenting on Masumi's interpretation of becoming, see Patton, 2000, p. 82). Becoming, for Deleuze and Guattari, starts 'from the forms one has, the subject one is, the organs one has, or the functions one fulfils' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 272).

This ceaseless process of diversification and transformation neither fabricates an infinite series of differences nor has a predefined end. Becoming has no fixed telos – but Deleuze and Guattari are no 'difference engineers' (Ansell-Pearson, 1997). They are meticulous manufacturers of unity, a unity without subjects. There is no 'final analysis' in this unity! Differences, individuations, modalities are only

the starting point; they are the building materials of the world. So, interestingly enough, the end of all becomings is not the proliferation of difference, it is its elevation into a process of becoming everyone. It is a process which creates a unity of multiple singularities. Becoming indiscernible, impersonal, imperceptible occurs when 'one has suppressed in oneself everything that prevents [one] from slipping between things and growing in the midst of things' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 280).

Becoming everyone occurs anew in each moment, in every place. Becoming everyone is a universal strategy because it prevents a certain form of becoming from being held up as a universally acclaimed endpoint. Becoming everyone is a move based on respect and care of the worlds we are creating when we leave behind marked and secure social positions and selves; the everyday politics of escape is based on these modes of constructing new imperceptible sociabilities. In this sense, becoming everyone is becoming imperceptible because it is a move of dis-identification, a decisive move leading outside of the subject-form, as we described it earlier in Chapter 5, towards the construction of new bodies and relations.

Becoming everybody/everything is to world, to make a world. ... It is by conjugating, by continuing with other lines, other pieces, that one makes a world that can overlay the first one, like a transparency. Animal elegance, the camouflage fish, the clandestine: this fish is crisscrossed by abstract lines that resemble nothing, that do not even follow its organic divisions; but thus disorganised, disarticulated, it worlds with the lines of a rock, sand, and plants, becoming imperceptible. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 280)

Imperceptible politics is based on a continuous process of leaving behind all those forms of representation which constrain the connections between people and attempt to condense them into the next policing node of postliberal aggregates of control. This takes us beyond our current predicament of resistance, to work with modes of subversion which are already unfolding without announcing themselves.

approaches, the representations and images which dominate and subjugate immediate sensual experience and material action seem to have their provenance in the notion of ideology. A top-down reality is invoked as dominating people's daily actions and experiences. We want to avoid this understanding of dominance functioning through the imposition of external images and representations over people's ordinary lives. Instead, we need tools for examining how the terrain of life is not always, already ensnared, nor a space where only familiar biopolitical and new postliberal modes of co-option and policing proliferate. Experience is captured, but experience is also the most fundamental point at which the politics of life itself breaks with policing. The imperceptible politics of escape from migration and labour control, discussed in sections IV and V, relies on tactics which release and play with haptic, continuous experience, and it is to these that we now turn.

## 9 EVERYDAY EXCESS AND CONTINUOUS EXPERIENCE

### Politicising Everyday Experience

That the private is political might be familiar news, but the depoliticisation of the private or its total collapse into the political are also very ordinary stories. Feminists deployed the interrogation and affirmation of the politics of everyday experience in response to the imposition of an external, patriarchal, heterosexual gaze – an imposition which functioned to contain struggles over the regulation of sexuality and gender to the private realm (Haug, 1987; Gill, 2006; Crawford, 1992; D. E. Smith, 1987; H. Rose, 1994). For a time, the effects of this feminist strategy were electrifying, akin to the woman being drawn by Dürer's *Draughtsman* (see Chapter 1) standing up and throwing the grid out of the painting. These effects materialised in the emergence of new forms of social and sexual relations, in transformations in the workplace, in health services and in state politics. But today we are forced to reconsider the potency of experience, of the private and the personal.

In recent decades we have witnessed the increasing proliferation of starkly individualistic practices of everyday life and individualistic modes of relating to self and others. Following this neoliberal turn, even the subjective desire for freedom can be seen as a mode of individual regulation, i.e. 'the personal' becomes the means through

which subjects are constructed as individually responsible for their own continuous self-invention (N. Rose, 1996b). Concurrently, we are witnessing the rise of a therapeutic and medicalised culture, involving modes of relating (to selves and others) which constitute subjects as traumatised, negated and in need of recognition (Frank, 1995; Orr, 2006). When such relations substitute affirmations of individual experiences for political action, political engagement is reduced to resentment and nostalgia (Brown, 1995). If the everyday is being laid bare as an active player in political change today, we must take account of the fact that the dominant trajectories at work in much politicisation of experience are the same optic trajectories through which the formation of emergent life operates.

Certainly, the widespread use of the political potential of experience has forced transformations in social and political life. But since the 1960s and 1970s we have seen the proliferation of this intimate form of power (see Chapter 2) which feeds off the wild insurgency of experience. The formation of emergent life functions through optic trajectories which link the body's immanent relation to itself to the game of representing and gaining recognition for identity and difference (Santos, 2001). Not only does the formation of emergent life need the personal; the more politicised that personal is the easier it is to absorb into intimate power. Now, demonstrating how the personal is already located in the public domain can solidify the very processes of policing that feminist politics of the left aim to subvert and rework. For example, foregrounding the personal realm can accelerate a collective, cultural turn inward in search of solutions to political problems. Simply representing the private and asserting the personal through collective actions is an increasingly inadequate response to the ongoing flows and mattering of patriarchal powers. Today this form of political engagement seems to be akin to micropolitics which, as we discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, seems to be incapable of addressing and challenging existing inequalities. The feminist declaration that 'the personal is political' has provoked a response. Once, an outright negation of the personal might have been a main defence of patriarchal power. But when life is regulated through the very paths carved out by feminist politics, feminism's target must include the patriarchal revaluing of the personal domain.

Rather than jettison the terrain of the personal and the private outright, we want to follow the trajectories opened by feminist and queer politics, which escape the imperative continually to represent experience, and return us to the problem of how to continue to

devise ways of actively making the personal political without always being captured by life control. We do this by distinguishing between approaches to experience which identify the optic at work in the everyday (a useful but limited project) and those which seek to harness the productiveness of both the joyous and despairing excesses of experience, carving out trajectories which lead to imperceptible politics.

### **Capture in the Optic Trajectory: Self-esteem; Hybridity; Pink-washing**

Something of the contemporary capture of experience is exemplified in the feminist discussion surrounding Gloria Steinem's (1992) *Revolution from Within: A Book of Self Esteem*. Taking what for many was an unexpected turn, Steinem argues that feminism needs self-esteem. Her rationale is that good self-esteem enables participation in the public domain, a prerequisite for effective political engagement. However, it might appear that there is a regressive dimension to Steinem's call to work on oneself. The imperative to transform oneself has long been a means of containing women's engagement to the personal, and not the public, domain (e.g. Walkerdine, 1990). Steinem appears to neglect decades of feminist work which targeted the pathologisation of women's subjectivities as unstable, unpredictable, emotional (e.g. Irigaray, 1977; Grosz, 1989a); work which attacked women's historical exclusion from the public domain on the grounds of inadequate personhood – as opposed to adequate personhood, defined in phallogocentric terms (e.g. Hall, 1985). In advocating the importance of a particular psychological state (of esteem) as the basis of political action, Steinem seems to take a depoliticising turn.

This is an important critique, but it does not elucidate why actors (not only Steinem but her avid readers) who had been so central to subverting patriarchal notions about the inadequacies of feminine personhood now seem to be moving beyond their own insights. Perhaps the turn to self-esteem is not actually a backward step but a step which keeps abreast of and works with the intimate functioning of contemporary forms of experience in the regime of the formation of emergent life. Steinem's interest in self-esteem has been defended on the grounds that it offers a more realistic and more promising way of tackling contemporary depoliticising forms of the regulation of experience (Cruikshank, 1993). In this reading, the political relevance of self-esteem is that it instils a moral obligation to participate in public life and to shake off the apathy that accompanies democratic governance. Following de Tocqueville (1963), Cruikshank identifies

the risk of depoliticisation which seems to accompany democracy. Certainly, de Tocqueville saw free people when he visited democratic America. But, to his eyes, the freedom and equality granted to isolated individuals entailed its own form of powerlessness: independent citizens are weak and in the absence of projects which bring them together there is a danger that their freedom will amount to nothing. De Tocqueville argued that democratic governance cannot function without people coming together and that governments need to take an active role in bringing people together:

In democratic countries the science of association is the mother of science.... If men are to remain civilized or to become so, the art of associating together must grow and improve in the same ratio in which the equality of conditions is increased. (de Tocqueville, 1963, p. 110)

For de Tocqueville, democratic governments can only be distinguished from despotic rule through their effective deployment of technologies of 'association', i.e., technologies of governance must extend into everyday social relations between people. Seen as a technology of governance, self-esteem can be understood as a means of engaging people with a regime of control. For contemporary theorists of neoliberal governance, self-esteem is a tool through which relations to the self are constructed, relations which enjoin people to others (it is hard to create and sustain relations without self-esteem), a prerequisite for active (supportive and contrary) engagement with others and with government.

Critics of *Revolution from Within*, Cruikshank suggests, fail to take account of the impossibility of developing a feminist politics which is located outside of neoliberal configurations of patriarchal power. From this perspective, it would seem that feminist struggles are best fought in and through the uneven, contingent and unpredictable course of continually emerging modes of regulation. Whilst acknowledging that self-esteem is a technology of governance which opens people to self-regulation (and opens women to patriarchy), it emphasises that, as a 'science of association', self-esteem also opens people to new forms of politicisation (and women to feminist politics).

However, in this reading of the value of self-esteem, political engagement is seen from the perspective of regulation only. It mistakenly conflates the political potency of social relations with the harnessing of bodily potentials through a 'science of association' to a regime of control. Such a reading illustrates how neoliberal governmentality theory is blind to the full realm of immanent

potentials, seeing only those that reveal themselves as trajectories moving towards control. It is true that a feminist turn to self-esteem might elucidate the contemporary regulation of life; but by reducing politics to active engagement in governance (and self-regulation), Steinem is inciting feminists to follow optic trajectories, to play the game of policing.

Consider another example of the ambivalent effects of some contemporary critical forms of political engagement. This is the issue of hybridity, which has been so central for undoing racialising essentialist practices (Ang, 2003; Anzaldúa, 1999; Bhabha, 1994; Hall, 1994; Papastergiadis, 2005; Santos, 2001; Werbner and Modood, 1997; Young, 1995). Even notions of 'rhizomatic hybridity' (Wade, 2005, p. 606), which arise from engagement with recombinant genetics and the new era of biosecurity, are entering into discussions of hybridity. One might think that this denaturalisation of race would intensify anti-racism in our current political conditions. But the idea of hybridity seems to have rather ambivalent outcomes: it neglects the materiality of race and its importance for articulating effective anti-racist politics (for an extensive discussion of this issue see Papadopoulos and Sharma, 2008; see also Saldanha, 2006). The idea of hybridity seems to normalise subjectivities in transnational and postcolonial conditions by including them in shuddering multicultural societies (as discussed by Hage, 1998), or by aestheticising otherness through the 'ambivalent coupling between racism and sexualized desire for the Other' (Sharma and Sharma, 2003, p. 5). And Sanjay and Ashwani Sharma continue:

Contemporary Orientalism appears less troubled with the danger of going native (and even miscegenation) in its relation to otherness, which may account for the 'frisson' of difference being harder to sustain now. Moreover, the encounter with the Other is no longer only one of a distant place or mediated through Orientalist representations; it has become an everyday occurrence in the Western multicultural metropolis. Nevertheless, while the racism of Orientalism has shifted towards a differentialist inclusion, we find that an assiduous preservation of 'the proper distance' from the 'Other' has become portentous. (2003, p. 6)

In all these examples we see how the immanent and situated transformations taking place on the level of everyday practices are easily absorbed into a distant and all encompassing system of representations, a policing system which then pervades the everyday as an optic trajectory. Life is becoming coded and all the actual entities

which make up experience are coralled into the form of an already determined and fixed entity (Whitehead, 1979; Braidotti, 2006).

The formation of emergent life establishes itself as a regime of life control by transforming one (pluripotent) mode of everyday existence into another (a clichéd mode of inhabiting the everyday). This is the depoliticising move of experience; a move which is made patently clear, for example, when Jain (2007) examines the 'pink-washing' of breast cancer partly through corporate investment in 'awareness' campaigns. One might consider that a 'breast cancer awareness' day would be a vehicle for engaging the public with women's suffering and deaths resulting from this disease or with the importance of identifying and contesting the prolific use of carcinogenic compounds. But Jain argues that instead of making breast cancer into a communal event of this kind, pink-ribbon day (sponsored by Estée Lauder) redeploys heteronormative, romanticised notions of women as innocent and reduces any political project of freedom to affirmation of individual women's survival of illness. As we mentioned above, one alternative to entering into these neoliberal games might be to negate the realm of experience altogether. However, we want to argue for a different strategy, one which draws on feminist and queer attempts to work from and with the movements of excessive trajectories in the everyday.

Jain hints at this in her insistence on the imperative to refuse the 'pornography of death', a form of pornography which involves the proliferation of images of titillating, violent deaths and renders ordinary deaths invisible (such as women's deaths through cancer). This refusal, she anticipates, must take the form of the 'material presencing' of the ordinarily unseen violence of death (Jain, 2007, p. 526). Whilst the material presencing of death may certainly be manifest in public demonstrations or performances of the kind Jain discusses, we argue that what is important is that it occurs in people's everyday lives – more than this, this materialisation begins and ends in the everyday. The private and the personal do not become political through being elevated to something public and extraordinary; it is not the spectacle that is politicising, but rather a process of return to and radical reorganisation of the very space in which ordinary, mundane experiences arise. The personal undoes itself and this is what makes it political. We examine this process below, through Gillian Rose's account of her own terminal cancer, in which the meanings and significance loaded onto her illness are refused and undone through the return to the ordinary. There is

nothing exceptional in these ordinary encounters, their meaning is not given and pre-existent; their potency lies, rather, in the immanent unfolding of actual experiences.

### **Experience Beyond Representation**

Feminist and queer politics have continued to develop strategies for making the personal political – strategies which test the current policing of the personal realm and trouble the very conditions in which subjectivity is produced. Repoliticising experience is not a matter of affirming subjective experience by trying to connect it with power. It entails developing alternative relations and modes of being, anxiety inducing relations (Chambers, 1998), modes of connecting which evade clichéd forms of capture, by working with the excess of the everyday.

This leads us to the central question of this section of our book: What is imperceptible politics in the regime of life control? How does imperceptible politics give birth to acts of escape from the optic trajectories employed by the formation of emergent life? In Chapter 6 we described escape as a form of subversion of regimes of control, rather than as a force which simply opposes these regimes. It is a betrayal which is enacted and performed in the everyday, a refusal to accept the pressure to adopt and operate with the given representations operating in the formation of emergent life. This subversion takes place in the heart of the regime, it operates with existing representations and at the same time it exceeds and annuls them. Betrayal and escape from the regime of life control occur as forces which materialise in the everyday by creating new forms of sociability beyond and below the formation of emergent life's regulation.

Imperceptible politics in the formation of emergent life exists and acts in the core of this regime. And the core of the regime is the everyday. As much as the formation of emergent life works in the immanent terrain of everyday life, there is an excess produced there, an excess of sociability, which lies beyond the representational structuring of the optic. Haptic trajectories circulate in the excess of everyday experience, segments and moments which do not yet coalesce into identifiable elements of the everyday; they undo representations as they materialise. There is a creative, imaginary quality to the pathways of escape they carve out of the everyday (which does not mean that their flights are ultimately unrealisable). With Debord (1981) we can say that this is the moment when everyday life turns against itself, becomes a betrayal of itself, changes

itself, transforms and overcomes the optic trajectories which try to organise experience.

The excess uses something of the blasphemy deployed in the carnival (Bakhtin, 1984; Lachmann, 1997; Lefebvre, 1991) to invert, to twist, to mock the portentous and pontifical narrative of the regime of the formation of emergent life. It is in the carnivalesque, this 'world turned topsy-turvy', this 'play without a stage' (Bakhtin, 1978), that the limits of optic trajectories are encountered and their pretentious seriousness is unveiled. But the displacement enacted by trajectories of excess has nothing to do with a transgression of the everyday that has been celebrated in prior, phallogocentric attempts to think transformation (e.g. Bataille, 1986). There is no transcendent move, it occurs in the everyday. Haptic trajectories are not extraordinary, but mundane and, as we discuss below, this is where their potency to betray the formation of emergent life lies. With Bakhtin (1984, p. 474) and his work on Rabelais, which has been crucial for our book, we say: 'All the acts of the drama of world history were performed before a chorus of the laughing people.'

### **The Haptic: Cancer and the Break of Illness Narratives**

Like 'pink-ribbon day', illness narratives risk focusing on affirming individuals' strategies for survival and for exercising choice. Gillian Rose's (1997) *Love's Work* is an anti-narrative. She repeatedly refuses the myriad of different possible meanings well-intentioned friends and experts suggest she could attribute to her ovarian cancer. She recognises their (well-intentioned) efforts as policing. To make her illness palatable to others would be to negate the inside, immanent story of movement, to negate the contradictory trajectories being opened, criss-crossed and closed again and again as she navigates a terminal illness. She struggles to work with the dynamic fluidity of living and dying, of being close to death, of touching death. Gillian Rose refuses the invitation to relate to others solely through optic trajectories of experience, rather she engages with the haptic excesses of experiences circulating between herself and others; she moves with them and she works with them and against them from within. Haptic trajectories are connected to a specific configuration of the material presencing of existence (Jain, 2007); they do not pertain to meaning extracted from representations of individual experiences. Haptic trajectories start from the incommensurable. In the beginning was incommensurability. 'What is expressed' through these haptic trajectories, we can say, 'is the incommensurability of sense. This

is politics at its best. A politics not of consensus or causality, but a sensing politics of bodies-in-movement' (E. Manning, 2007b, p. 119).

Rose disputes the notion that her cancer has a meaning, any meaning. She reintroduces that which is excluded in good illness narratives – her cancer is a random event: 'it has no meaning. It merges without remainder into the horizon within which the difficulties, the joys, the banalities of each day elapse' (1997, p. 72). There are no choices in *Love's Work*, there is only an interrogation of possibilities for harnessing experience to follow singular trajectories of excess, and to affect – to woo – others through continuous experience. Rose's experience works as an unfolding unruly, constituent force which moulds everyday transformation. In place of evoking the object of her experience, her cancer for example, for the reader's inspection, she invites us into the continuous flow of her experience.

Rose finds that others are affronted not only by the fact of her cancer, but more so by her energy for life, her vitality. And the reader has a sense of this vitality. The book is crafted so that before we read about the details of her illness we learn about Rose's relations with friends and lovers, with Judaism and Christianity, her work, her passions, her faith in destruction and recombination and construction – 'Let me then be destroyed. For that is the only way I may have a chance of surviving' (1997, p. 87). Without offering redemption, *Love's Work* gives us a sense of what Rose brings to a terminal illness, and how she is being remade by it.

After initial surgery and a summer of chemotherapy, an operation to remove a colostomy fails. Rose adopts the colostomy, embodies it. Noting the glaring absence of this long-established medical procedure in literature, she has little trouble in describing her new physicality: 'Tight coils of concentric, fresh, blood-red flesh, 25 millimetres (one inch) in diameter protrude a few millimetres from the centre left of my abdomen... Blueness would be a symptom of distress' (1997, p. 87). She cannot convey her everyday relation with this body without contesting its incongruity: 'I have trouble imagining, publicly or privately, that everyone is not made exactly as I am myself.... my routine is unselfconscious about the rituals and private character of your routines. Thus, I handle my shit' (1997, p. 89). Rose invokes and refuses how others distance themselves from her bodily functions:

Deep brown, burnished shit is extruded from the bright, proud infoliation in a steady paste-like stream in front of you: uniform, sweet-smelling fruit of

the body, fertile medium, not negative substance ... This is to describe a new bodily function, not to redescribe the old. The organ of this fracture has achieved that pipe-dream of humanity: evacuation of the body is far removed from the pudenda, pleasure and pain. (1997, p. 88)

Handling your shit brings you closer to everyone, Rose argues; now she embodies everyone's dream of a new relation to shit.

### **Dis-identification**

This strategy of dis-identifying with cancer might be – has been – read as a form of denial. Equally, Rose might be taken as exemplifying the 'difficult patient' – as Chambers (1998) reads Eric Michaels, discussed below. But neither is the case. She is generously appreciative of the skill and insight that others (friends and healthcare workers) bring to realising the malleability of medical knowledge and practices. One of her surgeons (she has two because her cancer spreads between different realms of expertise) says 'a beautiful thing' after the failed surgery: 'You are living in symbiosis with the disease. Go away and continue to do so' (1997, p. 93). But she is deeply and eloquently critical of those who lack such engagement.

Such discernment is simultaneously destabilising and promising. Rose repudiates colonising understanding and pastoral care; she indignantly destroys the very notion of 'unconditional love' well-wishers glean from alternative and new-age health movements and try to offer in their attempts to relate to her. Instead of aligning her experience with dominant narratives of illness, she seeks out uncertainty, the risk of relating and the painful confusion of life. The reader is drawn into the repoliticisation of her experience as she continually invites us to 'keep your mind in hell, and despair not' (1997, p. 98). This is no masochistic gesture. It is a refusal to be captured by the force of representational practices of illness (Robbins, 2005), a force which traverses and infuses everyday experiences of illness. A refusal is possible because this optic infusion is always incomplete, always accompanied by, haunted by, haptic trajectories which lie beyond the representational regime in the excess of sociability.

Rose works with experience beyond representation, the excess of everyday life. In so doing, she makes her departure from a form of power which enjoins individuals to employ redemptive notions of a good life as they connect with others. The move towards hell is promising because it enables an engagement with the present which is not always already colonised and transcended by a given better

solution. In this way Rose can work with haptic trajectories, blocking the extension of intimate political power into the finest fissures of sociability and moving beyond clichéd renditions of the everyday. By dis-identifying with illness, she struggles to avoid simply playing the game of policing and capture of everyday excess. The effect is that her thanatography 'burns with its own form of radiance and hope' (Soper, 1996, p. 160).

### **Out of the 'Foucauldian Horror Show'**

Rose evokes her body's recombination as 'everyone's dream' as she draws others into the haptic trajectories of embodiment that are neglected in the representational regimes of illness narratives. Eric Michaels (1990) employs a strategy which is similar in many ways. *Unbecoming* is an active struggle to push his bodily transformations out of the realm of the 'Foucauldian horror show' (1990, p. 25) of the hospital, and into public terrain, and to work these transformations as a series of events which fuel *others'* recombination and new modes of connectedness (Carrigan, 1995). This thanatography opens with an account of the 'clear and insistent' narrative which is traversing Michaels' body: Kaposi's Sarcoma is described as a set of 'morphemes, arising out of the strange uncertainties of the past few years to declare, finally, a scenario' (1990, p. 23). The virus's destruction is irrefutable – he is reduced to making a series of wish lists denoting the order in which he would prefer to lose his bodily functions, knowing that these lists will bear no relation to the course of the disease.

Trained as an ethnographer, Michaels is profoundly ambivalent about the process of representation and in the diary he keeps in the last year of his life (1987–88), a diary written for publication, he continually reflects on his own intent and the possible reception of the diary after his death. Chambers (1998) reads *Unbecoming* as an anxiety-provoking text: Michaels tries to destabilise us. He tries to draw his readers out of the safety of any 'concerned' connection with an HIV-positive gay man, a depoliticising mode of connecting which, like empathy (Jill Bennett, 2003), blocks transformation. And he does this by demanding some form of engagement with the new specificities of his embodied experience. He creates newness out of nothingness by investing in the materiality of his own experience as it emerges in the connections between his ill body, his relations to the gay community, HIV politics and the discrimination of the immigration authorities.

Michaels really hates Brisbane, where he went to take a job – a job for which the Department of Immigration is now refusing him a permanent resident's visa on the grounds that he is HIV positive. His status poses 'possible health risks for the general community and the considerable public health costs which will accrue from the treatment given' (letter from the state director of the Department of Immigration, quoted in Michaels, 1990, p. 170). Once his visa appeal has failed, the only thing preventing the minister from demanding his immediate departure from Australia is the deterioration of his health: Michaels is too ill to travel. But this means that he is trapped in Brisbane; he is no longer free to visit either Sydney or Alice Springs, where his friends and affinity to these places might make 'a few weeks extra [of life] seem worth it' (1990, p. 185). He rails against the situation and, in the last weeks of his life, is particularly incensed by the way Immigration pursues his doctor with questions about his capacity to travel whilst he is lying in a hospital bed. His final entry:

Can you believe this? ... They really insist on hounding me to death. ... Why would even the meanest bureaucrat be party to so mean a treatment?... That people willing to do this exist staggers me. That they can represent the official arms of the State depresses me more than I can say, or think. (1990, pp. 185–6)

Perhaps the potency of Michaels' work remains unrealised in the field of Australian immigration policy – in mid 2007 the prime minister of Australia announced a new proposal to prevent people (including refugees) with HIV and leprosy from entering the country on *any* visa, including a tourist visa. This announcement followed increases in HIV infections in the state of Victoria, which the Victorian Minister for Health blamed on migrants (it later transpired that these 'migrants' were largely people from New South Wales relocating to Victoria).

However, the challenges that Michaels poses to sexual politics, in particular his insistence on the need to develop an HIV-positive, gay politics, have travelled further. A postscript to the book, a previously unpublished document dated 1982, gives some insight into Michaels' trajectory in sexual politics. A participant in 1970s gay liberation, he simply states 'I liked being deviant' (1990, p. 191). The tense is past. Michaels vehemently disputes the wisdom of gay men's exchanging deviance for the comforts of normalisation – partly because the acceptance granted is only surface, but more pointedly because it means that 'being a faggot isn't very interesting anymore' (1990, p. 191). He tries (in 1982) to anticipate responses

to this depoliticising normalisation, wondering whether people will be forced out of complacency by a swing to the 'lunatic right', whether with the passing of time gay men will look back and develop a more radical critique of the heterosexual matrix, or whether 'gay epidemic cancers and disease will mean we will have to learn the art of conversation again' (1990, p. 192). Conversation is important as a site for cultivating a gay aesthetic, but not *any* gay aesthetic, certainly not the aesthetic of the 'lavender prison' which Michaels sees gay men as constructing (1990, p. 191). It is a means of enabling the play of everyday excess in the connections developed between people. As such, the 'art of conversation' veers away from de Tocqueville's 'science of association', rupturing the policing of the everyday.

### Unbecoming

For Michaels, betraying the means of everyday life control entails undoing every position (social, sexual and kind-of-identity position) which has become congealed and no longer sustains the elasticity necessary for a transformative move beyond itself. There is nothing solidified about sexuality in *Unbecoming*, it appears as immanent in social and sexual relations. He describes his own coming out

[i]n New York, 1971, [when] 'gay' was something impossibly chic, central to the cultural life of the city, a public rather than a private form, beginning to assume that enormous sense of importance that Western society would accord gayness in the 1970s whilst straights bungled their sexual politics and aesthetics. (1990, p. 28)

Michaels evokes his sexuality as both ordinary and highly contingent; this mode of becoming would have taken an entirely different course had he been born 20 years earlier or later.

As sexuality momentarily coalesces only to be continually rediscovered and remade, its political potency also shifts. Mardi Gras, 1988. Michaels writes about the parade as a fantastic spectacle of the kind only gay men could mount. But more exciting still was

the sea of partygoers ... tens of thousands of people flowing down the streets of Sydney for hours afterwards ... Astonishing and unarguably political, though it's impossible to venture a reading of what those politics might be or mean. The world really perched on the edge for a few hours, and could at any moment have collapsed into a black hole in the ground and disappear. As close to the 'Day of the Locust' as I expect to see! (1990, p. 108)

Whilst the political potency of this sea, this swarm, is marked by the fact of walking, of reclaiming city space and of entering into the carnivalesque everyday, it stems from the very moment of becoming with others. It is through such moments which break the logic of policing – so that experience is lived as ‘play without a stage’ and without a script, having the possibility of moving in many different directions – that becoming everyone acts as the constituent force of imperceptible politics.

As he himself is transformed by his sexual practices, by his ethnographic work with and relations to Indigenous people in central Australia, by HIV, Michaels continues to work with everyday experience as a means of questioning his social relations and the limited modes of political engagement he sees available to him. In the last months of his life, these questions turn to the problem of how to engage with the specificities of HIV and the forms of destruction and recombination it entails, the way these transformations are being embodied not only by positive individuals but by the gay community and beyond. On reading the cultural analyses offered in the (now canonical) 1988 special issue of *October* on HIV, Michaels reports finding most of the pieces depressingly uninspiring (with the exception of Bersani’s paper, discussed in Chapter 8). In response to authors who wheel out familiar critiques of the pathologisation of gay men, Michaels retorts ‘we already know nobody likes faggots, and hardly expect late capitalism to show much sympathy’ (1990, p. 157). More pointedly, he suspects

a sort of liberal humanism infects these analyses which, by exempting gays from criticism, in its own way renders us passive, and so victims in terms of our own arguments. I stuck my tongue (and my arm, and my cock) into some pretty odd places during the 1970s and remain unsure about some of that. Desire rarely proved to be democratic. We continued to police the class structure as much by our sexual choices as our careerism. Is there no way to discuss these things, to evaluate them and possible complicities in our present conditions outside the tacky theologies of guilt and retribution...? (1990, p. 157)

This attempt to imagine an HIV politics which starts from and works with the virus and its remaking of sexuality is what finally legitimises the publication of *Unbecoming* for Michaels. That is, after months of questioning both his own purpose in entering into the questionable business of representing his experience, and his friends’ reasons for continually encouraging him to write the diary, on reading *October* Michaels articulates a role for his own work: to subject himself, gay

men, gay cultural politics to penetrating critique is Michaels' mode of journeying to hell. But unlike for Rose, there is no 'back' here for Michaels, no reconstruction, it is simply a continual process of movement, a becoming which never congeals, an unbecoming which materialises in new experiences and then moves again, challenging them. Imperceptible politics.

*Love's Work* and *Unbecoming*, living and dying, death as an ongoing engagement in life. Both Rose and Michaels appreciate (for what they are worth, i.e. the care of those who invoke them), mock and then jettison all the optic trajectories traversing the everyday that are offered to the sick – codified moments of ordinary life which are magnified as they are encountered in ill health, modes of connection which both recognise as deadly to those who participate. In different ways, each writes to break the rules of representation and integration, transforming the game into a political dispute over their very existences. The excesses of the everyday become palpable as haptic trajectories animate the experiences circulating between Rose's transformation, others to whom she is connected, 'everyone' who she has 'trouble imagining ... is not made exactly as' she and her own previous journeys to hell. As the haptic circulates between people in *Love's Work*, it is regenerative, it produces life out of death, it produces new experiences outside of the optic regulation which polices everydayness. Michaels too imagines a world beyond policing. Not a future world, but a world being actively made in the present, and his living is a part of this process. We have argued, in Chapter 5, that an escape is manifest as a material, irrevocable shift which changes the conditions of existence without negotiation. Here we want to add that escape, at its most basic level, is only possible with the transformation of experience. It is primarily an experiential transformation which fuels and lies at the core of the politics of escape. The third entry in Eric Michaels' diary marks his escape:

This is why I have AIDS, because it is now on the cover of *Life*, circa 1987. And this is why I can't believe everyone doesn't have it, because of the sense in which I believe myself hypertypical. And if any of this is so, then it explains why the world I look out on now seems so drear and painful, so devoid of joy, so mean and petty, not such a bad place to leave. The implications of an end to liberated sex and the death of gayness has truly miserable cultural/demographic/historical implications, even more than just a world of mean-minded hypocrites and wowers shaking their fingers 'I told you so'. The reason I'm not terribly interested in living in such a world/future is not it isn't any fun. I

haven't had, nor sought, any fun since 1975. It's the oppressions, the cathedrals of inequality and greed that are to be built out of that rhetoric of the failure of liberation that I have no great wish to see. (1990, p. 29)

### Actual Occasions, Events and Continuous Experience

In Chapters 8 and 9 we discussed how the regime of life control involves the recombination of the body as a biosocial entity and attempts to disseminate these transformations into everyday sociality. The tool of this dissemination is experience. The optic trajectory of the regime of life control colonises and controls life by arriving in the most basic and ordinary fissures of people's lives: experience. It is in experience that we see how the remaking of the everyday and the recombination of bodies come together to create stable forms of controlled life. No regime of life control can operate and consolidate itself without capturing experience. Drawing on Gillian Rose and Eric Michaels, we described attempts to escape this capture – through the cultivation of haptic trajectories. But how do these haptic trajectories undo the control of life and reclaim life outside of the optic function? Addressing this question necessitates developing an understanding of experience beyond accounts of universal or situated experience. If experience is the ultimate target of the regime of life control, it is also the starting point for every politics of escape. Experience is the most contested point; it is where control and escape ultimately meet only to follow subsequently divergent paths of development. We could read this divergence as a gesture towards freedom – a topic which is so central in Benjamin's early writings (Benjamin, 1996c). Here we find a concept of freedom which is neither given in experience nor existing as a normative formal ideal outside of experience. Rather, experience constantly shapes and is shaped by the move to freedom. In his *Critique of Violence*, Benjamin points out that this move to freedom, or, in his words, 'divine violence', lies 'outside of law' (Benjamin, 1996a, p. 252); that is, outside the pernicious policing established by lawmaking and law-preserving violence. What is important for us here is that experience is neither simultaneous with nor independent of freedom; it is instead in a co-constitutive relation to freedom from policing (see also Chapter 6).

Experience evades the regime of policing and seizure of the optic through its dispersal across space as well as time. Dispersal means experience is scattered across different locales, across disjointed emotions, between disparate encounters among people, animals and things. Scattered in time and space, these discrete points are

incorporated into the trajectories carved out in people's encounters and movements. Moreover, experience can never be fully unified as *the* experience which pertains to something, for example a historic event, or an illness. Against the optic understanding of experience as a form of enduring substance bound to a subject, we understand it as part of a process. Experience consists of actual occasions which arise from temporally preceding actual occasions. Here, we draw on Whitehead's (1979) speculative metaphysics and his distinction between determinate events – a moving body for example, or a reflexive, intentional subject – and actual occasions of experience – e.g. a footstep, a partial sensation, currents of a process, what Whitehead sometimes calls 'drops of experience'. The concept of actual occasions provides a useful tool for interrogating the haptic realisation of the building blocks of existence, of life, of potentiality; for Whitehead there is nothing beyond actual occasions. The process of their realisation is a creative one; nothing determines it apart from other, preceding actual occasions. 'Whitehead's creativity is ... manifest in the world, in the coming-to-be of all new actual entities. These constitute its accidental (non-predetermined) manifestations, and through them it has a merely contingent toehold on existence, despite its basic nature' (Simons, 1998, p. 388). Pertaining to sensation and not rationality, pertaining to process and not substance, these creative forms of experience are always either becoming, or perishing. They are not distinct components of larger entities: 'each actual [occasion] is a locus for the universe' or more specifically a locus of the 'universe which there *is for it*' (Whitehead, 1979, p. 80, emphasis A. N. W.).

How can the world exist in a fragment, a process of experience? Whitehead introduces the concept of an actual occasion in the attempt to refuse the ways experience is commonly thought – such that subject and object are split (for an extended discussion of this see Stengers, 2008). Instead, he insists that '[t]he occasion as subject has a "concern" for the object. And the "concern" at once places the object as a component in the experience of the subject with an affective tone drawn from this object and directed towards it' (Whitehead, 1933, p. 176). In this sense we do not have here the core enduring substance of a subject and the binarism between subject and object, but streams of actual occasions.

Although actual occasions can evade being captured in the substance of a subject-form (as discussed in Chapter 5) this alone is not why they are of interest and use in thinking imperceptible

politics. Importantly, when actual occasions coalesce together into a nexus, or 'society', they are transformed into another mode of experience, what Whitehead calls events which have continuity and a degree of stability. But, as Erin Manning explains, events always 'remain invested' in the quasi-chaos of actual occasions' becoming and perishing, 'for they have been prehended from the indeterminacy of the forces which compose them. This indeterminacy is a living aspect of the event' (E. Manning, 2007a). That is, stable, representable modes of experience are always accompanied by, no enabled by, imperceptible worlds which exist *for* unrepresented actual occasions of experience.

Rather than thinking of these dimensions of experience as two sides of a coin, we use the term *continuous experience* to denote their co-existence. The passage of continuous experience – i.e. back and forth between a nexus of actual occasions and an event – is always unstable and dispersed across incommensurable processes, moments and spaces. Continuous experience only exists as a fluid movement between. Moreover, whilst events entail actual occasions they are not determined by them. Hence, the connections between a society of occasions are always contingent. This is continuous experience, the form of experience which pertains to the imperceptible politics of escape which addresses and forces transformations in the totality of power (as discussed in Chapter 6) of the optic regime of life control.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the formation of emergent life's fascination with recombinant life – that is the deep reorganisation of the material existence of bodies in the everyday – usurps the life/culture system's vitalism and turns into the stuff of technoscientific experimentation which is then inserted into the everyday in an objectivist, optic form. Continuous experience betrays this optic transformation, not by baulking at or suppressing the potentialities included in these transformations, but by navigating the amorphous terrain of the everyday in ways which betray the fixity of meaning entailed in the optic regulation of everyday experience (an example of this fixity is Asimo, discussed in Chapter 8) and which reclaim experience as the process which evolves, reorders and recombines everyday life again and again. Continuous experience is always already recombining; recombination is its mode of existence, not something to be celebrated as a particular masculine omnipotent fantasy of changing the totality of the world and life itself.

These recombinant processes hinge on continuous experience's capacity to disperse not only across people, but between people *and* things. Again, Whitehead is useful for avoiding an understanding of experience which is based in an attempt to conceive of nature as homogeneous (Latour, 2005). Whitehead insists on the qualitative differences between different forms of life and between life and inorganic matter. Given this, he seeks to *understand* how relationships between different modes of existence, between people and things, can evolve and function. In this regard, the concept of actual occasions helps to elucidate what it means to claim that a thing experiences or can share experience. There are direct correspondences between some of the occasions studied by physicists and those experienced as part of a human's higher faculties. A 'physical occasion' involves the passing of energy between distinct entities. When a series of such moments coalesce they become a physical entity; Whitehead understands what has happened in the same terms as the concrescence of actual occasions into an event. As Stenner (2008) points out, a common difference between the physical occasions which make up, say, a stone and the higher grade actual occasions which make up some mental process is that the former do not express the creativity of the latter. In this way, Whitehead not only explicates the commonalities and the differences between people and things but concrete pathways, or occasions of experience, through which they are related. For Whitehead there is only one stuff out of which the world is made. But against other reductionist monist understandings of materialism, Whitehead argues that this stuff is not only matter but contains also experience of different grades (Whitehead, 1979, p. 109; see also D. R. Griffin, 1998; Lango, 2004).

As both Michaels and Rose emphasise, the subject is undone as she is constructed through the circulation of continuous experience. Continuous experience is the excess which occupies the same terrain as the formation of emergent life; it moves through, works with and reworks life's potential on all its different levels of organisation. But unlike the regime of control, it is open to unrepresented worlds as it works with haptic trajectories; it triggers processes of unbecoming, of undoing optic representational trajectories and congealed material arrangements. With Benjamin we could say here that 'experience is the uniform and continuous multiplicity of knowledge' (Benjamin, 1996c, p. 108). That is, the actual occasions of experience are the final constitutive element of the world and at the same time they

are always diverse and in constant change, creating new material configurations of life.

### **Material Presencing and the Immediacy of Continuous Experience**

If experience is beyond optic representation, this is not to say that it has no role in the transformation of life. Continuous experience is a force which works, neither through articulation nor through the bestowal of meaning, but through materialisation. It alters de facto the immediate material conditions of existence *without* needing to be interpreted as part of a given system of meanings. The politics of escape hinges on continuous experiences because this is the most basic and crucial level at which social change takes place. Continuous experience is a form of social change which exists long before it is codified as such, that is as a social movement which attempts to transform a given social order. Thus, when we say that continuous experience alters de facto the material conditions of existence, we mean that it creates new imperceptible everyday forms of bodily existence and sociability which only later can be classified as movements which challenge the stability of a regime of control. For example, we show in Chapter 4 how vagabonds escape the feudal system of labour in an everyday and imperceptible way before they are considered as a threat and then recaptured in a new regime of wage-labour control. Or in Chapter 15, we show how precarious workers create artefacts and social relations which remain outside capitalist modes of appropriation. Thus, they materialise their activities in ways which exceed the process of commodification. Continuous experience displaces hegemonic optic representations as it materialises in people's everyday lives. Continuous experience instigates a transformation which happens on the very immediate, mundane, ordinary, grounded sphere of our bodily shape, habits, perception and sociability. This is the reason why continuous experience is the most basic stuff of the imperceptible politics of escape.

Both Eric Michaels and Gillian Rose live their bodily transformations by engaging with the materiality of these experiences. After surgery Rose lives with a colostomy. But her experience of the colostomy is not determined by the colostomy itself. Neither is it the case that this experience is produced through her engagement with representations of her colostomy (in fact, she notes the relevant absence of representations). What Rose does is to follow the new sensations of her physicality, she moves with actual occasions of experience, observing the colours, the smell, the warmth: that is,

her experience *is* bodily. And it is because she literally embodies the redirection of her shit that Rose's experience of her colostomy interrupts its medicalisation or the pitying gazes of her friends.

Materialisation opposes any representational function of language. People develop singular modes of existence by being embedded in continual processes of affecting others, of materialising experiences, changing bodies, creating new connections to things and animals. This is a process of co-evolution which gives birth to non-standardised experiences of being in the world and being in a certain body. But this body is not an organism, it is not representable in language. The body one has, the body one is, the environment in which one lives, the environment which exists in our bodies is always created and cannot be effectively denied (Csordas, 1994). It is not an option, it is always the real starting point in which all future transformations are located. Materialisation, thus, creates life which cannot be reversed, bypassed, forgotten, eliminated. It is there, you deal with it. Humans, things, animals evolve together, incorporating each other into the materiality of their existences. These relationships mean that there is an accountability to other people, forms of life, the environment which is central here (Braidotti, 2006). As Donna Haraway says, 'language is not about description, but about commitment' (Haraway, 1991a, p. 214).

In what senses can the immediacy of material presencing be beyond representation? In what sense can continuous experience unfold below the optic regime of life control? We want to note that imperceptibility does not amount to invisibility, or to being beyond sensation altogether (here we draw on Wolfe, 2006, in her reading of Deleuze). For Deleuze, as with Rancière, what is outside representation is so because it is incommensurable with a majoritarian commonsense. The imperceptible is an active force which becomes apparent by materialising in the body, such that 'the body's effort to endure always takes the form of a forcible communication between incommensurables, producing new intensities and reconfiguring the old' (Wolfe, 2006, np). Our argument, illustrated in Rose and Michaels' thanatographies, is that people actively participate in the circulation of intensities and the reconfiguration of those sanctioned by the regime of life control by working with actual occasions of experience as they materialise in our lived relations and as they undo stable, representable subject positions.

**Betraying Time**

Continuous experience flows through time, departing from the logic that experiences are discrete points on the timeline of individual's life story (Adam, 2004). Regimes of control employ a linear representation of time in order to function (for further examples of this in relation to migration and labour control, see Chapters 11 and 14). The formation of emergent life's imposition of normative discourses occurs in time, structuring time and controlling the flow and the figurations of everyday activities (Elias, 1978). But continuous experience retreats from this chronology. The exits it constitutes are not effected through practice, rehearsal or refinement. They are idiosyncratic and contingent, and can as easily fail as succeed. Above we said that actual occasions and continuous experience are contingent and not determined, but that is not to say that they cannot be anticipated. People invest in transformations which may or may not occur. They tarry with time – an idea which is intriguingly discussed by Michael Theunissen (1991); they enter into a different relation with time, taking distance from the imperatives of linear and reversible time (Sandbothe, 1998), turning away from the sense of events and towards the quasi-chaos of actual occasions. Tarrying is a means of engaging with this mode of being which is inextricable from others, from the situation – a move beyond the self and towards the world, enabling the permeation of experience with the world. Tarrying is intentionless, purposeless and targetless: it has no object.

Continuous experience unfolds without constituting a coherent intentional subject. Tarrying occurs before intentionality and entails the dissolution of the reflexive subject, disrupting any formation of a nexus of occasions. Continuous experience produces action as part of the social field in which it unfolds, not intentionality. Intentionality and intentional agency are relatively unproblematic for those working within a given regime of representation, with its predetermined rules and codes. But it is unhelpful if intentions cannot be articulated, or exist outside representation.

Continuous experience works with unrealised trajectories, possibilities which do not yet exist, potentials which may never manifest. Tarrying with time does not entail a concrete vision of an alternate future, but an expanded, slowed-down present which fuels new imaginary relations with other actants and new forms of action, possibilities people are compelled to explore, but which only

later and unexpectedly will materialise in an alternative future. The effects of this constituent force can never be intended, but cannot occur without people's fidelity to change (Badiou, 2005a; see also Chapter 6). Continuous experience is both immanent and full of potentialities and fictionalities – it is speculative. It is incorrigibly present, mesmerised by suddenness (Bohrer, 1994). This is political action from the absent core of a situation, an active mode of being which prepares and evokes a change in the unfurling present as it permanently questions any possibility to restore a notion of the subject.

### **Subjectlessness**

Continuous experience is a constituent force which undoes subjectivity – and this is precisely what Steinem fails to grasp in *Revolution from Within*. Subjectivity is variously conceived in different social or theoretical contexts: in the neoliberal market-oriented universe, subjectivity takes the form of the rational entrepreneurial individual; in mainstream psychology and dualist philosophy, we have the universal subject as a carrier of pre-organised mental structures; in humanist talk, we encounter subjectivity in the shape of a person's unique interiority; in discursive accounts, subjectivity is related to social or linguistic positioning; in theories of governmentality, subjectivity is recast as subjectification, that is subjectivity is ever made anew through power-pervaded social relations; finally, in cognitive neuroscience, subjectivity is constructed as a disembodied activation pattern of the brain's network.

All of these approaches conceive of subjectivity as a way to interrogate how the subject is produced in particular social relations (Papadopoulos, 2008). In other words, all of them cast sociability as a homogenising unifying force which fabricates subjects. They can account for a group of individuals who come together representing a common standpoint or social position (e.g. humanist and discursive approaches to subjectivity); or for a social group constituted as such through the forces of regulation (e.g. governmentality theory); or for a group of people who are connected through pre-existing disembodied similarities or qualities (e.g. universal and cognitive approaches to subjectivity). But they cannot account for the specific forms of heterogeneity entailed in collective modes of existence, for the incommensurable dimensions of any nexus of actual occasions which lie beyond common sense and common sensibilities. None of these approaches to subjectivity manages to conceive of sociability,

or the connections between people, in terms of singularity. Because of this, we prefer to talk about experience, and more precisely continuous experience, instead of subjectivity.

In contrast to all these approaches, with Spinoza we can understand sociability as a move along a trajectory of increasing differentiation, without characterising the connections forged between people in terms of some overarching unity. Here, plurality is an enduring feature of existence, and collectivity is cast as a network of individuals in which singularity emerges (Negri, 1991). Singularity is neither universal nor particular, but occupies the terrain between these two poles. In Whitehead's terms, singularity would be the unique perspective of an actual occasion on the multiplicity of other actual occasions. For the most basic elements of which the world is made up are actual entities, segments of experience in which a multitude of many different things acquires an individual unity. Whitehead calls this process concrescence and insists that the conditions for the unity of actual occasions lie entirely within and for themselves.

Now, the importance of sociability can be grasped in terms of its role in the production of singularity, not in terms of its role as a catalyst for the production of subjects. More than this, interrogating sociability can be the only means for understanding how the irreducible differences of singularities 'can be extended close to another, so as to obtain a connection' (Deleuze, 1991, p. 94). This marks a radical shift from collective forms of existence thought as individuals aggregated in the form of a homogenising unity. Unlike individuality, which enjoins subjects to representing some notion or aspect of themselves into a collective universe, singularity exceeds representation and interrupts self-coincidence (Patton, 2000). Singular connections are not based on commonalities, but on shifting relations of affinity between concrete, material others. Singularity emerges from sociability rather than acting as its foundation. Thus Rose and Michaels' jarring insistence on the incommensurable dimensions of their experience is not, in our understanding, evidence that they are despairing or difficult patients; rather it is a fundamental element of modes of sociability which strive towards shattering majoritarian commonsense. In contrast to approaches to subjectivity which cast sociability as a homogenising and relational force or process, we understand continuous experience as fuelling a mode of connecting with the world as a non-unifiable singularity. Certainly, continuous experience moves through subjectivity; but it is incommensurable

with the subject. It does not seek to transform subjectivity, or to invest in the emergence of 'new subjectivities'. It simply materialises.

The (reassuring or terrifying) containment of self-reflection – thought as an 'I' reflecting on a 'me' or even a 'we' – is shattered by the flow of continuous experience. As it washes through the connections between people, animals and things, continuous experience exposes the internal incommensurability of actual occasions of experience, and the sheer impossibility of being a 'subject' in any kind of stable, predictable relation with oneself, others or the world. Continuous experience collects singularities, binding collectives of those who belong nowhere, those who are in a process of becoming everyone.

The process of becoming everyone is akin to a subjective death, in the sense that subjects are irrelevant as individuals with subjectivities. But their experience matters more than anything else; actual occasions that test the limits of commonsense materialise in and between bodies. Experience lives. Continuous experience evokes a fictional understanding of people's relations to each other and the world; in this way it fuels the imaginary necessary for embodying alternate modes of sociability, modes which refuse the optic exclusions of the formation of emergent life. Hence, experience matters because it is through experience that the connections between people are refused, reworked and reimagined. Continuous experience directs the focus on imperceptible politics towards these small-scale events and moments, which are germane to how people move, walk, touch each other, feel, sense.

In the following sections we describe how this mode of imperceptible politics deployed in the regime of life control is also an important means of escaping the regulation of migration and of work. We examine how the relations between those involved in migration contest contemporary sovereignty and how the excess of sociability entailed in precarious labour destabilises the configuration of productivity today. Any form of imperceptible politics necessitates remaking the minutiae of everyday connections between people. And the most basic steps in this politics are the actual occasions of continuous experience – in Whitehead's words the creation of 'novel togetherness' (Whitehead, 1979, p. 18). As continuous experience flows between people, it corrodes the fixtures and aspirations regulating people's vision, it eats into eyes which see only control; it cuts through flesh and travels on by literally remaking our bodies. Can you imagine a world without the constrictions of subjectivity?