

# Notes

## Introduction

1. See Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History: Theses on the Philosophy of History." Translated by Hannah Arendt. *Critical Theory Since 1965*. Edited by Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle. Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1986.
2. With regards to Spinoza's modal metaphysics of the self, Deleuze speaks of, on the one hand, "living individuality . . . as a complex relation between differentiated velocities" and, by extension, "affective capacity," awareness of which constitutes "a mode of living, a way of life" (2005, 58–59).
3. See Roland Barthes, *S/Z*. Trans. Richard Miller. New York: Hill and Wang, 1974, 5.

## Chapter 1

1. This malleability applies equally to academics whose professional trajectories may presuppose critical engagement with social relations in theory and in pedagogical practice but not necessarily in everyday practices of "self," its meaning and reason for being. I will explore some of the complexities of reactionary pedagogy at the end of this section.
2. See chapter 7, "The Masochistic Body," in my *The Subject of Minimalism: On Aesthetics, Agency, and Becoming* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) for an examination of suffering.
3. For insightful analyses of psychological identification as a common and largely negative condition of lived experience, see Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience." In *Écrits*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: W. W. Norton, 1977; and P. D. Ouspensky, *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution*. New York: Vintage, 1981, 12.
4. No one would dispute the value and efficiency of word processing. On the other hand, the model classroom dedicated to first-year writing courses is typically outfitted with numerous, large, mounted computer screens in addition to the laptops at every desk. In such an environment, the artfulness of writing is less about critical thinking and seminar-style discussion that might inspire the *pleasure* of writing and is more oriented toward assembly-line exercises.

5. The rampant defunding of US public-education institutions in recent years clearly has as much to do with militating against what conservative lawmakers perceive as the proliferation of progressive agendas in schools (from the teaching of evolution to gender studies and philosophy) as with reorienting public education toward “business and commerce,” as North Carolina governor Pat McCrory has put it. See Tyler Kingcade’s *Huffington Post* article, “Pat McCrory Lashes Out against ‘Educational Elite’ and Liberal Arts College Courses.” Available at [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/02/03/pat-mccrory-college\\_n\\_2600579.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/02/03/pat-mccrory-college_n_2600579.html), accessed May 27, 2014.
6. (In)famous DH practitioner Franco Moretti’s Stanford Literary Lab project “discusses, designs, and pursues literary research of a digital and quantitative nature” (see <http://litlab.stanford.edu>) by essentially reducing literature to data via innovative software. Consequently, it dismisses the close reading of individual texts in favor of a practice that examines the frequency with which particular words appear in the body of an entire genre, for example, spanning hundreds of texts, in order to make large-scale claims about the respective genre or about literature in general. An additional methodology constructs diagrams the purpose of which is to make “scientific” computations regarding narrative structure. The challenge of literature as a process of insight unfolding between reader and text, an experience of mutual provocation, is of course entirely neglected in such research. The (non)reader can thus program the machine, compile the results, write an article, and feel very good indeed about the radical trajectory of his or her career.
7. It is worth noting here that such “disruption” is diametrically opposed to that which appears to govern the *raison d’être* of DH insofar as the latter seeks to sublimate the subjective “unknown” of extended, critical inquiry, the immediate confrontation of self and text, with noninterpretive methodologies and technologies. DH may disrupt professional careers and consequently bolster others, but it can only leave the static, and therefore conventional, ontology of the self very much intact.
8. This is not to overlook the infinite variety of human experience but to foreground what Deleuze observes as the “power of the impersonal.” Hallward elaborates on such power as the condition that allows one to reduce the “I” “so as to impose the least possible limitation upon the creating that sustains it” (2006, 29). Note the present participle that can signify impersonal force (immanence) as much as it can indicate a theological category of presence (transcendence). Consequently, there is none of the philosophical pessimism made (relatively) popular by the likes of a Thomas Ligotti at work here.
9. For an illustration of the child subsumed by a majoritarian sensibility, consider James Baldwin’s “Sonny’s Blues,” in which the laughter of children is depicted as “mocking and insular, its intent was to denigrate. It was disenchanting, and in this, also, lay the authority of their curses” (2002, 28).
10. As opposed, of course, to the Gadsden flag snake, coiled to strike at any representative of otherness who would dare to challenge its hegemony.

## Chapter 2

1. Thomas Phillips, *The Subject of Minimalism: On Aesthetics, Agency, and Becoming*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
2. The cottage has no electricity and no water aside from the kerosene that is delivered in the summer months and a water pump. The bathroom is an outhouse. They have come to terms with these limitations as part of their property's charm.
3. American dependence on oil and oil ecology has existed since the mid-nineteenth century. It is of course ironic here that those who control the oil are not the privileged urbanites but the "country people." In this respect, Jackson further conflates and confuses the nature of the "horror" that governs the action of the story.
4. In his translation notes to *A Thousand Plateaus*, Brian Massumi asserts, with regard to the terms "affect" and "affection," "*L'affect* (Spinoza's *affectus*) is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act. *L'affection* (Spinoza's *affectio*) is each state considered as an encounter between the affected body and the second, affecting, body (with body taken in its broadest possible sense to include 'mental' or ideal bodies)" (1987, xvi). While this "passage" is not necessarily liminal in nature (most of us interact with other bodies on a regular basis, the consequent psychological and physical ebbs and flows of these encounters being typically less than "intense," in the conventional sense of the term), in the context of what I'm calling "sublime narrative," it inevitably is. Moreover, and crucially, this transition can either augment or diminish the self, specifically its (his or her) action, movement, or cognition. In Lovecraft's fiction, the "anomalous" will often graft its affects onto the self in a manner that may be at once paralyzing and quantitatively monster producing.
5. From here on, I will float between "he" and "she" when referring to the narrator.
6. Kafka's becoming-insect in "The Metamorphosis" is, of course, a clear example of what Deleuze and Guattari are exploring in this notion. We will encounter another in Marie Darrieussecq's striking and provocative novel *Pig Tales* in Chapter 4, the original French title of which is *Truismes*, a revealing play on *truie* (sow) and *truismes* (truisms) that implies, among other things, the self-evident truth of becoming-animal in the face of sadistic social forces.
7. See *The Subject of Minimalism*, chapter 4.
8. For an excellent account of this self/other dynamic, see Kaja Silverman's *The Threshold of the Visible World* (1996), especially page 24 where she discusses what she calls the "self-same body." I will return to Silverman's reading of Lacan in Chapter 5.
9. In introducing the omega point to Finley, Elster claims, "We're a crowd, a swarm. We think in groups, travel in armies" (2010, 52), a conspicuous but problematic parallel to Deleuze and Guattari's assertion that "we do not become animal without a fascination for the pack, for multiplicity." Elster is

less concerned with multiplicity than he is with an inevitable “self-destruction” (ibid.).

### Chapter 3

1. Kaja Silverman’s *The Threshold of the Visible World* (1996) offers a valuable Lacanian reading of “the active gift of love” that transcends the egotism of what I have already identified as common reactions to otherness, the desire to either subsume or repudiate the other.
2. To bring this list up to date, we might supplement it with the everyday practices of time on the generic computer, Facebook, Twitter, the multitude of social networking sites that offer a simulacrum of belonging, time at the country club, the hipster beer hall, the hipster tattoo parlor, with the Nicholas Sparks Meetup group, the disco Yoga Meetup group, and so on.
3. Specifically, it is known as the Jesus Prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me” (Salinger 1981, 36).
4. Buddhism maintains that there is no essential self. Rather, the individual is comprised of countless memories, habits, and more or less mechanical feelings and thoughts, all of which reside in and perpetuate the mind/body organism and its identity as shaped and solidified in the course of one’s formative years.
5. It is tempting to invoke Joseph Campbell’s monomyth here, a cycle found in hero mythologies spanning historical eras and world cultures in which the hero leaves home to venture into the unknown, encounters trials and thresholds, is initiated into “death” and new life if successful, and eventually returns home to share his or her wisdom. Given the vast popularity of Campbell’s observations, I will leave it to the reader to visit or revisit *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).
6. The back of the second photo reads, “7 *Charms Street, the courtyard covered with pink flowers from the tree and Nem cut off because he moved while I was taking his picture*” (Redonnet 1994, 46).
7. To keep from going out, they order pizza when Yvan has become-wolf. As the narrator explains, “I ate the pizza, Yvan ate the pizza man” (Darrieussecq 1997, 130). And further, “You couldn’t tell the blood from the tomato sauce. I decided there was no doubt about it: home delivery was incredibly convenient” (ibid.).

### Chapter 4

1. The original French title is *Journal d’un SDF: Ethnofiction, SDF* standing for *Sans Domicile Fixe*, an acronym for someone who is homeless.
2. I know a number of retirees for whom it is essential to organize a given day around notes, mostly regarding food and errands. Like dogs, most people need something to do in order to feel productive and thus fulfilled.
3. Moving, via what Hegel calls “sensual experience,” is actually the easier of the two vehicles of becoming (thinking and moving), to the degree that “fixed thoughts have the ‘I’” while “sensuous determinations have only powerless,

- abstract immediacy, or being as such” (Hegel 1986, 78). To separate mind and body in this manner is today a deeply problematic construction, though the power of identity, equally constructed, is no less worthy of attention.
4. The doctor’s treatment program has, early on and years before the current narrative begins, been reduced to mere containment, as opposed to rehabilitation; and even here, it fails miserably given the escape and, beyond the walls of the film’s immediate and original narrative, the vast and largely unnecessary scope of what became the *Halloween* franchise—that is, many more chances for Myers to do what he does best and for audiences to pay a great deal of money to witness it.
  5. Rather than the usual magazines and newspapers, Dr. Sergent has a copy of “a boring seventeenth-century play by Pierre Corneille” (Deck 2014, 12) in his waiting room that could be read as signifying the theatricality of his practice, with the doctor in the director’s chair, of course.
  6. As is “everyone else,” as she asserts, doubtless including the “fresh young idiot” (Deck 2014, 14) for whom her husband has left her, Héloïse, the “ambitious young thing” (81) of a colleague who ends up being the husband’s mistress, and the multitude of social workers and specialists (many of whom are women) who reduce her predicament to the pretentious self-certainty of their fields, not to mention the police and their routines of interrogation.
  7. References include Richardson, Dickens, Nabokov, Camus, Strauss, Beethoven, Schubert, Haydn, Oscar Peterson, and Stan Getz, among others.
  8. To Sylvère’s question at the hospital regarding Lucien’s condition, “Do you think he’ll be able to live like that?,” the doctor responds, “Why not? Look at women” (Gailly 2005, 6).

## Chapter 5

1. As I’ve suggested earlier, there is an illuminating parallel between non-being and the Buddhist notion of emptiness. The latter relies on the fundamental observation that “all phenomena are empty in that they lack an intrinsic nature that exists in and of itself. Physical phenomena, the mind, the self—all of them are empty, all are dependently related events” (Wallace 1993 182). Without discerning this condition, one is governed by the “reification” of negative patterns—destructive, clinging, self-centered desire—the “antidote” to which “is to experience the emptiness of all phenomena, and to recognize their nature as dependently related events” (ibid.). While neither Deleuze and Guattari nor Lacan have much to say about Buddhist psychology (though Lacan’s *Seminar on Anxiety* [Polity, 2014] offers a compelling exception), particularly given the negative role Buddhism ascribes to desire as an essential cause of suffering, I would argue that the Buddhist perspective nevertheless stands at the nexus of “desiring-production” and lack. In so far as emptiness signifies at once a non-essential self from which emerges a potentially exceptional consciousness, one that may engage conscientiously and compassionately with the external world, and a neutralizer of desire as the negating, reductive force of “partial objects”

acting on and within a besieged subjectivity, its realization invites a productive negotiation of the tension to which I have already alluded in Chapter 1.

2. Though it goes without saying that these are significant, and signifying, to the desiring self whose lived experience, including Reich's notion of garden variety neurosis, or "psychic massacre," breathes life into the text.
3. As a corollary to the Imaginary, the Mirror Stage is a point at which the infant, from 6 to 18 months of age, observes himself or herself in the mirror and identifies with a perception of an other, a mere reflection, that is relatively whole and static. For Lacan, this perception is erroneous, the product of a misidentification that may nevertheless follow the self throughout his or her life as a haunting signifier of alienation.
4. For Deleuze and Guattari, of course, the real is precisely the space wherein "desiring-production" operates and is thus severed—theoretically, corporeally, and psychologically—from Lacan's relatively negative representation.
5. The pleasure principle is Freud's notion of a primary force that governs human life, the perpetual desire to procure pleasure and avoid pain.
6. Consider Eliot's comment in *The Cocktail Party*: "We must also remember that at every meeting we are meeting a stranger," a condition that includes the other as close friend, family, or otherwise intimate relation, the "affectionate ghosts" (1978, 72).
7. B: "This city, fucking love it, wouldn't live nowhere else, couldn't" (Kane 2001, 165).
8. A: "A pale gold sea under a pale pink sky, / M: A distant bell crosses the empty sea, / B: Clouds converge as I see I am on a globe" (197).
9. A significant aspect of the actor's training for their roles, including, at times, the sound designers (my brother, J. Winston Phillips, and myself) was both the Grotowski and Laban work that, very generally, aims to ground the actor's attention and intentionality and to give all movement (be it physical or vocal), a definite direction and quality of focus.
10. The obvious distinction between the two "performances" being the aesthetic and intellectual capacity of Kane's play.

## Chapter 6

1. The same can be said, of course, for relatively traditional literary studies and the close-reading strategies on which they generally rely, though a key difference is that the latter does not depend on popular and ever-updated technology. Its own battle is fought on behalf of the increasingly unpopular project of critical, intimate engagement with aesthetically rich texts and, by extension, the self that reads.
2. See Chapter 1 on Kant, Heller, and the sublime.
3. Metal subgenres include black, death, doom, extreme, nu, Viking, power, thrash, speed, progressive, folk, and avant, among others.
4. The title track includes the line, "Don't forget the cry of the humble . . . let them [the nations] know they are just men" (Trouble, "Psalm 9." 2009), for example.

5. The manifestations of Norwegian black metal from the early 1990s went much further than self-mutilation and recording gimmicks, with certain individuals burning churches, killing one another, and flirting with neo-Nazism, in addition to wearing “corpse paint.” In retrospect, this initial subculture consisted largely of bored, relatively privileged teenagers who in many respects resembled what in the neighboring Finnish language would be called a *juntti* or, in American English, the common redneck. Nevertheless, black metal has endured as a compelling musical form about which much has already been written. See, for example, *Hideous Gnosis: Black Metal Theory Symposium 1*, edited by Nicola Masciandaro (Charleston, SC: Createspace, 2010).
6. Consequently, it is not difficult to understand the stereotypical draw toward Satanism, especially as advocated by Anton LaVey in *The Satanic Bible*, on the parts of metal fans since the genre’s inception.
7. Like other musical expressions since the Middle Ages, metal has always held an affinity for the augmented fourth guitar interval, or as it is otherwise known, the “Devil’s Chord.”
8. For a fascinating explanation of particular Metal musical terms, see Ronald Bogue’s “Becoming Metal, Becoming Death” chapter in *Deleuze’s Wake Tributes and Tributaries* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004).
9. Aside from the historical violence and theatrics of black metal, the general subgenre of extreme metal animates these gestures, on the border of liminality, to lesser and greater degrees depending on the band but more so than any other subgenre. Even a cursory listen to Decapitated’s *Organic Hallucinosi*s, Suffocation’s *Pinnacle of Bedlam*, Cannibal Corpse’s *Gallery of Suicide*, Carcass’s *Symphonies of Sickness*, or Necrophagist’s *Epitaph*, to name just a few examples, would suffice to reveal the inherent threat in their music, the immediacy of its execration embodied in the speed and density of their sonic assaults. That said, the radical undoing of conventions constituting even these extreme edges of metal on the parts of Sunn O))) and Gammelsæter, I would argue, relegate such gestures to secondary standing with regards to liminal, and thus affectingly abject, experience.
10. Compromised as it may be in its reduction to language, I would characterize my own experience of such a “moment” in the following manner: in December of 2012, Sunn O))) performed at a venue in Seattle, Washington, the sound system of which was optimally designed to accommodate the clarity and volume of their music. Near the end of their set, the corridors immediately outside the performance hall began shaking, to the point of it feeling as though the building was on the brink of collapse. It felt dangerous and unsafe. Taking a break from my responsibilities there, I entered the hall’s balcony where I heard the loudest sound design imaginable (before it becomes truly perilous to human hearing), with vocalist Attila at center stage, inhumanly costumed and emitting what could only be described as infernal bellows. The stage smoke had settled and leveled out to an even line, approximately four feet in height. The light was dim, with a purple and blue hue. The volume of low-end drones was at its peak; it infiltrated the

body. The other performers, robed and therefore temporarily anonymous, mirrored the audience's own effacement, or depersonalization. In that large hall, and arguably in the embodied territories of each individual and collective psychology, there was paradoxically no room for anything but the music overwhelming, frightening, and ushering its listeners into the sublime. It was a form of theater, albeit one that was more viscerous than words can ever be. Herein lies, it seemed at that moment and in retrospect, 'Sunn O)))'s capacity for fostering transcendence and liminality.

11. The most recent recording, *Soused*, in collaboration with famed experimental crooner Scott Walker, has been reviewed by *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*, among many other publications and websites.
12. Bands such as Dimmu Borgir, Dream Theater, and Opeth come to mind, to name a few.
13. Although 2005's *Black One* contains moments of relative stillness, especially on the concluding track, "Báthory Erzsébet," it is frequently characterized as claustrophobic, a quality that is ultimately superseded on *Monoliths and Dimensions* by its relative scope and breadth.
14. A common structure found in "experimental," through-composed, and improvised music (the latter in particular) is not surprisingly Aristotelian in nature in that it tends to rely on a standard trajectory toward a high-volume climax and denouement.
15. Husserl claims that "psychical life may be revealed to us not only in self-consciousness but equally in our consciousness of other selves, and this latter source of experience offers us more than a reduplication of what we find in our self-consciousness, for it establishes the difference between 'own' and 'other'" (1986, 659).

## Chapter 7

1. At one point, to make amends to his wife, Marty joins the Promise Keepers, a contemporary form of Muscular Christianity that is often criticized for its patriarchal vision of male dominance. That he is an ideal candidate (who will inevitably fall from grace, so to speak) for an organization infamously founded on reductive readings of scripture is indicative of his problematic role in the show's drama.
2. See Paul Schrader's *Transcendental Style in Film* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988).
3. A particularly charged scene in *True Detective* finds Rust and Marty observing a fundamentalist revival meeting where the former methodically and bitterly outlines the various social structures and practices that essentially reduce the followers and their cultural milieu to animalism. Rooted in more or less common behavior, it stands as one of the show's most potent and caustic critiques and thus, in retrospect, places the final scene in a very suspicious light indeed.
4. See chapter 8 in Thomas Phillips's *The Subject of Minimalism: On Aesthetics, Agency, and Becoming* (2013) for an examination of both Buddhist meditative practice and Gurdjieffian notions of self-development.



5. This is not to extol the virtue of absolute stoicism, or Asperger's syndrome for that matter, or to privilege reason over emotion. However, it is suggesting that the "I" at the center of emotional experience is, more often than not, too self-absorbed to embody the non-being required to break patterns of identification and thus to engage lovingly in the sense in which Orage characterizes such practice.

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