

Affective | Reading | Affect

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“Don’t be scared.”

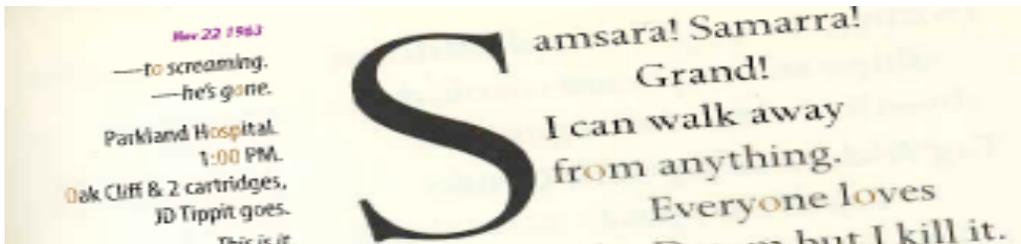
“Don’t be.”

(Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (2000) 480-481)¹

¹ *House of Leaves* will be cited as (*HoL*) from here forward.

Language matters²

As language *means* anything, it is visual, aural, and or tactile. As language *means* anything it is material: inky letters, words, hieroglyphics, pictographs, characters, scripts, logographs, orthography, sentences, speech, sound, writing and the raised imprint of Braille alphabets. As language *means* anything it is sensation. Before language means anything it is affect. After language means something it is affect. While language means it is affect.



(Mark Z. Danielewski, *Only Revolutions: The Democracy of Two Set Out & Chronologically Arranged* (2005) (OR Hailey 1/OR Sam 360))³

Affect matters

Affect is slippery. Representations of affect are slippery. Affect conducts. Affect transmits. Affect can be emotion read in the face of the analyst's patient. Affect can be intensity read in the face of a geologist's seismograph. Affect is oftentimes thought to be the corollary to emotion. Affect is sometimes thought to be the corollary to intensity. Affect is sometimes thought to be the corollary to feeling and feelings. Affect is sometimes thought to be the corollary to touching, to sensation, and to movement. Representations of affect are affective too.

And...and...and...+...+...+...*...*...*...x...x...x...f...f...f...

Were it not for our post-structural and multimodal tolerance for diffraction, theorists of

² "Language matters" and the following section heading, "Affect matters," are echoes of feminist physicist Karen Barad's contention that, "Language matters. Discourse matters. Culture matters. There is an important sense in which the only the thing that does not seem to matter anymore is matter." ("Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28.3 (2003) : 801-831).

³ Mark Z. Danielewski, *Only Revolutions: The Democracy of Two Set Out & Chronologically Arranged* (Hailey's version)/*Only Revolutions: The Democracy of Two Set Out & Chronologically Arranged* (Sam's version) will be cited as (OR Hailey #/Sam #) for Hailey's narrative or (OR Sam #/ OR Hailey #) for Sam's narrative from here forward. The dual page number references, "(OR Hailey #/ OR Sam #)" reference the double narrative structure of the novel. "Sam" (OR) begins on the final page of "Hailey," and when the book is flipped over 180° laterally and longitudinally, "Hailey" (OR) begins on the final page of "Sam." In print both page numbers appear. Please see the following [image](#). A fuller description of the dual narratives and rotational or "revolutionary" structure of the novel/s will be discussed at the end of the chapter.

various sub-disciplinary stripes might not tolerate the excess, ambivalence, ambiguity and multi-valence of affect nor its promiscuous intercourse across human and non-human matters, organic and non-organic matters. From Spinoza, let us define affect as the power of a body to possess capacities to “impinge” upon bodies and to be impinged upon itself, “The human body is affected in very many ways by external bodies, and is capable in very many ways of affecting external bodies” (*Ethics*, ii.xiv.97).⁴ In the Postulates just prior to this Proof, Spinoza asserts, “When the fluid part of the human body is determined by an external body to impinge often on another soft part, it changes the surface of the latter, and, as it were, leaves the impression thereupon of the external body which impels it” (*Ethics*, ii.Post v.97), which suggests that the “impinge[ment]” of affect not only transmits energetic and informational sensations but is materially transfiguring, a process of mutual material in-corporealization and re-mediation between bodies.

For the moment, let us confine this pursuit of affect to interactions with the “external bodies” of language and image matters. For while media theory offers a flourishing array of modes of affection, literary, rhetorical and composition studies have had a some trouble theorizing affect, precisely because of the discursive nature of the understanding of language and because a great deal of work has been done to understand images discursive phenomena as well.⁵ And with some minor exceptions in the work in “literal art,”⁶ creative media, and electronic literature wherein non-discursive language compositions have been explored, affect has been left largely unattended.

This essay draws out affect in three “schools” of thought and in several movements. To begin, it works to draw out a genealogy of affect in rhetorical literary studies to map affect and what we might call “affective reading.” “Affective reading” is a bidirectional term that refers to both reception and composition. In terms of reception, affective reading points to the impinging sensation that the process or activity of reading enacts in synthesis with a reading body. This

⁴ Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. Cary Elwes, (NY: Dover, 1955), will be cited as (Spinoza x.y.z) corresponding to (Book x.Proposition y.Elwes translation page #z) from here forward.

⁵ The works of Christian Metz in film theory and Roland Barthes offer excellent arguments for this transposition of images into languages.

⁶ “Literal art” is a term I borrow from digital poet, John Cayley, who uses it to describe works made with language and its components or work meant to be read. This term, then, leans heavily on the root meaning of the word “literal”—to be read or be readerly. I use the term “literal” in this manner, throughout this chapter. See, John Cayley, “Literal Art,” on *ebr* (*electronic book review*) <http://www.electronicbookreview.com/thread/firstperson/grammatology>.

receptive affection is produced through the *composition* of language programmed to execute discrete or “coded” affects in the embodied materiality of the reader, to effect an “affective reading” through the bodily matters of the reader, or to compose the body as a reading machine. This understanding of affect may be traced through the works of Spinoza, Gilles Deleuze, and Brian Massumi.

In regards to a non-discursive field of affections, the term “reader” is already in trouble because of the immediate association of reading to the acts of rendering discursivity even from non-discursive forms, such as non-representational images. And while my departure point for thinking about the term “reader” is Barthesian and linked to visual rhetoric, in many ways, this chapter intends to undo the readerly, to decouple the automatic default to discursivity, which is privileged to the point of exclusion of other modes of transit and circulation of sensation, perception, and thought. We might consider the fact that computational machines are also reading bodies, but we do not ascribe the same sense of discursive rendering to these processes.

The two other movements defined as affect occur at the level of individual human cognition through which we practice “readings” of affect and are likewise bidirectional. The reading of affect points to a cognitive understanding of the passage of affections and occurs as sensation (re)cognized as feelings and emotions (thrills, chills, pathos, suspense, emotive content). This movement is that to which most literary and cultural theorists of affect refer including Fredric Jameson and Sianne Ngai, whom I discuss below. In this instance, affect is articulated as the immediate registration of any number of named emotions or states of feeling and being. This understanding of affect-as-emotion is intimately connected to the final articulation of affect, as representation. Here affect is found through a critical practice of representational analysis in which a text signifies the passage of affection (usually as emotion); however, even these representations may also transmit actualizing affects.⁷ In each of these movements of affection, cross flow occurs and each cognate inflects and shades the others.

The key question for many theorists and critics regarding affect has been a smattering of “what” opening onto a very particular “how.” *What* is the role of affect in the production, distribution and reception of texts? If affect indeed points to a pre- and post-discursive circulation of sensation

⁷ Gilles Deleuze explores this representational impingement in *Cinema I: the Movement Image*, in his discussion of the affection-image (chapters 6-8).

and impingement that, among other things, establishes the ground upon which language thinking might occur, how does one use discursive language to capture it? If reading is an affective process and we read representations of affective impingement, how do we pull apart this feedback loop of the affect of reading and the reading of affect in order to perform an object analysis?

While some theorists attend to the emotive or cognized dimensions of affect, they do not address the dynamic primordial materiality whereby reading bodies are corporeally mediated prior to cognition. The temporalities and recursion of these processes necessitate that we reconsider our modes of critique and analysis. If affective feedback loops circulate through us in non-discursive modalities and materially transfigure our bodies, how do we stand outside of these circulations in order to make critical interventions? How does one perform an affective literary critique in which affect is also understood as non-discursive?

As one of the imperatives of this book iterates the need for an opening of method to the extra-discursive capacities of affect, it should be noted that the style of this piece will oscillate, culminating in what I hope will be an experimental, permutative, and object-oriented practice, or a move toward a sort of “creative criticism”⁸ or “affective reading” response that ultimately riffs off of the rhetorical play in Mark Z. Danielewski’s “post-print” fictions, *House of Leaves* (2000) and *Only Revolutions* (2006)/*Only Revolutions* (2006).⁹

Feelings and Critique

One of the several modes of affective reading and the most consistently deployed mode engaged in rhetorical and literary studies is the critical practice of representational analysis. Most critics who use affect in this mode equate affection with emotion. In *Ugly Feelings* (2005), Sianne Ngai provides one model of affective literary critique wherein affect is teased into her eponymous title

⁸ “Creative criticism” is discussed in the chapter, “Creative Criticism and Non-Discursive Analysis.”

⁹ My use of the term “post-print fictions” refers to digital and non-digital fictionalized narratives that explicitly demonstrate their kairotic registration of the technics of print in the midst of a digitally mediated milieu. In an interview with Kiki Benzon published on *ebr* (*electronic book review*), Danielewski remarks, “as archaic as it is, with [*Only Revolutions*] illuminated text and its ribbons, this book could not exist without technology. Without my G5 and 23-inch screen, with two pages on the screen at one time” using “Adobe InDesign CS,” and continuing, “I had - Font Pro, I think - I had like 10,000 fonts.... Online resources, certain archival things. OED online so I could race through etymologies quickly, double-check words. In the old days what do you do to find one word? You take down the two volume set, it takes you a while to find the word.”

through a broad swath of critical theory. Located within an American Studies framework, *Ugly Feelings* is an impressive performance in its elaborate and schematic diagramming of affect (read as emotion) intending to address the political valences of what might be thought of as mediocre and passive states of being. Ngai suggests that these weak and waffling states of being offer critical insight into our contemporary political and social conditions, which she argues, is culturally devoid of powerful, cathartic affections. Ngai's project "presents a series of studies in the aesthetics of negative emotions" (1) in a range of works by Alfred Hitchcock, Gertrude Stein, Nella Larsen, and Herman Melville.

Despite the revision of the cathartic sublime onto petty feelings (affect), Ngai's readings tend back toward a familiar representational hermeneutics. When affect or "feeling" is read through "primary" texts, she uses conventional critical practice in order to determine how representations of weaker passions, emotions, affects or "ugly feelings" can be made to correlate with a schema of classical aesthetics predicated on stronger passions (affect) while at the same time keeping faith with critical praxis. Two issues are raised here. Her project provokes a serious issue as critical theorists tend to eschew aesthetics for historical materialist analyses wherein art became cultural production. It is not the calling of this piece to rehearse these histories; however, in the section that follows, I provide an elaboration of affect in relation to the critical praxis that has been powerfully established as disciplinary practice by Fredric Jameson. The important point here is that Ngai summons her readers back to a consideration of aesthetics, and a "low" aesthetics at that. As she frames it, Ngai uses a historical materialist, critical method to perform an aesthetic reading of lesser aesthetic properties:

My exclusive focus, however, is on the negative affects that *read* the predicaments posed by a general state of obstructed agency with respect to other human actors or to the social as such—a dilemma I take as charged with political *meaning* regardless of whether the obstruction is actual or fantasized, or whether the agency obstructed is individual or collective.

(Ngai 3, my italics)

Thus she maintains a critical modality by shifting the register of the aesthetic to the phantasmatic ("actual or fantasized") and does so without importing the psychoanalytic. Rather than thinking of "a general state of obstructed agency" as an individuated psychoanalytic state, she reads states of being as social, as produced by external causes and experienced as individuated affect. Therefore, Ngai's works out a critical methodological praxis whereby she "read[s]" "meaning" (my italics in the quotation above) through her collection of socially construed, negative affections

producing what she terms, “ugly feelings,” or impotent, weak “state[s]” of being. These “ugly feelings” work through or include: tone, animatedness, envy, irritation, anxiety, “stuplimity,” paranoia, and disgust. What does not become clear in Ngai’s circuit of the social, the aesthetic, and obstructed agency is how the *material* transmission of these “negative affects” occurs. We are also left wondering why or how we should come to “read the predicaments” or register and transmit “the predicaments” particularly *as* feelings, as cognized emotional reaction, and how these feelings become sustained states of corporealized being.

To demonstrate her correlation of social and obstructed agency, let us take up one of the ugly feelings in Ngai’s “bestiary of affects” (7), “stuplimity.” The humorous coinage of “stuplimity” meshes stupor and the sublime, a neologism signifying exhaustion and fatigue as these states of being might parallel the function of the more powerful passions of shock and awe attendant upon the sublime in classical aesthetic theory. In her attempt to reengage aesthetics within a historical materialist framework, she posits a dilation or stunting of powerful passions such that awe becomes exhaustion and action becomes “suspended agency” (Ngai 1). However, in order to sustain the political drive of her project, alongside this stuttering aesthetics she also posits a stuttering theory of cultural production that attempts to answer “a pre-affective question, by addressing one of the most important though under-examined aesthetic functions of feeling in general” (Ngai 31). In positing a “pre-affective” domain, she signals her concordance with “John Dewey’s effort to divorce expression from ‘the mere issuing forth or discharge of raw material’ by describing ‘esthetic emotion’ as ‘objectified emotion’” (Ngai 23). While I am wholly on board for the corrective to the “under-examined aesthetic functions of feeling,” I am rather unclear as to the domain of “pre-affect[ion]” in terms of either “feeling in general” or the “*mere* issuing forth or discharge of *raw* material” (my italics and emphasis).

Modifiers are radiant tells for resonant wells. What is the material basis for emotion and affection if not the raw matters of reading bodies and texts? Ngai herself argues, “mere[ness]” and “raw[ness]” are examples of “what Genette calls ‘aesthetic predicates,’ affective-aesthetic values like ‘precious,’ ‘stilted,’ ‘monotonous,’ or ‘imperious,’ created from, or based upon the feeling of pleasure or displeasure that accompanies our initial perception of the aesthetic object” (cited in Ngai 23-24). In other words, they are persuasive rhetorical modifiers suffuse with tonal affection. Why such diligence in persuading us that matter is inert? Clearly this insistence reifies the privileged role of the human in historical materialist relations with so-called “nature” and of course,

in pointing to this contingency, puts this privilege on the line. But the question of materiality is not a poststructural and epistemological intervention. It signals a parsing and the seepage of ontology, affection in excess of the human, that radiates and resonates despite decades of theorizing the real away or into history.

There is an enormous difference between affect and “feelings in general” when embodied, dynamic, material sensation underwrites and composes tone (or metrics, rhythm, and repetition). Through what substrate might a “pre-affective question” or even an experience of unsettling tone in relation to the discursive identification of recognized feelings occur if not through embodied sensation and perception? And most significantly, we must consider what non-human or non-cognized agency—what modal affection—is at work in the “*mere* issuing forth or discharge of *raw* material.”¹⁰ The automata of matter and materiality are the domains of affect and their non-discursive and dynamic “raw[ness]” must be incorporated into modes of critique as they are incorporated into our bodies and thought.

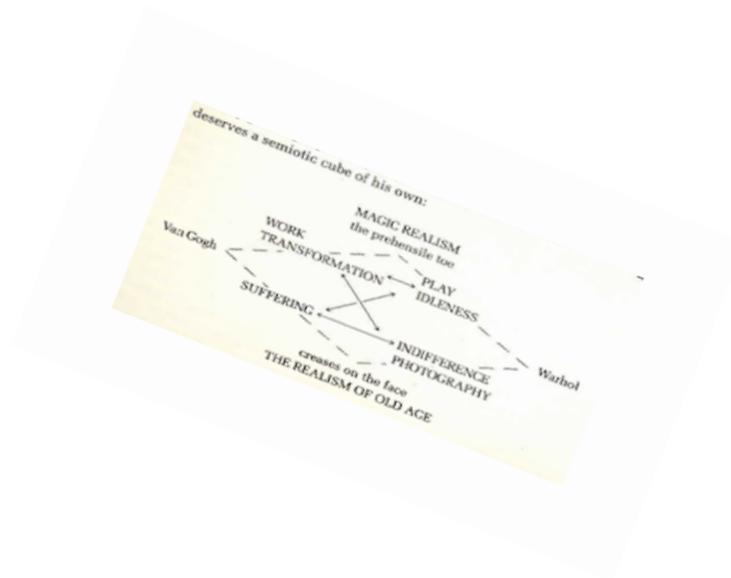
My dispute with Ngai emerges from our differing understanding of the ontology of affect and the differences Spinoza marks between *affectio*, material impingement between differential (rhythms) bodies, and *affectus*, the reverberation of impingement within a body fed back and cognized as emotion. We share a pursuit of the difficult schism between aesthetics and critical historical materialist praxis, but my understanding of affect is much broader and located beyond and prior to emotions and feelings.

I also privilege historical materialism over classical aesthetics precisely because the politics of the second are locatable within the domain and modalities of the first. Both the “school” of emotion or feeling-as-affect, and a radical materialist or speculative realist understanding of affect, in which I will place my own articulation of affect, work through a materialist understanding. However, we do so by means of different scopes and at different scales of materiality and frames of analysis. When affect is taken as a correlate to thinking emotion and feelings, any impact of the affective ends at the epistemic and the human psyche and is fraught with alternative inheritances of psychoanalysis or phenomenology that limit the discussion to the human.

¹⁰ Feminist physicist Karen Barad calls this “agential realism,” which she describes as “an understanding of the nature of the relationship between discursive practices and material phenomena, an accounting of “nonhuman” as well as “human” forms of agency” (“Performativity” 810).

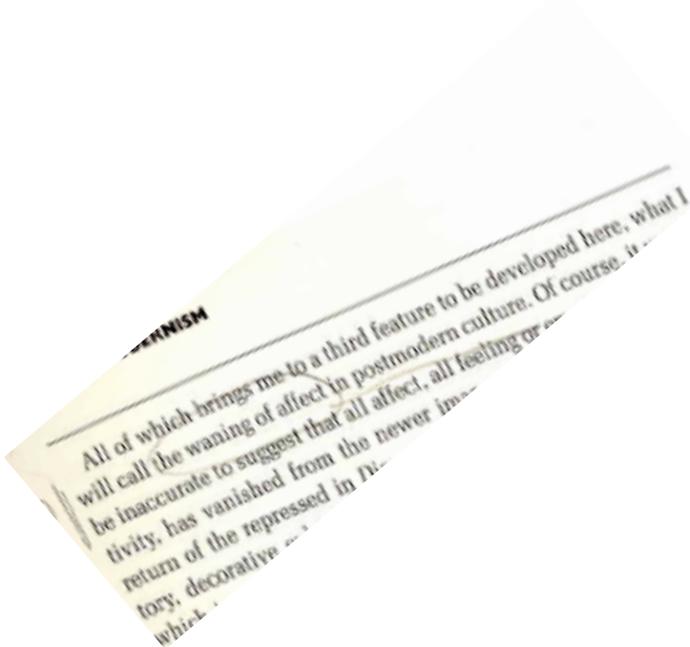
Affections are generalized material phenomena not limited to human bodies or to auto-affective “feelings”—(emotions)—that human bodies may produce and cognize. When affect is understood beyond an anthropocentric scope, it is not a dilation of aesthetics that must occur, but rather an expansion of our understanding of matter, materialism, and historical/temporality such that affect becomes a function in a radical materialist ontology that includes but absolutely exceeds the human, the psyche, and emotions or feelings. Moreover, while much of this chapter focuses upon “the affective turn”¹¹ that is predicated on radical materialism, in my conceptualization of affect, the propensity to affect and to be affected is predicated through a Spinozian genealogy that includes but also radically exceeds the conscious and cognitive capacities of human perception and the current understanding in the humanities of affection as emotive feeling. Affect, as material remediation, is constituent of understanding, not a subset of understanding.

The Waxing & Waning of the Affections of Critical Hermeneutics



or Reading Readings

¹¹ This term is the eponymous descriptor for the collection *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, edited by Patricia T. Clough with Jean Halley. In this anthology may be found an earlier essay of mine, “Techno-Cinema: Image Matters in the Affective Unfoldings of Analog Cinema and New Media,” in which I argue for affective reading and reading of affect in film and digital image production grounded in a Bergsonian ontology. In a certain sense, “Affective | Reading | Affect” is literary and rhetorical (language-based) companion to “Techno-Cinema: Image Matters in the Affective Unfoldings of Analog Cinema and New Media.”



Affect has been a critical trope du jour for quite some time, serving as an explanatory apparatus, promised salve for the ills of progressive melancholia, a way to get “real” again (or a way for matter and the “real” to travel back from psychoanalytic and metaphysical exiles), a way to leave Oedipal drives in the 20th century, and/or perhaps most earnestly, a way to respond to Fredric Jameson’s provocative accusation that “we” (progressive academics) have allowed a catastrophic “waning of affect” (Jameson 10) to capsize the progressive project.¹² Both Ngai and Brian Massumi, well-known but radically different theorists of affect, introduce their work in response to Jameson’s melancholic loss of affect. I follow in this practice here.

Jameson superbly marshaled a widespread but targeted affective blow with his claim for affect’s demise. And in this spotlight or perhaps in these fibreoptics, Jameson’s well-worn, well-aged, and generative critique of postmodernity, reiteration, and summary model for humanities-based historical materialist critique propelled many intended and unintended lines of flight. In terms of “reading,” I think we might suggest that the majority consensus of cultural criticism heralded the Jamesonian call, but in terms of affect, I think we might suggest that the majority consensus of cultural criticism heard the call but took different routes. How could Jameson’s critical method, predicated on the recovery of a needful but missing politicized affect, be so cleanly extracted from

¹² Citations from Jameson will come from the original publication of his essay “Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,” published in *New Left Review* in 1984, and from its revision in the eponymous book published by Duke University Press in 1991.

its ground? How can critical practice remain unmodified by the ellipsis of this essential “third” aspect of Jameson’s analysis of postmodernity, “the waning of affect”? If affect is not waning, what happens to critique?

Unlike both Massumi and Ngai, my folding of Jamesonian waning affections against the textured explosion of affective modes of analysis is not intended to wax the obverse or labor to proof through the construction of negation.¹³ My concern is with the intense methodological gap generated were we to reposition Jameson’s argument in light of the explosion of designed and coded affects and their corresponding population spike of computational delivery technics. Ironically, Jameson’s turn into affect, albeit as demise, loss and lack, prompted much of the theoretical investment in affective modalities. And the subsequent dispute over the waxing or waning of affect convincingly produced a critical sense of affect’s ascendancy.¹⁴ Clearly there has been a waxing of affect as theoretical premise.

To assess the “affective turn,” we need to unfold this “waning of affect” as it sits staunchly at the center of gravity for Jameson’s fervent rejoinder [back? forward to?] a historical materialist method of critical reading praxis out of the once deep and grimy industrial modernity onto the glittery surfaces of what was--at the time of Jameson’s composition--“postmodernity” and its depth-lacking affections. For many, the return to Jameson’s readings of the shoes of Van Gogh and Warhol will be a review, but for the sake of the turn to affect, I would rehearse the steps so as not to reproduce the ellipsis of affect. I would also make it clear that I am interested in tracking the affective coding executed in Jameson’s rhetoric and critical reading, in other words, the powerful impingement of reading affections produced by his language.

Shoes for the ground and shoes for the surface

Jameson claimed that as receptive beings we are a population experiencing the “waning of affect,” which he defined in the sentence following this famous phrase as “all feeling,” “all emotion,” and “all subjectivity” (10). This definition, taken from the version of this essay published

¹³ My use of the term “fold” here is meant to allude to Deleuze’s reading of Leibniz and “the pleats of matter” in *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) and in particular, the non-competitive, generative method of comparison for which folding allows rather than that which analytical cleaving disallows.

¹⁴ This argument is also made by Ann Pellegrini and Jaspir Puar in their essay, “Affect” (*Social Text* 2009 27(3 100): 35-38).

in *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), is located at the heart of his critical comparative response to Van Gogh's *A Pair of Boots* and to Warhol's *Diamond Dust Shoes*. Significantly, the comparison is an explication of earlier articulations of critical methodology that he describes as *reading* or "*hermeneutical*, in the sense in which the work in its inert, objectal form is taken as a clue or a symptom for some vaster reality which replaces it as its ultimate truth" (Jameson 8, italics in the original).

These hermeneutics are themselves derived through a prior set of readings collated into a methodology from Jameson's reading Van Gogh's *A Pair of Boots* as the demonstrable object of Heidegger's *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, "which is organized around the idea that the work of art emerges within the gap between the Earth and World, or what [Jameson] would prefer to translate as the meaningless materiality of the body and nature and the meaning endowment of history and the social" (Jameson 7). With the waning of feeling, emotion, and subjectivity comes the loss of the subject of history, the loss of the social (and depth), a loss of the truer "aesthetics of expression" represented by modernist works and superseded by "a strange compensatory decorative exhilaration"¹⁵ that he sees in Warhol's surface-textured pop art and "the end of the psychopathologies of th[e] [bourgeois] ego" (15). He argues that "some more fundamental *mutation* both in the object world itself...and in the disposition of the subject" (9) has occurred and that "this depthlessness [is not] *merely* metaphorical: it can be experienced *physically* and '*literally*' by anyone" (my italics, 12). Suggesting that a dynamic, mutating earth has swallowed world-making capacities of the human overrun by a material superficiality that is felt by the human as *physical* and literal, humans then lose our feeling capacities, those which ground subjectivity and the capacity to distinguish ourselves from "inert, objectal form[s]" of being. In this context and in response to cultural production, a diminished capacity for affect as emotion opens up a profound abyss in progressive politics, setting hermeneutics off its centrifugal axis of centered subjectivities engaged in social and historical material analysis, and leaving us with flattened schizophrenic surfaces rather than the deep and repressed grounds of cultural production—and no means through which to respond.

¹⁵ I am reading both the original essay publication in the *New Left Review* and the subsequent revision in the book *Postmodernism* together here. I would also note that it is in this second space that Ngai locates her intervention: rather than disregard lesser expressions, such as the anxiety that Jameson disdains, she takes these weaker passions as politically charged rather than depleted.

Taking Jameson at his aims, it becomes clear then that in our *affective reading* of Jameson's reading of shoes, we must also locate Jamesonian affect as *emotion, feeling, and subjectivity* such that we read his reading "properly" rather than merely glossing surface-level effects:

[Jameson] first want[s] to suggest that if this copiously reproduced image [Van Gogh's *A Pair of Boots*] is not to sink to the level of *sheer decoration*, it requires us to reconstruct some initial situation out of which the finished work emerges. Unless that situation—which has vanished into the past—is somehow mentally restored, the painting will remain an inert object, a reified end product impossible to grasp as a symbolic act in its own right, as praxis and as production.

This last term suggests that one way of reconstructing the initial situation to which the work is somehow a response is by stressing the *raw materials*, the initial content, which it confronts and reworks, transforms and appropriates. In Van Gogh that content, those initial raw materials [Earth], are...to be grasped simply as the whole object world of agricultural misery, of stark rural poverty, and the whole rudimentary human world of backbreaking peasant toil, a world [World] reduced to its most brutal and menaced, primitive and marginalized state.

(7, my italics)

Here in Jameson we find the same categorical separation of human expression (as "mental restoration") from physicality by means of the denigration of matter as "raw material" similar to that which was found in Dewey's disarticulation of expression from "the mere issuing forth or discharge of raw material" (cited in Ngai above). However, for Jameson's historical materialist praxis (as well as for radical materialism) there is nothing "mere" about matter or the raw materials of the object world and those of the socially and historically enabled human body (the Earth/World). What is the stuff of our mental capacity if not matter? Yet bypassing this ideality, as Jamesonian readers, "we" must "reconstruct" a context of "raw materials" that has now "vanished into the past," the context in which the manual and symbolic labor of Van Gogh's painting was performed. This reconstruction of the "vaster reality" functions to move the "inert" and "objectal" position of the painting as "clue" or "symptom" from "the meaningless [raw?] materiality of the body and nature" to a meaningfully "endowed" "praxis and production" of the artwork through the social labor of subjectivization.

If we are listening closely to this description of method, we are actually hearing at least three process narratives and a procedural rhetoric. In the making and composition of the painting, Van Gogh's meaning-filled, subjectivized, and symbolic labor ["praxis" and "production"] is applied to the brute or raw materiality of paint and canvas by means of the brute or raw materiality of his body that has registered the "object world of agricultural misery" (as Jameson reads it). Were it

not for Jameson's subjectivizing affects (feelings) of sympathy, compassion, and empathy, the brute body of Van Gogh might only register the "object world of" agriculture--misery implies a transmission or identification of unpleasant experience, a "transmission of affect,"¹⁶ from those in misery to Van Gogh who "confronts and reworks, transforms and appropriates" this misery onto a representational canvas, creating a representation of affect through effective symbolic design and the coded transmission of affect taken in transit from Van Gogh's act of witnessing to the canvas. This is a compositional-affective narrative.

And in a second narrative, "we" must come into the picture, quite literally, readerly, and hermeneutically. For the work of art, once composed, "replaces" the "truth" of the "vaster reality"—the now past--represented only by the brute materiality of the painting, and the painting "will remain an inert object" without a *mental* restoration of Van Gogh's "vaster reality," specifically as Van Gogh was positioned as responding witness and/or receptive analyst, the third-person receptor of the affect-as-feelings, emotions, and subjectivity of "agricultural misery." To "read" this painting is to "read into" its "clues" and "symptoms" as a representation of Van Gogh's mental representation, the subjectivizing compositional process of these embedded representations and affects, effecting a restoration of the "raw materials" and "situation" of both its content and composition, its referents and its representations.

In the making and composition of the reading, Jameson's meaning-filled, subjectivized, and symbolic labor is also now applied (with a fine brush) to the brute materiality of painted canvas by means of the brute materiality of his body that has registered "the whole *rudimentary* human world of *backbreaking* peasant *toil*, a world *reduced* to its *most brutal* and *menaced*, *primitive* and *marginalized* state" (ibid, my italics). Were it not for the subjectivizing affections of sympathy, compassion, and empathy, the brute body of Jameson might only register the "human world" of *painting agriculture*. As that which "Genette calls 'aesthetic predicates'" and Ngai translates as "affective-aesthetic *values*," Jameson's use of words "created from, or based upon the feeling of pleasure or displeasure that accompanies our initial perception of the aesthetic object" (Ngai 23-24) such as *rudimentary*, *backbreaking*, *toil*, *reduced*, *most brutal*, *menaced*, *primitive*, and *marginalized* imply a transmission or identification of unpleasant experience from Van Gogh's

¹⁶ This phrase is taken from Teresa Brennan's *The Transmission of Affect* in which she argues for a socially transmissible physics and psychology of a material and physicalized affect that correlates historically to populating passions.

painting to Jameson, who “confronts and reworks, transforms and appropriates” Van Gogh’s visual representation into a descriptive reading, a literary (readerly) representation through effective design and the codified transmission of affects of the reading of the painting. This is a receptive-affective narrative.

Finally, in a third narrative, “we”--Jameson’s marshaled, active and receptive readers--are confronted with a rhetoric of force and method, an affective imperative exhorting a codified protocol of response to several embedded representations, clues and symptoms in order to explicitly affect our reading of them. For the critique, once written, “replaces” the still-extant and still fully material painting as the “truth” of its “vaster reality,” and yet Jameson’s critique “will remain an inert object” without a mental restoration of Jameson’s description of Van Gogh’s painting and its correspondent “vaster reality,” specifically as Jameson was positioned as responding witness and/or receptive analyst of the affect-as-feelings, emotions, and subjectivity of Van Gogh’s representation and as Van Gogh was positioned as responding witness and/or receptive analyst of the affect-as-feelings, emotions, and subjectivity of “agricultural misery.” To “read” this critique is to “read into” its “clues” and “symptoms” as a representation of Van Gogh’s painting is to “read into” Jameson’s mental representation, the subjectivizing compositional process of these embedded representations and affects, effecting a restoration of the painting and its critique, their referents and representations.

In the rhetoric of force and method in the reading, our meaning-filled, subjectivized, and symbolic labor and the brute materiality of our bodies are subject to a barrage of affects and affective demands receptively transmitted by means of Jameson’s meaning-filled, subjectivized, and symbolic labor executed through the brute materiality of his body that has registered and represented Van Gogh’s painting as a subjectivized representation of “stark rural poverty” that has already been mentally remediated by Van Gogh and Jameson. Were it not for the rhetoric of force conducting subjectivizing affects of fear, shame, guilt, disgust, sympathy, compassion, and empathy, the brute body of Jameson’s reader might only register one academic’s preference for dirty old boots over sparkly high heels. Jameson’s rhetoric of force transmits imperative intensity and a designed protocol of reading thus generative of certain unpleasant experiences from Van Gogh’s painting to Jameson’s reading to Jameson’s reader, who MUST “confront and rework, transform and appropriate” Van Gogh’s visual representation and Jameson’s descriptive reading into a subjectivization, a positioned critical-affective stance, and these strict protocols are bound

by a stern threshold of feelings and emotions. This constitutes the executed programming and execution of composed, critical, readerly affect intending to subjectivize and incite emotion and feeling according to a particular set of protocols or thresholds (history and the social). This is programmed or coded affection.

But then, so is the work of most rhetoric...persuasion...that which allows us to come to think and “feel” differently by means of effective design and the codified transmission of language affections, linguistic impingement, a soft affective movement conducted in the materiality of language between and among the materiality of bodies. And unfolding the affect of rhetoric exposes it as poesis, a making, a crafting, and a doing, and as techne, by design, protocol, and codification. But poesis, techne, and rhetoric have been understood in the academic production of language as constitutive of the line between the work of art and the work of criticism (poesis and rhetoric) composed and delivered through conventional genres or modes (techne).

Critical poetics or the poetics of criticism? Yes, and more. To complicate and make matters more explicit, techne’s recent digital upshift to multiple modes and temporalities has affected a poesis and rhetoric of the technical, spacing in non-discursive yet sensate language and visual affects as well. And in the undisciplined affective spills of intensity between and through bodies our hermeneutical schema gets quite muddy chasing the tails of tails of readings and with aesthetics and the technical substrates upon which they compose an intensive world. Affect isn’t bound to art or poesis, nor is argumentation and force bound to rhetoric. Techne runs through both, and “the context” out of which we might claim representations from symptoms and clues starts to perform itself as a powerful, multimodal and speedy issue of raw material and at times at the speed of light.

How do we unveil a morph? Recover its raw material as it burns in becoming? This isn’t mysticism or crude vitalism; this is the energy and movement that is affect made programmable and visible through informatics assembling through bundled or in-tensive code, language, and critical praxis and production that in concert with reading bodies becomes ex-tensive as sensation, movement, and meaning. Jameson’s critical “we” is now running quite fast...headlong into an affective aesthetics that may “move” the soul but also dilate blood vessels and fire synapses--by coded and poetic designs. The perceptual legibility of material impingement, of affect as a physical process, is the “fundamental *mutation*” (9) to which Jameson points, and yet

the physics of the material world did not shift. Our observational understanding of these physics and our understanding of our conception of human bodies did.

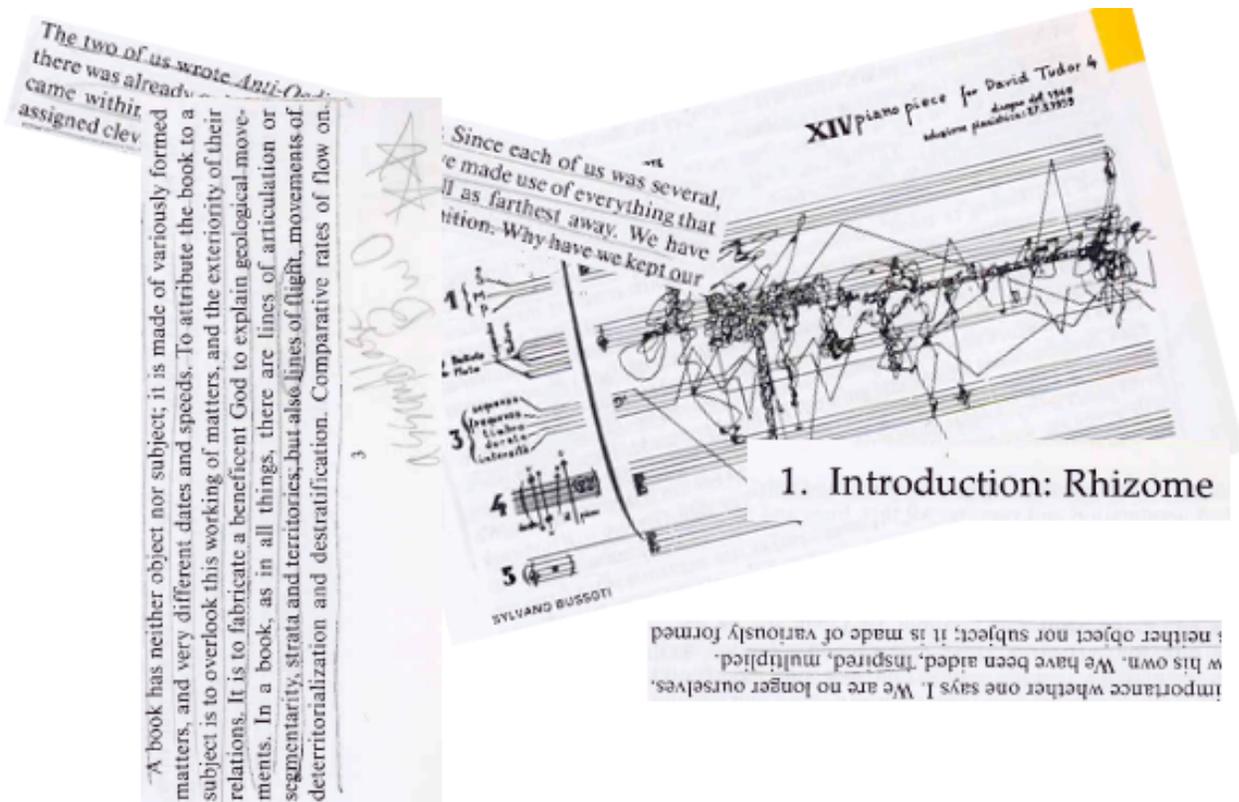
Feelings, Emotions, and Affect

All modes, wherein one body is affected by another body, follow simultaneously from the nature of the body affected and the body affecting; so that one and the same body may be moved in different modes, according to the difference in nature of the bodies moving it; on the other hand, different bodies may be moved in different modes by one and the same body.

(Spinoza, *Ethics* II.XIII.92)

Emotion [*Affectus* in original], which is called a passivity of the soul, is a confused idea, whereby the mind affirms concerning its body, or any part thereof, a force for existence (*existendi vis*) greater or less than before, and by the presence of which the mind is determined to think of one thing rather than another.

(Spinoza, *Ethics* III.xlviii.185)



...Spinoza tells us: above all do not believe that affectus as I conceive it depends upon a comparison of ideas.... affect is not reducible to an intellectual comparison of ideas, affect is constituted by the lived transition or lived passage from one degree of perfection to another, insofar as this passage is determined by ideas...

(Gilles Deleuze, "Lecture Transcripts on Spinoza's Concept of Affect" 3-4)

The positioned distinctions of affect are rather critical, particularly given that all affective theorization that I am aware of presumes a materialist ontology, though not all would make claims beyond epistemology. This marks a critical difference in the scale of materiality from which theorists stake out claims for affect. Some theorists of affect, such as Jameson, presume affect's privileged belonging to particular categories implicitly circumscribed by the human--the emotional, the anthropological, the strict Marxist, the psychoanalytic, and the psychological--and find thinking affect outside this human threshold "meaningless" or the "the mere issuing forth or discharge of raw material" and therefore outside the realm of political or critical value. Following this problem of the "meaninglessness" of affect beyond a human frame of reference, and in a curious moment of materialist intervention in Ngai's critique of Massumi and Raymond Williams, she notes that affect is inaccessible to positivist analysis:

The difficulty affective "intensity" poses for analysis is thus strikingly analogous to the analytical difficulty which Williams coined his term "structures of feeling" to address--that is, the kind posed by social experiences which "do not have to await definition, classification, or rationalization before they exert palpable pressures and set effective limits on experience and action."...Affective intensity clearly creates difficulties for more positivistic kinds of materialist analysis, even as it remains highly *analyzable* in or as effect.

(Ngai 26)

The selection from the footnote in Brian Massumi's *Parables of the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (2002) from which Ngai is summarizing and critiquing reads:

[In response to Lawrence Grossberg] It is argued here that affect is indeed unformed and unstructured, but that it is nevertheless highly organized and affectively analyzable (it is not entirely containable in knowledge but is analyzable in effect, as effect). The crucial point is that form and structure are not the only conceivable modes of differentiation. Here, affect is seen as prior to or apart from the qualitative...

(Massumi 26, note 3)

For Ngai, it is possible to posit a "pre-affective" question because affect is accessible in its remains, representations, effects and feelings, as the end product of human analysis, precisely the process that Deleuze counters, "affect is not reducible to an intellectual comparison of ideas" (4). To take the ideas of the ends without the materiality of the ends and the process by which the ends were effected is akin to privileging the Spinozian "ideas," which are representational vessels for the transmission of already affected content, without the materiality and processuality by which they are constituted.

Both Spinoza and Deleuze assert that *Affectus*--sometimes translated as “emotion” and defined as the transition of bodies under *Affectio*, translated as “affection”--“is a confused idea, whereby the mind affirms concerning its body, or any part thereof, a force for existence (*existendi vis*) greater or less than before” (Spinoza, *Ethics* III.xlviii.185). This force for existence (*existendi vis*) is being as it finds itself in constant change, as a “perpetual” variation of “the force of existing, or *potentia agendi*, the power [puissance] of acting” (Deleuze 3). These variations in “bodies are not distinguished in respect of substance” (Spinoza *Ethics* II.xii.95) because bodies are “distinguished from one another in respect of motion and rest, quickness and slowness, and not in respect of substance” (Spinoza *Ethics* II.xiii.93), and thus variations to a body *occur* and as a further occurrence of substantiation and are *then* represented in a fluctuating ideational register of the shift in either motion or speed of the *existendi vis* and/or *potentia agendi*, “and by the presence of” “the lived transition or lived passage of one degree of perfection to another, insofar as this passage is determined by ideas; but in itself does not consist in an idea, but rather constitutes [auto-]affect”—emotion. As the ideational fluctuation is itself an affective and auto-affective movement and circulation bound by representational thresholds, “confused ideas” auto-affectively process into that by “which the mind is determined to think of one thing rather than another” (Deleuze 3-4). And this is underscored by Spinoza in his assertion that “the human mind has no knowledge of the body, and does not know it to exist, save through the ideas of the modifications whereby the body is affected” (Spinoza *Ethics* II.xix.101).

Therefore in theorizing affect in a Spinozian or Deleuzian framework, there is no possibility for “a pre-affective question,” nor a construct for the analysis of “feeling” outside of affect, as “the human mind is the very idea or knowledge of the human body...as affected by another idea of a particular thing actually existing (external affect): or, inasmuch as the human *body* stands in need of very many *bodies* whereby it is, as it were, continually regenerated” (ibid, my italics). Affect makes ideas possible and not the obverse. Ideas are the autoaffective (intra-bodily circulation, cognition, recognition) registration of ongoing affective impingement and transmission between bodies and the world. It is the body under construction.

Two additional points are raised in this articulation. Spinoza’s language is quite distinct in making claims for “bodies” at large and for “the human body” in particular, and affect traverses both as variable speeds and movement, not as differentiations of substance. Moreover, the human body is constituted, as any body, as a variable assemblage, “the individual parts composing the human

body, and consequently the human body itself, are affected in a variety of ways *by external bodies*" (Spinoza, *Ethics* II.xiii.97, my italics). Furthermore, as "the very idea or knowledge of the human body" (Spinoza, *Ethics* II.xix.101) necessitates auto-affection *and* external affection "by another idea of a particular thing actually existing," a strictly auto-affective phenomenological account of affect, such as that found in Marc N. B. Hansen's *New Philosophy for New Media* (2004) and *Bodies-in-Code: Interfaces with Digital Media* (2006),¹⁷ is also not strictly possible within a Spinozian or Deleuzian framework. This position is underwritten by Spinoza's constellation of speeds and movement of bodies, human or not, whereby "a body in motion or at rest must be determined to motion or rest by another body, which other body has been determined to motion or rest by a third body, and that third again by a fourth, and so on to infinity" (Spinoza, *Ethics* II.xiii.93).

Other theorists, such as Manuel DeLanda, Deleuze, and Massumi, follow Spinoza's ontological claims predicated on material affect as movement and speed, and they provide for the inclusion of the human and our powers of analysis, but only as a subset in the realm of affect understood as ontological, variable force, power, dynamic matter and energies. In other words, positivist analysis through qualitative thresholds or epistemic habits would already hold the representational ideas (as *epistémè*, paradigms, methodology, etc.) of the collected effects of prior affections and cannot contain affect as continuous and generative materiality requiring a continuous and generative empiricism. Affect (quite like "structures of feeling") came before and continues through--in time and morphology, determines as a subset, and circuitously resides apart from rationalized technocratics precisely because they are a structured ideational subset of organized, captured, and codified affections. What becomes interesting then, is that while we cannot fully capture affect, we can intervene, shifting affective processes by constraints or thresholds, and create new affective codifications.

Sianne Ngai's *Ugly Feelings* does provide what we might think of as an analogic structure of affect and feeling in relation to the debate she engages with Massumi on the distinction between emotions and affect through three ironically qualitative categories: the "subjective/objective

¹⁷ Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this piece to flesh out this quibble with the work of Mark Hansen. In a completely different register from the work of Ngai, Hansen also posits a provocative articulation of affect with which I debate in the chapter entitled, "Instruments of Production and Affective Transduction." I would also note that Hansen's more current work indicates a shift in his position toward a more radical materialist perspective.

divide”; “narrative/nonnarrative” and “semiotic/asignifying” capacities. Emotion in Spinoza “is a confused idea” or “waverings of the mind” corresponding to the duration between affection [Affectio] and affect [Affectus]. In simple terms, as the variation of movement or speed that is occurring through bodies (affection) and within a body (auto-affection), a necessary passage from impingement to ideation might be thought as the time-procedurality of the production of an idea (representation) in the mind, thereby expressing the idea as “confus[ed]” and “waver[ing].”

Ngai’s work in *Ugly Feelings* would seem an aesthetic investigation and compendium of these confused and wavering moments as rhetorical, theoretical, literary and filmic representations, “Certainly less narratively structured, in the sense of being less object- or goal-directed, the intentionally weak and therefore often politically ambiguous feelings in this book are in fact much more *like* affects...than emotions” (Ngai 26, my italics). In this direct response to the work of Massumi on affect, the analogic structure of Ngai’s sentence creates a sort of pendulum with affect on one end and emotion on the other, and it is the work of feelings to traverse the two. She goes on to argue that affect and emotion represent “*transitions* from one pole to the other” (ibid) as suggested in my pendulum metaphor. In a materialist analysis, modes are not positions and differences in intensity do not imply interchangeability...except, perhaps in human psychological and representational discourse.

Ngai defines feeling intersubjectively and technically. Drawing from psychology she defines emotion as “first-person” (ibid) emotion (patient’s state) and affect as “third-person” (ibid) affect (analyst’s account of patient’s state), and attempts to dissolve the subjective/objective containment of feeling between these two “identity[ies] through another analogic model wherein the first-person/third-person, emotion/affect problematic is resolved “by film noir’s oscillations between first-person and third-person point of view” (Ngai 28). She asserts that, “noir’s demonstration that certain kinds of ugly feeling (paranoia, disconcertedness) become maximized when we are most uncertain if the ‘field’ of their emergence is subjective or objective” (ibid).

This argument takes its effects or expressions for its causes or affects. From my position, the very uncertainty of location, inside or outside, subjective or objective, and the emergence of perturbations resulting in “less narratively structured, in the sense of being less object- or goal-directed...intentionally weak and therefore often politically ambiguous feelings in this book are in fact much more *like* affects” (Ngai 26) points to an affective transmission defined by Spinoza.

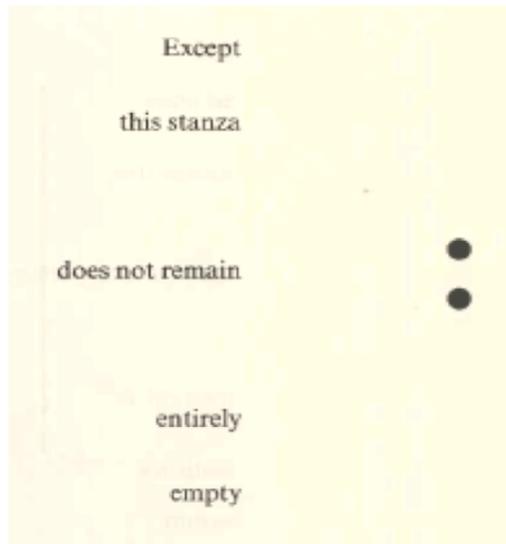
Ngai's example points to the legibility of this affective passage (not unlike Deleuze's extensive work in the *Cinema* books), made representable and ideational through *the technical capacities* of a particular style of camera usage and lighting design. And while I disagree with her composition and compartmentalization of affect, what Ngai has hit upon is a spectacular opening in the understanding of the aestheticization of human affective processes, particularly as representations and even more particularly as representations of language affectively amplified or intensified by the variable speeds and movement produced and composed through technics and technical bodies.¹⁸

To return to an earlier point, literary, cultural and media analyses of affect have not tended to draw from the same wells of affect. In fact, outside of readings of affect as representations of characterized or narrativized emotion, literary criticism has seemed at a loss to produce the kinds of affective analyses that creative critical media work has produced through considerations of the sensate materiality of visual, aural, literate and kinesthetic cultural production, multimodality, multi-mediation.¹⁹ Ngai aligns the diegetic cinematic framings produced through camera positioning and technical point of view with literary tone understood as oscillating significations of representations made between narration and story and reader reception, point of view and immersion, or the text's "global or organizing affect, its general disposition or orientation toward its audience and the world" (Ngai 28). She does more than recuperate "feeling" from Adorno's critique of aesthetic experience and Jameson's attack on postmodern "euphoria," but she does so specifically to recuperate and reify critical hermeneutics and especially the dialectic, "Tone *is* the dialectic of objective and subjective feeling that our aesthetic encounters inevitably produce" (Ngai 30). Thus, we are fundamentally offered a delicious new set of weak and intransitive feelings available for the elaboration of a "noncathartic aesthetics" (Ngai 9) modeled precisely on a newly remediated classical aesthetics and critical theory, such that noncathartic aesthetic values "allow texts to become 'readable in new ways'" (Ngai 8). More precisely, we find that this shift allows bodies and reading bodies to become "readable in new ways." Thus, Ngai's work recalls a banished aesthetics while championing the continuation of hermeneutical inquiry and politicized representational analysis.

¹⁸ This issue is taken up explicitly in my essay "Techno-Cinema: Image Matters in the Affective Unfoldings of Analog Cinema and New Media" in *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (Durham: Duke UP, 2007).

¹⁹ Kathleen Kennedy's book on affect in film, *Deleuze and the Aesthetics of Sensation* (2000), is a notable and early exception.

Affective Reading and Reading Affect



(Danielewski, *House of Leaves* 486)

Let us call the practice of critical hermeneutics articulated by Jameson and as discussed above in both the dilations of Ngai's "ugly feelings" and Jamesonian "affect" instances of "reading affect." "We" find ourselves in the second and third narratives mentioned in the elaboration of Jameson's canon of affective critical inquiry such that we are placed in the position of reading a reading and by implication reading a primary text through our reading of another reading and its circulation of political imperatives, aesthetic predicates and affective codifications. In fact, we find ourselves loaded with affection's effects, possibly even waverings or confused ideas. By the term "reading affect," what is meant here is that affect shall be ideationally located in a (in this case, literary) representation of character, tone, or narrativization and excavated through critical hermeneutics or an interpretive reading. As I find the concept of "stuplimity" as sublime in its anti-sublimity as its author argues, stuplimity shall offer its exhaustion and fatigue up representationally as grist for the mill of "reading affect."

In describing a number of contemporary authors of language-based rather than story-based literatures that employ what Ngai names Deleuzian "thick language" --syntax and grammar loosely coordinated such that the protocols for already normalized and habituated relations of signification and the relationships between tenor and vehicle, referent and reference, order and articulation are not present, and are interrupted, bifurcated or diverted from epistemic norms.

Signification is not the privileged modality, codified rules and constraints are. These texts are not solely, if at all, sentimental or plot-driven works. Though plot and sentimentality are not the usual modes of expression for what John Barth famously termed the “Literature of Exhaustion” (1967) and Deleuze elaborated in his essay “The Exhausted” in *Essays: Critical and Clinical* (1997), the fantastically impressive quality of Danielewski’s *Only Revolutions* lies in its demonstration of fiction written-under-constraint that can distribute coded protocols, thick language, exhaustion, fatigue, AND the sentimentality of plot and character-driven storytelling. I will address this issue and Danielewski’s work more thoroughly in the final section.

For Ngai, whose thought in this chapter travels extraordinarily close to Deleuze’s work in “The Exhausted,” the stuplime text is work driven to the edges and limits of language and signification in a given epistemic context of legibility. They test the limits of rhetorical force in narrative genres. Ngai describes several works in terms of affection, “simultaneously astonishing and deliberately fatiguing” (Ngai 260), “affectively reorganizing the subject’s relationship to language through stylistic innovation” (ibid). The last quotation refers to Gertrude Stein and the prior to Farrell, Goldman, Stein and Beckett. Much of the work she references in the chapter certainly qualifies as writing-under-constraint, technical, algorithmic, coded, or rule-based literary production. Writing-under-constraint holds no pretence to “hidden meanings” accessible through surface clues and symptoms, but rather demonstrates the symptomology of function-based programming. The text is a performative execution of the design of coded protocols and rules for usage.

Thus when we attempt to engage this coded textuality hermeneutically, we experience “obstructed agency.” If instead we engage or interact with the performativity of the execution of coded language programming, we practice an entirely different mode of critical reading than that which produces an interpretative reading. We *run* the word machine, which operates upon us and not for us. It is an experiential and interactive (versus immersive) mode of narrative. And as the result of a text *performing us* as fully sensate and *multimodal readers* rather than the reader producing a meaningful text by means of deep *reading*, the language of these works appears “thick” indeed, unyielding and non-sensical—precisely because it is so *by design*. This is not to say that one can’t “make” or craft sense out of such text, but this productive action would be a constructivist poesis, creative criticism, as it were, and not a critical hermeneutical unveiling. Take the following extended quotation as an example of the difficulty of performing interpretive work upon writing-under-constraint or coded textuality:

Draft chapter for Cross Media Movements
DO NOT CITE WITHOUT PERMISSION

Like Stein's style in the period of *Making of Americans*, "Stirrings Still" becomes syntactically dense and complex while remaining minimalist in diction. As in the case of Homer's "simultaneous" or "timeless" language...its language is marked by the same absence of a "sequence of cause and effect" that stupefies Legrand, producing the effect of delay, fatigue, or "temporary paralysis".... This discontinuity is generated within the speech or text itself, as well as experienced by its interpreter as an interruption of understanding. What Poe, West, and Beckett suggest in different ways is that when language thickens, it suffers a 'retardation by weak links,' slowed down by the absence of the causal connectives that would propel the work forward. It is this change in temporal organization that in turn slows down the interpreter--as if the loss of strong links in the text paradoxically strengthens an affective link between text and reader, transferring the text's 'stupor' to him or her.

(Ngai 256-7)

Ngai's excavation of the "raw materials" but not the context of the work, the "dense and complex" syntax and "minimalist" diction, in fact belie a comparative analysis as these aesthetic-predicates-modifiers laden with value relative to other conditions--reflect a non-normative combination of literary styles. This non-normativity refers to particular readers of a particular language within a particular set of receptive literary protocols and expectations and not to an assumption of literal/literary normativity. The reader expecting the pre-programmed affects of a "story" or the deep-seated "themes" of modernist sensibilities may find the style of the syntax "dense and complex" *despite* the promise of "minimalist" diction, and likewise the reader expecting pre-programmed affects of a "treatise" or the expansive categorization of a "compendium" may find the diction minimalist *despite* the promise of "dense and complex" syntax.

In either case, the reader receives unexpected affections and might well be "simultaneously astonished and deliberately fatigued" by the disjuncture between anticipation and affect, or as Deleuze claims:

The combinatorial is the art or science of exhausting the possible through inclusive disjunctions. But only an exhausted *person* can exhaust the possible, because he has renounced all need, preference, goal, or signification. Only the exhausted person is sufficiently disinterested, sufficiently scrupulous. Indeed, he is obliged to replace his plans with tables and programs that are devoid of all meaning. For him what matters is the order in which he does what he has to do, and in what combinations he does two things at the same time--when it is still necessary to do so, for nothing. Beckett's great contribution to logic is to have shown that exhaustion (exhaustivity does not occur without a certain physiological exhaustion...The combinatorial exhausts its object, but only because its subject is himself exhausted. The exhaustive *and* the exhausted.

(Deleuze, *Essays* 154)

Furthermore, the “absence of a ‘sequence of ‘cause and effect’ that stupefies” (Ngai 256) and “this discontinuity [that] is generated within the speech or text itself, as well as experienced by its interpreter as an interruption of understanding” (ibid) presumes an established set of codes and protocols for language that might produce “understanding” or interpretive and structural legibility in the first place.

Discontinuity was normative in the European codex of the Early Modern period not to mention in most so-called sacred texts. A non-causal textuality is not a stupefied textuality despite the conditions and conditioning of its variable readers. Moreover, the anthropomorphic assignation of “stupor” and “thickness” to language, despite the re-interpreted Deleuzian reference to thick language, is, under these circumstances, used metaphorically, not as a compositional material descriptor, but as a *receptive* metaphor, and *is* a clue for or symptom of the material condition of a reader/interpreter whose method needs to flex a bit to accommodate “weak” links and a change in temporal organization (one explicit definition for affect). In other words, naming a text stuplime is the primary symptom of an exhausted reader not a stupefied text. For Ngai is correct in asserting that “the loss of strong links in the text paradoxically strengthens an affective link between text and reader” (ibid), especially a reader who is fed a healthy diet of “strong links,” but less provocative in the presumption that there is a “transfer[of] the text’s ‘stupor’ to” (ibid) the reader. While there may be no doubt that after reading “stuplime” text, the reader/interpreter is in a state of stupor in this example, there is a serious doubt as to a “text’s ‘stupor.’”

“Stupor,” as a quality and a state, is the product of readerly interpretation. The reader cognizes and reads his affect as “stupor” through an overly conditioned and now desired causality that mistakes his negative affect or “ugly feeling,” which has been generated by the asymmetrical movements and speeds of the text impinging upon the reader such that the reader represents herself to herself as a body in stupor *caused* by a text in stupor. Having not felt stupor before reading but feeling stupor after reading, she ascribes the causality and source of stupor to the text. The text “did” this to her. By what agency? --The reader herself, under a particular signifying, subjectivizing, and narrative regimen. She is a reader whose reading is bound by the affective thresholds and praxis of interpretive narrativity such that when the variability of the text exceeds her ideas of text, affection has indeed occurred. And she names this wavering and confused idea, stupor, and in the auto-affective attempt to produce a sufficient idea of the text, which in a hermeneutical context must be “meaningful,” she attributes the effects of her quality,

structure and form of affection to the text itself. We might recognize this attribution of affection in ourselves and in our classrooms every now and then, i.e. “the book made me feel stupid, so the book must be stupid.”

Now this is not to argue that “stupor” was not a coded or programmed compositional affect executed through a performance upon the reader by the text. In fact, we must concede that it is a rather clever bit of language that is capable of unfolding a signifying, non-discursive, affective stupor in some readers. The transmission of affect from one body to another body cannot be mistaken for the transmission of identity nor qualified substance. Neither can the aesthetic coding of affect be mistaken for the performative execution of affect. “Reading affect” presumes representational and hermeneutic grounds that reveal a signifying stability, and to paraphrase Laura Mulvey, just as sadism needs a story, it takes powerful capacity and agency to produce transitive objects for subjectivity.

Ngai’s example and Jameson’s bemoaning the “euphoric” aesthetics of postmodernity demonstrate rather aptly the discomfort of a reader taken through the body nondiscursively as a subjectivized object of affective textuality. This language of agency-bearing subjects and receptive objects is not entirely apt for affective theorization; it operates in a signifying register that stabilizes these as positions rather than demonstrating them as moments or movements in a complex ethological process. Stupor is a trajectory of intensity, durational and slow. The stupefied reader who in the engagement with text is impinged by a speedier affect than her capacity to receive and cognize this affection allows, becomes *slower*. Over a period of time she will have experienced “affective reading,” or “a force for existence (*existendi vis*) greater or less than before, and by the presence of which the mind is determined to think of one thing rather than another” (Spinoza, *Ethics* III.xlviii.185). She in turn critically interprets or “reads her affect,” in its clues and symptoms, back upon the text as an “ugly feeling” *caused* by a text secretly *possessing* “ugly feelings” despite its material constituency of printed or pixelated language, paper or screen, syntax and diction. Affective reading is force-filled, discursive and non-discursive.

Programmed affects, affective reading, and non-discursive aesthetics

So here [*Only Revolutions*] is something that's absolutely visual; if you look at each page, it's like a screenplay. There's so much action that's taking place. At the same time, it's impossible to visualize.

(Mark Z. Danielewski in an interview with Kiki Benzoni, *ebr*)

Echo:

As language *means* anything, it is visual, aural, and or tactile. As language *means* anything it is material: inky letters, words, hieroglyphics, pictographs, characters, scripts, logographs, orthography, sentences, speech, sound, writing and the raised imprint of Braille alphabets. Before language *means* anything it is sensation. Before language means anything it is affect. After language means something it is affect. While language means it is affect.

Affect is not proprietary nor need it exclude. Language can be other things too.

But,

Echo:

As
language
means
anything,
it
is
visual,
aural,
and/
or
tactile.

You were there.

Mark Z. Danielewski, Dedication, *Only Revolutions*, Sam
Mark Z. Danielewski, Dedication, *Only Revolutions*, Halley

You were there.

You were there. You were becoming your body. A textual embodiment. The impingements of affection between multimediating and multimodal bodies: "Affect occurs as a *process of*

composition sustained through a relation between body and expression, representation, map and knowledge” (Munster 140, my italics).

“This is not *for* you.”

(Danielewski, *House of Leaves* Dedication, my italics)

Indeed affect is not intentional or directional, nor is it “a thing or a substance” (Munster 139) nor does it have a history (Hansen 168).²⁰ Affect is not the objected or subjected possession of human bodies and minds but rather that which it compositionally becomes--in the gerund--becoming--becoming sensation through movement across/through/as bodies: human, earth, world, novel, reader, page, screen. Affections are sensate and material capture and composition, not through agency but through constitutive embodiment, material configuration, design, and the execution of the force, energy, and processuality of that which makes an event a duration, as a *revolution*.



Affect happens “before language means” and while and processually. Language may be made to mean because affect has circulated back on itself within a body, as autoaffectation. The *durées* of duration. The spans of happening. Xeno’s infinitely divisible trajectory as event. The “before” here refers to time, space, and matter as morphological composite/ing. So how to capture affective reading? How to compose affective reading? Yes, coded affects might unfold through/as “critical” compositions. Might we think that affective considerations of quality, movement, symbiotic exchange, feedback streams, circulations of motion and rest, speed, control, and sensation, and expressive tendencies might offer a more provocative approach to our theorization of affective reading and critical composition? Time and movement address a well-worn theoretical question; how does the flight of butterfly translate when pinned dead to an insect display board? If the capture of the dynamic thing also constitutes its death and produces by this transformation a new

²⁰ Affectivity has no sequential or causal history in Hansen: “affectivity is pre-cisely the experience of one’s **incongruity with oneself** (one’s excess in relation to any fixing of identity)” (*Bodies-in-Code*, 168). He make these remarks in the context of his reading of Keith Piper’s work, *Caught like a Nigger in Cyberspace*, and a discussion of racial codifications.

entity, how might we “scholarize” this flight but through the capture of movement transformed into a deadened and mastered representational object archived in and among other similar objects? Is it not possible to take flight over death? Does textuality fly? Can’t criticism make and do as a rhetorical poesis?

Digital poet John Cayley accuses print text of exposing itself through its “s t u n n e d ” quality (“Time” 309).²¹



I disagree.

Affective movement works across and through bodies. Including print. Habituation to affections may deaden the legibility of their intensities, and likewise, language that is “stunned” (or slow moving) resonates with in-folded and in-tensive energies that make critical unveilings so delicious. They possess the immanent execution of various syntactical and grammatical codes, similar to those of computational programming languages upon which John Cayley predicates this difference. To make a creative critical affective case for affective language matters, I would like to

²¹ From “Time Code Language”: Despite your understanding that, for example, these [print] words are inscribed as writing (temporally *stunned*, deferred, and spatialized) you will sense words shifting their meanings as I write/speak and you read/hear” (309, my italics).

trace several issues raised when considering Danielewski's post-print fictions (print fiction that comes after and acknowledges digital technics and aesthetics) and the codified rhetoric of technical constraint and exhaustion through which he produces text.

Also Cayley's theory of programmatology and coded textuality, when not taken as an exclusionary principle, print is "stunned" and digitality is "live," offers a different mode of approach to affective reading. I have stated above that digital medial instantiation makes *visible* some of the affective morphologies of language bodies at a scale and scope at which the human sensorium *can register* them, and likewise, digital media have offered the opportunity to produce the execution of coded affects through digital or what Anna Munster calls "information aesthetics" (*Materializing New Media: Embodiment in Information Aesthetics* (2006)). Were we to pursue Cayley's distinction between print and digital textuality, however, we would find that we are bound to equate print textuality with code as well. For while in terms of affective impingement print textuality is substantially habituated, genred, normalized, and conventional (affective intensity "waning"), we would find that it fully possesses the capacity to execute or perform its intensive codifications. For print has its own domain of execution and performance and capacity for intensive affections that the post-print fiction of Danielewski demonstrates with dynamic, lively, and enervating affect.

In *Writing Machines* (2002), N. Katherine Hayles offers one of the most well-known readings of Danielewski's first novel, *House of Leaves*, through her critical construct, "media specific analysis," which simply put, insists on the technical and medial specificity of analyses of literary, cultural and rhetorical production. As prime example, she takes up Danielewski's unique first novel:

House of Leaves...extends the claims of the print book by showing what print can be in a digital age; second, it recuperates the vitality of the novel as a genre by recovering, *through the processes of remediation themselves*, subjectivities coherent enough to become the foci of sustained narration that remains the hallmark of the print novel. The computer has often been proclaimed the ultimate medium because it can incorporate every other medium within itself. As if imitating the computer's omnivorous appetite, *House of Leaves* in a frenzy of remediation attempts to eat all the other media, but this binging leaves traces on the text's body, resulting in a transformed physical and narrative corpus.

(Hayles 112, my underlining)

What are the claims of the novel? The trope of the speaking book charms literary critics almost

as much as the “showing” book. Talking/hearing, showing/seeing, and ultimately “binging”/eating, we might gather that despite Cayley’s obituary, the book “IS ALIVE!!!”--not to mention a carnivorous copycat. Add to this the print book’s spirituality found in its capacity for generic recuperation and salvation (were books ever *dying?*), and a strong claim might be made here for the affective reading of Danielewski’s textual movements and constraints offered by Hayles.

Ultimately, though, Hayles reads affect and kills the text to do so, for after the medial binging “marks” the body of the text, it becomes a rather deadened “**transformed physical** and narrative ***corpus***” (ibid, my italics and underlining). The force of her rhetoric exhausts the text, at least analogically. The effect of her affective reading moving through the reader’s body once auto-affectively represented *becomes* a reading of affect. And there is so much *body* in this passage, so much affect, transition, impingement, corporeality and *existendi vis*:

Here everything about

the [house](#)

suddenly

changes

([HoL](#) 459-460)

The claim that the computer incorporates all other media is an echo of claims made on behalf of the novel prior to the computer’s arrival. But it is interesting to follow Hayles’ assertion of

has argued that his term “time code language” is the center of difference between print and digital production:

In so far as code generates the temporalities of writing in programmable media, it highlights what I believe is currently the most important thread in a program that *criticism and theory* must follow in order to accept these temporalities as integral and inalienable properties of all atoms of *signification* in literal, indeed, literary art...The cultivation and articulation of real, material time is built into the text through coding.

(327, my italics)

Despite the radical implications of Cayley’s assertions, our critical narratives return once again, “criticism and theory” that must be fundamentally predicated on “signification” wherein the difference here is the “cultivation and articulation of *real, material* time [...] built into the text through coding” (ibid). That subtextual, processual, and programmed textuality generate an emergent but established set of surface texts with “real, material time” “built in” points to *transitions* between simultaneous and disparate temporalities adherent to the executability of all code and text in direct medial relationship to their technical instantiations. In other words, while Cayley would argue a substantive difference here, in fact, the difference is one of degree. The speeds of the performative *execution* of coded textuality as electronic literature or electronic literal art are visibly faster than those of print, and certainly this is important, especially in term of discursivity and significance. But on a non-discursive register, this distinction does not hold, and since movement over time is the hinge, the non-discursive relevance of the affection of visible movement is important.

“I’m afraid it’ll vanish if I move closer. It’s almost worth spending an hour just basking in the sight. I must be nuts to enjoy this so much.”

But when Navidson finally does move forward, nothing changes.

([HoL 462](#))

Is reading a film through its stills analogous to reading electronic literature through print literature? Is the composite “writing in *programmable* media” the difference? I assert that this is explicitly an issue of (re)medial difference, an issue of fast programmable digital media versus slow programmable print media. Is this the crux of difference/différance in writing and composition? Is the concept “writing” once again made so whole? Is not the passive human legibility of temporal duration in digital media and not the executability of language as human-machinic text or language as computational-machinic code the perceptual difference? Put differently, is this not a

question of the constraints of human perception in relation to two media rather than an issue of the ontology of print or digital language?

“—Consume only this.”

(OR “Hailey” 42/”Sam” 319)

“—Consume only this”

(OR “Sam” 42/”Hailey” 319)

To complicate matters, Cayley argues for a redirection of critical attention paid to electronic texts away from their *visible* modes and the metonymic correlation of the poetics of print culture as their foundational referent. His example of this criticism comes from Hayles’ reading of *House of Leaves* that “[...] makes us see and feel and hear the empty/nothing/void...” (cited in Cayley 327). Cayley observes that when digital and print texts are considered, the critical tendency is to produce analogic similitude across media by means of visual comparison:

However, we still, in this and other print culture examples, see and feel and hear the “leaves” using technologies of inscription that are profoundly familiar within the culture and institutions of literature and pedagogy in general: parallelism of textual streams (text and footnotes); commentaries; commentaries on commentaries; multiple perspectives; typographic novelties; not least, temporal complexities represented to us as content while formally virtualized and *deferred by writing*.

(Cayley 327)

Thus, the “profoundly familiar” medial habituation of print is affectively represented as deadened “temporal complexities represented to us as content while formally virtualized and *deferred by writing*” suggestive of a dematerialization of temporality through inscription. Here, deferral in inscriptive print is strictly stilled and spatial and does not possess the capacity of digital textualities to defer temporality, which is “literal[y]” possible in digital texts, as Cayley’s section title explicitly marks: “Code Generates Literal Time” (ibid).

This spatialized deferral of signification once again evokes and presumes a romanticized hermeneutical conception of analog textuality in generic contradistinction to digitality. Jerome McGann succinctly reframes this slippage in *Radiant Textuality*, in which he argues that this view of print textuality is underscored by:

A romantic hermeneutics: that is to say, under a horizon where multiple meanings are generated by readers working in and through texts imagined on an analogy with the Bible. Those kinds of texts appear to us as massively authoritative and

deeply mysterious, requiring devotional study to uncover secret meanings...Whereas in the light of digitality it becomes possible to re-engage texts and documents [as] fields open to decisive and rule-governed manipulations. In this view of the matter, texts and documents are not primarily understood as containers or even vehicles of meaning. Rather, they are sets of instantiated rules and algorithms for generating and controlling themselves and for constructing further sets of transmissional possibilities.

(McGann 2)

Affective transmissions. A hermeneutics, an inscriptive mode of critique, is invoked by Cayley as the model for digital critique but also the negating cut for print textuality's "instantiated rules and algorithms for generating and controlling themselves and for constructing further sets of transmissional possibilities." What does it mean to shift from spatial to temporal significations, then? Does such a divide exist? Can spacing occur outside of time? Can symbolic and signifying time exist outside of space? What is the onto-epistemological ground of "literal time" wherein the word "literal" references *reading* and *readability* etymologically and in the practice of Cayley's example and critique and wherein composition and reception are selectively parsed between the two domains?

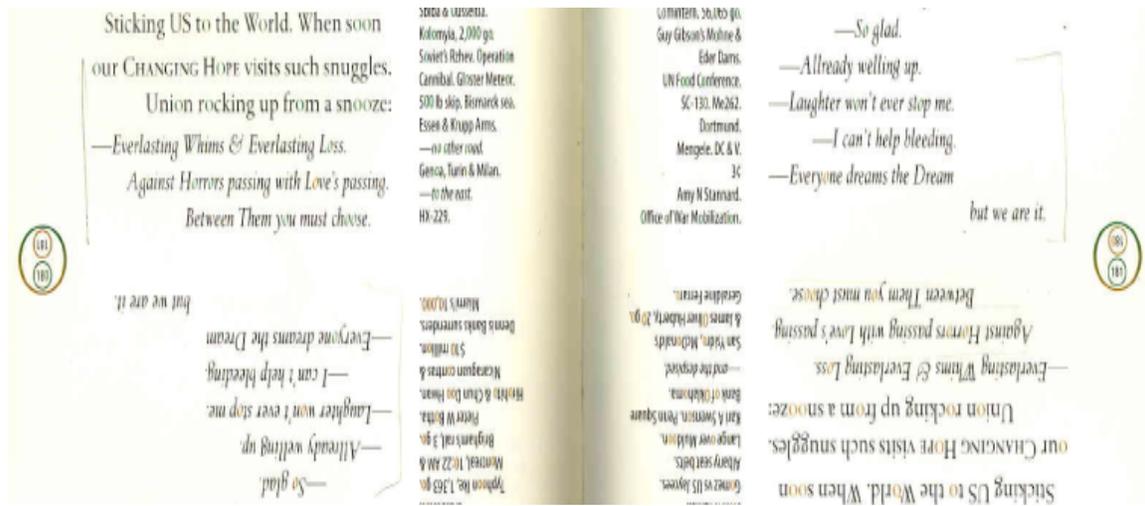
Cayley argues that "code as programming" "allow[s] authors and readers to program aspects of temporality as integral parts of the text" and these processes generate "reading time[s]" as transversal movements of linguistic, syntactical, visual, design, material, and embodied practices (or what Cayley following Espen Aarseth calls "ergodic processes") that fundamentally "break" with the "literal time[s]" of print media. Both are literal media; both are readerly. As readerly, literal media, then, the issue is, not as Cayley argues, one of the capacities of code in-itself, but rather an issue of affect. Both operate through combined tempo-material *modalities of deferral* and *movement*. These movements are already constitutive of a multiplicity of temporalities, simultaneous, and segmented across the composition and reception of dynamic textualities. What we must take into consideration are the spatio-temporalities of deferral and movement at the "literal" nexus, the *literacy*, and dynamic interfacing of the media and its reader, the *bodies* of the affective (re)mediation, including the bodies of the user/programmers/author, the modes of capture (book and/or display, inscription and/or code), and the print/digital *events, codes, significations* and *functions*.

There is an obvious quality to the observation that a programmed text authored using Flash is not

read in ActionScript, but rather executed or unfolded through Flash—unless it is a codework meant to be read both at the level of execution and at the level of code. And we must remember that reading code at the level of codeworks does not involve the generation of “literal time” but rather holds quite still on screen or hardcopy—rather “stunned” in fact. The medial instantiation, proper structuration, and indeed the proper name of the syntax and grammar of a code language does not provide sufficient basis for an ontological claim for “real material time” against analog textuality. Both are executed; print through its subtexual protocols, processual syntax, and modular grammatical programmability. And while the movement of print does not register as the generation of an automatic visible, moving surface, the pages must be navigated performatively and the tempo-material agglomeration of the discursive and non-discursive, signifying and affective interaction of the text with a reading body does indeed illustrate that there is “real, material time” built in to print textuality. Likewise, the computational machine must read the code through its body.

This is not to suggest that there is no material or affective difference. As with Jameson’s claim to a “waning of affect” producing an explosion of affect, Cayley and other digital theorists championing digital media over print media, have made the temporalities of print media visible and the real space of “cyberspace” rather less virtual. Cayley criticizes Hayles’ reading of Danielewski’s first novel, by charging the material difference of “leaves” that “generate temporal complexities represented as content while formally virtualized an *deferred by writing*.” According to Cayley, time is *only* coded as content, subtended into the narrative framing of content, and most importantly, producing a unimodal tendency that defers temporality into the literariness of writing itself. And it is here that I would flatly disagree, for as leaves must be turned--and in the case of Danielewski’s work books must be flipped--and navigated, so too programs must be loaded, started, and navigated according to a set of material user/reader performances and most importantly, they must be run by a machine reader.

Turns into the open



(OR "Hailey" 180-181/OR "Sam" 180-181)

I will turn to *Only Revolutions*, a novel that Danielewski has claimed cannot exist online precisely because of the design of its navigational programming and executability. As the story of two 16-year-olds-in-love-and-on-the-road, *Only Revolutions* must be *driven*, steered, and manually navigated by the reader in order to execute its coded language and in order to produce signification (the analogy of play with video game controllers comes immediately to mind). The book must actually be flipped around and steered by the human user. The insistence of medial priority by both Cayley and Danielewski is provocative. Taking claims for absolute difference, the word “code” cannot play the aporetic scapegoat for the spacing between the words “difference” and “differential.”

Aside from the obvious status of syntax and grammar as codes operating in analog languages, there is an unacknowledged interface or perhaps intra-face at the core of Cayley’s notion of “stunned” or dead analog textuality that supplements his sense of the flight of digitality as execution. The body is the interface for print and the body is the interface for digital textualities—but what then is the executability of the materiality of the book? Or what is a body/book interface that unfolds as affective reading? If the radiant ambiguity of print text (its reader-ly-ness) butts against the hierarchal determinacy of executable digital code (its author-ly-ness) must we also presume differentials of delivery: publication, software, and operating systems? Are not in fact *both* the composite deferrals of coded languages, albeit differently so, and therefore *both* differentials of space *and time*? And therefore both differentials of affective/ed bodies modulated

by variable technics?

House of Leaves is what I would call a *centripetal* book. It's about interiorities and history and progeny and ancestors. Now this [*Only Revolutions*] was pointedly a *centrifugal* novel. It was about getting outside. It was about looking at landscape. It was about addressing *what the open was*. It was about--not only an academic level--reading Agamben's "The Open" [sic] and readdressing what Heidegger was talking about with "the open." Looking at the naturalists, looking at ecocriticism. It was also about *physically living* that role, personally saying, "Mark, you have to get out of the house. You have to go talk to people about what it was like to be sixteen, and talk to them about their experience of history." Addressing the online community and saying, "Hey, give me your input here: what was your favourite historical moment?" So it's not just my personal history, but histories that go beyond what I can perceive when I'm looking at thousands of books.

(Danielewski in an interview with Kiki Benzon, *electronic book review*)

The open is affect. Centrifugal and centripetal forces are affective. Physically living is affective. And all of these events operate in functions and ethologies of time and space and can be represented and made to mean, and these operations and significations open onto further affections as do the experiences of individual and collective histories and representations of histories in "thousands of books." Affect works through each--differentially.

Expiration Date: Now

(OR "Sam" Publication Page/"Hailey" End Page)

Without reference to the narrative content (the presumed location of temporality deferred by writing in print media and the site of hermeneutical inquiry) of *Only Revolutions*, I would like to demonstrate not only the coded user-interaction of the novel programmed to unfold designated affects, but its further relation to protocols, algorithms, thresholds, and games, as a "radiant textuality" according to McGann's description. One must learn to "play" *Only Revolutions* by user engagement (movement, sensation, and time) without any reference to the narrative or to signifying or asignifying conditions, but rather through its tempo-spatial deferrals articulated through embodied protocols.

The novel is indeed *stunning*, not in the sense of Cayley's derogation of stilled text, but in its completely programmed articulation as an example of writing-under-constraint that produces both a language-based text and a signifying narrative as story. The novel may be entered from either

of two portals and in fact, download and execution instructions are provided in the packaging: “the publisher suggests alternating between Hailey and Sam, reading eight pages at a time.” But these are not command controls, so a violation does not crash the novel, but neither will the medium ambiently alternate between portals automatically. The reading body must manually flip or steer *Only Revolutions* 180° laterally and longitudinally rather than click to execute its various movements. And certainly, then, its speeds are slower than digital execution but well matched with the capacities of a human body--and speeds are at issue.

Temporal deferral is *the* issue of this affective trajectory operating in 4-dimensional space-time. *Only Revolutions*' temporal execution unfolds in flipbook style iconographies of the page numbers as well as its compressions and expansions of font and dates. Each page is a composite of 4 quadrants or streams each composed of 90 text objects executing simultaneous and networked but separate algorithms. And while I could go on to list over 40 other aspects of “programmatology” to use Cayley’s phrase for coded textualities, each of which also hinges upon temporal and spatial deferral, the point I am making is that even were we to disregard the executing reader, this “book” of analog print violates Cayley’s ethos that analog textuality is characterized by “text as a line (resting) in space” (320). Instead the book demonstrates that analog textuality can abide by his ethos for digital textuality in that it “realizes the potential for a more radical restructuring of the culture of human time” (321) and is “time-stamped” (324).

Most provocatively, *Only Revolutions* demonstrates that like digital media, “the code is hidden as it runs, driving temporal atoms of literal signification” (328)—until we reveal the source code, the functions and algorithms and see nothing more than lots of lines. Machinic execution: computational and human. Digital text and print text codes affect by aesthetic (poesis) and machinic (techne) design, and whereas habituation of receptive modes dulls the affect of print textuality such that it appears to wane, Danielewski’s post-print fiction makes affect evocatively legible. Affect through amplified or intensified poesis and techne:

Time

finished

between

the space of

two

frames

([HoL 198-201](#))

What *Only Revolutions* does, remembering Danielewski's insistence that the novel cannot be a digital text is demonstrate the affections that might be revealed through the mediation of digital and analog texts taken together in a mixed reality mélange, or what I term "cross media movement." We might interrogate the qualities and movements of textualities given their material conditions without assuming a pre-critical separation of textuality predicated on an exclusively disciplinary taxonomy of medial instantiation.

Allowing for a cross mediated and mixed reality approach, a "digi-logical" analytical/constructivist crafting, or creative criticism, if you will, we might consider the qualities and movements of relational bodies and capacities across inter- and intra-faces by means of transversal motions in unevenly ubiquitous print and digital environments--analog and digital--wherein as McGann insists "our minds think in [codes]." And this certainly supplements Spinoza's assertion that ideas are gauges of variability and variables. For reading in both analog and digital media, the execution of the variation, affect, makes the first move:

Then no matter where you are, in a crowded restaurant or on some desolate street or even in the comforts of your own home, you'll watch yourself dismantle every assurance you ever lived by. You'll stand aside as a great complexity intrudes, tearing apart, piece by piece, all of your carefully conceived denials, whether deliberate or unconscious. And then for better or worse you'll turn, unable to resist, though try to resist you still will, fighting with everything you've got not to face the thing you most dread, what is now, what will be, what has always come before, the creature you truly are, the creature we all are, buried in the nameless black of a name.

And then the nightmares will begin.

(HoL xxiii)

“Don't be scared.”

(HoL 480)

Affect is real.

Affect is slippery. Representations of affect are slippery. Affect conducts. Affect transmits. Affect can be emotion read in the face of the analyst's patient. Affect can be intensity read in the face of a geologist's seismograph. Affect is oftentimes thought to be the corollary to emotion. Affect is sometimes thought to be the corollary to intensity. Affect is sometimes thought to be the corollary to feeling and feelings. Affect is sometimes thought to be the corollary to touching, sensation, movement. Representations of affect are affective too. But when a representation of affect is affective, it is not only a representation. It is affect.

And affect is the composition of the real.

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