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So Soon Too Late: Affective Shifts in a *Ketl* [1]

Thinking back and forth, feeling what just happened, what things have been and are still becoming, as all these emerge together – there are many modes in which an event seems to shift, as if outside of itself, just as this outside is felt within thought. Events are always in the middle of things, even as this middling seems far-flung for the "now" moment.

Drawing on systems-based and philosophical approaches to affect and situated cognition, I discuss a media performance project called *Ketl* to consider how media may be seen to open (and withhold) relational processes of collective creation. I want to define media quite broadly, for both this work and its writing—to include physical objects, digital interfaces, site-specific elements, and their modes of description; where it's not just specific kinds of media, but the speeds and slowness they allow in modulating affective tonalities for bodies and persons.[2] If the immediacy of the event is already a "specious present" that's blurred and smudged across untimely modes of attention (Varela 2000), then perhaps media do not so much mediate our experience of the world, as enact an ecology of thought that includes human and nonhuman agents.

This allows us to think about media in the manner of immediation, a term that lends itself to strange middlings. Immediation marks its own disjunctive coherence when we pull the term apart to find those that comprise or decompose it – immediacy and mediation. Our tendency may be to immediately suspect mediation because it suggests a position of representation, a mode of presentation or of resolution. We may feel more in favour of immediacy because it seems to deliver the pure event to us as a singular moment in time. I aim to trouble these oppositions, to open instead a productive disjunction in terms, where immediation may offer a more immanent and shifting relation

across immediacy and mediation. I seek to show how immediacy and mediation shift through various practices of thinking and making in the development of a project. This has an affective dimension that becomes useful for understanding collective dynamics within collaboration and participation, especially at different scales of relation.

In doing so, the art making process may also reveal underlying conditions within a given milieu, to offer a critical perspective on social mechanisms of control and agency, even as these conditions become generative constraints drawn through the aesthetic logic of a work. For *Ketl*, I aim to demonstrate how online geospatial interfaces are embodied through affective states of withdrawal and openness across a broad set of registers. Here I identify formative points and critical shifts, where particular techniques emerge in the process as ways of approaching affective immediation in media performance practice. These move through collaboration and creative development, to audience spectatorship and participation, where affective and emotional tonalities are complicit with analogue and digital elements.

Ketl—in the time of writing

These shifting relations are also immanent to the practice of writing itself. In the back and forth of writing both for and about performance, this essay becomes another site for immediation, where problems of description trouble the boundary of thought and materiality. Immediation offers a concept at the intersection of writing and art practice, where description is inflected by the fabulatory impetus of media entities, such that writing may feel the aesthetic quality in which these entities are coordinated.

Ketl is part of a continuing project that has involved workshops, research-creation events and exhibitions – with performance, video, and participatory actions, using mobile, locative and interactive media. This essay focuses on one iteration – *Ketl* at FOFA Gallery in Montreal (Hornblow and Sans 2015).[3] The problem with describing the work is that it's already a long and variable series and I'm still in the middle of everything. At the time of writing (July 2015), we've just completed the performance at FOFA Gallery, and I'm now preparing two presentations for the International Symposium on Electronic Art, to be followed by a work at the Affect Theory Conference in Lancaster Pennsylvania.[4] Being caught in the middle of things can be a source of much anxiety, but just

Figure 48: *Ketl* 2015, Hornblow and Sans, 2015. Image: Kinga Michalska

as deadlines loom large they also allow new forms of life to appear. To say "at the time of writing" may then become a matter of foregrounding the time of writing itself. Where immediacies shift across multiple durations and scales of action, we may feel many speeds and durations in which things already describe themselves somehow, and where media come to enact processes of thinking and making in the back-and-forth of our own descriptions. If writing may describe a work, it is through singular, untimely and distributed processes of immediation where multiple media shift in tonality, opening and withdrawing, with and from one another.

> *"So I've been thinking about*
> *withdrawal and opacity*
> *transparency and openness*
>
> *how they seem to go in a loop*
> *or get folded through in a way"*
> *Ketl* (Hornblow and Sans 2015)

Flashback to the FOFA performance/event – the opening lines for *Ketl* are repeated over and over as I bounce up and down on the spot. People enter the space and spread tentatively around the perimeter, finding a place to land while I shift position with each repetition, framing their movement in-between short, improvised dance sketches. The bouncing is a warm-up exercise borrowed from dancer/choreographer Yumiko Yoshioka – a good way to ground yourself and get into a

dancing body, which is useful for me now as I'm feeling nervous about how things might work out. A warm-up exercise is not always the best choreographic gesture to begin with, but it suits the text. With each repetition the words get mixed up a little, finding strange loops, as if I'm not quite sure which way round things should be. The bouncing and framing gradually opens into more extended movement and vocal phrases, as the grounding effect amplifies my expression on different levels across the floor, displaced, all the while, with broken gestures to lend the text an open uncertainty.

First Formative Point—Impossible Indifference

I've been feeling and thinking about withdrawal and openness for some time, but it was only in the intimate immediacy and mediation of working closely with another person that this became something to work with. We had met just recently through a mutual friend, had nothing much to go on – Sans and I – except a feeling of shared sensibility, and a curiosity around affective states in the creative process. Sans sent me a YouTube link to a lecture by Catherine Malabou on the possibilities of new forms of withdrawal, after reading my paper for ISEA (Hornblow 2015b). In "From Sorrow to Indifference" Malabou challenges Deleuze's reading of Spinoza, suggesting that each of them disavows a total lack of affection for wonder in human experience (Malabou 2013). Drawing on contemporary developments in neurobiology, Malabou argues instead for the possibility of total withdrawal, and that "inspiring indifference" – rather than "inspiring sad passions" (as in Spinoza) – has become "necessary for the exercise of power" in contemporary political spheres.[5]

This isn't something I want to deal with right now, or at least not yet. It's still too soon for indifference – except to say that withdrawing from the question allows for the possibility of drawing with-and-from what becomes delayed so it may enter untimely relays with other things. For now, I'm more concerned with how the serial immediacies of this process and its enactive mediation may find a disjunctive quality of immediation. In the middling of withdrawal and openness, transparency and opacity, immediation moves as an affective shift; as I came to wonder during the *Ketl* performance – "how they seem to go in a loop or get folded through in a way" (Hornblow and Sans 2015).

Second formative point—screen / display

Collaborations are never without difficulty. It's hard to know in advance what the outcomes may be and how they might land. Especially with new work, iterations or partnerships, there's a delicate search for formal coherence, while allowing all entities in the process to have their autonomy and potential – as much as these are already relational and with context. After several discussions we are finally in the gallery, which doubles as an open studio for a group show seeking to foreground process and collaboration through a series of "visitations." We're trying to define how my video-art and performance elements may work together with Sans' contribution using 3D animation and face recognition through the real-time software environment Processing. There are a lot of things on either side, with many constraints beyond the technical – conceptual, spatio-temporal, compositional, performative. We sit around a laptop considering different scenarios for the interactive media, but keep hitting a wall. The speculative nature of the project makes it difficult to anticipate how technical objects might sit alongside everything else, without actually testing them. But we don't have a lot of time, and each task requires a series of steps, the linearity of which limits adaptation to changes in process. So we bounce around a frustrating *mise-en-abyme* of projected ideas that don't seem to land in any future, only collapsing in a proliferation of possibilities that seem to withdraw on themselves.

Realizing that half the problem is being locked in a screen world, we move into the concourse beside the gallery to consider the space where
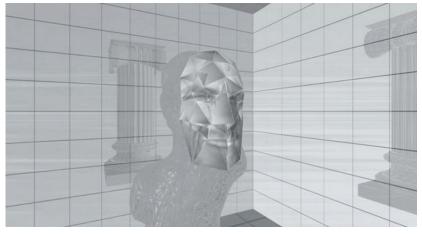

Figure 49. *Ketl*, Processing screenshot, Hornblow and Sans, 2015

the work is to be installed – a long narrow display area known as the vitrines. Suddenly everything shifts. Now that we have a real wall to bounce off and a real window to look through (rather than a digital one), the dead ends open up as the conversation moves through our bodies with each scenario placed *in situ*. We reach a brief impasse for deciding which options should be pursued and how, but the shift has opened enough of a middle ground for charting a way forward. Now media has moved from its usual place in technological interfaces to include the wall and the space it enacts, a move that arrives with an accompanying shift in affective tonality.

Slippage and Appearance—Affective Tonality

The screen/display experience indicates how states of openness and withdrawal move as a speculative horizon that extends or recedes, even collapses, drawing with-and-from the media (materials, spaces, devices) in which we situate our attention. External elements do not so much mediate our experience, just as mediation is never only a site of communication and negotiation. Instead, such elements enact speeds and slowness for which their immediacy is variable and distributed. The movement from screen to vitrines seems to offer a technique that has something to do with shifting scale and/or mode of attention – but there's something more slippery going on that eludes individual agency. To account for a strange middling, the shift may be found in that slippage where the now moment seems to both elude our attention and enact the situated nature of our experience.

What is this – to elude and enact, to feel things slip away in the same manner of making an appearance? And what occurs for affective tonalities that shift in the passage opened up by this gap? The experience I've called screen/display – moving from a laptop to the vitrines, offers a way of thinking about how attentive slippages shift affectivity. These shifts and slips may be seen to move across three main scales of action and related timeframes.[6] In what follows, these are: for the surrounding environment, its apperception as absolute duration; for the body, readiness response and the half-second lapse; and for the conscious mind, a fringe horizon of around 1/10th of a second.

1. Already Always: apperception—The wall in the vitrines is every wall I've ever considered until I engage with it directly, even

as this falls into worlds that have since moved on, retaining a pastness of future potential.

A kind of absolute duration is already there before us while we foreground what is necessary and intentional, a slippage for smoothing our way in the world. We subconsciously assimilate familiar elements from our surroundings based on prior knowledge (apperception). This is not reserved for matters at hand, for it already suggests a distribution of thought at a liminal level. The situated and embodied nature of cognition is enacted through a dynamic ecology of experiential couplings with other entities in the environment. Embodied cognition is enactive and extensive in thinking and feeling through material traces and mnemonic devices that operate as physical supports for recollection and speculative prehension (see Thompson 2007; Chalmers and Clark 2002).

2. Half a Second: readiness response—A wall is proximity, enclosure, and display, finding its threshold in the readiness of all walls within me.

    At the level of the organism, our apperception of the wall is already primed in the physiological activity of the autonomic neural systems, so much so that it often gets the jump on us before we know it. Around a half-second lapse may occur between the initiation of movement in response to external triggers, and the time it takes for the movement to be registered in conscious thought (see Libet, Gleason, Wright, Pearl 1983). This is not just a case of being a little slow off the mark, but where functional stimulus potential and psychophysical tendencies are virtually prefigured with incipient forms.

3. 1/10th: fringe horizon—A wall is the blurry surface of my own agency towards it. As I reach to touch it I've already touched it, and in touching am reaching still.

    At the level of consciousness, we find an even more discrete interval for this composite sense of the "now." As Francesco Varela explains, what we experience as "the specious present" in any instance is not clear and distinct, but more a blur of impressions within an almost imperceptible timeframe – a fringe horizon at around 1/10th of a second (Varela 2000). On

one side, this slippage tends towards an immediate future (protention), while on the other tends toward a just-past that is not yet memory (retention). Protention finds our grasp upon the wall in the speculative micro-intervals of how things might work out, just as retention performs a kind of cognitive cache for carrying this coherence.

Being in the world entails a dynamical flow of cognitive couplings with other things based on sensorimotor activities that operate in a liminal area as much as anything we can clearly grasp. Affect doesn't begin with being affected by someone or some thing as such; rather it turns upon a kind of disjunction in the very texture of subjective agency, where we are always and already affected (auto-affection). Affect becomes a "constituitive temporality" in which "I am affected before knowing that I am affected" (Depraz 1994: 73, 75). Consciously identifying states of feeling in relation to outside influences may be where a particular mood or emotional tone becomes clear and distinct, but these are predicated on an auto-affective substrate in which we are in a state of "permanent coping" (Varela 2000: 230).

Third Formative Point—Collapse / Reframe @ 4am

Flashback and forth to the *Ketl* ... it's the day before the performance and we're busy arranging the final installation, each of us attending to our own areas and tending to the overlaps. Then, suddenly, catastrophe strikes. I tested the WiFi signal weeks ago, but on final checks the signal strength has collapsed to two bars. An essential feature of the show involves me wearing a Google Cardboard VR headset, to dance an online navigation through the Google Street View world on St. Catherine street outside the Gallery. The image I see on my Nexus smartphone goggles is shared with everyone on a large video projection, sent live by a screen-share application over WiFi. But it's a lot of data and needs a strong signal. Now the video stream is crashing after 10 minutes, then 8 ... 4 ... nothing. I collapse with the WiFi into a screen of anxiety, emotion heightened and scattered across device and set up ... wondering all the while what might happen tomorrow.

Recalling the first formative point (screen/display), I try different locations, discuss the situation with Sans and others, but everyone is focused on their own tasks, and the possibility of resolving it through technical support feels remote. The protentional collapse is palpable,

centripetal and vertiginous. I can feel the walls closing in as I navigate many corridors of impossibility. A sense of quiet terror slowly shifts through despair, resignation, looking for hope, a change of plan. I get home late and exhausted but can't sleep, my mind all ruminant machinery with strange transitions of worry, fatigue, REM states barely dropping into dream. Then gradually, images appear, ideas take form, coordinating and accelerating, feeling the joy of them. I'll be deliriously tired today but at 4am I have a "plan-b" that feels better than just live-streaming an online navigation to the audience.

Falling Out of Phase—Emotional Expression

Attuning to shifting rhythms is central to the strange middlings of immediation, especially where affective tonalities loop and fold with emotional expression. As Brian Massumi puts it, emotion is "qualified intensity owned and recognized at the conscious level of a personal subject, while affect operates more at a pre-individual level (Massumi 2002: 28). Varela describes affective tonality as a "dynamical landscaping" (Varela 2000), to which the horizon of our situated attention becomes transparent (open) or has a certain opacity (closure) that takes on the color of specific emotional content. From a cognitive dynamic systems perspective, the appearance of emotion is accompanied by a "phase shift," when a break occurs in the tonal continuity of self-affecting-self (auto-affection); an interruption in the transparent or unreflective absorption in a flow of action (Varela 2000: 291-292). Emotional expression shifts affective tonality when thinking and feeling identify something that seems to be at stake for the subjective territory of a person. This is not to attribute a negative value to emotion solely in favour of pre-personal affect. Phase shifts on a fringe horizon are simultaneous and incipient in their movement across dynamical landscapes of affective tonality. Both have their places, where systemic conditions and different ecologies of experience allow collective tonalities of "affect" and "emotion" to be mobilized in different ways.

Several questions and potentials arise for the art-making process, for it's not just where interpersonal mediation may be transduced through collaboration, but how the spatial, temporal and material elements specific to this transduction offer further insights. How might these affective media ecologies allow an audience to think and feel in different ways through various modes of participation

and spectatorship? How can this thinking-feeling remain affective and conceptual in the relational back-and-forth of media, performer, spectator? And what is at stake for the phase shifts of affects and concepts, where a performance does not simply communicate ideas or convey emotional states? If critical practice can do more than make comment on the mechanisms of control that mould these tonalities (as if it were outside their very operations), this calls for a critical edge of a different kind. A precarious and speculative one, in which transformations of thought and action might occur.

As Massumi has shown, affective politics operate at a liminal level where forms of power exercise a kind of shorthand trigger mechanism, especially in the way media effects elicit emotional responses that are already prefigured within a broad spectrum of control (Massumi 2005). The art process often confronts a redoubled limit, and a certain reticence, lest it become too literal around political critique. On one side, when forms of power and emotion are invoked or expressed they can collapse the potential for new affects and sensations to emerge, as creation and reception fall into the dead ends of interpretation. On the flip-side, the internal fields of force at play within works of art (and their emergent processes), harbour their own qualities and powers for transformation. We might say that art finds its own politic of sorts, seeking diverse modes of agency, entities of thought and feeling that have not yet come into being but have a nascent power nonetheless. In the abstract concreteness of conceptual and affective vitalities, aesthetic processes seek a critical edge within themselves where a work may eventually take on a singular life of its own. Across them both (external collapse and internal potential), there's a strange middling particular to immediation. The invocation of emotional responses (as subjective territories, forms of power, and their critique) becomes a relational boundary condition for weighing up how audience reception may participate in, and indeed enact the distributed nature of affective and emotional ecologies. For *Ketl*, this becomes a fugitive exercise on the precarious cusp of critique.

Orbital Flatness—Faciality

My first thought at 4am was to go outside the gallery and smash my phone on the footpath as a way of ending the performance. But by mid-morning, I realised the catastrophe called for a subtler sense of urgency. Even as a joke for insomniac frustration my initial reaction

seemed appropriate at the time, especially where questions of withdrawal and critique found relevance beyond my discussion with Sans. The FOFA performance was curated as a two-hander with Joel Mason's *Duck Feet* soiree, and the two works were situated more broadly within the timeframe of the *Undercommons Residency*, hosted by Senselab in Montreal with guests Stefano Harney and Fred Moten.[7] In *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*, Harney and Moten put forward a compelling response to contemporary mechanisms of control (2013). Their project recognizes that the Commons as we once knew it is long gone, already overrun with neoliberal subjectivity and micro-fascist complicity at a systemic level. Entering the "Undercommons" instead becomes a matter of recognizing our shared brokenness, to discover a constantly shifting fugitive capacity – "the refusal of what has been refused" (Harney and Moten, 2013: 96).

For Harney and Moten, objective critique becomes patently impossible when institutional frameworks professionalize it as the voice of privilege. (For them it is primarily the problem of the critical academic, but this can be applied more broadly). A critical perspective becomes yet another performance indicator, a condition of impossibility carrying an affective tonality that may be felt as a fugitive state: acting both for and against the institution. This tonality is ecological, and systemic – in institutional context and in the dynamical manner in which Varela describes affective phase shifts. A fugitive criticality calls for working through a shifting condition in which there is no outside in objective terms, only a strange *jouissance* of being overcome by its transformations. It is, then, that other "outside" of which Deleuze speaks (Deleuze 1988: 23-47, 118). Or in a different manner, where fields of force shift phase through the deepest interiority, immanent shifts that bifurcate and jump in scale, confronting the very conditions in which a system operates.

For *Ketl*, the WiFi catastrophe brought home with some gravity how broader tonalities may be felt within a specific institutional context. It also created a break in thinking through what was at stake in using Google Street View as a performance platform. How could it function as a critical lens for looking at online geospatial interfaces at a simultaneously planetary and embodied scale? How then to work with the limits of that critique, given the conditions and constraints that had appeared? Affective phase shifts acquire very particular media materialities, finding an interstitial quality that turns upon disjunctions of immediacy and mediation. The catastrophe had already cast its own

refusal, so the question of what options were given or taken now lay in a fugitive region of distributed tonalities, across performers, media, various spaces and occasions.

Instead of the live screen-share projection, I show an edited Street View navigation from a previous iteration in New York (Glasshouse Gallery 2014).[8] At FOFA, the screen is a large perspex sheet covered in white lard, which gives the projected video a glistening painterly quality. This accentuates the strange organicism of digital artefacts already apparent in the image. As I discuss in my paper for ISEA, the Google Street View image has a textural flatness that belies its 3D orbital orientation, full of bleeding contours and shallow blocks of colour. Zooming up on people at the limit of the image's resolution, this flatness shifts across the visual platform when we notice how faces are blurred to satisfy legal concerns, enacting a simultaneous privacy and privatization of the public (see Hornblow 2015b).

An initial point of departure for discussion with Sans was to draw parallels between Deleuze and Guattari's concept of faciality, and the image recognition algorithms Google uses to identify faces and signs. Faciality is a codified assemblage of control operating in and through the human face—a white wall of signifiance with its sensory orifices as black holes of subjectification (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 167-191). Similarly, many facial recognition systems look for identifying features by extracting landmark elements (eyes, nose, mouth, etc.)[9] To trouble an easy parallelism calls for both specific and speculative slippages. Faciality is not a machine that simply works via faces but through any encoding regime of white surface and black holes, with their coordination enabling figure/ground relations for a territorial system of identification. On Google Street View, faciality becomes dense and abstract when the algorithm saturates a scene to find accidental traits; for instance in the leaves of a tree or a pile of trash. A paradox occurs in which the very processes that encode a given scene come to generate aberrant signifieds through the universality of binarisation. Accidental identities, as in a tree or some trash, suggest faciality machines yet to come, as if permeating nonhuman entities at the machinic level of their very materiality.[10] If there's something inherently inhuman about the human face, it is where systems of control appear as a distant close-up for subjects and signs. To resist faciality is then not to erase the face but to multiply its traits, to invent new faciality machines, or 'probe heads' as Deleuze and Guattari call them (190) – a monstrous becoming-animal

of proliferating orifices where it's hard to say for sure what mouths and eyes are anymore, or of what they may be capable.

Plan B - broken media

> *'I don't have an answer for these questions*
> *of withdrawal and openness,*
> *except something broken to share'*
> *Ketl (Hornblow and Sans, 2015)*

The WiFi catastrophe helped to draw out affinities between *The Undercommons* and notions of faciality, towards a kind of generative brokenness for immediating the performance process. Plan B began with me crawling around the gallery, showing my phone to people one by one, holding the screen flat to the floor so the accelerometer sensor in the phone would convey the geospatial orientation of a ground in parallel with the online 3D image. The intimacy of the small screen drew people in one by one, the performance becoming more conversational in tone, with a break in presentation leading to a number of open questions.

The image on the screen carried its own brokenness, of a geospatial kind. I'd come across several glitches in my navigation outside the gallery on Google Street View. With multiple cameras on the roof of the Google Street View car, the composite image these create is always prone to dislocation and planar distortion. Gaps appear in the way Google stitches together a spherical 3D world. Like falling through the cracks in the pavement, urban fabrics and geospatial interfaces extend and shift through a ubiquitous planetary assemblage, a scopic regime full of its own slippages.[11]

I collect a few things together – the Cardboard VR unit, some small tomatoes, a kitchen knife, a container of lard. Kneeling, I cut some slices of tomato using my phone as a board, lathering lard thickly across the screen and embedding the slices into it like a snack. I place the phone inside the Cardboard VR unit and secure it by circling cling wrap around my head, inserting tomatoes as I go – a wipe of lard here and there – cutting a hole to breath and speak. A few participants assist me with the wrap, then I offer the knife, inviting people to cut into the tomatoes so the juice can escape and dribble down my body like a bleeding image.

Figure 50. *Ketl*, Hornblow and Sans, 2015. Image: Kinga Michalska

The actions contrast with spoken speculations on the planetary nature of geospatial interfaces, looking to a time of writing when, as I say in *Ketl*: "everything will become media, as media becomes orbital in orientation, and all matter carries data" (Hornblow and Sans 2015). Plan B is not just a withdrawal from the failures of technology (in technical process, or their negligence in providing critiques of power); rather something has shifted in scale and mode, where concepts take on materiality by reconfiguring the coordination of analogue and digital elements. Much of the early work by artists using Google Street View (Doug Rickard, Jon Rafman, Michael Wolf, Mishka Henner)[12] finds a post-photographic condition where artistic agency meets machinic vision. With the development of *Ketl*, and what might follow from it, I'm thinking more broadly about a post-media condition where there is no longer any outside in terms of agency. Or indeed, this has always been media's "outside" in the Deleuzian sense – that any milieu is both troubled and renewed by the very conditions that define its boundaries. Which is to say, where media is the plurality of a medium – as the means of doing or communicating something, its hybridity can only go so far before it finds an internal limit. The agency media assumes to mediate for other things enters an absolute middling, where all entities already describe themselves somehow, just as our own mediations are already full of enactive couplings.[13]

This may be immediation's most radical middling for media materialities, where the development of a project is no longer just to be caught in the middle of things, but where descriptions might *pass*

through things themselves, troubling the boundaries of human and non-human agency. For *Ketl*, an attempt to dance this condition was accompanied by other thoughts coming over the PA, with a text-to-speech program used to sound like an android:

> *It's not a personal thing*
>   *it's almost impersonal*
>   *or some kind of impersonation*
>   *where I becomes like a thing*

> *I becomes a thing*
>   *made up of many things*
>   *to feel that other things*
>   *all think in their own way*
>   *Ketl (Hornblow and Sans 2015)*

With-drawing In-difference

I want to return to Malabou's proposition around withdrawal from wonder, which I couldn't deal with earlier but can no longer avoid. Arriving with some delay at the question of indifference, and feeling indifferent one way or another (whether withdrawal inspires sad passions or a lack of affection), my inclination is towards a different *in-difference*—to refuse the options given and in this refusal to accept them both. For if auto-affection enacts the dynamic landscaping of affective tonalities as a state of permanent coping, there is already a nascent politics in withdrawal as a field of forces that may confront its own outside. To withdraw is not simply to refuse or recoil from the circumstances of a given context, as if institutional forms of power were merely external forces for subjectivity. To be always and already affected (auto-affection) often appears to lie "outside" our attention, and yet this outside comes to the fore as a defining condition in the micro-perceptions of untimely phase shifts. Whether passive in retreat or active in refusal, states of withdrawal sit astride emotional and affective tonalities in the unravelling of multiple speeds and durations. The minor catastrophes of *Ketl* revealed how technical agents underlying the process may suddenly withdraw their affordance, arriving so soon or too late as points of protentional collapse, through which auto-affections are embedded and extended to other things.

My own withdrawal was already there as a state of affection (or lack thereof), in mutual sensitivity for the initial discussion with Sans, and thereafter acting as a kind of strange attractor throughout the process. Now, post-catastrophe, a kind of slowness arrives for the performance itself, a withdrawal from affordance in which the multiple speeds and durations of other things may enter a speculative area. This *with-drawal* is not just a refusal of the technical (broken media) but a state of affective restraint, a caution and care for the future of our becoming media. To be *in-different* around the political uses of "sad passions" versus "lack of affection," may then find a different politics; an immediation in potential – for and against, with and from, to be *in-difference* with the phase shifts that pass back and forth, within and between us, through other things.

A lack of affection is not nothing, for even states of withdrawal enact distributed couplings. I wonder then, whether wonder was never simply a personal joy but rather that "enjoyment" that all occasions of experience partake as absolute process (Whitehead 1968: 150-152). And we might add, where human and nonhuman entities both add to and draw from one another's existence (James 1912: 180). Even after the collapse of intention, beyond the catastrophe, we may find the delirium of a strange *jouissance*, allowing ourselves to be overcome. Or, as in that peculiar mood called melancholy, which is nothing if not a different curiosity toward other things – to really wonder what they can do, a sensate feeling all the new after the self has passed a state of despair, and continues to carry that potential.

To draw with and from (rather than simply open or withdraw), is a process that has passed through several stages and scales of relation: from the transduction of interpersonal collaboration via the digital and analogue shifts of screen / display, to the WiFi catastrophe and subsequent delirium of 4am, to Plan B and its broken media. Two concerns conclude my thoughts on affective shifts in "a *Ketl*" around the politics of withdrawal for contemporary media. How are systemic ecologies and their affective / emotional tonalities taken up on the other side of the performance by people in the audience? And how does a speculative post-media condition begin to find its own outside, in feeling bodies and thinking subjects? It's hard to say what an audience response may be, let alone speak for it, when feedback is so often based on the communication of personal feelings and opinions. I'm more interested in what may be called "post-performance" strategies or tactics for troubling expectations around spectacle, reception and

Figure 51. *Ketl*, Hornblow and Sans, 2015. Image: Kinga Michalska

participation.[14] When virtuosic techniques seem to collapse, diverge or delay their effects, the affective gaps that issue from this may become more apparent between performer, audience, and the middlings of their media.

The so-called group subject of 'the audience' collapses as a single entity when spectators come to acknowledge their own side of the wager, opening a relational field of forces in which responses may both diverge and polarise. Emotional and affective tonalities teeter either side of the shift, as people withdraw into critical interpretation, or find a speculative area where they come to reference and reframe the grounds of their own reception as part of the event. When virtuosity fails or falters in the gap, shifts in phase generate multiple responses. For *Ketl*, post-performance strategies shift between an over-determination of description (performance lecture, and this essay), tentative improvisation and quotidian gesture (dance/ physical action), and the dirty analogue collapse of digital media interfaces. On the pre-personal side of the post-performance gap, the distributed nature of affective intensities may retain their potential for multiplicity and transformation. In the back-and-forth of shifts in phase, tonalities of various kinds are taken up by the audience through restraint or disjunction. New collectivities may be invented; not just those of a human group subject, but where people might enter a relational mode of thought in which the notion of thinking things feels tangible somehow.

De-scribing delimitation, towards a different writing

These speculative conditions of a multiple post-ness offer trajectories beyond the scope of this essay. Indeed, they point to its own outside in the delimitation of de-scribing a tentative time of writing.[15] As a final response to Malabou (where "inspiring indifference becomes necessary for the exercise of power"), I would add that critical art practice exercises its own politic of sorts in demarcating a semi-autonomous potential for the transformation of affects and sensations. Post-conceptual and post-performance conditions call for a different kind of "in-difference": for with-drawing-from systemic ecologies; for thinking through where things may shift in tonality. Here the strange middlings of immediation find broad frames of reference and scales of action, towards a speculative post-media condition. Here aesthetic processes have much to offer critical conundrums to come, when thought and matter collapse and proliferate in their singular multiplicities.

Anything may contribute to the emergence of a work of art – the way it coheres across diverse modes of agency, material and conceptual affordances, collaboration, participation. The work takes on a life of its own when its delirium starts to move within and between subjects and objects. Phase shifts in process offer untimely immediacies that seem to come so soon or too late, appearing as signs of affective tonalities not yet felt, or of concepts invented on the fly. Even at a point of protentional collapse there's an opportunity to withdraw for a moment, to draw from that which has withdrawn its usual affordance, to draw *in-difference* with a new alterity. When this happens, immediating qualities that are untimely and translocal may be seen to move transversally across human and nonhuman agencies, where critical practice may weigh up what is at stake for collectivities of various kinds. For *Ketl*, critical shifts approach a fugitive limit around systemic tonalities, becoming speculative as a process of de-scribing the delimitation of its own self-reference.[16] Thinking back and forth, feeling what just happened, what things have been and are still becoming, as all these emerge together – I wonder how the radical middlings of immediation might shift differently, if this text may be felt in the world when its end starts again with other things? Reading this sentence … we have a general feel for how the flow of words might work out in the near future that's already now, carried along by a just-past potential for holding it all together, as this iterative recursion enfolds the movement of thought through an intentional center, bounded by a fringe horizon. If the time of writing is a matter of affective tonality, then being caught

in the middle of things is not just a concern for this project, but for disjunctive rhythms of immediation to be felt in the time of reading, and in times of living.

Notes

1. This essay for Immediations is a companion piece to two recent publications written during my postdoctoral research at Senselab – the first, a journal article for *Inflexions* 8, special issue on Radical Pedagogy, "A Sahara in the Head: The Problem of Landing" (Hornblow 2015a); the second, a conference paper at the International Symposium on Electronic Art (ISEA 2015) – *O'megaville: Excursions in Planetary Urbanism* (Hornblow 2015b).

2. I aim to contribute to the sense in which media takes on a broader definition within an expanded field of research. See for example, Andrew Murphie's "Electronicas: Differential Media and Proliferating, Transient Worlds" (Murphie 2003). Also, Matthew Fuller's *Media Ecologies: Materialist Energies in Art and Technoculture*, where he explores how new media works have multiple compositional elements that generate "abnormal" relationships in their interaction with other objects (Fuller 2005).

3. *Ketl* was performed at FOFA Gallery, Rue St Catherine, Montreal, on June 23 2015. For previous and ongoing iterations for this project, see: michaelhornblow.com/Ketl/

4. This iteration for *Ketl* at the Affect Theory Conference involved a site-specific installation on the street outside the Ware Center in Lancaster Pennsylvania, on October 17 2015; in collaboration with Melora Koepke and Anwar Floyd-Pruitt.

5. It may be said that Malabou offers a very narrow reading of Deleuze, with her focus on a contemporary neurobiological understanding of affect, via Damazio (Malabou 2013), which limits the broader philosophical engagement with Spinoza. My own concern is not so much to weigh in on this debate, or at least to "*with-draw*" from it at this point. I'm more interested in how the question of withdrawal may be deployed as an experiential concept, not just for this project in its performance and preparation, but for a time of writing that might find a mode of description immanent to it. In saying this, and as I go on to discuss towards the end of this essay, I also question the neurobiological basis of Malabou's argument from the point of view of Varela's thesis on auto-affection (Varela 2000).

6. See my Doctoral thesis for a discussion of how 'intensive timeframes' may become a way of thinking about untimely speeds and durations across affect and performance (Hornblow 2013).

7. *The Undercommons Residency* involved a series of discussions, reading groups, workshops, performances and "pop-up propositions,"

at the SenseLab (Concordia University, Montreal), as well as in local parks and other venues (July 13-25, 2015). See: http://senselab.ca/wp2/events/a-week-of-study-with-the-undercommons/

8. *Omegaville* was a previous development to *Ketl*, involving a four-channel video installation, presented at Glasshouse Gallery, New York; as part of an exhibition *The Smell of Red* with Erin Manning, Nathaniel Stern, and others (June 2014).

9. Traditional face recognition software uses this geometric approach, for example the MFlow system in airports (see: www.hrsid.com/product-mflow). Other developments involve photometric algorithms, with 3D data points, skin texture maps, or thermal imaging.

10. Deleuze and Guattari refer to information theory as being permeated by the machine of faciality, with relation to processes of binarization: "Information theory takes as its point of departure a homogeneous set of ready-made *signifying* messages that are already functioning as elements in biunivocal relationships" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 179).

11. See my paper for ISEA2015, where I discuss in more detail how notions of faciality may be explored through specific features of the Google Street View platform; with related concepts around cinematic machine vision, planetary urbanism, and mondialisation (Hornblow 2015b).

12. See the following: Doug Rickard's *A New American Picture*, exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2011); Jon Rafman's *The Nine Eyes of Google Street View* (ongoing); Michael Wolf's *Street View: A Series of Unfortunate Events* (2010); and Mishka Henner's *No Man's Land* (2011).

13. Domenico Quaranta gives an overview of how the term post-media has been used in different ways; from its political call to action with Felix Guattari, to the historical impact of the media in New Media Arts, and related crises for aesthetics and medium specificity (see Quaranta 2011). As suggested in *Ketl*, with current technological advances for the materiality of media, I see new implications moving across these debates. As indicated in my later comments in this essay, areas for future research may include a combination of post-conceptual, relational and object ontologies.

14. I see this as a tendency in relational approaches to contemporary performance art practice. For a similar approach to theorising such a tendency in theatre, see Lone Bertelsen and Andrew Murphie's *Affect, Subtraction and Non-Performance* (Bertelsen and Murphie 2012).

15. A speculative post-media condition may be explored further through relational and object ontologies. For the former, thought is a process of making invented in and with the world, and is not limited to human mentality but enacted through material affordances and collective processes of various kinds (see Manning and Massumi 2014). For the latter, I would say that things do not just withdraw in their being in a sea of alterity (see Harman 2002), but also draw with-and-from others through semi-autonomous relations.

16. The project title for *Ketl* is taken from the military "kettling" practices adopted by riot police, as used in Montreal during the 2012 and 2015 student protests. What interests me is how kettling, as a process of biopolitical delimitation, has co-evolved alongside new techniques in urban protest with similar yet contrasting dynamics, beginning with the Arab Spring and Occupy movements of 2011. See further, my synopsis for the Affect Theory Conference 2015: https://www.michaelhornblow.com/#/Ketl/