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A Pedagogy of Suspensions: Infrathin Variations between London and Manchester

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Abstract

This paper takes as its catalyst a series of live art events that took place between London and Manchester in 2019. Thinking in conversation with Erin Manning's propositions for "minor movements" and the Duchampian "infrathin", we explore the potential for live art to temporarily suspend the thresholds of perceptibility and permissibility in the public realm. We argue that artful techniques of improvisation carry the potential to suspend capitalistic orderings of time by temporarily confounding the perceived barriers between art and life. Drawing together anarchival traces of improvised movement, sound, image, and thought, the paper is composed of vignettes that sketch the infrathin variations of a "pedagogy of suspensions" as elaborated through live art events in a public park, a moving train, a university gymnasium, and an anechoic sound chamber.

Keywords: Manning, suspension, improvisation, infrathin, live art

A Pedagogy of Suspensions: Infrathin Variations between London and Manchester

In our train car we are tethered and let loose from our seats like swirls coming back and in. We inhabit Carriage D, standard class, charging one way and another, moving through, across, under, between. Allowing ourselves to be moved. Suspended between London and Manchester, we are hanging in around a telephone connecting us to Resonance FM, trying to transmit 2 hours of live radio content. We are hanging out on a suspended railway, in a suspended train riding on air

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above tracks, attuning to train signaling, radio signaling, suspended signals, signaling suspension - we are suspended radio hosts attuning to that infinitesimal indicator that grabs your attention in the eternal flux of absolute movement, while keeping attention on the time-bending possibilities of artful practices in the everyday.

Over two days in September 2019 we activated a series of "suspensions" in urban parks and rail terminals, in the passenger cars of a commuter train, a community garden, a university gymnasium, an anechoic chamber, a Victorian apartment building, and a Gamelan orchestra. These events were conceptualised and organised in response to a series of 15 propositions for "minor movements" composed by Erin Manning, and released through the SenseLab's international network in early 2019[1]. Manning's propositions invited practices of attuning to minor movements in the barely perceptible transitions of felt variation, while also calling for a radical undoing of binary distinctions between art and life. A global series of events was seeded in the matrix of these propositions during the summer of 2019, with events sprouting spontaneously in Montreal, Sao Paolo, Zurich, Amsterdam, Edinburgh, Berlin, Copenhagen, Helsinki, and Castlemaine. Our contribution to this international seeding of events was an open proposition to collectively explore "suspensions" in public places and transport networks between the cities of London and Manchester.[2]

Our interest in the idea of suspension grew out of live art practices developed at the SenseLab in Montreal, Canada and the Manifold Lab in Manchester, UK, including practices of performance art, installation, sound art, and participatory art developed by members of our international collective.

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[1] *Propositions for Minor Movements from Erin Manning*

1. Minor movements are not ours to make so much as ours to attune to
2. A curatorial process for the activation of minor movements requires an attunement to the conditions that select for artfulness
3. An attunement to artfulness opens the work to its more-than
4. The more-than is what is curated
5. An environment is activated, an enlivening of an ecology
6. With the enlivening comes a felt experience of time bending
7. Time bending moves experience to its emergent unfolding
8. In this emergent unfolding we are not spectators
9. Emergent unfoldings affect the environment they co-compose
10. We are part of that co-composition
11. To compose a minor movement is to be composed by it
12. A curatorial process for the activation of minor movements requires an active shift in the presupposition that there is a field of art and a field of life
13. The political runs through the differential that is composed when the binary between art and life is undone
14. What matters is not whether it is art, but how it shifts the conditions of experience
15. When art becomes the way and not the endpoint minor movements become orientors for processes to come. (Manning, 2019, np)

[2] The suspension events were co-funded by the Manifold Lab at Manchester Metropolitan University, a researcher accelerator fellowship from Manchester Metropolitan University, and the SSHRC *Immediations* project led by Concordia University. Manning's (2019) informal and unpublished propositions for minor movements urged us to push at the supple limits of the academy. The two-day series of events that is the subject of this paper, while hosted by academies, threaded its way in and out of the interstices of the university system, pushing the conceit of scholarly inquiry into deformalised (dis)articulations that resist translation into "outputs".

Thinking together with Manning's propositions for attuning to minor movements in the everyday, we approached the concept of suspension ambivalently and experimentally, as a propositional "lure for feeling" oscillating somewhere between a philosophical concept and an aesthetic sensation (Whitehead, 1978). As a philosophical concept, there was a sense that suspension was linked to the "untimeliness" of events as "experiential clusters" that arise through a "mutual sensitivity of feeling" (Manning, 2020, p. 25). As an aesthetic sensation, our sense was that suspension might be akin to "the felt experience of time bending" through subtle shifts in the affective tonality of events (Manning, 2019). The suspensions were therefore conceived as collective experiments with how to make felt "the uneasiness of time in the making, time in the feeling, where time is at once the here-now and the not-quite-yet" (Manning, 2020, p. 26).

Our suspension events were open to anyone, and the invitations to participate were extended informally through online platforms, social media, and radio as part of a collaboration with London-based community radio station Resonance FM. An ad hoc collective of artists, curators, musicians, educators, researchers, students, radio broadcasters, and local community members began to assemble. Through the radio station and other channels, the suspension events were "pre-accelerated" by circulating a selection of texts by Erin Manning (2012), Brian Massumi (2018), Tina Campt (2016), Andrew Goodman (2018), and A.N. Whitehead (1967). Concepts drawn from this collection of readings became piloting ideas for each of the suspension events, with specific concepts operating as springboards for the improvised unfolding of events in public spaces over a two-day period:

> ***Suspension 1:*** Sept. 5th, 9:43 – 10:36, public park near Euston station (Invisibility)
>
> ***Suspension 2:*** Sept. 5th, 10:46 – 11:28, Euston station terminal (Complicity)
>
> ***Suspension 3:*** Sept. 5th, 11:40 – 13:46, train from London to Manchester (Passage)
>
> ***Suspension 4:*** Sept. 5th, 15:39 – 16:37, Hulme community gardens (Cultivation)
>
> ***Suspension 5:*** Sept. 5th, 17:05 – 18:03, Gymnasium, Brooks building MMU (Metabolism)
>
> ***Suspension 6:*** Sept. 5th, 19:03 – 20:19, 36-38 Whitworth Street/Mayfield depot (Capture)
>
> ***Suspension 7:*** Sept. 6th, 9:30 - 10:30, Anechoic chamber, University of Salford (Volume)
>
> ***Suspension 8:*** Sept. 6th, 11:30-16:00, Manifold Lab, Manchester Metropolitan University

In proposing this series of events, we were interested in developing techniques of improvisation that might temporarily suspend the capitalistic organisation of time in public places, prising open alter-political "escape hatches" or "temporary autonomous zones" in the intervals of the everyday (Massumi, 2018). Railway schedules, land zoning ordinances, surveillance systems, and other institutional infrastructures all work to configure the affective fielding of time in ways that serve the interests of global capital (McCormack, 2013). This capitalistic ordering of temporality not only influences the present possibility conditions for events, but also modulates the potentials for *future* events already in germ within the "crannies of the present" (Whitehead, 1967, p. 191). Our interest in improvisation was, in this sense, aimed at what Whitehead (p. 195) describes as the

margin of "elbow room in the universe", as a liquid interval of immediate freedom suspended between the collective determinations of past and future. We wanted to explore how improvisation might hijack some of the elbow room in public patterns of temporal ordering such as train schedules, ticket barriers, and surveillance systems. But we also wanted to explore the elbow room carried by the intensive suspensions of relatively private moments, such as talking to a stranger or daydreaming on a train. In other words, tiny suspensions of time where you temporarily forget where, and who, and what you are. By working across private and public suspensions of temporal experience, our improvised experiments sought to enliven mundane environments through artful disruptions and reroutings of lived time, while attuning to the "infrathin" edges of perceptibility and permissibility in the public realm (Manning, 2020).

Infrathin Variations

In her recent book *For a Pragmatics of the Useless*, Manning builds on Marcel Duchamp's notion of "infrathin" as the "most minute of intervals or the slightest of differences" (Duchamp, cited in Manning, 2020, p. 16). Manning stresses that infrathin is not a noun but a qualifier, referring to an ineffable quality of differential relation that cannot be defined, only exemplified through the variability of how a feeling is felt. Examples of infrathin variation are encountered in the sheer singularity of events as surfaces of felt experience brushing up against each other. Duchamp's loosely collected notes list infrathin encounters as he went about his life.

> *The warmth of a seat (which has just been left) is infra-thin (#4); Subway gates—The people / who go through at the very last moment / Infra thin—(9 recto); Velvet trousers— / their whistling sound (in walking) by / brushing of the 2 legs is an / infrathin separation signaled / by sound. (it is not an infra thin sound) (#9 verso).*
> (Duchamp, cited in Manning, 2020, p. 16)

Duchamp's distinction between a sound (e.g. of two trouser legs) and the *relation signaled by that sound* is important here. As Manning (2020) notes, the infrathin cannot be experienced directly, for instance, as the warmth of a seat just left. Rather, it is the particular quality of "left-ness" which is carried by the event as a relational field that is infrathin.

> *The infrathin: that most elusive of states where what is felt, in the briefest interval, is the lived co-composition of difference. Contrast.*
>
> *The infrathin: the differential that marks the rhythm that is the oscillation between what is perceptible and what is imperceptible yet felt, by the event. The thisness of this singular relation, as perceived from two directions at once.*
>
> *The infrathin: a variation on lived experience. (Manning, 2020, p. 19)*

Importantly, Manning's account of the infrathin includes those qualitative variations of feeling which might be left out or discarded from an event, but which are still felt in their absence. Whitehead (1978, p. 226) describes these as "negative prehensions" which nonetheless leave the

"scar" of their absence on the "affective tonality" of the event, as a mark of the "imperceptible *within* the perceptible" (Manning, 2020, p. 24, emphasis added). Attuning to the minor movements of infrathin is, in this sense, a mode of attuning to the folding of the imperceptible *into* the perceptible. Over the course of two days, our suspensions events left many warm seats, among numerous other infrathin differentials of this nature:

> *Fluorescent orange construction jackets / reflecting off a royal blue ribbon; (the same ribbon) clenched in a commuter train's doors between carriages / running back on the train / as the doors close behind; the rebound of a body / repeatedly thrown against a padded gymnasium wall; the brush of green trousers / against the green of a gymnasium curtain; the pop of a balloon / in a suspended chamber without reverb; the gurgling of blood through veins / heard in the chamber / but otherwise inaudible.*

Writing as event

Our approach to writing and composing this paper focuses on these infrathin qualities of the suspension events, as untimely variations that rustle at the edges of perception and intelligibility. This approach is allied with emerging posthumanist and post qualitative orientations in the social sciences that reject the idea that "theory" is something you can "apply" or "put to work" on "data" (Rousell, 2019; St. Pierre, 2019a). Rather than treating theory as an interpretive device for analysing archival data, we invested in writing as an event where the movements of theoretical concepts and aesthetic sensations co-arise through infrathin variations of experience. This way of writing is orientated toward the anarchic movement of concepts and sensations already at play in the doing of the work, a movement of forces and tendencies already partaking in the event through which the work is playing out. *Writing as event* necessarily demands new techniques of attending to infrathin variations that arise through writing, where theory is no longer working "on" the event, only *through* it (Rousell, 2021; 2019).

Manning (2020) describes this in terms of practices of "anarchiving", where the aim is to collectively generate "techniques for sharing the work's potential, the speculative edge of its pragmatic propositions" (p. 76). In embracing the challenge of anarchival writing as a sharing out of propositional potentials, we collectively developed a series of improvised writing experiments that gradually congealed into the four vignettes that follow:

Invisibility, Sept. 5th, 2019, 9:43 – 10:36, Euston park, London

Passage, Sept. 5th, 2019, 11:40 - 13:46, Train line between London and Manchester

Metabolism, Sept 5th, 16:05 – 17:03, Gymnasium, Manchester Met University

Volume, Sept. 6th, 9:30 - 10:30, Anechoic chamber, University of Salford

The vignettes purposefully and necessarily break away from expository academic writing conventions in order to maintain a sense of suspension and improvisational excesses generated

through “action traces” (Manning, 2020, p. 76). They were composed collaboratively using a Google online document while accessing shared drives with extensive sound recordings, videos, photographs, and notes. Each vignette can be considered an experiment with writing/feeling/thinking through the anarchival action traces of particular suspension events, simultaneously attuning to the minor movements of concepts and sensations *in the event* as microperceptual “shifts in the conditions of experience” (Manning, 2019, n.p.)

Invisibility, Sept 5th, 2019 9:43 – 10:36, Euston park, London

The event has already started before anyone arrives. It has no visible starting point or beginning. Instead, there is a middling, a medium, a milieu through which the event begins to express certain tendencies. A small park outside of Euston station. Not so much a space as a sharing out of durational intervals of felt time (Manning, 2012).

There is a sense of sporadic and untimely arrivals. We arrive in fits and spurts. A little before and a little after 9:43 AM. No one arrives at the same time. But we also don’t know who “we” are. Some folks from the neighbourhood heard about the event on the radio (an invisible medium) and decided to turn up. A loosely affiliated collection of artists, curators, and musicians had also heard about the event (before the event) through various ad hoc media channels. Many emails had been sent along invisible chains of electrical signals and digital code. Philosophical texts and sound files had been exchanged. A live radio broadcast had been speculatively proposed. An invisible “pre-acceleration” (Manning, 2012) had shaped and conditioned the event through a particular confluence of appetites, urgencies, orientations, trajectories, arrivals, departures, escapes.

This event could not have been planned. Instead of planning we proposed a series of cuts in the passage of experience constrained by approximate temporal proximity. A concept, a place, a time: Invisibility, September 5th, 9:43 – 10:36 am, the corner of a park near Euston station. Not so much a plan as a laying out of enabling constraints as propositions for suspension. Propositions for a *gathering of shared potentials*, or what Goodman (2018) calls a “gathering ecology”.

The gathering ecology of the park is already eventful at 9:43 in the morning. Two people lie on the grass just a few metres from the first Suspension point, their sleeping bodies enveloped between layers of cardboard, sleeping bag, and blanket. A red pram sits beside the sleepers, stuffed full of unguarded possessions. Already suspended in the event well before we arrive, the sleepers are simultaneously overexposed and overlooked (Fleetwood, 2011).

In the park outside Euston station we ask the question of what is invisible. Air, thoughts, feelings, relations, capital, illness, pain, hunger, concern, anticipation, persons. The list grows quickly. We consider the invisibility of *time*, such as the way the immediate past and future are felt invisibly, and yet viscerally, in the passing present (Whitehead, 1967). Certainly, most of what is sensed and experienced is invisible. So why does the visible continue to dominate experience? One tactic for resisting the tyranny of the visible is to tend toward imperceptibility. The arts of camouflage. Blending in with one’s environment. Resisting the demand for interpersonal faciality (Manning,

2020). How can we make *ourselves* invisible here?

Figure 1

Refusing the tyranny of vision in Euston park: becoming-imperceptible through a chromatic politics

Huddled together in Euston park we discuss the uncanny experience of sensing someone's eyes on the back of your head: vision as the haptic sense of an unequally shared milieu of sociality. Paradoxically, the sensation of "vision" *in* consciousness is never visible. You can never see what anyone else sees, and yet your vision participates in a field of experience that is saturated with the sensation and consciousness of others (Ruyer, 2018). In *Troubling Vision: Performance, visuality, and blackness*, Nicole Fleetwood (2011) argues that vision is not a socially constructed semiotic to be decoded, but a processual activity that participates in the micropolitical construction of the social field itself. Vision as both a material *fact* of historical derivation and an immediate qualitative *factor* in the social ordering and aesthetic texturation of experience. In accounting for the construction of blackness within the visuality of the social field, Fleetwood notes that the immediate visual field is always already entangled with a social order that is saturated with prior acts of making (in)visible.

Attending to infrathin variations in Euston park, we notice that colour is saturating the event with an "improvisational excess" (Moten, 2018, p. 156). The red of Catharine's coat converses with the red pram tending the sleepers nearby. Later the red jacket camouflages her figure against a parked London bus, while the foliage obscures the green of her trousers (Figure 1). Becoming-imperceptible: "animal elegance, the camouflage fish, the clandestine… it worlds with the lines of a rock, sand, and plants" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 303). Camouflage makes a creature indiscernible from its milieu. Catharine's camouflage makes visible an audible threshold when the bus driver shouts at her to move away as the bus takes off. At the same time, in the middle of the park, Jasper's black trench coat dangles from his head like a gallows pole, simultaneously

attracting wayward hyper-vigilant attention and making himself invisible. Agata unrolls a royal blue ribbon, which becomes indistinguishable from the blue of her trousers. She spends a long time conversing with a group of construction workers in fluorescent orange jumpsuits, which refract off the gleaming surface of the blue ribbon. Refusing the tyranny of vision while affirming the infrathin sociality of colour: the possibility of a "chromatic politics" (Massumi, 2017).

What do these chromatic variations make (in)visible in the park? And how do acts of making in/visible entangle with social orderings of exclusion, privilege, thresholding? In *For a Pragmatics of the Useless*, Manning (2020) weaves careful threads between the radical traditions of Black study and process philosophy, invoking sociality in terms of minor movements and infrathin variations within a dynamic field of life-living that is never reducible to executive functioning. Sociality, considered in the wayward genealogy of radical Black studies, is encountered in the fugitive immediacy of aesthetic experience as the improvised conditions of social life (Hartman, 2019), a continuous relay between social practices of ongoingness and fabulation in the undercommons (Harney & Moten, 2013; Keeling, 2019; Moten, 2018).

In Euston park, our investments in becoming-imperceptible bring us into "approximate proximity" with the park life that precedes us (Manning, 2020). We can barely sense the chromatic patterning of contrasts and exchange of tendencies playing out through the infrathin variations of sociality in the park. Catharine sits down next to two homeless people with camping backpacks on a park bench. They really want to hear about what we are doing, what's going on. When she tells them we're going into Euston station and boarding a train, they give her intricate details about the various layers of police surveillance in the train station. Catharine is holding the royal blue ribbon in one hand. It stretches across the park, where it entangles with the fluoro-clad construction workers. Her other hand is poised with a pair of scissors, ready to cut. The homeless men warn Catharine not to bring the scissors into the station. She offers to give them the scissors, which they refuse because they don't want to be caught with anything resembling a weapon. They caution us against doing anything suspect or unusual in the train station based on their own experience of being stopped, searched, and interred. Our suspension event has become a shared matter of concern. An invisible exchange of gifts has taken place, with the only currency being the incalculable gift of sociality (Manning, 2020, p. 302). With this exchange comes a sense that certain thresholdings have been brought into approximate visibility, while others have been backgrounded, camouflaged. This s(h)ifting of thresholds bears the question of what kinds of appearances and behaviours can or cannot *pass* through everyday barriers of social ordering and surveillance capitalism. This hyper-awareness of thresholds carries into our next suspension events as we push the thresholds of (un)acceptability and (un)intelligibility on a moving train. How to resist easy passes, making the weight of each transition feel thick and heavy with infrathin variations?

Passage, Sept. 5, 2019, 11:40-13:46, Train line between London and Manchester

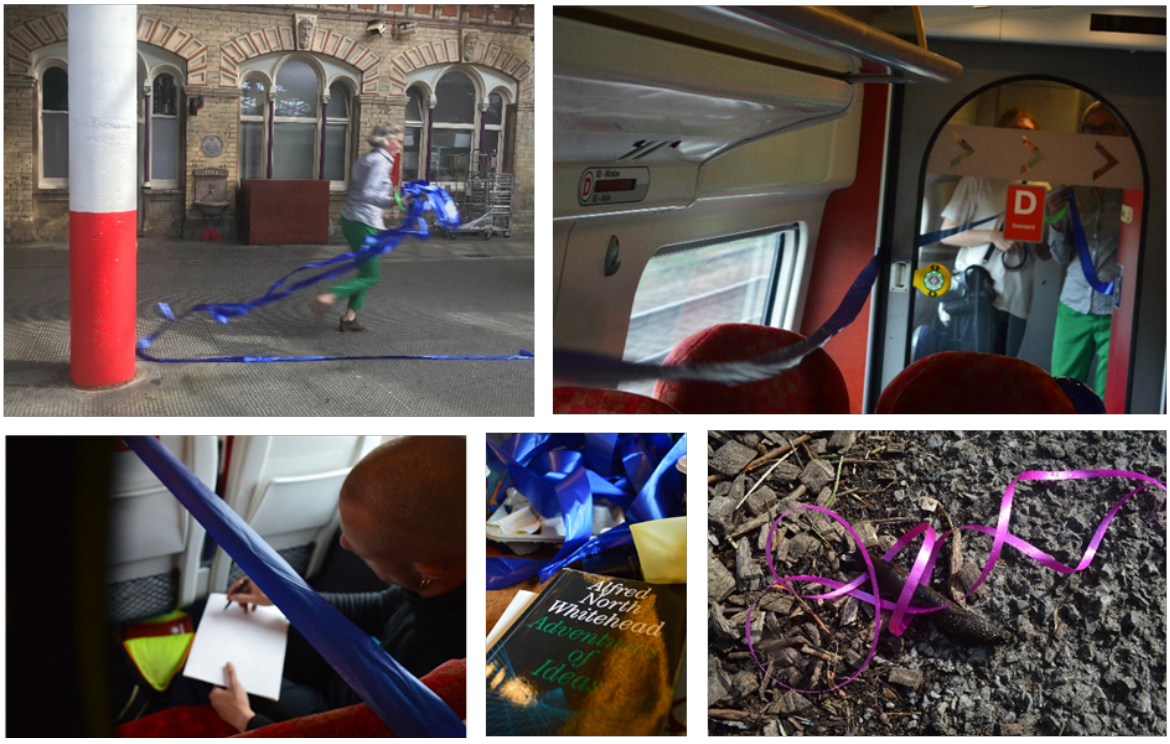
Two hours in a symphonic train bumping along to a certain destination - all its latency and fluid scratchiness, lagging behind and shooting ahead of itself all the way. The train provides us with a

discrete body of time, a shooting bullet of time. Our bodies suspended in time. Specifically, our bodies suspended in a moving train car, and within that we had to break the regularity of the seats, the rectangular receptacle of a train wagon, the seats molded to receive neurotypical bodies, our expectations, the train attendant's expectations of our behaviour, the thresholds of what passes for acceptable and intelligible on a moving train. Embracing Manning's (2019) propositions for attuning to minor movements and Whitehead's (1967) bid for contemporary freedom, we chose the enabling constraint of the straight line shot of a train-track running Northwest through the heart of England.

This passage was about creating conditions for attuning to minor movements, while also situating the event in a *major* movement, a capitalist commuter through-line. We suspend a blue ribbon from Virgin Train coach D to E, F, and G, connecting one suspended train car to another, ribbon snipped by the scissors of automatic train doors. We are told off by the train attendant ("you can't do this"), but we still manage to hang in. Most of the other passengers vacate our train car, but a woman with a small baby stays the whole time. Ribbon is wrapped around her baby carriage, the baby plays with the ribbon, they are part of the event. The train stops for three minutes at Milton Keynes, Catharine runs onto the train platform with the billowing blue ribbon, wraps it around a pole, and then runs back inside the train just as the doors close. A train attendant chastises us again, threats of disembarkment are made. We have located an internal limit-point, a threshold of permissibility beyond which the event implodes (Figure 2).

Figure 2

The ribbon threading its way through Passage, a live transmission from a moving train behind London and Manchester, and eventually tangling with a slug in the Cultivation Suspension in Hulme community garden.



From inside the accelerating train we also suspend an umbilical ribbon of sound on Resonance FM. We hang in and out with the radio listeners, tuning in from London and across the world, while we accelerate on a train that was obviously delayed, suspended somewhere between departure and arrival. As the enlivening of an ecology through technics, the "Passage" radio transmission consisted of sonorised minor movements sent from train tracks relayed through mobile phone towers onto radio waves. Invisible to the public eye, noticed by some curious strangers on the train, the transmitted event in transit must have been incomprehensible to the listener's ear.

> *The minor gesture, we must remember, is defined by its capacity to vary, not to hold, not to contain. It acts on, moves through, is gesturing always towards a futurity present in the act, but as yet unexpressed. This is its force, this is its call for freedom.* (Manning, 2016, p. 24)

The Passage Suspension tested the ways artistic practices can temporarily suspend capitalistic control, scrambling the codes of intelligibility and suspending the signals of normative temporal functioning. Time bent and we listened to our future as the radio's present. "Real-time is a fiction", Brian Massumi (2017) argues. There is no such thing as true simultaneity. That is not to say that events do not happen together, but rather, that the contemporary togetherness of events makes its own time. "The causal independence of contemporary occasions is the ground for freedom within the Universe" (Whitehead, 1967, p. 198).

Yet our preparation partially consisted of habitual worries about whether the transmission would be legible. Anxious about the reliability of the Virgin Train's free Wi-Fi system, we explored budgets to hire Wi-Fi boosters and transmitters and a sound engineer to travel with us. How to call home was the question. At minus three weeks, we thought it might not work at all, and since two hours of silence seemed unacceptable, we read, wrote, composed, played, sang, and choreographed a series of "suspended" pre-recordings[3]. In the end, just as we boarded the train, Agata simply called the radio station's landline from her mobile phone, and somebody answered. This is why our live broadcast from the train sounded as if it was being sent from the Moon.

From the normative perspective of professional radio broadcasting values, the transmission of Passage was a total failure, occupying the threshold where broken communication dephases into noise. But the brokedown, scrambled, anarchival transmission perfectly suited the experimental character of Resonance FM. The radio station loved our broadcast, and even submitted the recording to an international radio consortium as an exemplar of experimental broadcasting practice. As Massumi (2017) reminds us, capitalism thrives on the deterritorialisation of its own edges, opening up new markets capable of penetrating the oblique and unintelligible dimensions of experience. Yet recognising the complicity of speculative practices in capitalist expansion is also a key step in cultivating techniques of "creative duplicity", which work to undo capitalistic tendencies and reclaim value *from inside* institutional entanglements (Massumi, 2018).

[3] London-based duo Irruptive Chora remixed many of the sound recordings generated by the project, which can be accessed through Mixcloud: https://www.mixcloud.com/irruptive_chora/passage-suspensions-london-manchester/

Passage became an experiment in speculative practices of listening and sounding that value the impossibility of transparent communications. The act of listening typically demands a certain trust in mutual intelligibility, a trust in discernible signals, passages, arrivals. The transmission of Passage broke this trust, and inserted a different one in its place: a trust in disjunction, a trust in speculative and opaque investments, a trust in hanging out and hanging in with events. The broken transmission became a cry for *staying with*, for staying with events that feel fragmented, decayed, annihilated, destroyed. The leitmotif of this cry was indeed the trip, the skimming on the rails, the passing of the open fields - the hanging in with the ribbon of the phone call back to London - the corporeal divide between "here" and "there" growing deeper every passing minute, sometimes passing completely out of range.

The action traces of this event remain dominated by the deep royal blue fat ribbon, winding from the first suspension in Euston park, now coming to temporarily colonize a sea of red plush seats and joining railroad cars by getting jammed in the automatic accordion doors at each end of the car. This thread held onto the urgency of Manning's (2019) proposition for collective attunement, not to let the connection with our listeners down, no matter how faint or fragile. Serious attempts were made to keep the ribbon of transmission going — in 2 hours of intermittent latencies we catch a cacophony of train squeaks and squeals of laughter, attempts to read passages from philosophical texts, sounds of opening train doors getting in the way, long screechy pauses, one artist taking sound readings from creaking overhead compartments, another reading letters found in a garbage can in Shoreditch, strange ululations in concert with the whistling accordions connecting the train cars, shrieks and echoes of a train's restroom with seven people singing inside it, the jingling of rusty nails getting washed in the sink. In this we are not performing, and we are not performers. There are no spectators. We are simply an event coming to expression, harvesting smirks and smiles. Where finally did the Passage come to rest? Becoming unintelligible, the Passage refused to communicate its message. It refused to arrive. It stayed suspended. It stayed "methodology-free" by staying with the immanence of events (St. Pierre, 2019b).

Metabolism: Sept. 5th, 16:05 – 17:03, Gymnasium, Manchester Metropolitan University

The gym is a known space, a gridded space, an institutional space; it is situated at the bottom floor of the university faculty building. It is designed for teaching health and physical education. We feel its institutional weight bearing down on the atmosphere. Such a large volume of suspended air, and yet so weighty. It recalls smells and sensations from enforced school-day sports. A militant gym teacher telling you to walk off a broken leg. The everyday violences of schooling and the dull ache of forced play.

> *To be forced to play is like being forced to touch. Not only does it potentially do violence to the complex relational field in co-composition, it also presupposes an already homogenous arena of engagement.* (Goodman, 2018, p. 33)

The lines for different types of sport are gridded on the floor, they overlap each other making the

idea of discrete lines for discrete sports incoherent. These lines always offer points of return, where right-angles and semi-circles lead back to an infinite enclosure. Yet these sporting lines that delineate each game offer comfortable paths for us to travel when no demands are made. Letting the lines lead movement becomes an occupation (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Intersecting gridded lines in the gymnasium at Manchester Metropolitan University

Manning asks: “What if, instead of placing self-self interaction at the center of development, we were to posit relation as key to experience?” (2013, p. 2). This apparently innocuous question is actually revolutionary - what if we could eschew our early instructions, questioning the core assumptions and values that delineate the body? Might we think of bodies in less solid terms, as something more akin to gels or liquids? What if our very identities could give up something of themselves to relations, finding more of themselves in metabolic connection to others than could ever be found by focusing internally? What if we could understand community, and even institutions, not as hostile foreign invaders threatening bodily, intellectual, or spiritual integrity, but as opportunities that reinforce the “us” of shared dependencies, rather than subsuming or obliterating “us” to the bounded individual of liberal humanism?

Bounce. Bounce. Whap. ThudThudThud.

We circulate around the gymnasium repeating weird improvised gestures, bumping into and contaminating each other’s movement when we intersect. Perhaps moments like these are when

we come closest to Manning's (2019) propositions for attuning to minor movements. Not because the stakes are high, but rather because they are so low - there is no pressure to perform, either for a public or for ourselves. With the pressure dispersed, we mess around. We run and yelp like children, playing with our adult bodies like we played with our former childish ones. Someone flicks the lights off and we play in the dark. Far from being a stilted "art performance" (some grim movement exercise in a formal space that predetermines its outcome via careful social encoding), this moment is all ours - it does not matter what happened, or if anything happened. All we had was a room, and each other, and everything we carry together. Everything that carries us.

WhappaWhappaWhappa.

> *When the skin becomes not a container but a multidimensioned topological surface that folds in, through, and across spacetimes of experience, what emerges is not a self but the dynamic form of a worlding that refuses categorization. Beyond the human, beyond the sense of touch or vision, beyond the object, what emerges is relation.* (Manning, 2013, p. 12)

Thunk.

At some moment (what moment? and when does an awareness of an interval unfold?), an attention to the padded walls at the far wall of the room actualises. The padded walls recall a play sequence enacted in a different time and a different space: in this time and space three child bodies run one after another, wildly crashing into a metal garage wall. The padded wall in this now-time of the gym becomes an invitation to run and feel this sensation of body meeting surface at speed. This self-activity of the body-in-the-gym is not the wave-like rising and falling of three bodies against the garage wall where the responsive movement of bodies produced collective vitality affects (Stern, 2010), where activity becomes a form of "life-feeling" (Massumi, 2013, p. xvii). In this now-time of the gym, there is one body that is propelled forward with intent. Even as it seeks a wave to ride upon, it is an awkward body that does not flow; it has become accustomed to separating its skin from the world. The running speed accelerates and the wall crashes become more forceful. This determined body unexpectedly flinches in anticipation of the wall; an arm lifts to take the force of the wall, ribs are impacted by the folded-in arm and half-turned body. The wall-impressed ribs jab with pain, ushering a whimpering utterance. It is the unintended shielding arm, and the flash of pain that surprisingly causes this body to burst with life as wall and skin register through a process of self-absorption.

Bumbumbum.

The absurdity of running into a wall and getting hurt is funny, and collective laughter breaks out even in the impressed-body. When the impressed-body laughs, ribs jab intensely with wall/self-absorbed pain. Breath-in: pain rising. Breath-out, pain subsiding. Later the funniness of this state of affairs causes the impressed-body to laugh aloud again: the serial refrain of the run-up that was punctured by the contingent surprises along the way, bursting life into the body through the wall,

the pain, and the laughter. Later, when the impressed-body is sleeping and turning over in bed, the wall makes itself felt again, jabbing the body to wakefulness. As this body takes up its new breathing position and organs subside into new resting places, the gym-wall becomes a drift that dissipates in this re-settlement.

Huuummmmmm.

"Again and again in young childhood we are given instructions that assist us in differentiating our skin from that of the world" (Manning, 2016, p. 114). Toward the end of this metabolic suspension we're reminded by our bodies that we are not, in fact, children any longer. Our breathing is laboured. Our metabolism is working overtime. We laugh through gasps, or perhaps gasp through laughter. We lie on the floor and give ourselves time to recover our breath and our dignity in preparation for leaving this place. We stretch and rise, smiling, still not quite sure what, if anything, happened.

Volume, Sept. 6th, 9:30 - 10:30, Anechoic chamber, University of Salford

We are many and again we are (still) here. In silence, nevertheless, we are not still. Stillness is composed of movements, Manning (2012) explains. Together, we are trapped in the anechoic chamber, an aural void designed purposely to eliminate sound resonance. This is a spontaneous event of listening, while moving with the threshold of not-hearing. The chamber is suspended within a larger architectural infrastructure to prevent external vibrational contamination. The room is built with bricks specifically fired, for the foam-layered walls not to speak; for the asynchronous time to stand still. We see in here, but we cannot hear. We become dizzy. When you close your eyes, it gets a bit less confusing. We ask them to turn off all the lights. We realise that the porosity of skin literally makes our body all ears. We hear dribbling in the neck; sniffing down the gullet; cracking in the bones; blood in veins; a hiss. We become the sound that is listening to itself; the self-enjoyment of the event experiencing its own passage. An anechoic chamber is an event of becoming the imperceptible self-sounding body (Figure 4).

With our voice sounding slightly muffled, like a swaddled baby, the scarcity of vibrational affects isolates us from within. An anechoic chamber is an event of unlearning what it means to be surrounded and resonating with the environment. "The point is to begin to develop an attunement to the weight of that crossing, and how that weight affects what can happen in that environment" (Manning & Keupers, 2019, np). The act of crossing an anechoic chamber's doors is an event of attuning to the transitions of affective tonality, tuning out and tuning in.

Figure 4

Suspended in the anechoic chamber at the University of Salford

We are suspended between the echo of two events; between intervals; between past and future intensities. “To take the next step is to move-with the interval produced by preacceleration… to hear-with the wall’s approach” (Manning, 2012, p. 49). Volume provides a spatium for sound, but when sound hits the wall in this chamber, it gets swallowed. There are no echoic reflections, so every sound is a direct singularity. Encounter cannot be carried into locatable “points”. The intensive magnitude of each sonic wavelength is dampened. The muted room cannot reproduce affective resonance in sonic terms. “Affective tone is an environmental resonance of a feeling-in-action, a vibratile force that makes the milieu felt” (Manning, 2008, p. 8). Without the propagation of intensive flows, without sonic amplification though intensive surface, relation becomes even more invisible and barely heard. We learn what it means to listen but not hear (Campt, 2016).

To listen is to re-act like the foam walls of the room, absorbing the dense volume of affects that penetrate porous flesh. To listen does not mean to hear, but it means to be aware of the intensities permeating the skin. An anechoic chamber is an event of listening to the inaudible; of losing voice; of leaving and returning to reclaim anew. This is also Nietzsche’s technique of how to return the return in the constant sense of becoming different. “Eternal return is both movement and cycle of time. Don’t be seduced into thinking time is linear. Time is the future past, the nonsensuous – the feeling of the past – overlapping with the sensuous – the feeling of the present” (Manning, 2008, np). Return is the spiraling passage of the becoming-body, a bodying that listens, resonates, and attenuates time.

Resonating Erin Manning’s philosophy, this text comes from a feeling of urgency, the pressing pulsion for polyphony. In the penumbra of aural denial, in the anechoic chamber, we are mutated, transmuted and our voices are quieted. We touch and our polymorphous wordiness touches us. We are speaking in synch. We sound strangled. A polyphonic timbre reverberates our ribcages. An

ambience of emptiness; voluminous without volume; a deflated balloon; it feels like there is no gas in the room. There is no humidity to baffle the sound in here either. The vertiginous feeling of bodily discomfort seems to grow the longer we stay in the chamber. The space does not sound right, the body feels different. Maybe our ears need to pop. We blame the Eustachian tube, but it is not at fault. Tinnitus tingles the temples. The rhythmic sound of pulsating blood becomes unbearable. Silence suffocates. The body knows, but cannot tell. Non-reverberating rumbling in our belly, a suppressed liquid rushing through the large intestine is taking precedence over any predefined category of experience. Can we learn to value every strange sensation penetrating our guts and skin? Amplified contrast of corporeal consistency, in between the soft walls of this suspended architectural system, turns our gathering into a carnal happening. “A body is an event for affective resonance” (Manning, 2010, p. 124).

We have been sitting on the floor, which is suspended on springs to stop vibration from getting in. In quietness we coalesce, our sensory feedback shaken. A balloon is pierced. Crisp crescendo of a muted echo sounds contradictory to our ears. The volume of no substance creates an unearthly milieu. It is the moment when we realise that we are more than one body. “The body is always more than one (…) the body is always more than human” (Manning, 2010, p. 121). We are the air, what we breathe in. Our throat is hollow, food and air pipes are empty, our lungs and guts are hollow and empty. Even our bones are full of holes, there are thousands of blood cells inside of those. Remember, our heart is repeatedly pumping it all in and out. Our brains are woven with nervous tubes, with irregularly firing neurons. They are all empty. Life percolates freely through these interstices (Whitehead, 1978, p. 105-106). Energy is the effervescence of our veins. Our flesh is fizzy, and we shed skin daily. The porous clothing that gives form to our being is the voluminous envelopment of our energetic field.

Conclusion: A Pedagogy of Suspensions

To inquire through a pedagogy of suspensions is to learn to sense infrathin differentials of events, to become sensitive to what makes the slightest differences felt. Suspended somewhere between the singularity of an event and writing its re-activated action traces, we found a pedagogy of attuning to the smallest of intervals. This pedagogy does not claim to operate outside of capitalism, but rather works subversively, in the cracks and interstices between capitalistic orderings of time, life, sociality and the body. This pedagogy embraces the lag or latency where events brush against one another and celebrates a percolation of experience across intervals.

A pedagogy of suspensions works through those junctures of experience that are overlooked or discarded by capitalism because they are seen to lack calculable value or utility. This pedagogy necessarily entails an escape of certain singularities alongside a generative capture of others. But we are touched by that which escapes or fails to realise itself as useful, intelligible, or articulable. A pragmatics of the useless “must never claim to know how the infrathin will make itself felt” (Manning, 2020, p. 24). This has political implications to the extent that a power is attributed to that which does not fully actualize or even *act* (Massumi, 2018), but nonetheless carries a surplus value or aesthetic remainder that cannot be prefigured. “A politics of the infrathin—the way the

work's work eludes us, escapes us, the way it delays the affirmation of its tenuous apparition, the way it touches us, in the lag—cannot say in advance how it will unfold, or what it will do" (Manning, 2020, p. 15). A pedagogy of suspensions offers one of many tenuous paths toward this politics to come, a path that will ask for a new vocabulary of practices for studying with and through variations of experience that are only barely perceptible.

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