

EXPERIENCE AND EXPERIMENT IN AFFECTIVE SPACES

Refrains for Moving Bodies



DEREK P. MCCORMACK

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In the pulse of inner life immediately present now in each of us is a little past, a little future, a little awareness of our own body, of each other's persons, of these sublimities we are trying to talk about, of the earth's geography and the direction of history, of truth and error, of good and bad, and of who knows how much more?

— WILLIAM JAMES, *A Pluralistic Universe*

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PREFACE

In this book I explore the qualities of affective spaces generated for and by moving bodies through a process of participating in the possibilities these spaces afford for experimenting with experience. Like many in the social sciences and humanities, human geographers do not acknowledge often enough the influence of these spaces on the shape and substance of thinking. Perhaps this is because such influence resists individualization, registering and persisting as a vague set of swirling affects rather than as a discrete personality. *Refrains for Moving Bodies* is about how these spaces and their affective influence matter: it explores the potential of these spaces — or more precisely these spacetimes — to make a difference to the sensibilities through which thinking takes place. This difference cannot be tracked and traced with any degree of calculable precision. Yet as this book demonstrates, there are concepts and techniques through which, by encouraging a modest experimental empiricism, the play of this difference in the processual field of experience can be rendered palpable, even if only in passing.

Often, of course, the influence of affective spaces for moving bodies becomes discernible only in retrospect. For instance, in early 1991 I needed to make a decision: to continue working for a major multinational semiconductor manufacturer or to return to university to study geography after a break of over a year following an unsuccessful stint as a student of analytical chemistry. By chance, on the evening before that decision was made, I attended the Abbey Theatre in Dublin to see a production of Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa*.¹ Set in Donegal in 1936, the play centers on the lives

of a family of sisters, one of whom has a young son, who, in middle age, serves as the narrator of the events. Friel's play articulates all kinds of tensions and tendencies in Irish popular culture, particularly those centering on the body as a site of expression, celebration, and social control. Perhaps unsurprisingly, *Dancing at Lughnasa* has been subject to a range of critical readings exploring how the text figures and performs the relation between place, gender, and identity.² To be sure, these readings have some purchase. Such readings were beyond me, however, as I sat and witnessed that particular performance: certainly, the habits of thinking on which they are based had yet to be cultivated. And even now when I think of it, aware as I am of the bleak futures that haunt the lives performed in the play, what I remember of that performance are moving bodies: bodies "moving rhythmically"; bodies responding more to the "mood of the music than to its beat"; bodies moving in but also generating a kind of space of experience "in which atmosphere is more real than incident and everything is simultaneously actual and illusory."³

It would be tempting to imagine that attending the Abbey production of *Dancing at Lughnasa* was a decisive moment: to think that a clear arc of influence could somehow be traced between that moment and any subsequent course of action or line of interest. What can be said, however, is that those moving bodies, in concert with props, lights, and sound, worked to create an affective context shaping, however briefly, the sensibility through which thinking, as an orientation toward futures, took place. And for my part, what can be said is that the next day I decided to return to university to study geography. That the geographies in which I would eventually become interested might involve moving bodies was certainly not obvious at that point. And when a concern with the relation between bodies and geography did first emerge on my horizon of interest, it was framed largely in terms of representation: bodies were maps of signification (and power) whose meaning could be challenged and contested through critical readings. Viewed in this way, the characters and the spaces in Friel's play could be understood in terms of how they represented wider cultural themes. While it offers a great deal of critical purchase on the cultural geographies of bodies, this approach clearly leaves something out: a concern with the experiential — and more precisely the affective — dimensions of geographies that are excessive of a practice of cultural-critical reading that attends to the codification of corporeality. Fortunately my own growing interest in the spaces of moving bodies coincided with the emergence within human geography and beyond

of a sustained engagement with what Nigel Thrift has called nonrepresentational theory.⁴ This diverse body of work has many features, but central to it is the claim that spaces, and our sense of their extent and intensity, cannot be reduced to questions of representation, where representation is either an internal (cognitive) or an external symbol. Nonrepresentational theories, in contrast, encourage us to think of spaces and places in terms of their enactive composition through practice. They encourage us to find ways of making more of the affective qualities of these spaces: precisely those qualities exemplified through the processual enactment of Friel's play in the Abbey Theatre that night. And they do so not at the expense of attention to lived experience, nor, indeed, to critique as naive any appeal to experience: rather, for nonrepresentational theories the important question is how to cautiously reaffirm experience as a source — however modest — of conceptual, empirical, and ethico-political experiment.

Written over the course of a decade or so of engagement with nonrepresentational theories, the chapters in this book explore how the affective spaces generated by and for moving bodies offer opportunities for experimenting with experience. Two interrelated questions motivate these chapters. The first question is a conceptual-empirical one: how to make sense of the peculiarly affective qualities of the spaces produced by and for moving bodies? *Refrains for Moving Bodies* develops answers to this question through pursuing a radical empiricism in which concepts participate in the felt process of being drawn into, and drawing out, the affective qualities of worldly experience rather than distancing thinking from that experience.⁵ That is, concepts provide important ways of experimentally amplifying and modulating the felt qualities of the affects that move across and between bodies in encounters that are variously staged and contingent. In the process, *Refrains for Moving Bodies* affirms concepts as lived abstractions that sensitize thinking both to the affective qualities of spaces and to the myriad techniques and technologies through which these spaces are generated. What emerges in the process is an account of affective spaces — or more accurately spacetimes — as they are generated and modulated, and as they circulate across many different domains of practice and life.

The second question motivating this book follows on from the first, and can be formulated thus: what kinds of ethico-political experiments might be facilitated by conceptual-empirical participation in ecologies of practices organized around moving bodies? This question is particularly pressing in a world where the issue of what counts as a good life is more and more

bound up in the capacities of bodies to affect and be affected through movement. Equally, its importance arises also from the problem of how best to grasp the value of forms of affective life that are always potentially in excess of the economic, geopolitical, and biopolitical formations in which they are implicated.⁶ In this book, affective spacetimes are understood as relation-specific milieus in which the value of this excess might be explored through experiments with moving bodies.⁷ A central claim underpinning what follows, therefore, is that exploring the ethico-political potential of these spacetimes is best pursued through the cultivation of an affirmative critique: that is, through a style of critique that does not let some of the problems and difficulties associated with the object of critique foreclose opportunities for making more of and valuing the excessive qualities of this object through forms of modest experiment.⁸

Refrains for Moving Bodies takes place precisely as a series of modest relation-specific experiments. Linking all these experiments, in what follows, is a commitment to stretching out the affective qualities of empirical moments, events, and encounters in order to sense what might emerge. Put another way, the moments of affective excess emerging from these contexts are affirmed here as generative intervals of potential from which new refrains for thinking, feeling, and moving, however minor, might emerge and be sustained within and across forms of life and the movements of thought of which they are composed.

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Parts of this book draw upon and develop previously published material. Some of the ideas in chapter 1 were first exercised in "Drawing Out the Lines of the Event," *Cultural Geographies* 11, no. 2 (2004): 212–220. An earlier version of chapter 2 appeared as "Diagramming Practice and Performance," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 23, no. 1 (2005): 119–147. An earlier version of chapter 3 appeared as "A Paper with an Interest in Rhythm," *Geoforum* 33, no. 4 (2002): 469–485. An earlier version of chapter 4 appeared as "An Event of Geographical Ethics in Spaces of Affect," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 28, no. 4 (2003): 488–507. Chapter 6 draws on ideas first explored in "Thinking in Transition: The Affirmative Refrain of Experience/Experiment," in *Taking-Place: Nonrepresentational Theories and Geography*, edited by Ben Anderson and Paul Harrison (Farnham, U.K.: Ashgate, 2010).

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INTRODUCTION

Affective Spaces for Moving Bodies

Refrains for Moving Bodies begins in the midst of a conceptual and empirical relation — between bodies and spaces — that at first glance can appear relatively uncontroversial. Uncontroversial because it seems all too obvious that bodies move through and within spaces. They move through corridors, across rooms, along streets. And they move thus with varying degrees of fluency and frustration. Uncontroversial also because it appears similarly obvious that certain spaces are designed explicitly to facilitate the movement of bodies for a range of aesthetic, cultural, or political purposes. Theaters, stadiums, churches, parade grounds, airports, and shopping malls are among the more obvious examples. What links each of these spaces, from the sacred to the profane, from the public to the more obviously commercial, is that they demonstrate how the movement, flow, and stillness of

bodies is both enabled and constrained by various material architectures, habitual behaviors, and organizational technologies.¹

The relation between moving bodies and spaces is more than physical, however. And this is because it is always more than a relation between two discrete things: it is a relation between things already in process. On one hand then, the claim that moving bodies are never singular or homogeneous is by now well established. Certainly, to suggest that the identities of moving bodies are in any way stable or fixed is no longer credible, thanks to the efforts of feminist and post-structuralist scholars across the social sciences and humanities. But the unsettling of bodies involves more than a critique of the performative articulation of their identities. It also involves thinking through and grappling with how to make sense of the affective materialities of bodies as they emerge from, and in turn fold into, worlds of difference in the making. It involves, as Erin Manning writes, thinking of bodies as “relational matrices” composed of multiple capacities for making sense of worlds that complicate any strict opposition between inside and outside.² It involves thinking of bodies as lively compositions crossing thresholds of intensive and extensive consistency whose limits are defined less by physical boundaries than by capacities to affect and be affected by other bodies.³

As this point suggests, the question of how to think moving bodies already presupposes the question of space. Yet space, similarly, is never undifferentiated. Certainly, space is not reducible to the status of a passive, three-dimensional container within which the intentional action of an embodied, moving subject unfolds. Space, in other words, is never a backdrop for something more dynamic. Nor, indeed, can or should it be juxtaposed to process or temporality in a way that privileges the latter. Instead, it is always more accurate to speak of space, or spaces, as multiple: spaces produced via a range of technologies and experienced through different sensory registers; spaces with variable reaches and intensities; and spaces that can often only be apprehended in and through the assemblages of movement and stillness of which they are composed.⁴ Hence the question with which this book begins: if bodies and spaces are always already matters in process, how best to explore what social theorist Henri Lefebvre calls the *generative* relation between both in ways that do not presume the existence of one prior to the other? That is, how to explore and make sense of how bodies and spaces co-produce one another through practices, gestures, movements, and events?⁵

In *Refrains for Moving Bodies* I argue that making sense of this generative relation — that is, learning to think through and within the spaces produced for and by moving bodies — demands particular attention to the affective qualities of these spaces combined with a commitment to experimenting with different ways of becoming attuned to these qualities.⁶ Affective qualities are those heterogeneous matters of the sensible world we often try to capture through terms such as emotion, mood, and feeling. As part of the “affective turn” across the social sciences, these qualities of everyday life have been explored in a range of interesting and important ways.⁷ Bodies, in their manifold incarnations, are central to this work. Yet one of the key insights emerging from the affective turn is that affect is by no means confined to or contained by the physical limit of bodies. Affect is instead better conceived of as a distributed and diffuse field of intensities, circulating within but also moving beyond and around bodies.⁸ At the same time, the movement of bodies generates disturbances and perturbations that transform the intensity and reach of this field. In the process, bodies participate in the generation of affective spaces: spaces whose qualities and consistencies are vague but sensed, albeit barely, as a distinctive affective tonality, mood, or atmosphere.

For much of the time affective spaces are being produced without much in the way of direct intervention: they emerge accidentally, sometimes surprisingly, as part of the circulation of what Kathleen Stewart calls “ordinary affects.”⁹ They are happened upon, sensed unexpectedly. They seize us as we are entering into them. Moreover, the qualities of affective spaces are transmitted and felt across bodies, which are then potentially affected by, or moved by, these spaces. In fact, when we start to think about this, it becomes extremely difficult to differentiate the affective qualities of bodies and spaces. Both are always in the process of actively enhancing and dampening the qualities of one another. To dance with others is to sense this. To sit in a theater is to sense this. To attend a football game, or indeed any other sporting activity that draws an audience, is to sense this. So also is to listen to radio commentary on sporting events. Equally, to watch moving images of moving bodies projected on a screen — on a laptop, in a cinema, on a phone — is to sense this. A myriad of practices, techniques, and technologies are employed deliberately to actively organize, work upon, and choreograph moving bodies with the aim of producing affective spaces and modulating their intensity. Indeed, one of the most remarkable features of

contemporary Western societies is the sheer variety of means available for actively generating and modulating affective spaces for moving bodies in different ways.

While differing enormously, these spaces share a number of key characteristics that can be outlined briefly in the form of propositions for experimenting with thinking and feeling. First, these spaces are relational — they involve nonreducible relations between bodies, and between bodies and other kinds of things, including artifacts, ideas, and concepts, where neither these things nor bodies are ever stable themselves.¹⁰ Second, affective spaces are processual: that is, they exist as worlds in ontogenetic transformation whose variations can be sensed through different techniques of attention, participation, and involvement — techniques that can and should be cultivated as part of the process of thinking. Third, affective spaces are nonrepresentational: that is, their force does not necessarily cross a threshold of cognitive representation in order to make a difference with the potential to be felt. That is, these spaces have a quality that cannot necessarily be grasped or evaluated through a representational model of thinking — or at least not initially, and not if these qualities are to be sustained in thought. Instead, these spaces generate vague but tangible shifts, twists, and turns in the multilayered sensibility from which thinking takes place. They are composed of fragile and sometimes fleeting combinations of percepts, affects, and concepts — ways of seeing, feeling, and thinking that can align in potentially eventful and novel ways. Pursuing possibilities for sensing and thinking through the relational, processual, and nonrepresentational qualities of these spaces, and drawing them out through different techniques and technologies for experimenting experience, is central to the project of *Refrains for Moving Bodies*.

Rhythms, Atmospheres, Refrains

Refrains for Moving Bodies deliberately emphasizes the claim that moving bodies participate in the generation of affective spaces. This emphasis on space and spatiality is quite deliberate because the project of diagramming the distinctively affective qualities of the spaces we inhabit is a key task for the contemporary social sciences and humanities. This, in turn, is a necessary element of generating opportunities for creative variations and inflections in the ethico-political tenor and tone of these spaces.¹¹ Equally, emphasizing spaces deliberately thus also provides a way of countering

the tendency to think of space, and spatiality, as inimical to thinking processually.¹² Yet this emphasis is also a cautious one because what is really at stake here is the affective *spacetimes* in which bodies are generative participants — for this reason I use the term “spacetimes” throughout this book to designate the qualities of felt gatherings of affects, percepts, and concepts. Affective spacetimes do not just have extension: they also have duration and intensity. They have reach and resonance. Front and center of the project of *Refrains for Moving Bodies* is therefore a concerted attempt to grapple and experiment with a series of conceptual-empirical matters of concern that allow for thinking through the distinctive affective spacetimes in which moving bodies are generatively implicated. This book foregrounds three of these matters of concern as having particular value for thinking affective spacetimes: rhythm, atmosphere, and refrain. As the chapters work to demonstrate, each of these matters of concern provides ways of grasping the consistency or intensive “thisness” of affective spacetimes without necessarily reducing these spacetimes to the status of containers for moving bodies. Each performs a valuable and necessary process of generative abstraction as part of a radical empiricism that folds thinking into the world at the same time as it draws out the affects of encounters within the world.

Of the three, rhythm has perhaps attracted most attention across a range of disciplines and practices. Such attention is nothing new. In a short essay called “The Original Structure of the Work of Art,” Giorgio Agamben points to the long-standing importance of rhythm within Western thinking as a concept that offers a way of grasping the “authentic temporal dimension” of “man’s being-in-the-world.” The significance of rhythm in this respect, argues Agamben, is the fact that it “grants men both the ecstatic dwelling in a more original dimension and the fall into the flight of measurable time. It holds epochally the essence of man, that is, gives him the gift both of being and nothingness, both of the impulse in the free space of the work and of the impetus toward shadow and ruin.”¹³ Agamben’s essay foregrounds the particular importance of rhythm to any understanding of the spatiotemporality of aesthetic experience. But the significance of rhythm in this respect goes beyond efforts to understand experience properly defined in terms of its association with self-consciously aesthetic practices. It also extends to efforts to connect an awareness of the temporalities of aesthetic experience to an interest in the more mundane and habitual spaces of the everyday.

Refrains for Moving Bodies therefore draws heavily upon a minor tradition

of thinking in which rhythm figures as way of imbuing philosophical thinking with a sense of the importance of the everyday.¹⁴ Elements of the work of Henri Lefebvre and John Dewey exemplify this tradition. For both Lefebvre and Dewey, rhythm provides a way of thinking the everyday as dynamic, processual, and relational. And it links conceptual concerns with those of a range of somatic and aesthetic practices. In their work, rhythm is a mobile concept that draws together the concerns of philosophically inflected thinking and the performative logics of a range of somatic, aesthetic, and performance practices. Informed in particular by encounters with Lefebvre and Dewey, the book holds fast to the simple proposition that to learn to be affected by affective spacetimes is to take up and be taken up in the rhythms of which these spacetimes are composed: that is, *Refrains for Moving Bodies* affirms rhythm as a conceptual-empirical vehicle for experimenting with experience. And yet a certain degree of tentativeness is necessary here. This tentativeness stems from an awareness of the way in which rhythm can easily be co-opted by theories and political practices that place particular value on its capacity to underpin a space of ethical and aesthetic harmony. In the process it becomes all too easy to pathologize certain styles of movement as arrhythmic or, as Agamben's comments above suggest, to universalize the relation between bodies and rhythm. Thus, while affirming the value of rhythm, it is important to be cautious about the tendency for it to become a concept of ethico-aesthetic capture. The rhythmic spacetimes that figure in what follows are therefore always affirmed at most as fragile orderings emerging from, and potentially returning to, chaos.

The second conceptual-empirical matter of concern that figures prominently in this book is atmosphere. The claim that certain spaces have a distinctive atmosphere is a familiar one to most people, as is an understanding that the presence of moving bodies makes a qualitative difference to the intensity and feel of such atmospheres. In that sense, atmosphere is a concept with an affective resonance that precedes any attempt to theorize it. Until relatively recently, concepts such as atmosphere were too vague for the terms of critical social science. With a renewed interest in questions of affectivity, however, atmospheres have received more attention because they offer ways of foregrounding the distinctively felt qualities of spaces.¹⁵ In the context of an interest in affective spacetimes, the vagueness of atmosphere as a concept becomes a distinct advantage because it provides a way of grasping what Ben Anderson calls the "indeterminate affective 'excess' through which intensive space-times can be created."¹⁶ As Gernot Böhme has argued, atmospheres

offer a useful way of thinking about spacetimes precisely because they are the product of neither subject nor object: an atmosphere is a “floating in-between, something between things and the perceiving subject.”¹⁷

The relation between efforts to employ moving bodies and their rhythmic movement and the production of affective atmospheres is central to this book. Two questions follow from this. The first is the most obvious: how are atmospheres actually produced through attending to and mobilizing the affective qualities of moving bodies? This question is simultaneously conceptual, practical, and technical. As Böhme suggests, performance spaces, and particularly the practices of set and stage design through which these spaces are produced, offer privileged opportunities for exploring this question.¹⁸ Chapter 2 therefore explores efforts to produce performance spaces that generate affective atmospheres by virtue of the opportunities they afford for the rhythmic movement of bodies. However, at the same time, affective atmospheres are not defined solely by situations of proximity or copresence. A second important question is therefore how atmospheres can be understood as affective spacetimes sustained and transmitted across and between bodies at a distance. As detailed in chapter 5, techniques of event amplification such as running commentary upon sporting events provide an especially useful means of exploring how this process takes place.

Always facilitated by specific material configurations, the affective spacetimes explored in this book are not delimited by site specificity: they stretch out across and between bodies in situ, but also involve bodies and their ongoing spatiotemporal differentiation. Moreover, the affects of site-specific encounters have the potential to return again and again, simultaneously interrupting and supplementing thought at odd moments, taking place, repeatedly, through sometimes novel configurations of bodies, concepts, and objects. The conceptual-empirical matter of concern that best captures this quality of affective spacetimes, and the concept that forms part of the title of this book, is the refrain. Furnished by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, the refrain names the durational mattering of which affective spacetimes are composed.¹⁹ Refrains have a territorializing function: that is, they draw out and draw together blocks of spacetime from the chaos of the world, generating a certain expressive consistency through the repetition of practices, techniques, and habits. These territories are not necessarily demarcated or delineated, however: they can be affective complexes, “hazy, atmospheric,” but sensed nevertheless, as intensities of feeling in and through the movement of bodies.²⁰ While qualified by a certain

spatiotemporal consistency, refrains are radically open: that is to say, while they may be repetitive, refrains are always potentially generative of difference, producing lines of thinking, feeling, and perceiving that may allow one to wander beyond the familiar.

As Deleuze and Guattari make clear, the refrain is radically impersonal, or at least more than human. It does not necessarily originate through the expression of some inner psychological impulse: hence the fact that any expressive territory, including, for instance, the markings produced by animals, can be considered as refrains.²¹ To this extent the refrain is not a strictly phenomenological concept. Nevertheless the concept of the refrain also points to the affective consistency of what Guattari calls “existential territories”: that is, it gestures to the fact that these territories are held together and held open by affective relations of various kinds.²² Following Guattari in particular, affective spacetimes can be understood at least in part as existential territories composed of multiple refrains: kinesthetic, conceptual, “material,” and gestural.

Rhythm, atmosphere, and refrain are not self-contained matters of concern: each has the potential to traverse and participate in the activation of the others. To focus on the rhythmic spacetimes of moving bodies is also to explore their potential to participate in the active engineering of affective atmospheres. Similarly, affective atmospheres can catalyze refrains of different intensities and duration that shape the quality of thinking in a range of contexts. It is precisely in the interplay between rhythms, atmospheres, and refrains that this book moves. That the refrain figures in the title is not because it is any more important or primary than rhythm or atmosphere. Nevertheless, the refrain — perhaps more so than rhythm or atmosphere — provides a way of grasping the transversal quality of affective spacetimes. That is, it offers a way of affirming these spacetimes as having a consistency by virtue of affects that can travel across and between bodies and the relations of which these bodies are composed. The critical point here is that the aim of what follows is not to apply any of these matters of concern in order to construct a conceptual framework through which to make sense of the world. Instead, the aim is to enact a radical empiricism as an experimentalism insofar as it experiments with concepts, and thus re-creates them, every time they participate in making something of the world more tangible and palpable than it had already been. In the process, both experience and the concept are transformed.²³

Fieldworking: Experience and Experiment

The claim that rhythm, atmosphere, and refrain are simultaneously conceptual and empirical is central to the argument in this book. A key speculative proposition here is that conceptual matters of concern can sensitize thinking to the affective qualities of spacetimes in ways that generate opportunities both for renewing the promise of experimenting with experience and, in turn, for thinking with concepts. The question of experience is of course freighted with all kinds of difficulties and tensions. Certainly, it should not be taken to mean a stable, self-referential anchor from which to make sense of the world. Nor, however, can it be dismissed entirely in the wake of a post-structuralist critique of the security of self-identity. Instead, as thinkers such as William James and John Dewey remind us, experience is not so much a transcendent moment but a felt process of transition. In their terms, experience is experimented with — potentially — every time something in the world is encountered that offers the possibility for making this world anew, however modestly. Or, more precisely, if somewhat more awkwardly, *experience is experimented*: that is, as Isabelle Stengers reminds us, experience is not an object out there to be acted upon. Rather, it is a field of variation in which thinking is another variation.²⁴ When I use experimented in this book it is not, therefore, to reintroduce some experimental distance, but to draw a conjunctive and transitional relation between the process of thinking and the process of experience.

To learn to be affected by affective spacetimes is not, then, to strip away the experience of these spacetimes, but to make more of this experience through experimentation with techniques, concepts, and materials.²⁵ In doing so, the aim of experimentation is to multiply possibilities for life and living through modifications in thinking, where thinking is always more than a process of cognitive intellectualism. Figures such as Jane Bennett, William Connolly, Bruno Latour, Erin Manning, Brian Massumi, Nigel Thrift, and others also affirm this kind of experiment. For these figures, experimenting experience is a way of multiplying the forces, events, and processes that we admit as participants in this perplexing matter of worldly involvement.²⁶

The experimental quality of affective spacetimes is not so much that they provide opportunities to prove or demonstrate a prefigured idea, but that they have the potential to generate a feeling of something happening that disturbs, agitates, or animates ideas already circulating in ways

that might open up possibilities for thinking otherwise. Exploring these spacetimes therefore always involves more than the effort to demystify the processes through which they are generated, and more than the articulation of a distanced critique of how they become implicated in certain macropolitical constituencies. That is not to say that it involves suspending critique entirely. Instead, it requires the cultivation of an affirmative critique open to the possibility of becoming affected — or moved — by the spacetimes in which bodies participate while also remaining attentive to the limits and problems of this participation.²⁷ This critical openness is a variation on what is now a familiar Spinozist question: if we do not know what a body can do, we also do not know what spacetimes might be generated when bodies move, and how, in turn, bodies might be moved by these spacetimes. It is also a variation on Foucault's characterization of critique as an "ethos" concerned with an "analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them."²⁸

The cultivation of this ethos is a project both related to, and distinct from, the by-now familiar claim that Western thinking needs to become more embodied. It is related, in the sense that it shares the conviction that attention to the participation of bodies in movements of thought is of critical importance to the qualities of that thinking. And it is distinct, because it takes issue with the claim that a focus on embodiment provides a necessary corrective to an overly abstract or conceptual habit of thinking. Thus, instead of making thinking less abstract, the important question, pursued in chapter 7, is how abstraction might help us make more of the experimental relations between bodies, and the architectures of thinking, feeling, and moving in which these relations are composed and recomposed. As performances of abstraction, concepts are especially important here: they sensitize attention to become more attuned to different elements of experience. Concepts are not, of course, the only way to develop this sensitivity. Somatic and performance-based techniques that work upon the affective capacities of moving bodies offer important possibilities in this respect.²⁹ Equally, opportunities for learning to be affected thus can also be provided by encounters with a host of mundane things as part of everyday ecologies: objects, images, or sounds, for instance.³⁰

Taken together, the process of experimenting experience in the different ways pursued in this book can be understood as a particular form of fieldwork. This emphasis on fieldwork is shaped by the disciplinary context from which this book has emerged: geography. Within geography, it is fair to say

that fieldwork has often been framed as an activity in which the researcher goes out into the world and collects data before returning home to analyze or write up these data in a meaningful account. This division of labor has also tended to be underpinned by an implicit separation between mind and body, with the latter serving as the underacknowledged vehicle for the cultivation of the former. These distinctions have, however, been challenged in recent decades, with the field now understood as a distributed and differentiated space composed of practiced relations between bodies, texts, technologies, and materials. Rather than nuggets of information waiting to be discovered, data within this field are now understood as coproduced, affective materials.³¹ Within geography — and indeed other disciplines such as anthropology — fieldwork has come to be seen as a process of generative participation within the diverse forces and agencies of which the world is composed.³² This claim pertains to any context: it has a particular resonance for an interest in affective spacetimes, however, because much of what goes on in these spacetimes does not cross a threshold of representation in order to generate a felt difference or variation. To learn to be affected by these spacetimes is, then, to commit to a style of fieldworking in which experience becomes a field of variations in which to experiment with the question of how felt differences might register in thinking.

Of course, to affirm an experimental sense of experience might well be seen to merely foreground something that takes place all the time throughout the process of research. And yet it often still gets written out of accounts of research. How to write this experimental sense of experience back into accounts of research is therefore an important question. *Refrains for Moving Bodies* takes seriously the value of experimenting with the manner and style in which accounts of this fieldworking are produced, narrated, and addressed.³³ At certain key junctures, albeit in minor ways, it works to show how inventive interventions in fields of expression are just as important as whatever happens during what is often understood as the empirical moment in research.³⁴ This is more obvious in some chapters than others: chapter 3, for instance, is a deliberate effort to stretch the spacetime of expression as part of the practice of experimenting experience with rhythm. Even if they are less obviously experimental, other chapters work to show how the style through which one writes, draws, or choreographs expression is shaped by a sensibility inflected by variations in experience. In some cases this is nothing more than a shift in emphasis or the interruption of a chapter by the description of an empirical moment that opens up the

chapter to forces that exceed its lines. In other cases it is a shift in mode of address that opens up the affective territories of writing in deliberately suggestive but nonprescriptive ways.

Exemplifying

Refrains for Moving Bodies presents a series of experiments with and within affective spacetimes generated for and through moving bodies. These experiments are presented here through the logics of exemplification. As Brian Massumi argues, because examples are unruly and excessive, exemplification is a way of remaining faithful to the singularity of the event-full qualities of relation-specific circumstances rather than presenting this singularity as a particular instance of a general rule or theory.³⁵ Exemplification offers a way of avoiding framing encounters by the already defined idiom of the case as what Lauren Berlant calls a “problem-event that has animated some kind of judgment.”³⁶ More specifically, it provides a way of avoiding using these details as a case study of a process or phenomenon that has already been defined in advance. Instead, it works as a mode of presenting a sense of how participation within relation-specific affective spacetimes might be considered to make a difference to the sensibility through which thinking takes place: that is, how this participation works to complicate the initial terms of this encounter. Through exemplification the task becomes one of presenting a sense of the specifics of participation while also holding onto the possibility that participation has the potential to transform the sensibility that shaped it in the first place. The form of exemplification pursued and performed in these chapters differs, however. In some instances it consists of outlining a sustained encounter with the affective spacetimes of a particular practice (chapters 3, 4, and 5). In other cases it involves narrating the generation of an event of collaborative research-creation (chapters 1 and 8). And in other cases it consists of dwelling upon a particular moment, or generative interval, from which a germinal thought or feeling of tendency emerges (chapters 2, 6, and 7).

As an ethos, as a way and style of acting into the world, exemplification affirms a commitment to the activation of the details of the world such that they may circulate beyond the context of their taking place. That is, what is exemplified is not so much something that already exists prior to the situation of empirical encounter, but the qualities of the situation that make a difference to participants in ways that extend beyond the site of