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Making Trouble With Ontogenesis: Collaborative Writing, Becoming, and Concept Forming as Event

Qualitative Inquiry

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journals.sagepub.com/home/qixKen Gale¹  and Jonathan Wyatt²

Abstract

Through the authors' continuing creative encounters with practices of collaborative writing, this article offers a troubling of approaches to ontology that inform a construction of simply human selves and a constitution of Being. The article seeks instead to foster processual movements toward always becoming and the creative-relational practices of concept forming as event. In their speculative experimentations with the concept of "ontogenesis," the authors offer exemplifications of the capaciousness of collaborating writing bodies, always on the move, always folding and unfolding, always opening in active movements of inquiry, curiosity, and wonder. In the eventful potentiality of "notyetness" that each passage of writing affords, immanent sensings of becoming are imbricated in the intensification of fragile, prehensive, and ontogenetic emergence.

Keywords

new methods & methodologies, methodologies, writing as method of inquiry, methods of inquiry, reconceptualizing collaboration, decolonizing the academy, pedagogy

Beginning in the Middle

Ken, June 2020

In writing of the writing of Bob Dylan, Thomas says, "the recognition that comes from reading or hearing one text through the meaning of a later text is part of the aesthetic pleasure that is the product of the intertextual process . . ." (Thomas, 2018, p. 241). Thomas is fascinated by the presence of Roman and Greek poetry in Dylan's work and devotes his attention in this study to the intertextual imbrications that he *reads* as he reads and listens to the words of Dylan in his writing and his songs. Manning and Massumi (2014) point out that "(l)anguage is (likewise) *sui generis*: words only come from other words, in recurring waves, rising and falling from the linguistic any-point of the superposition of sound and speech, and of silence and noise" (p. 41).

Thomas entitles his book *Why Dylan Matters* and I read this title as one that is intended to signal that writing is not simply discursive, not simply about language and that it has a materiality. Words are pungent, they smell, they reek; in action, they are powerfully evocative: We know this; they *do*. In these doings, they are always actively moving; moving other words, moving affect, moving experience, moving us . . . whatever us is. And therefore, it also seems obvious to point out that movement is, *sui generis*, of itself: Movement moves.

Recurring movements shift presencing to the relational: As we once wrote (Gale et al., 2012), back in those much more human-centric days of theorizing, *writing touches*. Writing touches but we don't know how. The immanence of writing as doing is that it touches, and in these touchings, writing moves, the movements that these writings make come from movements. I recently heard Ursula Le Guinn say in an interview, "I never wanted to be a writer, I wrote." Perfect! And so, as writing is never alone, as we never write alone, our writing is always creative and relational; more accurately, to use Massumi's (2015) hugely influential phrase, "creative-relationally *more-than* human" (p. 14). This seems very important as, in this passage of writing with which we are now engaged, we are bringing into play the fluidity of becoming by making movements away from ontology toward ontogenesis in our writing.

Our (writing) movements act "in-formation" (Manning, 2007, after Simondon, 2009) of ontogenetic constitution of formative force and these formative forces animate

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vitalities. I like it that Manning and Massumi (2014) say of their writing practices together that “we had to learn how to ripple the difference between two stone-hard heads . . . we have had to learn to compose an uneasy two-headed thinking in the act, across a multiplicity of practices” (p. viii). As I sense the desert continuing to expand and in not-yet-ness always, in becoming, more populous, I also sense a force in Haraway’s (2016) term “sympoiesis” where she argues that the only way of “staying with the trouble,” of living in these frighteningly apocalyptic times, is in terms of “making kin.” I make sense of this “making” as always about movement, about writing as an immanent practice where, as Deleuze (2002) has said,

You can always replace one word with another. If you don’t like that one, if it doesn’t suit you, take another, put another in its place. If each one of us makes this effort, everyone can understand one another and there is scarcely any reason to ask questions or to raise objections . . . There are only inexact words to designate something exactly. (p. 3)

In these makings kin, there is no finding of the right words in this “uneasy two-headed thinking,” writing is in the act, it is immanent practice, and in these unceasing movements, we also have to sense the constant irruptions and eruptions, involved and evolving these multiple human and nonhuman selves. This is how I am beginning to understand these movements, these *ontogeneses*. Knowing that one can never write alone, knowing that “our words . . . are never without the echoes of the voices of those whose difference we chose to write with” (Manning & Massumi, 2014, p. viii), then this is how I am continuing to think, act, and work with our collaborative writing in the fluidity of ontogenesis, becoming and concept forming as event.

Jonathan, June 2020

This is an unusual experience. I’ve read your writing a couple of times, once just now and at least twice previously since you sent it at the end of last week. I read it the day it arrived and the next day, at the weekend. What is unusual is how your writing seems to fill the space. It leaves no gaps. I don’t mean that pejoratively, not at all. Over recent years, I have found myself wanting to write in between your words, in between your paragraphs (see, for example, Gale & Wyatt, 2017) but with your writing, this time I did not want to interrupt. It’s as if the writing has so much momentum, or perhaps feels so whole, that as I read there was no room, no appropriate point, for me to step in with my own writing.

Pause. I need to re-write those final sentences of the previous paragraph: It would be better to say how *the writing you sent me* (in contrast with the attributive term, “your” writing) is, after Simondon (2009, p. 6), *ontogenesis*: “a becoming, a mode of resolution . . . rich in potentials” that found an energy and movement that did not call me to interrupt it.

This morning was like many others over these recent weeks of the COVID-19 lockdown. I woke up early, made tea, and went out for exercise once the tea had been drunk. The city was still quiet. There are more cars out now in the mornings, but there is still a sense of a blanket having been spread over the city. The streets are muffled, sleepy. Even running on the pavements, it’s often the case that the loudest noise I hear are birds. When I run along the Water of Leith, the birds’ singing sometimes makes me stop to listen and look. It arrests me, stops me in my tracks. The momentum of my slow running can no longer carry me forward; something catches me in the birds’ singing, filling me with curiosity and wonder. I have an app on my phone now that I can direct at a bird singing and the app will tell me the name of the bird. I’m discovering a new world. It’s one you know well.

Now, back at my flat, I’m looking out through the windows at the elder tree coming into flower. I have the sense that writing together with you has its own movement, carrying us forward (backward, to the side, up, down, somewhere). It’s as if nothing can arrest writing except writing itself. It reminds me of the ocean, of the Ken I know heading into the water alone late on a summer’s afternoon, becoming caught up in the movement, the currents, and the swell of the water he is immersed in.

I spoke to a close friend today. She asked me what I was writing. I said I am writing with you. She asked me what it was about. I couldn’t find the words. I replied, after a pause, “I don’t know yet. We’re writing about writing. Collaborative writing. We’re talking about the concept of ‘ontogenesis’ in relation to collaborative writing.” That moment reminded me of the time many years ago—do you remember?—when we were writing our thesis and an uncle at a family gathering asked me what you and I were writing about. I couldn’t answer him either. He asked, trying to encourage me (he was a history professor, I was a doctoral student), wanting to be helpful, “So, what’s your thesis?” Where I landed at that time was that our thesis was about friendship.

Maybe that still applies. At the time I meant *our* friendship, you and me, one human with another. Now that exclusively human term, *friendship*, is destabilized, and/or it’s broadened, deepened. It’s about, as you say, after Donna Haraway, “making kin.” Writing as the making, writing in the doing, of kinship: kin-ing, not Ken-ing; or *and* Ken-ing (see Gale & Wyatt, 2009).

Ken, July 2020

And I come back to you with your phrase “the momentum of my slow running can no longer carry me forward.” You immediately follow this with other movements; movements with birds and their song, movements in and of the water, the sight of the elder blossom, the knowing of its scent, a movement in its self. I think of Stengers (2011) and her writing of wonder and of how those wonderings are so

wound up with speed, or perhaps it would be better to say slowness. In this, I sense that perhaps fast running might take you away from scents, sights, sounds. The immersion in the moments of movements (what Bronwyn and Susanne referred to all those years ago as “mo(ve)ment”; Davies & Gannon, 2006, p. x) and movements of moments is an immanence of practice that does not negate or ignore those other sensualities but absorbs them, winds and entangles them into the always “notyetness” of the yet to come, always in the intuitive “mo(ve)ment” of the now and what is on its way.

These windings and entanglings seem to be the ontogenetic energetic force of becoming in which immanence of its self disallows the separations of past, present, and future and imbricates them in what Deleuze (2001) calls “*a life*” . . . “*a life*, no longer dependant on a Being or submitted to an Act—it is an absolute immediate consciousness whose very activity no longer refers to being but is ceaselessly posed in a life” (p. 27). And in this, I return endlessly to my writing, our writing, together writing, that writing, that never ending *becoming-Jonathan-Ken-writing* that, as you say, echoing *Ken* writing, is a “heading into the water alone late on a summer’s afternoon, becoming caught up in the movement, the currents and the swell of the water he is immersed in.” Every time I walk down the cliff, eyes out sea, checking the swells, watching out for rips, there is a feeling, an excitement that surges through me; it is of compulsion; if it was a color, it would be vivid, vibrantly alive, searing a canvas with the venom of its serious brightness. You say, “It’s as if nothing can arrest writing except writing itself” and that is how it is with the immersion in the sea. “Affective presencing” (Gale, in press); as something takes over, immanence, of its self, precedes all else.

An Interlude

Ken, July 2020

I allude to the ludic here. The allusion does not make reference to a space between, where our difference is seen as being brought to the writing; I sense that much has been happening in these lives, these entangled becomings that imbricate, these spacings/timings where “Jonathan” and “Ken” pass in and out, where wandering is done, where brief encounters occur, where memories ignite, sparkle, and then appear elsewhere . . . “Erewhon” (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004) . . . so the allusion to the ludic suggests, perhaps, *intralude* . . . yes, *intralude*, where spacings/timings are always differentiating, where difference is always becoming in effervescent mad(em)nesses. And so . . .

Yes, and later . . . days, weeks later, the compulsion to write takes over again. I find myself, this self, writing about *he*, that person, that substantive some thing (Being) that I feel I have to write about, write with, write to, welling up: I remove this self from me and write with *he*.

His sleep was wakeful. He found himself, that self that lived with him permanently, though not always in obvious presence, pushing him to purposefulness, pushing his body, that body, to do: pushing that body in becoming. He was aware that somehow it didn’t matter . . . to what, to whom, to whatever but to and with now. He walked, half dressed, in his garden, the early morning sunshine warming his naked back, his feet washed by dewy soakings refreshing the long grass in his lawn. He picked kale, rocket, and onion: He would eat them later. Words filled him: He remembered that word *suffused*: No, he didn’t remember it, it remembered him, it returned, it became him, it wandered, it found himself, his self, that self; it arrived in the writing. Immanence. The word; there, alive, presencing . . . doing.

He returned to the warm sunniness of his early morning house. He picked up the book he had been reading before sleeplessness turned him into restfulness; that fitful, wakeful, livingness. He read again the passage that he had read earlier in the shadowy dimness of his room: There on the page, in the reading, it compelled him to write:

Our name will be forgotten in time

And no-one will remember our works

Our life will pass away like traces of a cloud

And be scattered like mist

That is chased by the rays of the sun

And overcome by its heat

For our allotted time is the passing of a shadow

And will run like sparks through the stubble. (Quoted in Jarman, 2018, p. 108)

There on the page, in the sunshine, it read differently to the way that he had read it last night. Last night, he had read it weary and full of thoughts of gloom. Last night, he had a sense of living like a gay man in the 1980s, with the presence of death all around, knowing that AIDS was possible in very encounter, that death was imminent, probably inevitable. He had felt trapped by the life of social isolation he was trying to live, he was trying to avoid the virus of the day, trying to avoid the passing contact of friendship, seeing the children he loved at a distance, no longer able to touch, hold, kiss, or hug: his children, his blood.

Somehow, in this bright morning of warmth and light, he read the words differently; in nuance, the words left him with some feeling of optimism; the final line, “And will run like sparks through the stubble,” seemed to suggest that there was a chance; feelings of potential, of emergence, the movement of feelings in the moment that possibility is always there. He sensed the dance of sparks running through

the stubble, still alive, irrepressible, potent with the possibilities of new flame.

He had not written with stories for a long time: His diaries were full of restless and worried meanderings: In the “affective presencing” of virus-induced introspection, he had produced pages of poetic imaginings, thin line sketches, and metaphysical abstractions that had taken him nowhere: He had simply written, drawn, and felt his way in the world. As he wrote himself as a spark in the stubble, he remembered his friend asking him to write stories, to give him stories; he remembered it from a long time ago, he wondered why it had arrived to him now. Unlike the abandoned infected mail on the doormat, he picked up this remembering, he turned it over in his hands and began to do something with it. He found himself storying. He found himself storying with no other compulsion than to write: writing simply to word the world. This seemed important, purposeful, necessary, in and only of its self. He knew that he would send his writings, in some form or another, to his friend: He had already found his self writing into correspondence that they had already begun but he sensed this as serendipity; he sensed a writing self, emergent, coming to the surface, writing its self, storying the world, moving toward, sparking the stubble, not sure, in these moments, where these writing movements would flow.

Sensing capaciousness in the words that tumbled out of him, he kept writing, he kept moving with the flow; like his swimming in the surging wash of the incoming tide, he offered no resistance, he allowed that powerful force to act upon him, nurturing the knowingness that in these intuitive sensings, something worthwhile, something purposeful might artfully emerge: He sensed the “witch’s broom” (Deleuze & Parnet, 2002, p. 15) on his tail, he sensed a benevolent, driving force moving him on, he felt the swishes of the broom, breezing, fanning the sparks, encouraging the sparks to glow. He turned and saw the witch’s face, he saw a visage of playful wickedness smiling at him, with him, pushing him on: He felt a knowing that this was OK.

Jonathan, October 2020

The sparks have reached me, after a time, after too long. I have read and reread writing these past 2 days after a long delay in responding to you. I feel sadness at that delay. I feel regret that life’s circumstances and their effects have kept me from writing these past weeks. It is only been these past few days that I have found the energy, the movement, to begin to write again. I have felt not right, like my body has not been aligned. I have felt out of sorts with not writing. I have felt out of sorts with not reading either, not reading you, not taking in this writing you sent me. Now, a dark autumn Tuesday morning in early autumn, hearing the wind outside, and feeling a sense of the you that you bring me in this writing, I feel at last able to respond.

Even though I’m writing in the first person, I remain in the “interlude” you have opened up. I want to stay with the compelling poignancy of the “he” you bring me. Something shifts in the telling about “him.” You suggest that this “he” is a self you “remove,” gain distance from, to write about. Yet, “he” is here, close, this morning as the church bell nearby tolls for 7: 00 a.m. “He” is vivid, presencing, affecting, in the quiet of my living room. “He” moves through, around, within, between. There is a poignancy in the experiencing of “him” as someone other-than-you, someone not-you, as I witness him going about his day, managing the difficulties and compromises and losses of living during this time when contact with those others close to us is so inhibited, so curtailed. As we read with him, as we respond with him to those poetic words. (I say “we.” But I mean “I”: this reader, not any reader. This witness, not any witness.)

He turns the writing of stories over and over in his hands. I see him looking at these stories while he does so, in wonder and curiosity. Or maybe not looking, or not only looking; he’s *feeling* them, sensing them. It’s as if the turning of them, or—no—the possibility of writing them, over and over, the possibility, the energy of writing stories, not the stories themselves, conjures this spark as he remembers his friend’s words. Something happens in the assemblage of his collaborative writing, something infects, something sparks the stubble; stories happen; writing happens. The witch’s broom arrives and carries him (carries, them) off—“a sensory connection. A jump. And a world of affinities and impacts that take place in the moves of intensity across things that seem solid and dead” (Stewart, 2007, p. 127). It’s a movement, an ontogenesis.

I’ll bring this writing to an end now. This story of writing with a man who finds himself writing stories. This story of a man at his desk on another early morning, turning to writing, feeling the call after many more days of not writing. He senses he can do this. He wakes up, makes tea, returns to bed to read the news, and after a short while feels that writing is possible. He wants to be in writing; not alone, not alone writing, but writing with this other, this writer, this friend in the opposite end of the country who will wake sometime soon, look out of his window at the day’s weather and wonder whether the ocean is calling him.

Ken, December 2020

This morning I was awake at 5.30. Despite the darkness all around me, the insistence of waking/ness drove me from my bed. Despite this darkness, I found the emergence of a strange knowingness emerging in my walking around these surroundings I have grown with in familiarity for many, many years. These surroundings I have come to know intimately appear to work normatively to customize my life. As Whitehead would have it, they are prehensive, they work intuitively, they foster the expectations of habituation, these

expectations reassure that everyday things will always be in the same place, this is their everydayness; I reach out to touch them in the knowingness that they will be there. And yet . . . and yet . . . this is not the full story, there is something more, in notyetness there is always something just around the corner, something that, as Manning (2016) might say, “in-acts” (p. 13), something in its event/ful/ness that throws you, forcing you to find your self making now, making elsewhere.

And so in the thrall of the emergence of these immediations, new life appears. Life begins first in habituation. A light is switched on, then another; the kettle boils, a cup of tea is made, its refreshment begins to give new life. In this new life, one thing leads to another. Out of nowhere, the books on the table are rearranged. In the absence of obvious intent, the laptop finds its selfing emergent on a different part of the table. You come to life with these happenings; involution melds with evolution. Life takes you to the tidying of the corner of the room that is layered with dust, you wipe and clean, drink more tea and spatialize, you rearrange the space into the place where you will write. In the unpreparedness of these busying moments the book that you had lost for years, the book that you had been apprehensively looking for weeks, reappears: C. J. Arthur’s student edition of Marx’s *German Ideology*, in interpellation, its materiality hails you from its dusty loneliness at the bottom of the book shelf. You bend down, remove it from its n/r/esting place of many years, run fingers over its dusty spine, gently lift pages apart, and, with no aforethought, begin to read that

a mode of production . . . is a definite form of activity . . . a definite form of expressing their life, a definite *mode of life* on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with *what* they produce and with *how* they produce. (Marx & Engels, 1974, p. 42)

In this undoing, in immediation, I find myself here, in this, now, dark, soon to be light, corner of my house, where I have set myself up to write. Writing is happening. Uncertainty about where writing will take me is with me now: I continue to write, this is how it happens, this is how my fingers wipe the dust from a book long hidden on one of my bookshelves.

When I spoke with you on the phone yesterday afternoon, I was staggered when you mentioned that we have some writing together, writing on the move that had been with me for some time, writing that had stalled because of my inactivity, writing to which I had not responded for some weeks. Your movement toward saying this was gentle, a quiet nudge, a barely uttered reminder for me that maybe I should be getting myself together, that I should be writing something back to you, in response.

We have a much-used trope of turn taking; one writes, the other responds, to which the other responds and so on

until we feel that collectively and collaboratively, we have said something, which then becomes a something that we then share with others, in conference presentation, paper publication, or often both. In the past, you have often castigated yourself for what you perceive to be the delay that you generate in not “writing back” to me. In the past, I have sometimes patiently waited, I have sometimes become annoyed, I have sometimes felt sad, and I have sometimes found myself saying, “Wtf, why doesn’t he ‘write back’?”

So finding myself here in this new place, creating a differentiating nuance in our collaborative and continually collaborating world making, I first ask a question of my self, “Why did writing back elude me?” As a character in the play of, what we have referred to as, *Becoming-Ken-Jonathan*, I am the one who is characterized as writing pages and pages of unfettered, badly punctuated, affectively charged, and often quite spontaneous prose back to you in response to something that you have recently sent to me. I am not going to work on trying to answer this question. While working on trying to answer this question could be revealing in terms of the ontologies and politics of our collaborative engagements, there is also a danger that doing so might simply perpetuate, what Manning (2020) refers to in the title of her new book, a “pragmatics of the useless.”

As I continue to ponder on this “delay,” which you generously described in our phone conversation yesterday as having a duration of “about six weeks,” and which, I discovered when I dug out our writing from my files last evening, after our call had ended, was actually well over 2 months, another question seems to make grumbles when I reincarnate these speculations we are always having about our collaborative writing practices, our writing to, our writing with, and perhaps now, a writing in immanence. A few lines back I made a reference to our “much used trope of turn taking” where “one writes, the other responds, to which the other responds and so on . . .” It is interesting how we have allowed this trope to animate, to go back to the quotation from Marx that I used above, “a definite form of expressing (our) life, a definite mode of life on (our) part.” This is what we do, this is what we have done, and this is how we do it. Like the “perfectly good man” in the lovely Patrick Gale novel you gave me on my birthday many years ago, the prehensive emergence of this practice has become tropic in disciplining our writing practices and how we relationally behave in particular and quite interesting ways. The emergence of this trope and the disciplinary effects it appears to have inculcated in our shared writing practices have created a plane of affectivity which has been capacious in terms of how our (writing) bodies affect and can be affected. Apprehending and accepting this trope seems to perpetuate a sequential linearity. Such linearity appears to run counter to the multiplicities and rhizomatic vagaries of becoming we have always valued and espoused in our writings. The question to ask, therefore, is obvious: Why do we hang around waiting for the other to

write back? Like the “perfectly good man,” are we simply being polite? Are we so busy in our lives that having these turn taking intermissions gives us some breathing space, thinking space to enact other behaviors and modes of activity? Are we just being lazy?!

So, how do we constitute and frame our daily living as *Becoming-Ken-Jonathan* writers? As Manning tells us, there are “minor gestures” at play in all that we do. Should we be more alert to the ways in which these are constitutive of the affective plane which imbricates our writing as doing, our wor(l)ding? There is a clearly a politics in what Moten and Harney (2013) might refer to as our “study,” in what Manning (2016) might call the emergences that are entailed by the “research creation” that animates our writing.

Writing here, I have just become aware that light is flooding into my room, darkness has disappeared, the leaves in the hedge by my window are glistening with water droplets left by the huge shower that punctuated my writing earlier, I am wondering now about the bringing in-act of a speculative what-if. Using these neologisms from Manning makes me wonder about the “minor gestures” we can make. As she says of the politics of this kind, “form and content are short-lived,” and so, “(i)n a politics attuned to emergent difference, we must begin instead in the midst, where force has not yet tuned to form. In this middle, where the event is still welling, there is potential for new diagrams of life-living to be drawn” (Manning, 2016, p. 15).

I wonder . . . I wonder . . .

Ken, December 2020

Turn taking as a trope: Perhaps it might be better to term it a “minor gesture.” As a “minor gesture,” it has the effect of turning things around . . . slightly, subtly, unobtrusively, and with effect. Turning as birds turn their bodies into the wind to reduce the ruffle in their feathers and the chance of the cold air causing them to chill. Turning can be slight. It can be nuanced. It doesn’t have to be a U turn; it inflects, and in its light touch, it exercises a slight politics: bodies in action, the tender crease of smile; love making perhaps.

You say in an earlier piece of writing you sent to me:

It is only been these past few days that I have found the energy, the movement, to begin to write again. I have felt not right, like my body has not been aligned. I have felt out of sorts with not writing. I have felt out of sorts with not reading either, not reading you, not taking in this writing you sent me. Now, a dark autumn Tuesday morning in early autumn, hearing the wind outside, and feeling a sense of the you that you bring me in this writing, I feel at last able to respond.

Now this feels much more like life on/with/around an affective plane. It feels much less like the enforcement of a trope or of being inflected by a minor gesture. In the immanence of your writing here, involutions abound. Here, you *self* and

in *selfing* your becoming is illuminated in the troubling presencing of “not feeling right,” of feeling “out of sorts,” and then at last feeling “able to respond.” There is a force in your writing here that disallows the sequential tropic variations that I allude to in my writing yesterday to do with turn taking. The dis-abling effects of this force are constitutive of relational living on a plane of affect. Not feeling right, feeling out of sorts, then feeling able to respond are the forces of your relational body doing its *selfing* despite its self; this body can’t help its self, living with this bodying is this body animating, bringing to life it’s self through its selfing. This processual dynamic, this “affective presencing” is enactive; it acts despite the demands of trope or habituating convention.

Something shifts here as I weigh this writing that is coming out of me now with what you say about some of my earlier writing that was written in and about a “he” that I wanted to remove and gain distance from. You say: “Yet ‘he’ is here, close . . . ‘He’ is vivid, presencing, affecting . . . ‘He’ moves through, around, within, between. There is a poignancy in the experiencing of ‘him’ as someone other-than-you, someone not-you . . .” There seems to be incursions here into space and time. Writing into and with JKSB¹ earlier this year I found myself thinking of and creating *spiritings* which I described at the time as being “creative not of subjects or objects but . . . enactive of what bodies can do,” and somehow, these bodies we are talking about here have these *spiriting* intangibilities; they are putting into play selfing, bodying as relational bodies always in action. I like it that you give the storying that enacts these bodies in these ways materiality by turning “the writing of stories over and over in his hands.” I like it that you are “looking at these stories while he does so, in wonder and curiosity”: these feelings, these sensings articulate with the concept of *spiriting* that I have tried to bring to life here in this writing.

There is a wonder here that always unexpectedly comes to the surface like the quiet but heaving, threatening energy of a swell that-at-just-that-moment turns over into the roaring, surging, crashing of a breaking wave, plundering and capturing all that confronts it, resolute on tumbling headlong on to the shore. It is the imagery of “now you see me now you don’t” (Gale, in press) that I wanted to bring to life in the Intimacy paper I wrote some while ago. Just as you think you’ve got it something comes along and interferes with any chance of solidity or fixity being fulfilled. Diffraction is always happening. The wave that forms as a swell that then breaks as a wave that then turns into a shore break that then leaves detritus on the strand line that then becomes the back wash that surges into the next incoming wave that disrupts the beautiful flowing form of wave patterning that turns the wash into complexity and, and . . . these are the movements that are clandestine, that are always awashing in the moments of the constant notyteness that can be brought to life in this surging power by the using

the concept of transpositionality. When we write to and about one “he,” we *spirit* away another. This *spiriting away* is elusive in the fragility of spatiotemporality but, looking at it as we are now in the “research creation” of these words, this “thought in the act” (Manning & Massumi, 2014), that is coming alive on these pages, offers a way of animating and activating the ontogenetic excursions that we were tentatively beginning to make when we started this phase of our writing together. The *spiriting away* is not at all about permanence, it is not to do with the politics of identity, it is not about intentionality, it is not even simply human, no, it is about the alertness of the nonhuman, the *etre aux aguets* of the ever alert “becoming-animal” (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004) that animates all bodies in the processual ever event/ful/ness of intra-active sensing, feeling doing, in-act/ness, fast or slow, always on the move. It is perhaps how we can become, not in understanding of immanence but in the always caught in the act/ness of writing/thinking/feeling in these ways.

In the productive desire that is animating this “thinking-feeling” now I could write more. And in the same spacetime I wanted to send this extra piece of writing to you, I wanted to write again, hot on the heels of the piece I sent to you yesterday, in part because what I sent to you yesterday felt somehow unfinished and partly as a kind of acknowledgment of the writing you had sent to me previously and which had sat neglected in my inbox for over 2 months, unattended, unresponded to you, by me. It also feels that in here, in today’s early morning writing, with sunshine beginning to leak through the mist on the hills over Maker, I can also intimate another excursion, another movement away from the tendencies of turn taking that I talked about with you yesterday. Like the unexpected surge in the ocean, if writing wells up then there is nothing else to do; you have to go with it.

Ending

Jonathan, March 2021

I began writing as I walked just now across the Meadows to get coffee from Matt. I had left your writing (our writing) here on my screen at my office and had dropped down the narrow winding staircase of my office building onto the shaded cobbles of Buccleuch Place, and from there had turned left to the park and the luminescent Spring sunshine. I’d started writing as I walked, speaking into my phone, which is a writing habit I have adopted during these long lockdown periods and their many walks. Only I have a new phone and it is not yet well trained. It makes so many, and such outrageous, mistakes that even only a few minutes after starting to “write” I look at the text that’s appeared and I am often unable to make any sense of it. I think one time I will try not caring about its “mistakes” and simply work with whatever text appears. The technology knows; it has

its own things to say. It has its own marks to make in response to what I say.

It’s not only the phone that’s involved, I realize. My spoken words are sent through the mobile network and heard by a transcription machine on a server somewhere, and then relayed back to appear on my screen. Somewhere, something is having fun. I had to give up this morning, though. I became impatient. I had been talking/writing for about 3 min and then looked down at my screen. It had lost interest about 2½ min earlier and hadn’t let me know. Most of the gems I had spoken were not there. There were perhaps 15 words, with “mistakes,” and the flashing cursor, waiting for instructions.

I detached the headphones and put them and my phone back in my coat pocket. I reached Matt’s café a little while later. I go to him each day. It’s a ritual. I get a quadruple espresso—which I take back to the office to dilute so I can have more than one cup—and we share news of our weekends and talk football. I love his café when it’s open. On a day like today, it would be filled with sunlight, with the door open and the good music he plays on in the background. As we are with the Covid regime, we stand in the doorway while he takes me order, and then he retreats inside and we continue talking over the noise of the espresso machine.

Today, your writing, our writing, has caught me. It has caught me up and has launched me into writing. The writing has been with me a few days. I read it last week, then again at the weekend, and once more time this morning. I have the sense not of needing to take my turn, nor of obligation, nor guilt, nor a sense of not wanting to “let you down”; not of the dulling repetition of meter, but instead have a sense of rhythm, the *refrain’s* rhythm, “located between two milieus or between two intermilieus, on the fence, between night and day, at dusk, *twilight*, or *Zweilicht*. Haecceity” (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004, p. 346). Our writing was there in the morning light as I walked up the hill earlier, in the movement of climbing the Mound in the pandemic quiet of the city; it was there in my *image of thought* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994), my encounter, with you, with us, with this; how you-and-me-and-your-and-our-writing called, pulled, lured me toward the screen, the keyboard, and the walking-talking-writing of the Meadows, a phone with a mind of its own (of course), and coffee and football talk with Matt. Haecceity. As you write earlier in this text,

Knowing that one can never write alone, knowing that “our words . . . are never without the echoes of the voices of those whose difference we chose to write with” (Manning & Massumi, 2014, p. viii) then this is how I am continuing to think, act and work with our collaborative writing in the fluidity of ontogenesis, becoming and concept forming as event.

It is *ontogenesis* that sets this writing today in motion—or catches me up in its always-already-in-motion—as I “complete” this writing to send it to you in urgency, in the urgency

of desire, to engage, to ride the wave (Gale & Wyatt, 2018) of this energy of writing with you, with Manning, with Massumi, with Deleuze and Guattari. Its fluidity, its event-fulness.

There. Done. Send.

(It's never done. There's more. Always more.)

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Note

1. "JKSB" is the writing assemblage that involves the two of us, Bronwyn Davies, and Susanne Gannon. See, for example, Wyatt et al. (2010).

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