

# Deleuze and the Anthropology of Becoming

by João Biehl and Peter Locke

Philosopher Gilles Deleuze emphasizes the primacy of desire over power and the openness and flux of social fields. In this article, we place our ethnographic projects among the urban poor in Brazil and Bosnia-Herzegovina in dialogue with Deleuze's cartographic approach to subjectivity and his reflections on control and the transformative potential of *becoming*. As people scavenge for resources and care, they must deal with the encroachment of psychiatric diagnostics and treatments in broken public institutions and in altered forms of common sense. By reading our cases in light of Deleuze's ideas, we uphold the rights of microanalysis, bringing into view the immanent fields that people, in all their ambiguity, invent and live by. Such fields of action and significance—leaking out on all sides—are mediated by power and knowledge, but they are also animated by claims to basic rights and desires. In making public a nuanced understanding of these fields—always at risk of disappearing—anthropologists still allow for larger structural and institutional processes to become visible and their true effect known. This fieldwork/philosophical dialogue highlights the limits of psychiatric models of symptoms and human agency and supplements applications of concepts such as biopolitics, structural violence, and social suffering in anthropology. Continually adjusting itself to the reality of contemporary lives and worlds, the anthropological venture has the potential of art: to invoke neglected human potentials and to expand the limits of understanding and imagination—a people yet to come.

*The ultimate aim of literature is to set free, in the delirium, this creation of a health or this invention of a people, that is, a possibility of life.* (Deleuze 1997:4)

## An Empirical Lantern

The late Gilles Deleuze was particularly concerned with the idea of *becoming*: those individual and collective struggles to come to terms with events and intolerable conditions and to shake loose, to whatever degree possible, from determinants and definitions—“to grow both young and old [in them] at once” (Deleuze 1995:170; 2001). In becoming, as Deleuze saw it, one can achieve an ultimate existential stage in which life is simply immanent and open to new relations—*camaraderie*—and trajectories. Becoming is not a part of history, he wrote: “History amounts only to the set of preconditions, however recent, that one leaves behind in order to ‘become,’ that is, to create something new” (Deleuze 1995:171).

In the urban-poor settings in which we work—in Brazil

and Bosnia-Herzegovina—people are at the mercy of volatile economies and pay a high physical and subjective price to get by day-to-day. As people scavenge for resources and care, they must deal with the encroachment of psychiatric diagnostics and treatments in broken public institutions and in altered forms of common sense. We find Deleuze's reflections provocative and helpful as we address lives in contexts of clinical and political-economic crisis. In the field, the unexpected happens every day, and new causalities come into play. We are drawn to human efforts to exceed and escape forms of knowledge and power and to express desires that might be world altering. How can anthropological methods and concepts incorporate evidence of these kinds of becoming? What would a Deleuze-inspired ethnography accomplish that others might not? And how could such work challenge dominant modes of medical and political intervention? It is time to attribute to the people we study the kinds of complexities we acknowledge in ourselves, and to bring these complexities into the forms of knowledge we produce and circulate.

We have no grand philosophical aspirations and do not wish to reduce Deleuze's enormously complicated venture into a theoretical system or set of practices to be applied normatively to anthropology. In this article, we limit ourselves to thinking through his insights on the relationships between power, desire, and sublimation and his cartographic approach to social fields and the unconscious (see Massumi 2002; Stew-

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art 2007). These insights help us to better grasp what is at stake for individuals and interpersonal relations in the context of new rational-technical interventions. Exploring the utility of Deleuze's ideas in light of the ethnographic realities we study—mental illness, poverty, and the aftermath of war—can highlight the limits of psychiatric models of symptoms and human agency (Biehl, Good, and Kleinman 2007; DelVecchio Good et al. 2008; Jenkins and Barrett 2004). It can also provide a helpful supplement to prevailing applications of Michel Foucault's concepts of biopower and governmentality in anthropology (Fassin 2007b; Ferguson 2006; Foucault 2007; Lovell 2006; Ong and Collier 2005; Rabinow and Rose 2006) and to neo-Marxist theories of structural violence (Bourgois 1995; Farmer 2001; Scheper-Hughes 1992). We are concerned with human matters that dominant epistemologies and interventions do not routinely conceptualize or account for.

In emphasizing the powers and potentials of desire (both creative and destructive), the ways in which social fields ceaselessly leak and transform (power and knowledge notwithstanding), and the in-between, plastic, and ever-unfinished nature of a life, Deleuze lends himself to inspiring ethnographic efforts to illuminate the dynamism of the everyday and the literality and singularity of human becomings. Through close attention to people moving through broken institutions and infrastructures in the making and with careful observation always complicating the a priori assumptions of universalizing theory, ethnographic work can make public the constellations through which life chances are foreclosed and highlight the ways desires can break open alternative pathways. For in learning to know people, with care and an "empirical lantern" (Hirschman 1998:88), we have a responsibility to think of life in terms of both limits and crossroads—where new intersections of technology, interpersonal relations, desire, and imagination can sometimes, against all odds, propel unexpected futures.

This is not to give up on explanation or the careful discernment of relations of causality and affinity in social and medical phenomena. The question, rather, lies in our receptivity to others, in what kinds of evidence we assemble and use—the voices to which we listen and the experiences we account for—and in how we craft our explanations: whether our analytics remain attuned to the intricacy, openness, and unpredictability of individual and collective lives. Just as medical know-how, international political dynamics, and social realities change, so too are people's lives (biological and political) in flux.

An openness to the surprising and the deployment of categories that are important in human experience can make our science more realistic and, we hope, better. As economist Albert O. Hirschman, an ethnographer at heart, writes, "I like to understand how things happen, how change actually takes place" (Hirschman 1998:67). People's everyday struggles and interpersonal dynamics exceed experimental and statistical approaches and demand in-depth listening and long-term

engagement. Anthropologists demarcate uncharted social territories and track people moving through them. The maps we produce allow the navigators—the interpreters—to consider these territories and their life force (their capacities and possibilities as much as their foreclosures).

In our reflections we draw from Biehl's work with Catarina Moraes, a young woman abandoned by her family and left to die in an asylum called Vita in the southern Brazilian city of Porto Alegre (Biehl 2005). Largely incapacitated and said to be mad, Catarina spent her days in Vita assembling words in what she called "my dictionary." She wrote, "The characters in this notebook turn and un-turn. This is my world after all." Catarina's puzzling language required intense listening, bracketing diagnostics, and an open reading. Since first encountering her, Biehl thought of her not in terms of mental illness but as an abandoned person who was claiming experience on her own terms. Catarina knew what had made her a void in the social sphere—"I am like this because of life"—and she organized this knowledge for herself and her anthropologist, thus bringing the public into Vita. "I give you what is missing." Her ex-family, she claimed, thought of her as a failed medication regimen. The family was dependent on this explanation to excuse itself from her abandonment. In Catarina's words, "To want my body as a medication, my body." Her condition spoke of the pharmaceuticalization of mental health care in Brazil; in his ethnographic work, Biehl charts the social side effects that come with the unregulated encroachment of new medical technologies in urban-poor settings.

Catarina's life tells a larger story about shifting human values and the fate of social bonds in today's dominant mode of subjectification at the service of science and capitalism. She suggests that these days, one can become a medico-scientific thing and an *ex-human* at the convenience of others. In the merciless interface of capitalist and scientific discourses, we are all a new kind of proletariat—hyperindividualized psychobiologies doomed to consume diagnostics and treatments (for ourselves and for others) as we seek fast success in economies without empathy (Martin 2007). But Catarina fought the disconnections that psychiatric drugs introduced in her life—between body and spirit, between her and the people she knew, in common sense—and clung to her desires. She worked through the many layers of (mis)treatment that now composed her body, knowing all too well that "my desire is of no value."

Catarina wrote to sublimate not only her own desires for reconnection and recognition but also the social forces—familial, medico-scientific, economic—aligned against her. While integrating drug experience into a new self-perception and literary work (the drug AKINETON is literally part of the new name Catarina gives herself in the dictionary: CATKINE), she kept seeking camaraderie and another chance at life. Biehl discusses Catarina's creative capacity in dialogue with Deleuze's idea of "a delicate and incomplete health that stems from efforts to carve out life chances from things too big, strong and suffocating" (Deleuze 1997:3). Her "minor literature" grounds an

ethnographic ethics and gives us a sense of becoming that dominant health models would render impossible.

We also draw from Locke's recent fieldwork in postwar Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina (hereafter, following the standard local abbreviation, BiH), to highlight the utility of Deleuze's suggestion that one should write for the benefit of a "missing people" (Deleuze 1997:4). Sarajevo is a city overflowing with "symptoms." Years of trauma-oriented psychosocial projects have made psychiatric diagnostics—collective depression and post-traumatic stress—integral to common sense in BiH. Such clinical-sounding assessments have the effect of emphasizing damage over possibility, determination over flight, painting the city primarily in terms of its wounds (which are indeed deep and bleed still) while disregarding the hopes and desires—and resistances to neoliberal economic forms—that pain also communicates.

Just as psychiatry silences Catarina's struggle to understand and reclaim her experience, in BiH the *psychologization of war's aftermath* "vitiate[s] the moral and political meaning of subjective complaints and protests" (Biehl, Good, and Kleinman 2007:3). In this way each of our cases takes up a struggle (individual and collective, respectively) to navigate public and private imperatives remade by intersecting scientific and economic rationalities. In each case a void is engineered in the place of older modes of self-assessment—which nevertheless and by swerving paths continue to thrive.

The strict application of a Foucauldian theoretical sensibility—seeking out, for example, the ways hysterical, fear-mongering nationalist politics, neoliberal market reforms and concomitant corruption, and years of humanitarian services and international supervision have newly "normalized" subjectivity and social relations—would miss the anxious uncertainty and open-endedness that inflects life in Sarajevo. Both anguish and vitality simmer beneath the city's shell-scarred—but slowly brightening, rejuvenating—surfaces, and Deleuze is helpful in finding an analytics that can illuminate the interdependence of these twin intensities: the ways symptoms may index not only darkneses and dominations past and present but also the minor voices of a "missing people" that speak within alternate "universes of reference," capable, perhaps, of one day propelling more positive social transformations in BiH (Deleuze 1997:64).

Sarajevo's "missing people" is composed of layers, each with its own force of intertwined grief and aspiration. Here the wartime dead (thousands of whom remain literally missing) continue to inhabit political claims and tightly held grievances (Wagner 2008). Here, who one was before the war (what one believed and whom one loved) no longer has value amid new economies and forms of governance—but persists, all the same, in hopes and frustrations. And here, lived experience continually escapes the social categories—competing ethnic and/or victim identities—that dominate the public sphere (Bougarel, Helms, and Duijzings 2007). In such a context—and many others—of routinized urgency and crisis, the human sciences are challenged to respect and incorporate,

without reduction, the angst, uncertainty, and the passion for the possible that life holds through and beyond technical assessments. Perhaps this task is what ethnography does best.

## Moving in the Direction of the Incomplete

We read Deleuze together with our ethnographic cases in order to reassert the symbiotic relationship between close empirical engagement with people (through fieldwork) and theoretical innovation in anthropology. We are not advocating another philosophical scheme to be confirmed by the figures we bring out of the field. As John Borneman and Abdellah Hammoudi remind us, the "tendency for anthropologists to deploy their work only as illustrative cases for philosophical trends or concepts threatens to make anthropology into a sterile intellectual exercise" (Borneman and Hammoudi 2009: 17). The point is well taken. In their relentless drive to theorize, anthropologists run the danger of caricaturing complex realities, neglecting key realms of experience, and missing lived ironies and singularities that might complicate and enrich analytics. People are missing, in multiple senses; Deleuze, we want to suggest, opens up paths to allowing them their due value and force within the core of anthropological work.

Long-term engagement with people is a vital antidote to what Hirschman identifies as "compulsive and mindless theorizing." The quick theoretical fix has taken its place in our culture alongside the quick technical fix. For Hirschman, as for us, people come first. This respect for people, this attention to how political discourses are manufactured and to the sheer materiality of life's necessities, makes a great deal of difference in the kind of knowledge we produce. Throughout this article, we are concerned with the conceptual fecundity of people's practical knowledge. All too readily disqualified by both scholars and policy makers, this knowledge may well yield new or counter theories of human agency, for example, as well as new approaches to politics and more effective policy solutions. As Hirschman writes, "In all these matters I would suggest a little more reverence for life, a little less straitjacketing of the future, a little more allowance for the unexpected—and a little less wishful thinking" (Hirschman 1971:338).

In a recent interview assessing anthropology's intellectual health, George Marcus worries that since *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus 1986), his path-breaking theoretical intervention with James Clifford and others, the discipline has been "suspended": "There are no new ideas and none on the horizon" (Marcus 2008:3). Marcus looks to the anthropology of science and to science studies, which have indeed been innovative, as possible inspirations; this field, however, often gives a privileged place to the official makers of expertise, technology, and policy. Marcus acknowledges that since the 1980s, anthropologists have played a useful role in studying emerging global political economies, but he does not think that this has been enough for "anthropologists to stimulate themselves intellectually" (Marcus 2008:2–3). Investment in

public anthropology, in Marcus's view, is a "symptom" of a "weak center" and disciplinary disorganization rather than an indicator of professional vitality and theoretical innovation in its own right (Marcus 2008:1).

For Marcus, "what's left to do" while anthropology awaits the renewal or transformation of the "ideas that move and stimulate it . . . is to follow events, to engage ethnographically with history unfolding in the present, or to anticipate what is emerging" (Marcus 2008:3). Marcus seems to designate the core work of anthropology as a remainder: a matter of record building and knowledge accumulation that (at least) can occupy us productively as we await the development of a new guiding theory or paradigm to "motivate" our research (Marcus 2008:3). It seems to us, however, that anthropology has (and has always had) a theoretical productivity as it explores how people navigate contemporary political, economic, and technological configurations and that it is stronger for the multiplicity of philosophical ideas it engages in any given period.

Certainly to carry out our analyses, we need models, types, theories—abstractions of various kinds. But the kinds of paradigms we search for, the ways in which we assemble them, and the authority we ascribe to them also make a great deal of difference. What if we broadened our sense of what counts as theoretical innovation and left aside, even if for a moment, the need for central discursive engines—the *modus operandi* that shaped much of anthropology in the twentieth century? Epistemological breakthroughs do not belong only to analysts. The cumulative experiences of "the unpredictability of the political and social effects of technological inventions" (Canguilhem 1998:318)—borne by people navigating contemporary entanglements of power and knowledge—are also epistemological breaks that demand anthropological recognition. Simply engaging with the complexity of people's lives and desires—their constraints, subjectivities, projects—in ever-changing social worlds constantly necessitates the rethinking of our theoretical apparatuses. What would it mean for our research methodologies and ways of writing to consistently embrace this unfinishedness, seeking ways to analyze the general, the structural, and the processual while maintaining an acute awareness of the inevitable incompleteness of our theories?

New and useful ideas do not have to look like overarching paradigms nor do we have to attribute to them unconditional authority. Recent anthropology is rich with productive, people-centered explorations of the present and the past. Ann L. Stoler, for example, has broadened Foucault's approach to discipline and power/knowledge by highlighting questions of race and desire in colonial practices (Stoler 1995; see also Boon 1982). In her recent book *Along the Archival Grain*, she draws from Deleuze's emphasis on desire over power to explore a "symptomatic space" in the craft of colonial governance (Stoler 2009:7; see Biehl and Moran-Thomas 2009). Attending to specific people, situations, and events—"minor histories"—in the administrative bodies of the Dutch East Indies, Stoler brings into view affects and spaces of uncertainty within hegemonic discourses and their attempted applica-

tions. Through and beyond domination, we are faced with the matrices through which ethics and care (or disregard) were constituted in real time.

Efforts in public anthropology have expanded our sense of where innovation comes from and what it is good for. Paul Farmer (2001, 2003, 2008) and colleagues at Partners in Health, for example, have used anthropological approaches innovatively to critique economic and public health orthodoxies and establish new standards of care and intervention for poverty-stricken AIDS patients. While expanding realms of feasibility in medicine and policy, their work also raises thorny questions about the ethics and rationale of prioritizing AIDS over other afflictions of poverty and the long-term implications of subsuming human rights under the banner of immediate medical rights. Adriana Petryna (2002) has charted people's common struggle in Ukraine to provide evidence that their illnesses are linked to the Chernobyl nuclear disaster and thereby become eligible for welfare and care in a new democratic state form. By exploring connections that make legal and medical forms newly personal, Petryna's concept of *biological citizenship* helps to elucidate shifting state-market structures and the modes of survival and political belonging that they make available. And Anna Tsing exhibits an inspiring inventiveness in her book *Friction* (Tsing 2004) as she tries, through ethnographic and textual experimentation, to craft a grounded analytics of the global and a voice that is at once anthropological and political.

Ethnographic realities are never fully reducible to the books and theories we bring to the field. What does it take for the "life in things"—the minor voices, missing peoples, "ill-formed" and tentative "collective enunciations" that seem to Deleuze to carry so much potentially transformative vitality—to acquire a social force and to attain recognition and political currency? What role can anthropology play in this process, and how can we write in a way that unleashes something of this vitality instead of containing it, reducing it, simplifying it? In what follows, we attempt to begin to explore these questions and the implications for ethnographic research and writing of a handful of Deleuze's ideas. "To write is certainly not to impose a form (of expression) on the matter of lived experience," says Deleuze. "Literature rather moves in the direction of the ill-formed or the incomplete" (Deleuze 1997:1).

We are more interested in writing *for* a certain vision of anthropology and the anthropologist's relationship to people than against a set of simplified foils. This is one of the reasons that we work through two ethnographic cases. Where Biehl's work with Catarina focuses on the literary force of an individual life, Locke's discussion of postwar Sarajevo takes up definitions, diagnoses, and marginal experiences of collectivities, and in this way we attempt to provide complementary angles from which to think with Deleuze's ideas about becoming. Individual biography is replete with collective inflections and implications, just as collective categories and alternative solidarities can come through only in the understanding of individual lives and stories; thus, actual people

and their lives, words, and affects—their subjectivities—are at the core of both of our cases, both explicitly and between the lines.

There is an improvisatory quality to our collaboration as we shift between individual narrators and a unified voice. In both of our cases, we hope to convey the messiness of the social world and the real struggles in which our informants and their kin are involved. In the field and at each juncture, a new valence of meaning is added, a new incident illuminates each of the lives in play. In addition to indicating the institutional and clinical processes that bear on our interlocutors, we try to evoke the non- or semi-institutional and temporary spaces in which life chances are also shaped, turbulent affects are borne and shared, and difficult circumstances are imbued with partial meanings. Details reveal nuanced fabrics of singularities and the institutional, political-economic, and scientific logics that keep problematic situations from improving. The ethnographic ethos of ambivalence, ambiguity, and openness inflects our own subjectivities in the way we try to portray our main characters: as living people on the page, with their own mediated subjectivities, whose actions are contingent without being inevitable, caught in a constricted and intolerable universe of choices that remains the only source from which they can craft alternatives.

## Human Body?

I (Biehl) first met Catarina in March 1997, and I saw her again when I returned to Vita in January 2000. Vita had been founded in 1987 as a rehabilitation center for drug addicts and alcoholics. Soon its mission was enlarged. An increasing number of people who had been cut off from social life were left there by relatives, neighbors, hospitals, and the police. Vita's team then opened an infirmary where the abandoned, like Catarina, waited *with* death. Catarina was in her mid-thirties and her health had deteriorated considerably. Seated in a wheelchair, she insisted that she suffered from "rheumatism." Catarina seemed dazed and spoke with great difficulty. But she was adamant: "I speak my mind. I have no gates in my mouth."

Although her external functions were almost dead, she retained a puzzling life within her body. Her "dictionary" was a sea of words, references to all kinds of illness, places and roles she no longer inhabited, and people she once knew and lived for. "Documents, reality, tiresomeness, truth, saliva, voracious, consumer, saving, economics, Catarina, spirit, pills, marriage, cancer, Catholic church, separation of bodies, division of the state, the couple's children." Her seemingly disaggregated words were in many ways an extension of the abject figure she had become in family life, in medicine, in Brazil. "Medical records, ready to go to heaven," she wrote.

"Dollars, Real, Brazil is bankrupted, I am not to be blamed, without a future. Things out of justice. Human body?"

Some 50 million Brazilians (more than a quarter of the population) live far below the poverty line; 25 million people

are considered indigent. Although Vita was in many ways a microcosm of such misery, it was distinctive in some respects. A number of its residents came from working and middle-class families and once had been workers with their own households. Others had once lived in medical or state institutions from which they had been evicted, thrown into the streets, or sent to Vita. As I learned by engaging health officials and human rights activists, despite appearing to be a no-man's-land cut adrift, Vita was in fact entangled with several public institutions in its history and maintenance. Porto Alegre contained more than two hundred such institutions, most of which were euphemistically called "geriatric houses." Some 70% of them operated as underground businesses. These precarious places housed the unwanted in exchange for their welfare pensions; a good number of them also received state funds or philanthropic donations and were used as platforms for clientelistic politics. Work with Catarina helped to break down totalizing frames of thought that made the reality of Vita and other zones of abandonment more assumed than analyzed, that is, a common sense that ultimately left no one accountable for the abandoned.

These are some of the things Catarina told me during our conversations in early 2000: "Maybe my family still remembers me, but they don't miss me. . . . My ex-husband sent me to the psychiatric hospital. . . . The doctors said that they wanted to heal me, but how could they if they did not know the illness? . . . My sister-in-law went to the health post to get the medication for me. . . . Why is it only me who has to be medicated? . . . My brothers want to see production, progress. They brought me here. . . . They say that it is better to place us here so that we don't have to be left alone, at home, in solitude . . . that there are more people like us here. And all of us together, we form a society, a society of bodies."

Caregivers at Vita told me that Catarina was *louca* (mad) and *fora da casinha* (out of her mind, or literally, "out of her little home"). They gave her tranquilizers and said that they knew nothing about her life outside of Vita. As for her growing paralysis, they reasoned, "It must have been from giving birth." I was fascinated by what she said and by the proliferation of writing. Her words did not seem otherworldly to me nor did I think they were a direct reflection of Vita's power over her or a reaction against it. They carried the force of literality.

"Even if it is a tragedy? A tragedy generated in life?" Those were Catarina's words when I asked her for the details of her story one day. "I remember it all. My ex-husband and I lived together and we had the children. We lived as a man and a woman. I worked in the shoe factory, but he said that I didn't need to work. He worked in the city hall. He used to drink a bit after work when he played billiards in a bar. I had nothing against that. One day, however, we had a silly fight because he thought that I should be complaining about his habits and I wasn't. That fight led to nothing. Afterwards, he picked another topic to fight about. Finally, one day he said that he

had gotten another woman and moved in with her. Her name was Rosa. What could I do?"

I remembered the phrase "the separation of bodies" in Catarina's dictionary, and it seemed to me that her pathology resided in that split and in the struggles to reestablish other social ties. In Vita, out of that lived fragmentation, the family was remembered. "I behaved like a woman. Since I was a housewife, I did all my duties, like any other woman. I cooked, and I did the laundry. My ex-husband and his family got suspicious of me because sometimes I left the house and attended to other callings. They were not in agreement with what I thought. My ex-husband thought that I had a nightmare in my head. He wanted to take that out of me, to make me a normal person. They wanted to lock me in the hospital. I escaped so as not to go to the hospital. I hid myself; I went far. But the police and my ex-husband found me. They took my children."

She was constantly recalling the events that led to her abandonment. "When my thoughts agreed with my ex-husband and his family, everything was fine. But when I disagreed with them, I was mad. It was like a side of me had to be forgotten. The side of wisdom. They wouldn't dialogue, and the science of the illness was forgotten. Science is our consciousness, heavy at times, burdened by a knot that you cannot untie.

"After my ex-husband left me, he came back to the house and told me he needed me. He threw me onto the bed saying, 'I will eat you now.' I told him that that was the last time . . . I did not feel pleasure though. I only felt desire. Desire to be talked to, to be gently talked to."

In abandonment, Catarina recalled sex. There was no love, simply a male body enjoying itself. No more social links, no more speaking beings. Out of the world of the living, her desire was for language, *the desire to be talked to*. I reminded Catarina that she had once told me that the worst part of Vita was the nighttime, when she was left alone with her desire.

She kept silent for a while, and then made it clear that seduction was not at stake in our conversation: "I am not asking a finger from you." She was not asking me for sex, she meant. Catarina looked exhausted, though she claimed not to be tired. At any rate, it seemed that she had brought the conversation to a fecund point, and I also felt like I could no longer listen. No countertransference, no sexual attraction, I thought, but enough of all these things. The anthropologist is not immune. I promised to return the next day to continue and suggested that she begin to write again.

But my resistance did not deter her from recalling her earliest memory, and I marveled at the power of what I heard—an image that in its simplicity appeared to concentrate the entire psyche.

I remember something that happened when I was three years old. I was at home with my brother Altamir. We were very poor. We were living in a little house in the plantation. Then a big animal came into the house—it was a black lion. The animal rubbed itself against my body. I ran and hugged my brother. Mother had gone to get water from the well. That's

when I became afraid. Fear of the animal. When mother came back, I told her what had happened. But she said that there was no fear, that there was no animal. Mother said nothing.

This could have been incest, sexual abuse, a first psychotic episode, the memory of maternal and paternal abandonment, or simply a play of shadows and imagination—we will never know.

The image of the house, wrote Gaston Bachelard, "would appear to have become the topography of our intimate being. A house constitutes a body of images that give mankind proofs or illusions of stability" (Bachelard 1994:xxxvi). In this earliest of Catarina's recollections, nothing is protecting the I. It is in Vita that she recalled the animal so close to the I. This story speaks to her abandonment as an animal as well as to the work the animal performs in human life. In this last sense, the animal is not a negation of the human, I thought—it is a figure through which Catarina learned to produce affect and which marks her singularity. When I told her it was time for me to leave, Catarina replied, "You are the one who marks time."

## The Primacy of Desire over Power

Catarina's puzzling trajectories and desires required a different analytical approach. It was not enough to deconstruct her classification as mad or her confinement in institutions of control. Claiming language and agency, she was not reducible to "bare life" (Agamben 1998), and her knowledge revealed complicated realities and the noninstitutionalized spaces in which life chances crystallized.

Deleuze, who did not share Foucault's confidence in the determining force of power arrangements, is helpful here. In a 1976 article called "Desire and Pleasure," Deleuze reviewed Foucault's then recently published *The History of Sexuality* (Foucault 1990 [1976]). In that book, Foucault took a new step with regard to his earlier work in *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault 1975): now power arrangements were no longer simply normalizing, they were constituents of sexuality. But "I emphasize the primacy of desire over power," wrote Deleuze. "Desire comes first and seems to be the element of a micro-analysis" (Deleuze 2006:126).

Attentive to historical preconditions and singular efforts of becoming, Deleuze said that he pursued "lines of flight." For him "all organizations, all the systems Michel calls biopower, in effect reterritorialize the body" (Deleuze 2006:131). But a social field, first and foremost, "leaks out on all sides" (Deleuze 2006:127). In an interview with Paul Rabinow in the mid-1980s, Deleuze once again emphasized that he and Foucault did not have the same conception of society. "For me," he said, "society is something that is constantly escaping in every direction. . . . It flows monetarily, it flows ideologically. It is really made of lines of flight. So much so that the problem

for a society is how to stop it from flowing. For me, the powers come later” (Deleuze 2006:280).

According to Deleuze, desire—via the inventions, escapes, and sublimations it motivates—is constantly undoing, or at least opening up, forms of subjectivity and territorializations of power. Even the concept of *assemblage*, taken up not long ago by Ong and Collier (2005) to name emergent global configurations (e.g., “technoscience, circuits of licit and illicit exchange, systems of administration or governance, and regimes of ethics or values” [Ong and Collier 2005:4]), has at its core desire, sensu Deleuze and Guattari’s definition in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (Deleuze and Guattari 1986). For Deleuze and Guattari, assemblages are contingent and shifting interrelations among “segments”—institutions, powers, practices, desires—that constantly, simultaneously construct, entrench, and disaggregate their own constraints and oppressions. Thus, an assemblage, they wrote, is “a concretization of power, of desire, of territoriality or reterritorialization, regulated by the abstraction of a transcendental law. But we must declare as well that an assemblage has points of deterritorialization; or that it always has a line of escape by which it . . . makes the segments melt and . . . liberates desire from all its concretizations in order to dissolve them” (Deleuze and Guattari 1986:86).

This emphasis on desire and the ways—humble, marginal, minor—that it cracks through apparently rigid social fields and serves as the engine of becoming figures centrally in Deleuze’s divergences from both Foucault and Freud. In Deleuze’s view, Freud and his disciples offer a philosophy of top-down penetration of depths, of memory and memorialization, one that digs through the past for the core, defining truths of a person’s being encapsulated in childhood mother-father oedipal dynamics. This is an *archaeological* conception of psychoanalysis, according to Deleuze. His use of this term also invokes his critique of Foucault, whose archaeology of the subject traces the ways in which he or she is constituted and confined by, for example, the categories of expert discourses in again what might crudely be sketched as a vertical or top-down movement. Freud and Foucault each define the subject by his or her dependencies and determinations—by past traumas and unconscious complexes on the one hand and by entangled regimes of power and knowledge on the other.

In the essay “What Children Say,” Deleuze revisits Freud’s seminal case study of Little Hans (Freud 1959) to develop “cartography” as an alternative analytics to Freud’s oedipal archaeology. The objects of cartography, what the analyst maps, are *milieus*—worlds at once social, symbolic, and material, infused with the “affects” and “intensities” of their own subjectivities—and *trajectories*—or the journeys people take through milieus to pursue needs, desires, and curiosities or to simply try to find room to breathe beneath social constraints. “The trajectory merges not only with the subjectivity of those who travel through a milieu, but also with the subjectivity of the milieu itself, insofar as it is reflected in those who travel through it” (Deleuze 1997:61).

For Deleuze, the analytic challenge is to illuminate desire and possibility, not (only) determination by the mother-father or any other force. Against the causality of origins and the weight of memory, our analyses must reveal mobilization and flight into indeterminate futures. “From one map to the next,” Deleuze suggests, “it is not a matter of searching for an origin, but of evaluating *displacements*. Every map is a redistribution of impasses and breakthroughs, of thresholds and enclosures, which necessarily go from bottom to top” (Deleuze 1997:61). In other words, it is “no longer an unconscious of commemoration but one of mobilization” (Deleuze 1997:61).

Defining the subject in terms of the archaeology of his/her dependencies may be less revealing than mapping out his/her movements through space, time, and social fields—people’s lines of flight, their escapes, as well as their blocked passages, moments when the libido is stuck or pushed backward. Done right, hints Deleuze, such maps can show the Dionysian force of the libido as it breaks down forms and constraints by investing the *indefinite*, which, he urges, “lacks nothing”: “It is the determination of a becoming, its characteristic power, the power of an impersonal that is not a generality but a singularity at its highest point” (Deleuze 1997:65).

Deleuze’s cartographic approach makes space for possibility, *what could be*, as a crucial dimension of what is or what was. It brings crossroads—places where other choices might be made, other paths taken—out of the shadow of deterministic analytics. It brings alternatives within closer reach. Ethnography, at its best, strives for the same achievements, and Deleuze’s approach has obvious potential to inform and inspire new partnerships and methods.

As Michael M. J. Fischer argues, subjectivities are now “raucous *terrae incognitae*” for anthropological inquiry: “landscapes of explosions, noise, alienating silences, disconnects and dissociations, fears, terror machineries, pleasure principles, illusions, fantasies, displacements, and secondary revisions, mixed with reason, rationalizations, and paralogics—all of which have powerful sociopolitical dimensions and effects” (Fischer 2007:442). In Fischer’s view, we need to attend to more than the “enunciative function” of the subject: subjectivity does not merely speak as resistance, nor is it simply spoken (or silenced) by power. It continually forms and returns in the complex play of bodily, linguistic, political, and psychological dimensions of human experience, within and against new infrastructures, value systems, and the transforming afflictions and injustices of today.

The anthropology of present workings of subjectivities—as individuals struggle to articulate desire, pain, and knowledge in novel constellations—can help us chart paths across larger structures and forces of repetition, technologies at play, and “the slippery slopes of unforeseeable consequences of action” (Fischer 2007:426). It can help us account for people, experiences, and voices that remain unaddressed and raise calls for new ethics and politics. Ethnography matters.

## The Psychiatric Aura of Reality

Catarina's speech and writing captured what her world had turned into—a messy world filled with knots that she could not untie, although she desperately wanted to because “if we don't study it, the illness in the body worsens.” Her words spoke of real struggles, the ordinary world from which she had been banished and of multiple therapeutic itineraries that became the life of her mind. An immense parceling out of the specific ways communities, families, and personal lives are assembled and valued and how they are embedded in larger entrepreneurial processes and institutional rearrangements comes with the on-the-ground study of a single Other. But Catarina was not simply trying to make sense of these processes and rearrangements and find a place for herself in history. By going through all the components and singularities of events, she was resuming her place in them as in a becoming. She crafted a line of flight: “To make peace with time, the hours, minutes, and seconds, with the clock and the calendar, to be well with all, but mainly with the pen.”

Writing helped her to draw out the best of herself and to make it all endurable: “From the letters I form words, and from the words I form sentences, and from the sentences I form a story.” Catarina created a new letter character that resembled a *K*, and with it new names for herself such as CATAKINA, CATKINA, CATIEKI, and CATKINE. She explained, “*K* is open on both sides. If I wouldn't open the character, my head would explode.” In other words: “One needs to preserve oneself. I also know that pleasure in life is very important, the body of the Other. I think that people fear their bodies. . . . I have desire, I have desire.” As Catarina rethought the literal realities that led to her exclusion, she demanded one more chance in life. And there was always something in the way she moved things from one register to the other—past life, *Vita*, and desire—that eluded anthropological understanding. This movement was her own language of abandonment.

From 2000 to 2003, I took numerous trips to southern Brazil to work with Catarina, sometimes for weeks, sometimes for months. I studied all 21 volumes of the dictionary she was composing and discussed the words and associations with her. In her recollections and writing, I found clues to the people, sites, and interactions that constituted her life. As an anthropologist, I was challenged to reconstruct the world of her words, so to speak. I wanted to directly address the various circuits in which her intractability gained form, circuits that seemed independent of both laws and norms—the “in-betweenness” through which social life and ethics are empirically worked out. With Catarina's consent, I retrieved her records from psychiatric hospitals and local branches of the universal health care system. On a detective-like journey, I was also able to locate her family members in the nearby city of Novo Hamburgo. Everything she had told me about the familial and medical pathways that led her into *Vita* matched with the information I found in the archives and in the field—

a field that was not given but that became manifest through returns, diligence, and care.

Catarina was born in 1966 and grew up in a very poor place, in the western region of the state of Rio Grande do Sul. After finishing fourth grade, she was taken out of school and became the housekeeper as her youngest siblings aided their mother in agricultural work. The father had abandoned the family. In the mid-1980s, two of her brothers migrated and found jobs in the booming shoe industry in Novo Hamburgo. At the age of 18, Catarina married Nilson Moraes, and a year later she gave birth to her first child. Shady deals, persistent bad harvests, and indebtedness to local vendors forced Nilson and Catarina to sell the land they inherited to take care of Catarina's ailing mother, and in the mid-1980s, the young couple decided to migrate and join her brothers in the shoe industry. In the coming years, she had two more children. As her illness progressed and her marriage disintegrated, her eldest two children went to her husband's family, and her youngest daughter was given up for adoption.

Catarina had become too much of a burden for her family, a history tangled by the complications of disease, poverty, and fear, and she was frequently hospitalized and overmedicated with powerful antipsychotics. Yet, exploring her medical records, I uncovered something unknown. Catarina actually suffered from a rare neurodegenerative disorder—Machado Joseph Disease—that caused her to lose her ability to walk and, over time, shut her down almost entirely (Jardim et al. 2001). It was an illness that had afflicted Catarina's mother, and, as in her case, presented itself after childbirth. Reaching this diagnosis took me through a maze of medical hoops, and as the picture of her illness became clearer, I took her to a geneticist and neurologist who finally made the correct diagnosis and provided the best possible care.

All these materials, experiences, and ideas found their way into my book *Vita* (Biehl 2005) alongside an institutional analysis of why and how zones of social abandonment proliferate in contemporary urban spaces. In many ways, Catarina was caught in a period of political and cultural transition—politicians were operationalizing a state reform to make Brazil viable in an “inescapable” economic globalization by allowing alternative partnerships with civil society to maximize the public interest within the state (Biehl 2007; Cardoso 1998). In *Vita*, I show how such large-scale change and redistribution of resources, power, and responsibility take place locally. Overburdened families and individuals are suffused with the materials, patterns, and paradoxes of these processes, which by and large they are left to negotiate alone. In this context, the family is increasingly the medical agent of the state (providing and at times triaging care), and medication has become a tool for such deliberate action.

Free drug distribution is a central component of Brazil's universal health care system, a democratic gain of the late 1980s. Increasing calls for the decentralization of services and the individualization of treatment, exemplified by the mental health movement, coincided with dramatic cuts in funding



for health care infrastructure and with the proliferation of pharmaceutical treatments. Data from the government's database for health resource use between the years 1995 and 2005 show that the country's psychiatric reform was accompanied by a significant fall in the percentage of resources dedicated to psychiatric care (Andreoli et al. 2007). In 1995, for example, psychiatric hospital admissions accounted for 95.5% of the mental health budget, down to 49.3% in 2005. Meanwhile, there has been a dramatic increase in resource allocation for community services *and* for medications. Medication provision rose from 0.1% in 1995 to 15.5% in 2005—a 155-fold increase in the national budget. Second-generation antipsychotic drugs were responsible for 75% of the expenses for medications in this period. Interestingly, the rise in medication allocation was followed by a relative decrease in the number of psychiatrists hired—psychologists and social workers have been hired at three times and twice, respectively, the rates of psychiatrists from 1995 to 2005.

In engaging with this new regime of public health and in allocating their own overstretched and meager resources, families become *proxy psychiatrists*. Illness breaks intimate household relations with a deadly force. Families can dispose of their unwanted and unproductive members, sometimes without sanction, on the basis of individuals' noncompliance with their treatment regimens. Psychopharmaceuticals are central to the story of how personal lives are recast in this particular moment of socioeconomic change and of how people create life chances vis-à-vis what is bureaucratically and medically available to them (Petryna, Lakoff, and Kleinman 2006). Such possibilities and the foreclosures of certain forms of human life run parallel with market exploitation, gender domination, and a managerial-style state that is increasingly distant from the people it governs. The fabric of this domestic activity of valuing and deciding which life is worth living remains largely unexamined, not only in everyday life but also in the literature of transforming economies, states, and civil societies in the contexts of democratization and social inequality. As this study unfolded, I was challenged to devise ways to approach this unconsidered infrastructure of decision making that operates, in Catarina's own words, "out of justice"—that is, outside the bounds of the judiciary and the public ministry—and that is close to home. "I know because I passed through it. I learned the truth and I try to divulge what reality is."

Ethnography thus makes visible the intermingling of colloquial practices and relations, institutional histories, and discursive structures that—in categories of madness, pharmaceuticals, migrant households, and disintegrating services—have bounded normalcy and displaced Catarina onto the register of social death, where her condition appears to have been "self-generated." Throughout this chain of events, she knows that the verb "to kill" is being conjugated—"dead alive, dead outside, alive inside"—and in relation to her, the anthropologist charts and reflects on what makes this not only possible but ordinary. This is also, then, a story of the methodological, ethical, and conceptual limits of anthropology as

it goes into the field and tries to verify the sources of a life excluded from family and society and to capture the density of a locality without leaving the individual person and her subjectivity behind.

## To Live Is Expensive

As I listened to and excavated what had made Catarina's voice "posthumous," a life force—often gaining form in the figure of the animal and related to libido, treatments, and belonging—emerged to rework thoughts and ideas of the person and of the value of social ties. While trying to speak, Catarina was overwhelmed by the chemical alterations of drugs, layers and layers of chemical compounds that other people used to work on her and drug side effects that were her body and identity now. To speak the unspeakable, she resorted to metaphors and to writing. In the following dictionary entry, for example, she tries to break open the reader's blindness and brings a Greek tragic figure and her three brothers and three children together with her renamed self and the always-inadequate clinical register: "Look at Catarina without blindness, pray, prayer, Jocastka, there is no tonic for CATKINE, there is no doctor for any one, Altamir, Ademar, Armando, Anderson, Alessandra, Ana."

Marked by paradoxes and impossibilities, she continues, "I need to change my blood with a tonic. Medication from the pharmacy costs money, to live is expensive." Medical science was indeed part and parcel of Catarina's existence—the truths, half-truths, and misunderstandings that brought her to die in Vita and on which she subsisted. "Pharmacy, laboratory, marriage, identity, army, rheumatism, complication of labor, loss of physical equilibrium, total loss of control, govern, goalkeeper, evil eye, spasm, nerves. . . . In the United States, not here in Brazil, there is a cure, for half of the disease."

In writing, as in speech, Catarina often refers to her condition as "rheumatism." In the following inscription, for example, she depicts rheumatism as a mangling of the threads people tinker with: "People think that they have the right to put their hands in the mangled threads and to mess with it. Rheumatism. They use my name for good and for evil. They use it because of the rheumatism." A possible reading is that her rheumatism ties various life threads together. It is an untidy knot, a real matter that makes social exchange possible. It gives the body its stature and it is the conduit of a morality. Catarina's bodily affection, not her name, is exchanged in that world: "What I was in the past does not matter." Catarina disappears and a religious image stands in her place: "Rheumatism, spasm, crucified Jesus." In another fragment, she writes, "Acute spasm, secret spasm. Rheumatic woman. The word of the rheumatic is of no value."

Catarina knows that there is a rationality and a bureaucracy to symptom management: "Chronic spasm, rheumatism, must be stamped, registered." All of this happens in a democratic context, "vote by vote." We must consider side by side the acute pain Catarina described and the authoritative story

she became in medicine and in common sense—as being mad and ultimately of no value. The antipsychotic drugs Haldol and Neozine are also words in Catarina’s dictionary. In a fragment, she defiantly writes that her pain reveals the experimental ways science is embodied: “The dance of science. Pain broadcasts sick science, the sick study. Brain, illness. Buscopan, Haldol, Neozine. Invoked spirit.”

An individual history of science is being written here. Catarina’s lived experience and ailments are the pathos of a certain science, a science that is itself sick. The goods of psychiatric science, such as Haldol and Neozine, have become as ordinary as Buscopan (hyoscine, an over-the-counter antispasmodic medication) and have become a part of familial practices. As Catarina’s experience shows, the use of such drugs produces mental and physical effects apart from those related to her illness.

In Catarina’s thinking and writing, global pharmaceuticals are not simply taken as new material for old patterns of self-fashioning. These universally disseminated goods are entangled in and act as vectors for new mechanisms of sociomedical and subjective control that have a deadly force. Seen from the perspective of Vita, the illnesses Catarina experienced were the outcome of events and practices that altered the person she had learned to become. Words such as *Haldol* and *Neozine* are literally her. The drug name Akineton (biperiden) is reflected in one of the new names Catarina gave herself: CATKINE. Abandoned in Vita to die, Catarina has ties to pharmakons. Her desire, she writes, is now a pharmaceutical thing with no human exchange value: “Catarina cries and wants to leave. Desire, watered, prayed, wept. Tearful feeling, fearful, diabolic, betrayed. My desire is of no value. Desire is pharmaceutical. It is not good for the circus.”

## Literature and Health

Catarina also writes to remain alive, I thought. In the dictionary, she constantly places her new names in relation to those of others she meets in Vita, such as Clóvis, Luis Carlos, or people she knew in the past, such as Valmir. She creatively redirects disciplinary clinical elements into a literary-therapeutic line of flight *and* contact.

I find Deleuze’s insights on literature and health quite helpful in reflecting on Catarina’s work of sublimation and the values it creates in Vita. Deleuze says that writing is “a question of becoming, always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed, and goes beyond the matter of any livable or lived experience. It is a process, that is, a passage of Life that traverses both the livable and the lived” (Deleuze 1997:1). He thinks of language as a system that can be disturbed, attacked, and reconstructed—the very gate through which limits of all kinds are crossed and the energy of the “delirium” unleashed (Deleuze 1997:1; see also Deleuze 2001; Didion 2006).

The “delirium” suggests alternative visions of existence and of a future that clinical definitions tend to foreclose. Language in its clinical state has already attained a form, says Deleuze:

“We don’t write with our neuroses. Neuroses or psychoses are not passages of life, but states into which we fall when the process is interrupted, blocked, or plugged up. Illness is not a process but a stopping of the process” (Deleuze 1997:3). The radical work of literature, however, moves away from “truths” and “forms” (because truth is a form in itself) and toward intermediate, processual stages that could even be virtual. Writing is inseparable from becoming, repeats Deleuze, and becoming “always has an element of flight that escapes its own formalization” (Deleuze 1997:1). To become is not to attain a form through imitation, identification, or mimesis but rather to find a zone of proximity where one can no longer be distinguished from a man, a woman, or an animal—“neither imprecise, nor general, but unforeseen and nonpreexistent, singularized out of a population rather than determined in a form” (Deleuze 1997:1). In Deleuze’s words, one can institute such zone of indifferenciation with anything “on the condition that one creates the literary means for doing so” (Deleuze 1997:2).

While I tried to restore context and meaning to her lived experience of abandonment, Catarina was herself producing, in her dictionary, a theory of the abandoned subject and her subjectivity that was ethnographically grounded. Consider this stanza:

Catarina is subjected  
To be a nation in poverty  
Porto Alegre  
Without an heir  
Enough  
I end

In her verse, Catarina places the individual and the collective in the same space of analysis, just as the country and the city also collide in Vita. Subjection has to do with having no money and with being part of a nation gone awry. The subject is a body left in Vita without ties to the life she generated with the man who, as she states, now “rules the city” from which she is banished. With nothing to leave behind and no one to leave it to, there remains Catarina’s subjectivity—the medium through which a collectivity is ordered in terms of lack and in which she finds a way to disentangle herself from all the mess the world has become. In her writing, she faces the concrete limits of what a human being can bear, and she makes polysemy out of those limits—“I, who am where I go, am who am so.”

One of the guiding principles of Deleuze’s philosophy is the link between the real and the imaginary as always coexisting, always complementary. They are like two juxtaposable or superimposable parts of a single trajectory, two faces that ceaselessly interchange with one another, “a mobile mirror . . . bearing witness until the end to a new vision whose passage it remained open to” (Deleuze 1997:63). In Catarina’s words, real and imaginary voyages compose a set of intertwined routes. “I am a free woman, to fly, bionic woman, separated. . . . When men throw me into the air, I am already far away.”

These trajectories are inseparable from her efforts of becoming. “I will leave the door of the cage open. You can fly wherever you want to.”

Actualized by literature, this mobile mirror reveals beneath apparent persons the power of an impersonal, says Deleuze, “which is not a generality but singularity at the highest point: a man, a woman, a beast, a child. . . . It is not the first two persons that function as the condition for literary enunciation; literature begins only when a third person is born in us that strips us of the power to say ‘I’” (Deleuze 1997:3). The shift to the indefinite—from *I* to *a*—leads to the ultimate existential stage in which life is simply “immanent,” a transcendental field where man and woman and other men and women/animals/landscapes can achieve the web of variable relations and situated connectedness called “camaraderie.”

“There, in Novo Hamburgo it is Catarina. Here it is CATKINE,” she told me when I asked her why she invented this name. “I will be called this now. For I don’t want to be a tool for men to use, for men to cut. A tool is innocent. You dig, you cut, you do whatever you want with it. . . . It doesn’t know if it hurts or doesn’t. But the man who uses it to cut the other knows what he is doing.” She continued with the most forceful words: “I don’t want to be a tool. Because Catarina is not the name of a person . . . truly not. It is the name of a tool, of an object. A person is an Other.”

Psychopharmaceuticals had mediated Catarina’s expulsion from the world of exchanges (as if she were ignorant of the language she spoke) and were now the thing through which she recounted bodily fragmentation and withering. This was what she was left with: “enjoyment enjoying itself” (*se goza gozo*), as she wrote in the dictionary. “Pleasure and desire are not sold, cannot be bought. But have choice.” The opportunity to “restart” and a human choice were all she wanted. This was what Catarina affirmed in her love stories in Vita. “I dated a man who volunteered as a security guard here,” she told me. “He bought me a ring and a bracelet, shampoo, many things. We met at night and had sex in the bathroom. But people were trying to separate us. Vera began to say that he was her boyfriend, too. So I gave him the ring back. He refused to take it back. I said, ‘I will not throw this into the garbage,’ so I put it in my suitcase. After we split, he had other women here . . . But as far as I am concerned, I was not his prey. I didn’t fall to him. I wanted it. I have desire, I have desire. I am with Clóvis now.”

Catarina refused to depict herself as a victim. Her body experienced, along with hunger, spasms, and pain, uncontrollable desires, an overflow unthinkable in terms of common sense. While exposing Vita as a place of total annihilation, she also spoke of the vitality of sexuality and affirmed agency. She spoke openly of having sex “in the bathroom and in the pharmacy” with Clóvis, a man who after passing through the rehabilitation areas became the infirmary’s “nurse.” For her, desire and pleasure were gratifying, “a gift that one feels.” During sex, she said, “I don’t lose my head, and I don’t let my partner lose his head. If it is good for me, I want to make

it good for him, too.” She was, in her own words, “a true woman” (*mulher de verdade*):

Female reproducer, reproduces, lubrication, anonymous reproducer, to fondle the aggressive lust, and manias. Scientific decadence, kiss, electricity, wet, mouth kiss, dry kiss, kiss in the neck, to start from zero, it is always time, to begin again, for me it is time to convert, this is salvation day, Clóvis Gama, CATKINE, Catakina Gama, Ikeni Gama, Alessandra Gomes, Ana G., to restart a home, a family, the spirit of love, the spirit of God, the spirit becomes flesh inside.

Catarina remarked that other people might be curious about her words, but she added that their meaning was ultimately part of her living: “There is so much that comes with time . . . the words . . . and the signification, you will not find in the book. It is only in my memory that I have the signification. And this is for me to untie.” Catarina refused to be merely an object of understanding for others, yet she challenges us to inquire into the benefits that can come from anthropological knowledge making, especially in the ways care can be redirected. “Nobody will decipher the words for me. With the pen, only I can do it. . . . In the ink, I decipher. . . . I am writing for myself to understand, but, of course, if you all understand I will be very content.” And she anticipated an exit from Vita. It was as difficult as it was important to sustain this anticipation: to find ways to support Catarina’s search for ties to people and the world and her demand for continuity, or at least its possibility.

## To Write for This People Who Are Missing

Where Biehl’s work with Catarina probes the significance of Deleuze’s thought in understanding individual subjectivity—the force and meaning of a life in its entanglements with transforming configurations of knowledges, economies, and forms of care—Locke’s research in Sarajevo explores Deleuze’s insights for understanding collective becomings. In BiH, what is held in common—who one cares for, identifies with, supports, or is supported by in the course of the fraught moments and activities of a postwar everyday—does not always correspond to official divisions and categories, that is, ethnonational divisions (Croat, Serb, Bosniak) and competing victim identifications (veteran, widow, camp survivor, rape victim, displaced person, returnee). The collective is an open space of ambivalence and contestation where there is room for tentative bonds and shared frustrations to cross entrenched boundaries and mark out new ones.

Although the specificities are, of course, different in crucial ways, Locke’s Bosnian interlocutors—like Catarina in Vita—negotiate an evolving interface of psychiatric and neoliberal economic rationalities. In BiH, as Locke argues in the following section, clinical diagnoses applied to whole populations mask the actual political, economic, and social discontents be-

hind their shared “symptoms.” Sustained ethnographic engagement can help to produce a counterinterpretation that, by taking seriously local desires and struggles at becoming, evokes the potential for alternative solidarities and political life in the region—“a people to come” (Deleuze 1997:4).

#### *BiH a Dozen Years after the War*

On a hot summer morning in July of 2007, I (Locke) take a taxi to Sarajevo’s Koševo Hospital to visit Dr. Senadin Ljubović. Dr. Ljubović, a psychiatrist with decades of experience, has since the war worked with traumatized ex-soldiers and rape victims. On my way into his office, I pass a gaunt, expressionless woman on her way out. Dr. Ljubović tells me, without prompting, in the course of our conversation, that she is from Srebrenica; she spent months in a Serb rape camp; and much of her family was killed in the July 1995 massacre. She has no job, no friends, and no family in Sarajevo. She receives only meager assistance from the government. She is about to be evicted from her apartment.

Dr. Ljubović, calm and resigned in his white coat, folds his hands in his lap and looks at me: what, he asks, can a psychiatrist do for someone like her? Her problems are social—the extreme violence of the early 1990s shattered her networks of support, and in a city still resentful of “villagers” and refugees, she has found little in the way of new human warmth and connection. And her problems are economic—12 years after the war, the Bosnian economy remains a wreck, and there are few prospects for (formal) employment or further education. The trauma of her terrible losses and violations is there, of course—in a crippled capacity to trust, to connect, and to hope. But Dr. Ljubović—one of Sarajevo’s staggeringly few mental health professionals—hardly has the time and resources to address this particularly bitter facet of her predicament. He can only prescribe medication, offer a few words of advice, and let her go, admitting the next client in line.

A few months earlier, I am sitting at the long table in the common area of the offices of Wings of Hope, a local psychosocial support NGO focused on services for children and teenagers. Three mothers wait in a cloud of cigarette smoke, while elsewhere in the office staff members work with their kids. They are angry and frustrated. Their husbands are gone (lost in the war or for other reasons) or unemployed; their children struggle in school; and the government does nothing, or next to nothing, to help them. Neighbors and friends are too preoccupied with their own daily struggles to take much interest. NGOs such as Wings of Hope—themselves extremely limited in capacity because of “donor fatigue” and the declining interest of the international community—fill in where they can in the absence of services the government should be providing. “Politicians do not care about us,” they say. “They just use their positions to get rich. . . . My husband died in the war and I live off his soldier’s pension. But it is not enough! And there are no jobs for me.” As they exchange bitter complaints, the mothers begin remembering together

what the system was like before the war, when material security, employment, and health care were all (ostensibly) guaranteed by the state. “Everything was better before. The war was for nothing.” They are grateful for the assistance they find at Wings but resent that it is their only apparent option. Anger at politicians and despair over their current circumstances dominate the mood.

Dr. Ljubović and the mothers at Wings of Hope both indicate, to some extent, the failure of governance (both local and international) and an absence of services and assistance; they express a general sense of social dysfunction, stagnancy, and disconnection, a vacuum of meaning and solidarity. Ironically, despite bloated, redundant layers of bureaucracy that suck up an estimated 70% of BiH’s yearly GDP, government here feels less like a weight (much less a positive force constraining lives or constructing subjectivities) than a *lack*—of care, support, and opportunity. Local politics—dominated by zero-sum, angry, fear-inducing debates between ethnic nationalists on both sides—transpire in a bubble of compulsive repetition disconnected from concrete socioeconomic problems. People feel left to fend for themselves in the course of their daily struggles. What care and opportunities they can obtain generally require personal or political connections or substantial bribery: students pay to pass exams, graduates pay to be employed, a patient needing stitches slips the nurse a little extra to receive local anesthetic. And with the steady withdrawal of international aid projects, leaving local NGOs to scramble for meager resources, the limited services provided by civil society (including those addressing mental health) can only scratch the surface of actual need.

#### *Therapeutic Governance*

The war in BiH (population roughly 4 million) saw approximately 100,000 dead and at least 1 million displaced. Bosnia’s infrastructure, economy, and civic institutions remain deeply compromised. The Dayton Accords, which ended hostilities in 1995, brought to BiH an enormous international apparatus of governance, monitoring, peacekeeping, and humanitarian aid—a kind of “migrant sovereignty,” to borrow anthropologist of Kosovo Mariella Pandolfi’s apt terminology (Pandolfi 2003). Renewed warfare has been held at bay, but otherwise progress has been spotty and fitful, with frustration building steadily over the years. Local nationalist politicians, who have a stake in maintaining fear and insecurity in the electorate, frequently stymie the efforts of international authorities to stimulate political reform. It does not help that the Dayton constitution entrenches the role of divisive ethnic identifications in the political process. In 2008, over 14 years after the end of the war, BiH remains in essence an international protectorate, and the “High Representative” (who jointly represents the UN and EU, and whose mandate was originally intended to last only 1 year) retains, though rarely exercises, the capacity to exercise near-absolute political authority. In economic domains, international organizations’ neoliberal

market ideology and “structural adjustment” policies have led to by-now-familiar outcomes—corrupt privatization, the auctioning off of once-public assets, and the dismantling of social welfare services (see Donais 2005).

“It was international intervention in former Yugoslavia,” argues political scientist Vanessa Pupavac, “especially Bosnia, that heralded ‘the triumph of the therapeutic’” (Pupavac 2004: 377). Borrowing this final phrase from Philip Rieff’s (2006 [1966]) study of the steady integration of Freudian thought into everyday “modern” culture, Pupavac argues that over the course of the 1990s, international policy in postcrisis situations created a form of power she calls “therapeutic governance.” Humanitarian organizations in the Balkans conducted psychosocial projects—by some accounts, thousands were implemented in the region during and just after the war, costing millions of dollars (Pupavac 2003:163; Summerfield 1999:1452)—targeting the trauma and mental health of war survivors. The psychosocial approach emphasizes the link between trauma and repeating cycles of violence; individuals are seen as essentially psychologically vulnerable (rather than resilient) and war survivors as damaged and therefore in danger of repeating the atrocities that they had witnessed or to which they had been subjected. According to Pupavac, this set of assumptions in part justifies the continuing supervision of BiH by foreign overseers. Contemporary therapeutic governance assumes that postwar citizens can be trusted with neither their political rights nor their own emotional well being. *Symbolic* justice is emphasized, while “substantive social justice” is all but ignored (Pupavac 2004:392).

As my fieldwork began, I expected to watch this configuration—the “triumph of the therapeutic” in postwar remediation efforts—play out in the fabric of everyday life in Sarajevo. However (as my opening anecdotes indicate), I quickly discovered that the *structural effect* of international psychosocial projects in BiH—notwithstanding all the millions of aid dollars spent—has been extremely narrow. Various international programs—the once-ubiquitous seminars, workshops, trainings, and conferences on themes such as conflict resolution, nonviolence, communication skills, and, of course, trauma—did shift the way a number of local civil society workers understood the psychological effect of war, and a community mental health center reform project led by a Swedish task force and supported by the World Health Organization and other agencies retrained many local mental health professionals and social workers accustomed to a more classical prewar system of psychiatric wards and asylums for the severely mentally ill (Lagerkvist et al. 2003). But most people do not tend to see some form of psychotherapy as a possible remedy for their woes. Even if they did, mental health care services in BiH, and public knowledge about them, are very limited (the community mental health care reform process notwithstanding).

In what follows, however, I will show that while strong mental health care infrastructures and treatment-seeking cultures have not taken root in any sustainable manner in BiH,

psychological language has in some way colored local common sense, confounding the way people understand the country’s social-structural and political-economic problems. Interpretation of the features of life in contemporary BiH takes place almost exclusively *on a clinical register* through which Bosnian voices seem to emit only signs of lives blocked by collective illness. Deleuze asks us “to have done with judgment,” which “prevents the emergence of any new mode of existence” (Deleuze 1997:135). We can listen to Bosnian lives *on a literary* rather than *clinical* register through which we may hear, between the lines, an incipient becoming, a “collective enunciation” that points to possible alternatives for social solidarity and mobilization (Deleuze 1986:18). I am after an agency that, paradoxically, pulses in a language of despair and refusal, of anger and abiding, a syntax of mournful waiting. How can such an anthropology inform and contribute to transformations in concepts and practices, both international and local, of postwar politics and humanitarianism?

## Diagnosing a City

What remains from the short-lived postwar flurry of psychosocial work? In Sarajevo I found a handful of small Bosnian-run NGOs, the staff of which more often than not were trained by or at least had important encounters with international mental health professionals during and just after the war. These NGOs try to adapt their sense of Western mental health science to what they perceive to be local problems and needs, often creating a disjuncture between mission statements (couched in psychological terminology) and actual practices (which look more like social work and community building). Beneficiaries are often seeking material assistance as much as (or significantly more than) some form of emotional support; NGO workers regularly told me stories of people appearing at psychosocial activities to ask for money or materials to rebuild damaged homes or to buy food for a few days. (There is a microhistory here of the kind of values and expectations that linger as philosophies and infrastructures of governance transform: this is the sort of assistance, apparently, that citizens would have expected of their prewar communist government.)

At Wings of Hope, what is billed as “psychodetraumatization” for children has evolved into academic tutoring for young people struggling in school, assistance in transitions from education to work, and pragmatic problem solving, counseling, and general support for families. On balance the efforts of Wings staff counteract the effect of contemporary socioeconomic pressures more than that of extreme wartime experiences. Yet staff members do talk in psychosocial terms, attributing poor grades to “transgenerational trauma,” and children are usually selected for the program based on a checklist of “traumatic indicators” developed for Wings several years ago by a psychologist from Sarajevo University. Maja, the director, persistently tells me that Sarajevo is in the

grip of “collective depression” and “mass trauma”—although when I interview staff members, they are less certain about such blanket diagnoses. If ideas about trauma only loosely guide NGO activities, they nevertheless seem to inflect, to differing degrees, the explanations people at Wings give about what they are doing.

There is something here akin to the processes of medicalization—the tendency to obscure the social etiology of affliction and reduce it to a biological reality amenable to medical intervention—frequently identified and critiqued by medical anthropologists (e.g., Kleinman 1988; Kleinman and Good 1985; Lock 1993; Scheper-Hughes 1992; Young 1995). Yet without the presence of an effective or powerful medical infrastructure, this form of objectification escapes along other lines: diagnostics move from the private clinical encounter and come to operate, fluidly and ambivalently, in domestic and public spheres and collectively constructed narratives about postwar life. People do not simply become the diagnostic categories applied to them—they inhabit them to greater or lesser degrees, refuse them, redefine and redeploy them, or ignore them entirely (Lock 2003).<sup>1</sup> As Ian Hacking acknowledged in his essay on how new kinds of people can be “made up” by medical diagnostics, “My concern is philosophical and abstract . . . and [I] reflect too little on the ordinary dynamics of human interaction” (Hacking 1999:162).

The legacy of “therapeutic governance” and psychosocial intervention in BiH is mixed in many senses. In the same breath Sarajevans can talk about psychiatric trauma as the source of socioeconomic challenges—when people are depressed, they lack the kind of individual initiative required to make capitalism work, the story goes—and then reverse the formula, pointing to economic problems as the true traumatic experience. A few days after the capture of Radovan Karadžić (in late July 2008), I took a taxi to Sarajevo’s central bus station. The driver asked what I was doing in Sarajevo. “I’m most interested in trauma and grief,” I told him. He replied, “That is very difficult. What you are looking for is hidden.” He explained that everything, at first glance, looks relatively “normal” in Sarajevo; people socialize, work, spend time in cafes with their friends, study at the university, take buses to the Adriatic coast in July. Under the surface, though, “*nešto nije u redu*”—something is not right. People are “explosive” and “temperamental,” flying into a rage at the little irritations of daily life, in a way that they were not before the war. But

“war trauma” is not the only reason for this half-buried malaise: *nema posla*, said the driver—*There are no jobs*. He began to recite a familiar litany of social ills: unemployment, corruption, poor social services, a country seemingly emptied of compassion and solidarity. “This is not a normal society. This is not what I fought for.” He had been in the militias defending Sarajevo during the siege.

In 2003 Slobodan Loga, a psychiatrist at Sarajevo University, told a reporter for Britain’s *Daily Telegraph* that everyone in Sarajevo had posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and I heard him make similar pronouncements at two separate Sarajevo conferences during my fieldwork in 2007. In the *Telegraph* article (cited also by Pupavac [2004:392] and tellingly entitled “The War Is Over but Sarajevans Cannot Find the Peace They Seek”), he rattled off the symptoms gripping the city: “violent mood swings, excitability, flashbacks, nightmares, emotional numbness, depression, anxiety attacks and trying to find someone else to blame” (Eager 2003). Suicide has gone up by 40%, he said; “PTSD is part of our lives” (Eager 2003). One of Loga’s colleagues, a psychiatrist who has worked extensively with war veterans, similarly suggested to me in an interview that “trauma here is so widespread that it is banal.” Šejla, a psychiatrist-turned-homeopath and a veteran of *Médecins Sans Frontières* psychosocial programs, told me that “you can’t talk about mental health for people who suffered during the war. They have no mental health. They are just human animals surviving day-to-day with these horrible memories.”

As our interview continued, however, Šejla left the war behind and designated the transition to capitalism—and the “passive” way Bosnians have responded to it—as the true catastrophe. “Some of those who managed well during war just broke to pieces at the end. Lots of psychiatrists figured out, what turned out to be an even more challenging experience was the shift from socialism to some sort of capitalism. That proved to be an even bigger source of stress than the war.” As a matter of fact, she went on, people often say they preferred life during the siege to life under the new postwar economy. “Life then was more straightforward—just stay alive, day-to-day.” Moreover Sarajevans were connected by a shared sense of struggle, of persecution by a common enemy, and, in Šejla’s words, “took better care of each other.” She meant that they expressed sympathy and solidarity in common suffering and shared supplies and survival strategies. Getting by in postwar Sarajevo, and getting along with others, feels to many people like a different, lonelier, and more point-less kind of struggle. They always knew the war had to end, someday, even as it dragged on well past expectations. But an end to poisoned postwar politics and the infuriating inequalities of the new economy is hard to perceive.

Seen from Šejla’s perspective, Sarajevans are longing for lost collectivities and solidarities—not only those of prewar Yugoslavia but of the wartime itself. The social ties that they desire are not addressed in contemporary Bosnian politics. People recall connections anchored less by ethnicity than by

1. Similarly Margaret Lock, in reviewing the literature on medicalization across disciplines, concludes with a call for an understanding of the process as less deterministic and more open-ended and context dependent: “Medicalization, understood as enforced surveillance, is misleading. So too is an argument that emphasizes the social construction of disease at the expense of recognizing the very real, debilitating condition of individuals who seek out medical help. Rather, an investigation of the forms taken by political economies, technological complexes, and the values embedded in biomedical discourse and practice and in popular knowledge about the body, health, and illness that situate various states and conditions as residing within the purview of medicine better indicates the complexity at work” (Lock 2003:123).

a shared, against-the-odds will to live (Biehl 2007) and to preserve a familiar humanity amidst dire circumstances.

## The Subjectivity of a Milieu

Sarajevo produces contradictory impressions. As the taxi driver noted, on the surface things and people seem normal now, but underneath something feels wrong. Similarly, a BBC reporter stationed in Sarajevo for years recently told a *New York Times* travel reporter that “there’s a lot of pain just under the surface—a lot of pain” (Solomon 2006).

The city landscape itself is largely gray, shrapnel-scarred, bullet-holed Austro-Hungarian and communist-era facades under perpetual restoration—leading the *Times* writer to remark wryly that “the predominant color of Sarajevo is spackle” (Solomon 2006)—but it is punctuated by gleaming new modern structures, such as the recently rebuilt Council of Ministers building or the striking Avaz “twist” tower, now the highest building in the Balkans. Reminders of grief, war related and everyday, are so omnipresent that they often blend unnoticed into the scenery: underfoot, the “Sarajevo roses,” mortar-impact craters filled in with red paint; and on trees, walls, and bus stop shelters, death notices (*smrtovnice*), posted both at the time of passing and at repeating intervals in subsequent years, printed on standard A4 paper, with pictures of the deceased and short poems or expressions of loss—“beloved father, brother, and friend: death does not end our love, nor time our sadness.”

Standards of hospitality are high, and greetings between friends on the street are enthusiastic. Popular nightspots fill with energy and young people dressed to the nines. But there is often an undercurrent of anger to street scenes. People complain about the inconsiderateness of others, recalling better manners and more gentle dispositions before the war, and they seem to have very low patience for daily irritations and rudenesses. Drivers are extremely aggressive and take no heed of pedestrians. Tempers everywhere seem short, a constant provocation: people get angry about how other people’s anger makes them rude and thoughtless. Arguments explode on hot, crowded trams over whether to open a window (most Bosnians are afraid of illnesses induced by exposure to drafts). In February 2008, three teenagers stabbed a fourth to death on a tram for looking at them the wrong way, prompting thousands of Sarajevans to take to the streets in a rare display of coordinated outrage against city officials (in this case for doing too little about juvenile delinquency).

Maja and Šejla’s anger drives them to action, and they are upset with people whose anger leads to apparent immobility or self-indulgence. Šejla railed about the “inertia” of her fellow Sarajevans—many unemployed, spending their time in cafés complaining and venting their own anger about the state of things in their world. Šejla mimicked their attitude: “The world should help us, give us this, no one is taking care. . . . [I] say no, cut the crap, go and clean the street and do whatever, just move your butt, you can’t just sit back and wait.

. . . This whole inertia . . . it was always there, it’s just that now it [has] emerged as the mode of living.”

Šejla designated “people who lived in Tito’s time” as the most guilty of this kind of passive inertia. In light of the many hardships and horrors of the intervening years, many people in Sarajevo—especially, of course, those of middle and advanced age—articulate longings for prewar life under communism (Locke 2008). This is a phenomenon known (affectionately or dismissively, depending on who is speaking) as “Yugo-nostalgia.” The complaints of older generations thus emerge in part from the values and dreams of Tito-era Yugoslavia, when neighborliness, tolerance, “brotherhood and unity,” and a strong welfare state were, for many, upheld as the key ideals guiding both individual and collective striving. Loga, after diagnosing all of Sarajevo with PTSD, pinned the blame not on war trauma but on “economic and social problems” (Eager 2003). His further comments are revealing: “We had a good life before the war,” he said. “Why can’t we go back to that? Our communism wasn’t like Russia or Hungary. I don’t mind democracy but this privatization is just a mafia. I don’t know why the international community wants us to be in this mess” (Eager 2003).

Tito’s stated ideals were only ever imperfectly achieved (see Ramet 2002); Zlatko Hurić, the former director of BiH’s “poverty reduction strategy” and a one-time World Bank employee, complained a few years ago that Bosnians “expect to live like they used to before the war—going abroad, buying Italian clothes. But it wasn’t real; the economy was funded by Tito’s foreign borrowing, and they won’t believe that” (Eager 2003). But whether or not the prewar economy rested on a “real” base—a foreign debt of nearly \$20 billion by the early 1980s (Donais 2005:6) and other systemic problems surely suggests that it did not—the values, ethics, and expectations of the time were *not* illusions; the fact that many Bosnians still hold to them in private and are again invoking them as they struggle to make sense of their dismal milieu indicates the potential for alternative political hopes and subjectivities that run counter to the visions of both local and international elites.

Many, such as Zlatko Hurić and Šejla as well as Western policy makers heavily enculturated into ideologies of individual initiative and capitalist risk taking, condemn these Yugoslav yearnings as another kind of pathology of memory parallel to (or part of the complex of) mass PTSD. It all adds up to a grand dismissal, a refusal to listen to the content of what Sarajevans have to say. In this view, Bosnians—rendered passive, entitled, and dependent by decades of socialism and humanitarian “handouts” and traumatized by the violent disintegration of Yugoslav-era dreams—are unable to accept their losses and “move on.” It is a clinical-sounding diagnosis—a recent UNDP report calls it “a huge dependency syndrome” (UNDP 2007:22)—blaming social problems on the accumulated individual psychological injuries of the past 50 years of Balkan history. It empties Sarajevo’s “affects and intensities”—what Deleuze might call its subjectivity as a mi-

lieu, the set of trajectories, landscapes, and socialities that comprise its own tortured becoming as a community—of content, meaning, and context. It sucks out the specificity of the complaints and frustrations of its inhabitants by calling them indicators of a universal psychiatric disorder.

## The Interpretation of Symptoms

We need a critical approach that takes seriously the lives of Sarajevans on their own terms, a way to halt the clinical impulse to reduce listening to diagnosis. But the kind of theory readily available in the current anthropological toolkit—Foucault-inspired “biopolitical” approaches, for example, focusing on rationalities and discourses, technologies of power and subject making, or overly determinist neo-Marxist frameworks such as “structural violence”—takes me only so far in the face of the ethnographic reality of Sarajevo. This is a painfully indeterminate social field, a place fully in the grip of neither old nor new, characterized less by entrenched logics of meaning and subject making than by liminality. My interlocutors navigate both the continuing force and legacy of a shattered world and the *partial* unfolding of new powers and knowledges. There is space between Yugoslav past and neoliberal future, between wreckage and new order, for creative survival, for desire and grief together to suggest alternate futures. Inertia and waiting, anger and nostalgia, may, situated in this space, carry a meaning other than collective illness (Fischer 2009).<sup>2</sup>

Deleuze’s distinction between language in a clinical state and language as literature suggests intriguing possibilities for listening. That is, the stories I hear could be signs of illness or stagnation or passages of life, depending on my presuppositions and methods. What possibilities does seeing the language of refusal, of waiting, of nostalgia as a “collective depression” foreclose, both for analyst and interlocutor? If I posit that in this refusal there is an agency, in this “Yugo-nostalgia” an alternative future, in this waiting a *becoming*, will my listening bring something else to my ears—a nascent “life in things,” as Deleuze would put it, growing in the “necessary detours” of syntax (Deleuze 1997:2)? Catarina’s life, as Biehl argues above, illustrates how high the stakes can be for these two modes of listening. While the psychiatrists by and large hear madness in Catarina’s words and thus proceed with a clinical process of diagnosis and psychopharmaceutical treatment that contributes to her social and physical death, Biehl takes her words and what she writes in the dictionary *literally* and in so doing hears what the clinicians are deaf to—her ongoing, wrenching struggle to *become*, to exceed and escape her diagnoses, to develop relations of desire and care with others.

2. In her work on trauma and testimony, Veena Das (2007) productively elaborates on how we sense, perceive, and acknowledge the other, pointing to an ethical stance of receptivity not reducible to any particular methodology. On the creative potentials of trauma and memory, see also Antze and Lambek (1996), Avelar (1999), Benjamin (1986), Caruth (1996), Das et al. (2001), Edkins (2004), Richard (2004), Sebald (2003), and Winter and Sivan (1999).

Deleuze articulates a key divergence with psychoanalysis—worth underlining here—in the way he approaches symptoms. Quoting Guattari, he suggests that “lapses, parapraxes and symptoms are like birds that strike their beaks against the window. It is not a question of interpreting them [in a Freudian framework]. It is a question instead of identifying their trajectory to see if they can serve as indicators of new universes of reference capable of acquiring a consistency sufficient for turning a situation upside down” (Deleuze 1997: 63). In other words, according to Deleuze the symptom is not (necessarily) the indicator of a pathological determination by a memorializing unconscious, but, as in Guattari’s haunting image, a bird beating its beak against the window; it is a *potentiality* for becoming, for breaking free of forms, for sublimating the violence of forces both everyday and world historical. This potential for sublimation needs social (even political) recognition. In Deleuze’s vision, symptoms express a desire or life force trapped and twisted at an impasse, awaiting a chance to break through.

Sarajevans are not just waiting for “someone to come fix their lives.” They have much more specific expectations. They wait for politics to improve, to grow out of nationalist fear-mongering and deadlock to again provide the kind of social protections and safety nets they recall from the communist era. They wait for people to become kinder, warmer, more neighborly again, the way they were before the war shattered trust. They wait for new industries to provide jobs and an economic base. They wait in Sarajevo’s abundant cafés, endlessly drinking coffee with friends and complaining about the government, about the impotency of Bosnia’s foreign supervisors, and about unemployment. They wait for war criminals to be brought to justice.

Their waiting is something other than a passive depression: it is a holding pattern, an abiding of intolerable present circumstances, a new kind of day-to-day survival that, in its simultaneous despair and determination, echoes the remarkable ways Sarajevans survived the siege—when they waited over three brutal years for foreign intervention (see Maček 2009). It connects them in an unnamed, unrecognized collectivity, a “tissue of shifting relations” woven by the shared experience of a loaded temporality, a *meantime*—between destruction and renewal—of grieving and anger and anticipation. And it is a kind of politics, a refusal to take on a social form—capitalism as “mafia privatization,” government as corrupt and heartless bureaucracy, neighborliness as competition, mutual suspicion and carelessness—bearing little resemblance to the prewar values they continue to hold in reserve, like the handful of eggs or bit of meat so precious during the war, for better days.

People are not just the sum of the forces—however overwhelming—constructing and constraining them. Neither “biopolitics” nor “structural violence” is sufficient to account for the movements and meanings of their lives. To trace the trajectories, the ever-deferred desires and expectations, the “symptoms” of Sarajevans, is to map a shared desperation for



flight: anger and inertia evolve from so many failed escapes and disappointed dreams. Where obstacles block passages of life, some trajectories dead-end: the war veteran, unable to find steady employment after 10 years, finally only repeats a daily path between home and a neighborhood bar; the university student, unable to afford the cost of passing grades, takes the same exams over and over into his late twenties, caught in a limbo of extended adolescence. But just as often—more often—people curve around impasses or push through anyway, carving out small life chances against the odds.

## A Sarajevo Becoming

Lévi-Strauss suggested that *bricolage*, the kind of thinking characteristic of the “untamed mind,” works via a swerve from defined and conventional paths: “a ball rebounding, a dog straying or a horse swerving from its direct course” (Lévi-Strauss 1966:16). Maja, the current director of Wings of Hope, has made a life out of this sort of swerve, consistently finding escape routes, breathing room beneath the burdens of wartime and postwar BiH. We can consider Maja’s life as both a singularity and an index of larger social processes. She survived the sieges of both Mostar and Sarajevo, working where and when she could to support humanitarian efforts. Coming from an ethnically mixed background, as so many Bosnians do, and compelled to choose a “Croat” identity as the war broke out, she now picks none of the official choices on offer—Croat, Bosniak (Muslim), or Serb—and is one of a minority in BiH to choose a civic Bosnian identity. Director of a psychosocial organization, she is herself neither psychologist nor psychiatrist; she studies philosophy and sociology (and before the war studied mechanical engineering and economics).

She subscribes to notions of collective depression and PTSD and considers the young people who come to Wings to have inherited the trauma of their parents. Yet in her work she pushes against persistent feelings of futility, militantly communicating a sense of power and possibility to her clients. She recalls a staff meeting when in discussions of one young client, a psychologist mentioned trying to help him to accept school and schoolwork as a “necessary evil.” Maja objected: they should try to teach him to see school, in all its boringness, irritations, and childhood terrors, as a place of possibility, a tool, a stepping stone toward whatever future he might want to imagine for himself. She sometimes considers herself more effective than psychologists in helping the children who come to Wings because, as she tells them, she is a “professional friend” and not a therapist. She tutors them in math and takes a consistent, active interest in the details of their day-to-day lives. For a week each January she and her colleagues lead about 20 children—those most discouraged, most without hope, most in need of something, anything, positive in their lives—to a snowboarding camp in the mountains above Sarajevo where, in learning to master an extremely difficult sport, they develop a greater sense of possibility and confidence.

Maja’s apartment building in Grbavica (a neighborhood of

Sarajevo occupied by Serb forces during the siege) is, she insists, unusual. Many others with whom I speak here deplore the state of their relations with their neighbors: the gardens around the big concrete block apartment buildings are reduced to mud; no one speaks to each other in the corridors; one resident blocks the ramp built for the handicapped war veteran on the ground floor with his car. One day one of Maja’s neighbors started to plant flowers along the walkway leading up to the main entrance of her building. The other residents soon joined; and now, sustained by the spontaneous gardener and Maja’s own directness and eagerness for connection, Maja claims that every family in the building—and they include Bosnians of all backgrounds—takes an active, consistent, compassionate interest in the lives of the others.

Maja is just as—if not more—angry, disappointed, and discouraged as any other Sarajevan. One of the first things she ever said to me was “I am always angry.” Her struggle to push against feelings of overwhelming frustration is obvious, and I have seen her explode. She tries to channel—to sublimate—all that anger into the small, practical forms of social assistance offered by Wings, into pep talks and study sessions for teenagers. Her work and actions—on the scale of what Lévi-Strauss would call “tiny solidarities” (Lévi-Strauss 1983:287), of small hopes and aspirations, of better math grades and prowess in snowboarding—suggest the “life in things,” the becoming, that is intimated by widespread longing for the past, by rejection and patient surviving or waiting out of things as they are in Bosnia. She may speak of BiH in clinical tones, but Maja’s trajectory—with its swerves and impasses, outbursts and breakthroughs—tells a different story, carries her life beyond the confines of the diagnoses she proffers. She evokes the possibilities of what Deleuze calls “missing” or “minor” people: buried alternatives, unexpected futures that remain only latent, marginal, sidelined by the mass of dominant patterns and compulsive repetition but with the potential, given consistency and critical mass, to “turn a situation around.” Maja’s frustration and short temper are more than symptoms of trauma; they are the flip side of a set of positive aspirations and values—everthwarted but never-extinguished desires for a different world, the parameters of “a people to come still ensconced in its betrayals and repudiations” (Deleuze 1997:4).

Maja’s agency radiates across social and institutional domains and through kinship ties. Maja has a young cousin named Milan, born in September 1992—just after the war had begun—in the town of Prijedor in northwestern Bosnia, now part of the Republika Srpska (RS). I met him for the first time at the annual snowboarding camp on Mount Igman (a former Olympic ski slope just above Sarajevo) in early January 2007. Maja brings Milan down from Prijedor every year and pays his way at the camp.

Milan has a very difficult life, though you would not know it from his charismatic and positive demeanor. Milan’s mother is Catholic and his father is a Serb who fought for the RS during the war. Milan’s maternal grandmother helped take care of him for a while, but she died when he was eight; now

he is left with his parents. His mother is considered mildly mentally retarded and makes very little money as a seamstress for a company in nearby Banja Luka. His father is an alcoholic. Maja's mother sends Milan money regularly: the cash goes directly to him, and not to his parents, whom Maja does not trust to manage it. Milan's misshapen nose is the result of having been hit by a car while crossing a street. Milan has always been uninsured, and no one in his family could afford the operation to repair the broken bones. Maja is saving up for that and to pay for the braces Milan needs to straighten out his jumbled mouthful of teeth. The only way Milan can get independent health insurance at his age is by dropping out of school and registering at the unemployment bureau, and Maja will not allow this.

Milan takes care of himself and his parents. He cooks and cleans the family flat in Prijedor. After school each day Milan goes from apartment to apartment in his neighborhood offering to do small errands or chores; he earns more in a day this way than his father does through his meager veteran's pension. Milan has amazing survival skills, but he is not a great student. He is naturally curious about how things work, but Maja is the only one in his life who takes the time to engage him and to encourage his interests, mostly over the phone.

Milan does not seem to harbor any resentment about his circumstances. At the snowboarding camp he is unfailingly sunny and keeps an eye out for his friends. He told me that "everything will be fine," in the face of so much evidence to the contrary in his family's experience. In this Milan is remarkable, but there are other ways in which he is not unusual at all. Many of the young people I met in Sarajevo told stories of their own about having taken on adult responsibilities all too early, about having had to become the grown-ups in families mired in hardship, depression, and alcoholism. It is Milan's *optimism* that is rare. I wonder whether it will last, and how much it depends on his exchange with Maja. Most of my young Sarajevo friends have become cynical and hopeless about their prospects in BiH and just want to leave the country.

## Memory and Mobilization

There was no money to repair Milan's facial appearance; in a way, he embodied the constraints of postwar household economies. Yet as a figure in Maja's own economy and redirection of therapeutic governance, he remained oriented toward future possibilities. Milan had no direct experience of any other world than the war and postwar society into which he was born, and he made the best he could of it. Parents and grandparents that I interviewed at Wings, on the other hand, regularly resorted to the past to account for and evaluate their present.

"Yugo-nostalgia," as I came to understand it over time, is something other than a pathological burden, a symptom of depression or of mass PTSD. Here memory is not (just) about obsessive commemoration of, or unfinished mourning for, a lost era. Older generations perform acts of remembering that

are as much about the present—and the future—as the past. These acts of memory play a role in mobilizations for alternative trajectories. The invocation of Yugoslav-era dreams and values by my informants in Sarajevo—whether or not the past to which they refer actually existed in the shape in which they currently cast it—participates in the construction of alternative postwar solidarities, "minor peoples" on the margins of BiH society.

Wings of Hope, though extremely limited in capacity and, like its beneficiaries, often forced to survive month to month by patching together short-term sources of funding, tries to weave social relationships on different terms than those that prevail in Bosnia generally. Their work implicitly draws on Yugoslav-era political ideals to renegotiate the terms of solidarity and the common good: the community they strive for is not one of individual entrepreneurship and pulling-up of bootstraps, nor one of strict ethnic segregation, nor of clientelism and corruption, but of institutionalized, free social support that disregards ethnic divisions and social status and attempts, in some small way, to compensate for the state's abandonment of the vulnerable. Wings is one of the few places Sarajevans can go for help where a bribe or personal connection is not required and where assistance comes without being preceded by months of bewildering bureaucratic obstacles. For the staff of Wings and their beneficiaries, healing the wounds of war is in itself sociopolitical rather than simply individual, accomplished less through personal therapeutics and processing of painful memories than through a small-scale, tentative restoration of ties of trust and support.

The past acts here not as backward-looking nostalgia but as a critical comparison allowing a reimagining of the possible and the posing of an alternative ethics of postwar social life. The mothers first connect with each other around the meeting table at Wings by exchanging bitter grievances about the lack of social services or any apparent sense of compassion and responsibility from the government; but then they shift, in the course of their conversation, to building a shared understanding—still angry, still bitter, but tinged now with commitment and a desire for care—of how things *should be*, firmly rooted in what they recall of the Yugoslav-era social contract and the feeling of communal life and support that it produced. This is the swerve that happens now and again at Wings, when connections based on an angry sense of victimization turn into—or at least gesture toward—solidarity based instead on shared values, aspirations, and morally weighted memories of prewar national life and politics.

Wings of Hope is a space in which Bosnia's dominant social field—heavy with despair, isolation, and mistrust—is fleeing itself around the edges, hinting at the possibility of transformation. Small solidarities such as those constructed here, against the odds, defy the prescribing of Bosnians as a damaged people rendered incapable of politics and coexistence by trauma and ethnic hatred. Here memory and despair, precisely those forces seen to be the instruments of stagnation, are agents of modest (but effective) creativity, connection, and

sublimation, motivating a tentative articulation of how things could be otherwise in BiH.

We can find in Bosnian lives and words a frozen form and call it “collective depression,” see their waiting and “lack of initiative” as a blocked passage of life, see them as “stuck,” mired in nostalgia and dysfunctional politics, as so many observers do. But in what I have heard, in the seemingly stuck or backward-looking depression and longings for times past, there is a component of flight that escapes this form by stubbornly alluding to—and (as with Maja and Wings) sometimes living, in seedling stage—*hope* for something different, something beyond nationalism and competing victimhood claims, beyond corrupt, compassionless capitalism, and beyond trauma, a sociality that reassembles, together with lessons learned in the crucible of violence, fragments of prewar Bosnian (or Yugoslav) values.

Such a sociality might correspond to a different—and for Bosnians, more legitimate—configuration of governance and economic policies, a different relationship to foreign powers and humanitarian organizations, and a different understanding of the effect of trauma and loss (and concomitant processes of healing). Careful and open listening, via sustained ethnography, can allow us to hear the voice of this “people to come,” this possibility of another life, always pushing against its limits (see also Borneman 2002). It can reveal BiH as an assemblage of places, peoples, and desires, of hopes and grievances, situated at a *crossroads* of alternative pathways rather than trapped in a dead end of collective psychiatric disorder—or doomed to the anomie and inequality of unchecked capitalism.

Anthropologist Andrew Gilbert and colleagues have called for a “social historiography of the future” as a means to better understand the societies of the former Yugoslavia (Gilbert et al. 2008:11). Attention to hope and “futurity” and not just despair could “complement historicity,” as they put it, tracking “horizons, the narratives and forms of belonging they inspire, and their impact on everyday practice in the now” (Gilbert et al. 2008:11). At stake, broadly speaking, is whether anthropology can contribute to opening up opportunities for progressive transformation in forms of care, politics, and economy, particularly during or in the wake of crisis, whether it takes the additional step beyond *explaining* dark realities to the work of *imagining*, in collaboration with its interlocutors, concrete ways in which things could be otherwise.

## A People to Come

In their study of Kafka, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that “the expressions of the solitary researcher tend toward the assemblage of a collective enunciation . . . even if this collectivity is no longer or not yet given. There is not a subject; *there are only collective assemblages of enunciation*, and literature expresses these acts insofar . . . as they exist only as diabolical powers to come or revolutionary forces to be constructed” (Deleuze and Guattari 1986:18). This vision for literature can also inspire fieldwork-based anthropology: listen-

ing as readers and writers, rather than clinicians, our own sensibility and openness become instrumental in spurring social recognition of the ways ordinary people think through their conditions. Ethnographic details reveal nuanced fabrics of singularities and the worldliness, rather than exceptionality, of people’s struggles; they make explicit buried becomings and alternative futures. Critical voices and lines of flight are there, in the margins of power and knowledge, and our listening/reading/writing can pull them from the shadows cast by contemporary common sense. In the ethnographic cases discussed in this article, people struggle to survive and belong through and against intersecting psychiatric and neoliberal rationalities that diagnose their projects and desires as forms of nonsense or madness, individual and collective. Anthropologists render publicly intelligible the value of what people, amid new rational-technical and political-economic machineries, are left to resolve alone. Their own practices of inquiry, their search for symbolic authority, challenge the analytic forms we bring to the field, forcing us to articulate more immediately relevant and experience-near conceptual work. Theory is embattled and unfinished on both sides of the conversation.

This respect for people, this attention to the manufacturing of clinical and political discourses and to the sheer materiality of life’s necessities makes a great deal of difference in the knowledge we produce. Large-scale processes are not abstract machines overdetermining the whole social field. Personal actions and social mobilization have a key role in the stories we tell in this article. Neither can the microarrangements of individual and collective existence be solely described in terms of power or rational choice. Both Catarina’s writings and people’s struggles to get by in postwar Sarajevo evince an everyday life force seeking to break through forms and foreclosures, to define a kind of subjectivity that is as much about swerves and escapes as about determinations. Freud’s oedipal theorizing, contemporary psychiatric common sense, and even Foucault-inspired anthropological analytics all tend to disregard this life force. Such a disavowal, we believe, has significant real-world consequences for ideas and forms of care and social intervention (“a tragedy generated in life,” as Catarina put it).

By reading our cases in dialogue with some of Deleuze’s ideas, we uphold the rights of microanalysis, bringing into view the immanent fields that people, in all their ambiguity, invent and live by. Such fields of action and significance—leaking out on all sides—are mediated by power and knowledge; but they are also animated by claims to basic rights *and* desires. In making public a nuanced understanding of these fields—always at risk of disappearing—anthropologists still allow for larger structural and institutional processes to become visible and their true influence known.

Far beyond authorizing gross dualisms or master theories, anthropology’s unique analytical force lies in recording competing rationalities and vital experimentations, in conceptualizing fine articulations of worlds, differentiated, in flux and

impending. This is one of the many good things about anthropology and the knowledge it produces: it is simultaneously open to theories and relentlessly empirical. As anthropologists face the startling complexity of events and the dynamism of lived experience, the written objects they create can challenge the limits of what can be known and acted on today.

We work to understand the macro without reducing or bounding the micro, accounting for the effect of structural violence, power, expertise, and the embodiment of sociological forces while still crediting the against-the-odds openness and ambiguity of individual lives and interpersonal dynamics—upholding, that is, the value of people's drive to singularize out of populations and categories, to take themselves out of the stream of history and social destiny.

In our research, we have seen novel subjectivities and sociological phenomena emerge: new relationships outside clinical settings to medical technology and discourse, the making of agency via psychopharmaceuticals and of political sensibilities via a reconfigured language of psychiatric diagnostics. Lines between public and private, between institutions and other more fluid and open-ended social milieus, routinely blur and transform. Actual political subjects are ambiguous and ambivalent about public institutions. Traversing worlds of danger and scarcity, constrained without being totally overdetermined, they create small and fleeting spaces through and beyond apparatuses of governance and control in which to perform a kind of *life bricolage* with the limited choices and materials at hand.

From this perspective, social theory and politics appear highly limited and impoverished, restricted in imagination and out of touch with intricate and shifting realities that carry the potential to become vital and/or deadly. People bear an understanding of their worlds, of the social problems they must circumvent or transcend, and of the kind of politics that would actually serve their aspirations that is unaccounted for in policy discussions and decisions. This is not a subjugated knowledge, constituted unidirectionally by power, but something personal, bearing traces of singularity not easily framed or contained. Even when institutionally ignored, it persists, and could be better attended to in the public sphere. In the meantime, however, interventions of governance and care—in postwar and resource-poor settings—remain epistemologically myopic and are not systematically structured to work *with* people and to incorporate their practical knowledge.

The process of communicating and disseminating evidence of becoming to other disciplines, and to public debates more generally, can have an effect by revealing the limits of dominant or currently operational concepts of justice, social welfare, and crisis intervention (among others). Anthropology retains—and can continue to build on—its capacity to challenge orthodoxies, for example, of human rights: typically conceptualized as primarily political, involving only democratic rights to speech and voting, the human rights our interlocutors the world over consistently seek—to social, eco-

nomics, and medical security—are neglected (Farmer 2008). Orthodoxies of care, social work, and postcrisis remediation: interventions are individualized, biomedical, and psychotherapeutic or pharmaceutical, ignoring the need to rebuild relations of trust and social support or even to ensure basic requirements of health and survival. Our field cases compel a return to the enduring question of what the complicated, empirical grit of ethnographic evidence can and should do to the contemporary nature of politics and policy. How can we find ways to bring our material to technocrats, policy makers, and caregivers in a way that truly challenges their practices and assumptions?

We work to understand people in a different kind of temporality—in between, in flux and transition—as they endure and try to escape constraints and articulate new systems of perception and action. By dwelling *in the meantime* of individual lives and social worlds, we strive to produce a knowledge that is not obsolete in the moment of its formulation. In this regard the time of anthropological knowing runs counter to that of political and economic rationalities, to the reason of policy and governance, which makes people the objects of technical fixes with specific, temporally limited stages of progress and evaluation (Greenhouse 1996). Our knowledge, by contrast, has a tentativeness and an open-endedness that can make it simultaneously historically attuned and *untimely* (Rabinow 2008), defying historical circumstances and constraints in the service of becoming, of the unexpected, in defense of “the right to a nonprojected future as one of the truly inalienable rights of every person and nation” (Hirschman 1971:37).

This tentativeness, this receptivity to different temporalities, is not always easily borne: with an eye to the possibilities and noninevitability of people's lives, we must recognize the thresholds where liberating flights and creative actions can become deadly rather than vital forms of experimentation, opening up not to new webs of care and empathy but to systematic disconnection. Becoming is not always heroic. Solidarities formed in reaction to the alienations of capitalism can themselves become exclusionary, founded less on expanded empathy than on shared rage and competitive claims to victimhood; dreams of the past can turn reactionary; new institutions of care can be co-opted and twisted into instruments of power, violence, or abandonment; and mobilization for rights can culminate in atomized and highly privatized political subjectivities. In all this, market ideologies and practices may work as a hidden engine, reconfiguring and relocating social and administrative functions, as if behind the scenes—social work shifts from government to civil society, medication from clinic to family, diagnosis from medical practice to the public sphere. How can we pinpoint and hold accountable “the market”—so impersonal and reified a force? How do we disentangle the agencies and modes of thought of which it is composed?

Finally, we suggest that our anthropological engagements challenge us to maintain a sense of where assemblages—complicated new configurations of global, political, technical, bi-

ological, and other segments—touch ground, how they take on institutional grip and individual, human valence. It is not enough to simply observe that assemblages exist; we must attend, as Deleuze and Guattari originally urged, to the ways these configurations are constantly constructed, undone and redone by the desires and becomings of actual people—caught up in the messiness, the desperation and aspiration, of life in idiosyncratic milieus. Nor is ours necessarily a choice between primarily global assemblages (Collier and Ong 2005) and principally local “splinters” of a “world in pieces” (Geertz 2000). At the horizon of local dramas, in the course of each event, in the ups, downs, and arounds of each individual life, we can see the reflection of larger systems in the making (or unmaking).

Grasping subjectivity as becoming—rather than structural dependence—may be the key to anticipating, and thereby making available for assessment and transformation, the futures and forms of life of emerging communities. Continually adjusting itself to the reality of contemporary lives and worlds, the anthropological venture has the potential of art: to invoke neglected human potentials and to expand the limits of understanding and imagination—a people yet to come. “There is no work of art that does not call on a people who does not yet exist” (Deleuze 2006:324). This project includes the active participation of readers. Thus also at stake is our capacity to generate a “we,” an engaged audience and political community, that has not previously existed—our craft’s potential to become a mobilizing force in this world.

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## Comments

### Michael M. J. Fischer

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I am a great admirer of Biehl’s ethnographic skills, clarity, poesis, and theoretical acumen, especially bringing Lacanian

and Deleuzian questions into anthropology, and am glad to be introduced to Locke’s work. They raise difficult issues: what is anthropology’s analytic force? They answer: “microanalysis,” “recording competing rationalities and vital experimentations,” and the “literary” rather than clinical force of individual lives. Microanalysis here means the trajectories of individuals through milieus of affect and intensities.

Biehl begins in a Porto Alegre asylum amid the socially abandoned, Locke in Sarajevo with the war devastated. They find active vitalities of people who must “scavenge for resources and care [amid] . . . psychiatric diagnostics . . . broken public institutions . . . altered forms of common sense.” Why Deleuze and not just Catarina Moraes? Catarina, thanks to her advocate and anthropologist (getting her properly diagnosed and her writings published) joins other canonic reference figures. She knew what was going on as much as Hannah Arendt did about the stateless and the vacuity of those who speak airily of Man and Being, rather than women and men. Moraes and Arendt, both Gramscian organic intellectuals in this sense, spoke and wrote from their situated experiences but shed light on larger hegemonies and injustices.

After Moraes one can never again take state statistics or policies at face value. Here is the force of the claim that microanalysis be read as literature rather than clinically, as the place where the particular *I* becomes an *a*, oscillating between the enunciatory and grammatical *I*. As Katkine argues, “My desire is of no value. Desire is pharmaceutical. It is not good for the circus.” She rejects this pharma and state welfare insistence and the devolution that made her family her proxy psychiatrist and enabled them to dump her for “noncompliance.” Moraes *morreu* (died). She insists life resides in “enjoyment enjoying itself,” in reigniting desire over and over in comradeship. The statistics bear her out; she clarifies their implications: antipsychotics on the rise, care on the decline. She was producing, Biehl says, a theory of the abandoned subject, her dictionary a cartography of displacements, less concerned with origins than with remobilizations of impasses and breakthroughs.

Similarly in Sarajevo, Loga says, “I don’t mind democracy but this privatization is just a mafia. I don’t know why the international community wants us to be in this mess.” Psychosocial needs assessments and trauma responses by international “humanitarian relief” risk seeing people only through their psychological vulnerabilities, in danger of repeating atrocities suffered, requiring outside supervision and symbolic justice (“while ‘substantive social justice’ is all but ignored”). Dr. Ljubovic, like the Moraes family, has no resources or time to attend to the crippled capacity to trust, to connect, and to hope and can only prescribe medications. Milan and Maja function in Locke’s search for “an agency that . . . pulses,” like Catarina, refusing scripts of collective depression.

The idea of literary listening is meant to recognize the alternative enunciative frames that individuals can mobilize. One thinks of Kim Fortun’s enunciative communities unstably “called forth” to navigate double binds, contradictory im-

peratives for survival and thriving. But is “recording competing rationalities and vital experimentations” sufficient for anthropology’s analytic force?

Once the anthropologist was a public reference if one wanted to discuss marriage or penal reform, rationality, and worldviews. What happened to the challenges anthropology once mounted against Eurocentricities, masculinities, and philosophies? Why do Foucault and Žižek’s opinions on Iran circulate more easily than the opinions of those they write about or those who have worked there (unless French or European Union opinion is the topic)? Today it all too often seems the only alternative to the pundit rabble, the economists working away on unreliable statistics, the 20-year-old policy formulators, and the politician negotiators are the philosophers, even though they generally abandon any pretense to being empirically grounded. (If desire is the topos, why Deleuze rather than, say, Clarice Lispector or Helene Cixous?)

The “theoretical quick fix” of philosopher names, like attributing trademarks to ordinary words—assemblages, friction, equipment, concept work, multisided (attribute and use them quickly, expiry looms, next arrives)—is a self-defeating neoliberal game of valuation, hardly an improvement over Cold War ideological schools (you evil deconstructionist, postmodernist, bioculturalist, structuralist, functionalist). The productive Cassandra of anthropology, George Marcus calls this, as Biehl and Locke quote, awaiting another vision to provide anthropology’s analytic force. Biehl and Locke want to rescue microanalysis from Marcus’s “in the meantime” anthropology, working merely on remainders.

Philosophers are fine, but as one reads for the ethnography, one reads past the philosophers looking for the Catarinas and Milans and Majas who shine the “ethnographic lantern” of contexts and situations. We tend to know less of Gilles, only of “Deleuze,” somewhat more of “Felix” (Guattari) because of his involvement in on-the-ground psychiatric reform experiments in France, and much more of all three Catarina, Catkine, Moraes (surname and respect that we accord the nonsituated “Deleuze”).

Evidence of transformative growth points and cracks within old hegemonic ideologies are often visible first in “minor loci”: the anecdote, the vignette, the ethnographic incident, the organic local theorist. These act as pebbles and labyrinths in the way of theory.

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This article is itself a beautiful example of how ethnography can generate theoretical insights, in this case about the limits of theories themselves. By conveying the yearnings and agency of sufferers such as Catarina and Maja, João Biehl and Peter Locke demonstrates the power of ethnography to capture nu-

ances of individual subjectivity that go beyond the assumptions, categorizations, and assertions of anthropological as well as psychiatric theories. Indeed, they show how the suffering of such individuals was exacerbated by efforts of those around them to reduce them to theoretical constructs. Assumptions about collective depression and PTSD obfuscated the extent to which suffering in Bosnia was caused by social and economic disorder and inequalities, and overreliance on psychiatric diagnoses by Catarina’s family and health-care providers actually contributed to Catarina’s misdiagnosis, neglect, and eventual death. Such ethnographic examples show the real harm that can be done to individuals by the reductionism of psychiatric theories, based on scientific disciplines that attempt to reduce the messiness of human experience to diagnoses of illnesses that can be cured with medication and standardized approaches to psychotherapeutic counseling and that explain human suffering as failures of patients’ compliance with treatment regimes.

But Biehl and Locke are not just criticizing the scientific theories frequently targeted by anthropologists; rather, they are pointing out the limits of all theories, including anthropological ones, that attempt to interpret messy human experiences as part of broader structures, systems, and discourses. Such theories are important for understanding the big picture of human experience, but they also miss out on the messy flux and flow of individual subjectivity. Overreliance on theoretical constructs of any kind can blind us to the desires and struggles that the individuals experiencing what we write about consider most important and meaningful. Ethnography recaptures what is missing and keeps theory honest. Ethnography without theory may be solipsistic and naive, but theory without ethnography is sterile and tunnel visioned. Drawing on the insights of Gilles Deleuze, Biehl and Locke make a strong argument for the continuing value of ethnography as a means to shed light on the “individual and collective struggles to come to terms with events and intolerable conditions and to shake loose, to whatever degree possible, from determinants and definitions.”

Ethnography has the potential to shed light on what theories actually mean as well as on the unruly possibilities that such theories cannot capture. While theories can situate individual subjectivity as part of the big picture, explain how it interacts with broader processes, or predict how it might change under different circumstances or in response to certain interventions, they can also obfuscate, distract, or explain away “what really matters” (Kleinman 2006). Biehl and Locke have made a powerful argument in favor of the continuing importance of engagement between theory and the kind of ethnography that can convey the messy dynamics of human experience. In so doing, they are insisting on the continuing vitality of the kind of humanistic ethnographic writing evident in Biehl’s ethnographies (Biehl 2005, 2007) and those of public anthropologists such as Lila Abu-Lughod (2005), Ruth Behar (1993, 1996), Tanya Luhmann (Abu-Lughod 1993; Luhmann 2000), Catherine Lutz (2001; Lutz and Collins

1993), and Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1992, 2000). The ability of such public anthropologists to make anthropological insights meaningful for nonanthropologists and nonacademics demonstrates ethnography's power to transcend boundaries between disciplines and between academia and the general public in ways that purely theoretical writing cannot.

There is a piercing power to the voices of individuals in such ethnographic work that cannot be reduced to theoretical constructs. Reading about them reminds us what it means to be human and thus always in the process of becoming. Theoretical constructs are a postmortem, assessing general patterns after they have been created. But human experience is always in flux, and human subjectivity is always in the process of remaking itself. At its best, ethnography can open new doors of possibility, awaken theorists to their own blind spots, and convey aspects of human experience that theoretical constructs often miss. This kind of ethnography reminds us that anthropology, like the people anthropologists study, is very much alive.

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For João Biehl and Peter Locke, what is at stake in the endeavor for a Deleuze-inspired anthropology of "becoming" is not just a kind of contrived attempt to ethnographically illustrate high theory. Rather, the point is that such an endeavor, which entails long-term ethnographic work and rigorous theoretical engagement, reveals hidden complexities and potentialities that are at play in lives in contexts of crisis both clinical and political-economic. To demonstrate the fecundity of such an approach, Biehl and Locke place their respective ethnographic projects in conversation with Deleuze's philosophy on subjectivity, charting the unexpected enunciations of their interlocutors as inhabiting and escaping, albeit in a "minor" way, the enunciated effects of their subject positions, also "minor." It is in such enunciations, such words and acts of *becoming*, that the crucial dimension of "what could be" opens up. Such a theoretical endeavor already has a respectable line of predecessors, especially in cultural and literary studies, but it represents a promising expansion for anthropology, particularly as supplement for and challenge to the dominant theories of biopower and structural violence.

In emphasizing the ways desires can "break open" against intolerable conditions, new fields of relation, and politics and meaning, Biehl and Locke draw on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "minor literature," which is inseparable from becoming. In what follows, I offer preliminary comments on their respective ways of dealing with this concept, with a focus on their shared validation, perhaps even celebration, of the figure of "the minor." My sense is that while minor literature is rich in conceptual possibilities, its implications for an anthropology of becoming and for the "minor" voices on which

this project rests need to be made more explicit. We should recall the three characteristics that belong to the concept of "minor literature": first, it involves a "deterritorializing" use of a major language; second, it is political because it draws attention to the conditions that make one language major and others not; third, it takes on a collective because it embodies an emergent sensibility that points to the possibility of a "community to come."

In Biehl's case, language is both literal and virtual. By scrambling representational orthodoxies, Catarina's words, both written and spoken, expose the potential of any form of language to become something *other*. Her "dictionary" draws attention to the powerful ways language constitutes life not in the dominant sense—that is, in an unyielding way—but in the sense of a writer struggling with the problem of life while always generating new meanings and connections that retain the possibility of becoming. "K is open on both sides," she explains of the new letter character she uses to refer to herself. "If I wouldn't open the character, my head would explode." Catarina's deterritorialization of language articulates the logics of its unfolding while defying exact classification.

Biehl's long-term ethnographic work takes into account the historical forces that summon Catarina's minor literature into existence, but he preserves the vitality of her words. "Her 'minor literature' grounds an ethnographic ethics," he writes. There is close proximity between the "minor literature" of Catarina, Biehl's ethnography of her, and the story of the coming to ethics of the ethnographer. At times, the relation between Catarina and Biehl seems to traverse the traditional roles of writer and reader; they seem to enter into a process of mutual becoming, thus embodying Deleuze's sense of *une double capture* (a double capture). Other times, the separation between the terms seems complete, such as when Catarina remarks, "I am writing for myself to understand, but, of course, if you all understand I will be very content." I would have liked more discussion of this problematic of individual and mutual becoming and of the shifting movements and stakes of writer and reader, minor and major. It may be useful here to consider Hélène Cixous's thoughts on reading (and not writing) as an experience that enables an exit or *sortie* (departure) of the dominant "masculine" order. "In order to read, we have to get out of the text. . . . At some point, we have to disengage ourselves from the text as a living ensemble, in order to study its construction, its techniques, and its texture" (Cixous 1990:3). How might Cixous's concept of departure call into question a conception of becoming that is bound up with "minor" writing?

Locke's appropriation of the concept of "minor literature" focuses on its third characteristic: its collective value. He maps the small, practical ways Sarajevans "sublimate" the political and economic dispossession they feel, a process that occurs through and against the meager social assistance programs that are available. Maja, a director of a psychosocial organization, subscribes to "dominant" notions of collective depression and PTSD but also undermines and exceeds these

categories in her relations with her clients and family. For Locke, Maja's words, relations, and emotions communicate the "life force" of a "people yet to come."

I share Locke's assessment of the semantic poverty of clinical and psychosocial projects and his call that anthropologists listen for the undercurrents of meaning created by those apparently defined by them. That said, I found the description of the collective value of the "minor literature" of postwar Sarajevo somewhat forced and romantic. This uneasiness is shaped, in part, by feminist and "minority" critiques of Deleuze and Guattari's "dream" of becoming minor, a dream that risks obscuring the real differences between privileged and oppressed, the desire for *reterritorialization*, and the question for whom the project of "becoming minor" is attributed to. Are the writings of a "minor people" ever afforded meaning and relevance on their own terms, or must meaning and relevance be made in relation to their "major" counterpart?

To end, any concept of "minor" within anthropology is bound to raise some difficult questions. While I agree that the concept of "minor literature" may be useful to consider alongside certain anthropological projects, I have some concerns about its extension into ethnographic ethics, methods, and explanation. It is important to question the presuppositions that underlie the theoretical concepts one uses. That Biehl and Locke have initiated this particular interrogation is a welcome contribution to an emerging anthropology of becoming.

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#### Adam M. Geary

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The impetus of this important article by Biehl and Locke is to advocate a way of reading or a mode of listening—an ethnographic practice—that is attuned to desire, which the authors describe as *possibility* and *becoming*, following Deleuze. Here, the authors are writing against the gravitational pull in ethnographic and other modes of attention toward treating ethnographic subjects as constituted and as revealing their constitution in their speech and actions. Rather, the authors argue, not only are the social formations in which subjects find themselves always incomplete and leaking in every direction—and thus unable to constitute "subjects" in any determinate sense—but following Deleuze they insist on the primacy of desire over the determinations of power. When subjects speak and act, they do more than reveal an experience as it has been constituted for them; they also speak a desire toward becoming that departs from that experience.

The theoretical and practical project of articulating subjectivity in excess of structural determination is hardly new, but what the existence of this article demonstrates is that it is still unfinished. My concern is that this article threatens to repeat an unproductive opposition between determination

and agency that has bedeviled the history of that project. I see this danger especially in the rhetorical distance that the authors take toward the so-called archaeological methods of social and subjective analysis, especially Foucauldian and psychoanalytic ones. This distance, I understand, is a rhetorical strategy meant to yield significance and value for a Deleuzian anthropology, but it effectively brackets the complexity and potential points of articulation between Deleuzian emphases and those under development in these other areas of inquiry. Although it is important to point out that Freud set aside rigid inscriptions of psychoanalytic speech into theoretical constructions, including the Oedipus, later in his life (Fink 2007:88), and Foucault (1990 [1984]) stated explicitly that subjectivity was irreducible to relations of knowledge and power, I wish to emphasize the complexity of contemporary research that is working within or near these theoretical traditions and point to some possible points of articulation between them and the Deleuzian analytic. In doing so, I hope to respect what I see as the invitational quality of this article, opening lines of dialogue not only between ethnographers and their subjects but within anthropology and between it and other disciplines.

Feminist anthropologist Saba Mahmood (2004) expands on Foucault's late readings of ethical subjectivity in her ethnography of Islamic women's piety in Egypt to critique the opposition between agency and determination in Western feminist theory. Mahmood argues that feminist theory too often restricts the category of "agency" to that which resists the structuration of the social and subjective, replaying the trope of power and freedom that Foucault called the "repressive hypothesis." She demonstrates that this understanding of agency has produced a deeply flawed and ethnocentric understanding of the pursuit of piety by Islamic women in Egypt, treating the pursuit of piety as ideological interpolation rather than as ethical agency in its own right. Articulating oneself to norms, Mahmood reminds us, is agential and requires kinds of work on oneself that need to be understood. There is, then, no necessary conflict among desire, normativity, and becoming.

In a complementary but unique line of inquiry situated at the margins of the object-relations school of psychoanalysis, literary theorist Lauren Berlant (2007) has taken up the project of describing forms of activity and affectivity that fall into neither the camp of normativity/determination nor that of sovereignty, desire, resistance, or agency. These include modes of activity and attention that she calls "lateral agency," which she argues is not oriented toward life projects or building "a life" so much as toward modes of extension, distraction, and getting by under conditions she describes as "slow death." Lateral agency in this scene, she argues, is a nonsubjective form of activity given the terms in which subjectivity is currently described and constrained: not subjection, not desire, and not ethical self-formation.

Biehl and Locke demonstrate some appreciation of the problem of opposing desire and determination when they introduce



the caveat at the end of the article that desires are easy enough to marketize and turn toward death and destruction rather than toward becoming. But this caveat seems more to ward the analysis from critique than to inform it. The authors write, “Becoming is not always heroic,” but they do not provide us with a careful demonstration of what that might mean. Doing so might require revisions in their account of desire and becoming. This need not and should not block accounts of desire and becoming, but accounting for these other forms of activity and affectivity does demand awareness of even more complexity to ethnographic subjects (and researchers) than the authors call for at the opening of their article.

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As an anthropologist of postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina, I share Locke and Biehl’s sensitivity to the ways in which forms of analysis—both ours and our interlocutors’—can foreclose a sense of possibility and occlude attention to how people are actually living their lives. Indeed, colleagues and I have argued that it is precisely by looking at individual desires and hopes in post-Yugoslav societies that we find “forms of possibility outlined against (and sometimes in terms of) disappointment, anger and despair,” and that these possibilities compel us to look for new ways to capture “both the entrenched and emergent and the ways they are inextricably combined” (Gilbert et al. 2008:10). It is against this background that I read this article with great curiosity and why, I believe, it ultimately writes past those readers interested in the implications of Deleuze’s ideas for a theory of transformation as emergence. Instead, the authors frame and motivate the article in a way that detracts from this promise. At times, the narrative is sidetracked by what we might call a romance of salvage and salvation and by an argument that risks caricaturing the role of theory in anthropology. Let me elaborate.

In his work with Catarina, Biehl offers compelling evidence of the emergence of a new form of subjectivity at the intersection of urban poverty, social and state abandonment, and the pharmaceuticalization of care. His engagement with Catarina and her writing seems a distinctly fitting example of what Deleuze would call life continuously in the process of “becoming.” But what are we to take from this tale of becoming? Can we say more about how that which is immanent to Catarina’s life emerges from the realm of the potential into that of a recognizable subject? Instead of theorizing emergence, however, we get method, an argument for ethnography as “cartography,” a mapping practice that reveals, in the form of subjectivity that is unique to Catarina’s becoming, the larger forces at work in her life and their effects.

This move from theory to method might explain why Biehl does not pursue the implications that a Deleuzian approach

to Catarina’s life might offer for an understanding of emergence. But it does not account for the romantic turn the narrative takes into a tale of the anthropologist as saviour: someone who took his interlocutor seriously, helped to arrive at a correct diagnosis, and provided her “the best possible care.” This is anthropology as humanitarian intervention, and it seems to undercut the argument about “desire over power.” Even if Catarina’s life is irreducible to and exceeds biopolitics or bare life, it is the anthropologist’s agency and intervention that appear to matter most in this portrayal.

I am also left with some questions about the kind of writing that the authors advocate. The Deleuze-inspired listening that they champion is detailed well, but what would Deleuze-inspired ethnographic writing look like? The article’s single example of the radical, liberatory nature of writing that approximates what Deleuze describes is Catarina’s, for whom writing is simultaneously therapeutic, self-constituting, and life creating. Is Catarina’s writing the model for ethnography? What would that look like? Or is writing simply a metaphor for the irreducible potential inherent in human action, more inspirational than aspirational?

One might say that the advocacy for listening and writing is somewhat reminiscent of salvage anthropology, always on the lookout for “fleeting spaces” and fields of action and significance “always at risk of disappearing.” Toward what end? To make them “public,” to “account for people, experiences, and voices that remain unaddressed and raise calls for new ethics and politics.” Given the vigorous calls for anthropology to more directly influence public debates, I was hoping for an example of just such a call. The article initially raises the prospect of addressing what “making public” might actually look like: “What does it take for the ‘life in things’ . . . to acquire a social force and to attain recognition and political currency?” Unfortunately, the question is left unanswered and simply posed again at the article’s conclusion: “How can we find ways to bring our material to technocrats, policy makers, and caregivers in a way that truly challenges their practices and assumptions?”

These questions could have been taken up within the context of theorizing immanence and emergence. Here Locke’s case is illuminating. He offers a description of immanent forms of social solidarity that become discernible if we rethink Yugo-nostalgia as something other than a mass pathological state of communist subjects who have not yet come to terms with the End of History. However, these immanent forms appear to remain precisely that—immanent, in *potentia*. What would signal their emergence, when “becoming” might reach a tipping point and “acquire a social force,” attain “recognition and political currency,” or gesture toward an “unexpected future”? What prevents this emergence? There is, in other words, a politics here, and on this point I found the differences between Locke and Biehl noteworthy: where Locke looks to Deleuze-inspired anthropology to locate (immanent) politics, for Biehl its promise lies in how anthropology might

approximate art. These projects seem distinct—with distinct stakes—and this distinction might be worth exploring further.

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In different life worlds and against the odds, Catarina, Maja, and Milan search for ways to articulate the actual and the possible. How to take such searches and struggles into account? In this article, Biehl and Locke write “for a certain vision of anthropology” in which actual people and their words, lives, and desires are at the core of anthropological inquiry. Here, Deleuze’s reflections on becoming provide inspirations, but not recipes, for a people-centered ethnography that illuminates the “leakiness” of social fields from the shadows of deterministic analysis. Given their concerns, it seems most appropriate to consider the way in which Deleuze’s insights articulate with their specific ethnographic contexts. In following their call for a people-centered approach—one that I deeply share—I weave between their ethnographic works and my own in La Pincoya, a low-income neighborhood in Santiago, Chile, to explore one thread, listening, as it critically engages the implications of “becoming” in anthropology.

To begin, I draw inspiration from Michel Foucault’s discussion of listening in ancient philosophy (Foucault 2005 [1982]). In philosophical ascesis, listening is ambiguous. In its passivity, it is the sense that exposes the soul to the surprises of the outside world (*pathetikos*). But it is also the only sense through which virtue is learned and the *logos* best received (*logikos*). Listening is not an art (*techne*): it does not hinge on knowledge. Rather, it combines *empeiria* (acquired skill) and *tribē* (diligent practice) as “the permanent support” (a potential) for the individual’s bond to truth. This discussion resonates in La Pincoya, where women speak of “catching” or “comprehending” (verb: *cachar*) others’ difficulties in a context where dignity marks the human from the inhuman. Difficulties are kept “within” the home, while “begging” to neighbors runs the risk of having that beg heard as a whine. But hardships seep out—for example, through a child’s cry from hunger—and are “caught” by neighbors in a kind of perceptive net, generating acts of care, an acknowledgement without asking. Exposure to the unexpected, acquired skill, and diligent practice constitute this perceptive net and sketch a form of life that subjects at once hold on to and test the limits of.

For Biehl, I understand the perceptive net in the anthropologist’s work with an individual. With Catarina and her dictionary, Biehl is confronted with how to re-create the life worlds that failed her. Catarina takes Biehl by surprise, and he responds with the “acquired skill” and “diligent practice” to acknowledge an other. What does Biehl do? He pieces together clues. He returns to her family and the psychiatric

hospital. He sees how Catarina was both expelled by and inhabits marginally a form of life.

Here, Deleuze’s insights on literature and becoming articulate with Biehl’s acknowledgement of Catarina’s desire. Catarina writes a becoming. Catkine is actualized through literature, as Catarina shifts to the third-person indefinite. A singularity generates a potential web of new relations in Vita: “Here it is Catkine.” From Biehl’s writing of a life world that expelled her to new relations actualized through desire, forms of life come into view for the reader against which and in which movement is called for.

For Locke, I was unsure whether Deleuze’s insights on “collective enunciation” elucidated or obscured landscapes of life in Sarajevo, a context informed by humanitarian psychosocial projects and market reform. Locke argues that rather than diagnose the city, the ethnographer enacts a literary listening, hearing “passages of life” that escape diagnosis. Clearly, there are stakes in how an ethnographer listens. But, how one listens is crucially tied to an attention to how words are used in specific contexts. It is tied to the multiplicity of the *who* of those “people” as constituted through their relations.

Instead of the smoothness of a collective “people,” I prefer the “rough ground” of words and relations. Take Milan. What constitutes “home” for him? Are meals eaten together? The details of Milan’s life world allows us to imagine how he generates other durational registers. It complicates the equation of an “[orientation] toward future possibilities” with “hope.”

In details, we break down classic distinctions between the individual and the collective. Listening—*pathetikos* and *logikos*, *empeiria* and *tribē*—is not what we ourselves would desire to hear, rendering optimism over despair (an expectation of the unexpected), but rather in listening to learn a lifeworld from others (the world surprising the soul). Listening allows us, as Geertz remarks, to distinguish a “wink” from an eye irritation or to acknowledge the uncertainty inherent in one’s attempt to distinguish it. In weaving a perceptive net in fieldwork and in writing—with the detail that it entails—we hear how a subject’s voice is projected outward and alternative forms of life are imagined and tested. I return to Deleuze’s image of a social field “leaking” on all sides. Are anthropologists challenged to go even farther? To explore just how it leaks and those leaks’ viscosity?

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In this interesting article, João Biehl and Peter Locke describe and analyze the life of a Brazilian woman called Catarina and some survivors of violence in Sarajevo through the philosophical ideas of the late Gilles Deleuze. Reading this article as part of a collective and comparative project coupled with the significant differences between the two countries, one im-

mediately gets expectations of a renewed demonstration that “a comparative perspective can lead to asking very useful and sometimes new questions” (Moore 1966:xix). This is not what Biehl and Locke do; of particular significance in their analysis is another interesting project: using Deleuze’s philosophical idea of “potentiality for becoming” to illuminate our understanding of cases similar to Catarina and postwar Sarajevo.

In order to construct their arguments, Biehl and Locke assert that ethnography and philosophical dialogues “[highlight] the limits of psychiatric models of symptoms and human agency.” This critique is repeated many times, although it lacks specificity and does not capture the complexities of psychiatric practice and research. There are psychiatrists who would agree with Biehl and Locke that violence creates a paradox of devastation and recovery. Other psychiatrists developed specific methods to refine diagnostic instruments and have done longitudinal studies during many years. Still others have developed comprehensive public mental approaches. Being someone involved in the past 12 years in multidisciplinary research on the manifold effects of the Mozambican civil war and famine, I think that the repetition of the critique of psychiatric models coupled with the lack of serious comparative anthropological analysis does not advance knowledge. The focus on these repetitions only delays the anthropological debates on how to develop relevant and clearly articulated concepts and cocktail methods to understand the complexities of the human toll of violence and trauma. Instead, one of the things that Biehl and Locke, following Deleuze and Guattari, write is that the symptom is “a bird beating its beak against the window.” It is unclear whether the symptom is the bird or the bird beating its beak against the window or the window that resists the beating or fails and breaks.

Although Biehl and Locke affirm that “people’s everyday struggles and interpersonal dynamics exceed experimental and statistical approaches,” they do not recognize the complexities of these approaches nor do they really engage with anthropological debates on the performativity of encounters between anthropologists and their interlocutors. But just such engagement is necessary in order to clearly grasp the limits of “intense listening.” Although they know that listening is far from being all that anthropologists do, Biehl and Locke could have also seriously engaged with other works dealing with issues of violence, creative resistance, and the politics of recovery (Lubkemann 2008; Schafer 2007). This lack of debate with similar disciplinary works and the author’s choice for critiquing psychiatry and statistical methods obfuscates the focus of their project of “writing *for* a certain vision of anthropology.” They ended up pushing the debate in the wrong direction and reinforced the misleading perception that to study violence, anthropologists need to critique psychiatry in order to justify their procedural choices.

The authors reiterate the importance of detail and context, but they do not clarify the meaning of detail and context and how these have to be worked through to advance their insights on *becoming*. It is a queue of details: Catarina’s sexual ex-

periences, the misshapen nose of Milan, and so forth. For example, regarding Catarina’s sexual experiences, their interpretation suggests desire. Why not also think that Catarina is trying to talk about rape? Nowhere is it explained how the numerous details form part of a systematic body of knowledge, the inclusion or exclusion criteria for selecting and communicating these details, the rules applied when editing the life of Catarina and Milan, the weight given to the quotations of the interlocutor’s statements, and the location where such enunciations are made. The authors could have clarified these issues and fleshed out their alternative research practices to understand “a people yet to come.” Particularly Biehl’s intuitive borrowing of simple play-therapy techniques indicates a tentative move toward a creative methodological cocktail in order to engage with individuals going through very disturbing predicaments. But Biehl and Locke do not systematically engage in a serious exploration of the potentialities of combining methodologies. Instead, inspired by the reflections of Deleuze, they shift between praising ethnographic methods and considering that others’ interventions appear as “highly limited and impoverished, restricted in imagination and out of touch” and “epistemologically myopic.” I have doubts that through this politics of persuasion and ill-informed polarization of research methods it is possible to mobilize lanterns to give visibility to the multifaceted experiences of people like Catarina and Milan.

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In “Lettre a un critique severe” (Deleuze 1990), Gilles Deleuze attempts to trace writing as flux rather than code. His purpose: to stir something up, make something move. In the same piece, Deleuze contends that there are two ways of reading a book. If one takes it as a box referring to an inside, thus seeking for its signified or signifier, one’s task would be to comment, interpret, demand explanation, and endlessly write the book of the book. The other way of reading a book is to take it as an a-signifying machine, which prompts the question, “Does it work, and how? How does it work for you?” This is an intensive mode of reading, in which there is nothing to explain or interpret. In other words, it is reading like an electric circuit, which relates the book immediately to the Outside: flux against flux, machine with machines, experimentation and events.

I would like to retain here this second form of reading as a way of establishing a zone of proximity with Biehl and Locke’s article, as it seems to me that the authors’ successful intervention was precisely to put to work certain Deleuzian notions such as becoming, rhizome, cartography, and mi-

nority in order to spark innovation in anthropology. This opens the discipline up to new possibilities, including re-functionalizing ethnography as an analytical engagement with the complexity of people's lives and desires, immersed as they are in constantly mutable social worlds. For the authors, this task demands a reconfiguration of our theoretical and methodological tools in order to engender modes of writing that incorporate both the vitality of people's cartographies and an attention to the emergent, to "a people yet to come."

Such opening to the emergent is no doubt what engaged me the most. Among the various possible lines of flight available for the reader, I choose to highlight the primacy of desire over power, which Biehl and Locke stress as a fundamental difference between the analytics of Deleuze and Foucault. Desire stresses lines of flight and escape, indeterminations. As Deleuze's cartographic approach, it gives way to multiple possibilities and makes visible crossroads where choices can be made beyond the shadow of determinism. Along with the ethnographic approach to subjectivity—a nodal aspect of Biehl and Locke's perspective—the Deleuzian inspiration helps to unveil the ways in which people live their lives and struggle to articulate desire, suffering, and knowledge while immersed in particular configurations connecting cultural representations, political economy, collective experience, and individual subjectivities (Biehl, Good, and Kleinman 2007: 1–23). Here, subjectivity is not only about resistance, and neither is it merely silenced by power (Fischer 2007). That said, how does one make sense of the article's insistent opposition between desire and power?

If it is true that desire always assumes human agency, agency is not always synonymous with resistance to domination. It can be seen as capacity for action engendered and made possible by concrete, historically specific relations of subordination (Mahmood 2000). Or it can be further subdivided into agency of power and agency of projects—the latter consisting of desire and intentionality—in order to understand different modalities of agency (Ortner 2006). What makes these different analytical perspectives on agency interesting is that they highlight something Biehl and Locke continuously refer to: the closer the anthropologist is to real people, their projects, their expectations, and their anxieties, the greater her ability to capture drives and desires that escape the binary of resistance/subordination. This raises the question as to whether an insistence on opposing an analytics of desire to an analytics of power would not maintain the binary logic of subversion and resignification of norms when, as the authors themselves contend, ethnographically individual biographies are pregnant with collective implications and inflections, and collective categories become evident only through an understanding of individual lives and trajectories? In other words, how to articulate desire and power without sacrificing the dynamic, open-ended, and fluid quality of all human relations?

The greatest appeal of Biehl and Locke's article is not so much its emphasis on desire as compared to power but rather its treatment of the dimension of desire as a condition of

possibility for new experiences. This brings to anthropological analysis much-needed refinement and complexification of its own project: instead of researching the already established, done, determined, and classified, anthropology endeavors to understand the unfinished, the emergent, the open, the polysemic, and the uncertain. In this sense, an analytics of desire would not focus on the pursuit of well-articulated and defined individual or collective projects but on the ambivalences and contestations by people immersed in multiple and constantly changeable worlds. This seems to be the boldest challenge set forth by Biehl and Locke, as it demands the broadening of the imaginative world not only of our interlocutors but of our own disciplinary canons.

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Biehl and Locke urge an anthropology attentive to missing persons, minor histories, and the potential of imagination. But like the very verb on which their argument turns—to become—their call for the craft of anthropology to act as a "mobilizing force in this world," though shot through with an inspiring optimism, is partially realized: the authors chart a novel path for listening, reading, and writing experiences that eschews a confining common sense (writ large, e.g., through discourses of pharmaceuticalization and postwar reconstruction), but we are left to imagine for ourselves how this heightened attention to "becoming" might challenge the practices and assumptions of technocrats, policy makers, and caregivers.

The gap between the proposed analytical lens and its potential to affect the social and material conditions of the people whom Biehl and Locke study lies with its ephemeral object. It is more than a question of translation—that is, how to listen for and, in turn, articulate experiences that elude analysis through power and knowledge, social suffering, and neoliberal rationality. It is the dilemma of the necessarily incomplete and at times invisible. Biehl and Locke anticipate this, repeatedly underscoring how Deleuze's notion of "becoming" intimates movement across emotional, social, and experiential registers. But how can the "grit of ethnography," tacking along sporadic and unpredictable courses of imaginings, desires, partial words, and incomplete bodies, resonate with audiences into whose ears we hope to pour more complex, nuanced understandings yet who are invariably bound by the constricting conventions of "common sense?"

It is a disheartening disjuncture, yet one familiar to scholars working, as Locke has, in places like postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina. Take, for example, the phrase "missing persons," which signals a particular population among Bosnians: some 30,000 individuals who were killed during the three-and-a-half-year war but whose remains were unrecovered. While

Biehl and Locke do not focus on such literal manifestations of “minor” or “missing” people, the example fits well within their rubric of “becoming.” For the majority of Bosnia’s missing remains just that—unrecovered and unidentified. These missing persons exist in a liminal state in which surviving relatives cannot mourn with certainty of their fate; they lack knowledge about the missing person’s final moments of life and death and the whereabouts of his remains. And so families are left with memory and imagination, two streams of their emotional and psychic lives that connect the past with the present, extending into the future. If all goes well, the technoscientific apparatus developed to respond to the void created by unnamed bodies eventually presents families with a DNA-based identification—statistically sound evidence of matching genetic profiles, diagrams of skeletal remains recovered, photocopied photographs of clothing and personal possessions found with the remains.

Behind this neatly packaged and presented set of documentation lies the expectation that surviving families, their questions now answered, can move on, move forward, move out from underneath the pall of their grief because, at long last, they know. Here, unlike the unpredictable and innovative “swerves” described by the authors, movement is to follow a particular path toward social repair, and the onus lies with families to embrace and act on the “gift” of recovered remains and marked gravesites. For along with identified bodies come agendas of refugee return, reconciliation, and social reconstruction.

I take seriously Biehl and Locke’s invitation to complicate and challenge this teleology of movement; the families of the missing and the missing themselves deserve no less. In fact, one of the most compelling aspects of their article is the aim to lift up the meaningful words and actions of minor, missing persons. There is a refreshing optimism in what they ask us to study—that amid the decay of *Vita* and the anxiety of Sarajevo (and beside the graves of Bosnia’s missing) lie countless moments of social interaction and expression that challenge assumptions about the limitations of life. But the question of *how* lingers, and my own concern is that the desire to craft a new anthropology might have the unwanted, unintended affect of eclipsing the very voices and lives we wish to open up to deeper understanding, at least among the field of policy makers and practitioners.

“We are not the stars of this movie.” Closing a recent talk before a room full of specialists in forensic genetics, the co-founder of the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team Luis Fondebrider urged humility among his audience. Gently and humbly he reminded those who have championed the successes of DNA and, more generally, forensic science in identifying missing persons that the lived experiences of loss and survival, especially those of the families, must not be overshadowed by a fascination with our ability to produce knowledge and fix identity. In a similar vein, the study of “becoming” must strike a delicate balance between analysis and

representation, keeping at its center those whom it strives to serve through the art of anthropology.

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Biehl and Locke weave together compelling portraits of urban poverty with a theoretical vision for how anthropologists can balance our understanding of collective structures and individual subjectivities. This balance between understanding individual and collective has always been anthropology’s challenge. The authors show how taking subjectivities seriously reveals what grand theories miss. Biehl takes Catarina’s dictionary literally and thus sees what clinicians and social workers are blind to; in Maja, Locke sees not just another sufferer of collective PTSD but an individual sublimating her anger to mount a microscale challenge to politics-as-normal. This is the “anthropology of becoming,” an art of bricolage, where bricolage is both what anthropologists do with theory and what people do with their lives.

But what Biehl and Locke also offer, almost parenthetically, is not only a vision of anthropology but of the anthropologist. There is a haunting line that appears both here and in Biehl’s book, *Vita*: “The anthropologist is not immune.” This cryptic aside alludes to the intertwined desire of informant and anthropologist and reminds us of the improvisatory quality of ethnography. In describing both lives and ethnography as creative works of art, we see anthropologist and informant on the same plane, collaboratively engaged and dialectically bound.

In this light it becomes particularly interesting to consider their reading of George Marcus’s 2008 interview assessing the state of anthropological theory today. In that interview (one of a series published in recent years, all widely disseminated online where Marcus’s cranky “nothing new under the sun” attitude is critiqued with respectful indignation), Marcus is nostalgic for what he considers the last great era of anthropological theorizing. What followed that era was one of some uncertainty about the future of ethnographic writing. But despite the pessimistic predictions of some doomsayers, this era of critique did not lead to anthropologists writing themselves out of jobs with their skepticism about truth and representation. We have doggedly kept on writing and representing, and as Biehl and Locke point out, this has included new topics, theoretical approaches, and experiments in writing.

One lingering effect of the Marcus-era critique of anthropological representation was a quiet compromise over where the anthropologist fits into the text. Wary of the label of “navel-gazing” that often stuck to that era’s experiments in ethnographic writing but mindful of the need to acknowledge in our writing the forces that generate scholarship, anthropologists have typically resolved that dilemma by carefully

treading the middle ground. They introduce the ethnographer and the fieldwork circumstances, but then this character promptly retreats so they can press on to demonstrate that their real object of academic inquiry is not actually the anthropologist. But the anthropologist can never completely retreat from the pages of her ethnography. This is not only a result of the political imperative that requires us to stay reflexively attuned to the structures that deliver us into a community, shape the relationships we develop there, and influence what we write; it is also a product of our peculiar methodology, which mandates that everything we learn, we learn through our own embodied experience.

What Biehl and Locke offer us is a vision for how to confidently keep the anthropologist in the picture. Ethnography, they remind us, is art—both the art of the anthropologist and his informants. Ethnography is also detective work, and the detective can never be written out of the mystery she investigates. This comes through powerfully in Biehl's book *Vita*, which he summarizes here and which is as carefully paced and suspenseful as a detective mystery. It also comes through in Locke's investigation of institutions and lives in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Not only is there no detective mystery without a detective, there is also no hand-wringing angst about where the detective fits into our understanding of the mystery being investigated. The detective is simultaneously central and peripheral to the story being told.

I have only one reservation, and it comes at the very end of this article, where Biehl and Locke claim that what is at stake is "our craft's potential to become a mobilizing force in this world." The examination of individual lives gives a face to collective struggles. As the authors note, this is what ethnography has always done best. Wings of Hope and Catarina's dictionary show us the power and creative potential of complaint, anger, and bitterness, even in the face of poverty, sickness, and social abandonment. But in focusing on individuals' responses to structural forces, the lines of flight and leakiness surrounding social fields, might we run the risk of heroicizing responses to poverty and oppression? If shining that empirical lantern on individuals' ways of making do leads us to marvel at human ingenuity and the triumph of desire even in social death, will our marvelling weaken our call to political action?

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## Reply

"There is so much that comes with time . . . the words . . . and the signification, you will not find in the book. . . . Nobody will decipher the words for me. I will not exchange my head with you, and neither will you exchange yours with mine. One must have a science, a light conscience. One needs to put one's mind in place. . . . I am writing for myself to

understand, but, of course, if you all understand, I will be very content."

Catarina's words came to mind as we read this provocative set of comments on "Deleuze and the Anthropology of Becoming." Her hermeneutics and ethics inspired us in the ways we conceived and crafted this response.

Adam Geary recognizes an "invitational quality" in our article, pointing to the ways in which it works to open "lines of dialogue not only between ethnographers and their subjects but within anthropology and between it and other disciplines." Similarly, Patrice Schuch underlines the potential of certain kinds of texts to make us work—both on ourselves and on "the Outside: flux against flux, machine with machines, experimentation and events."

Schuch reminds us, invoking Deleuze's own response to a critic, that there is much at stake in different forms of reading: if one takes the text "as a box referring to an inside, thus seeking for its signified or signifier, one's task would be to comment, interpret, demand explanation." But readers can also choose a less prosecutorial approach, working to establish "zones of proximity" with a text and striving to understand how the stories of others might emancipate one from a priori assumptions. This emancipatory mode attends to what texts *unleash*, the forms of understanding that they open up between us, and between their own lines: a truth/thought/poetic effect that is owned by no one.

It is humbling and immensely rewarding to see such a wonderful group of scholars read and respond to the article in precisely this spirit (with very few exceptions). The respondents' mode of engagement—methodical, perceptive, critical, generous, and open to the unknown—restores a kind of infancy, a sense of potential and possibility, to the text we crafted and (in a way) to the worlds from which it drew. In their own manner, and to unpredictable effect, this is what the subjects we engage in the field also do. As Lisa Wynn observes, the anthropology of becoming is "an art of bricolage, where bricolage is both what anthropologists do with theory and what people do with their lives."

Recall Catarina. In the course of the anthropological encounter, she denaturalized her abandonment and madness, claimed historicity, and invented, against all odds, a new name and the possibility of a chance at life. As people and their trajectories are plotted into the collective narrative of ethnography, they also keep plotting their own paths: Milan begins to exceed his destiny as a child of war, and Maja, with all her anger and tinkering with scarce resources, breaks open the totalizing diagnoses that claim to fully encompass the past and future of her nation. Drawing from her own ethnographic work in a low-income neighborhood in Santiago, Chile, Clara Han adds that "exposure to the unexpected, acquired skill, and diligent practice" constitutes a distinct "perceptive net and sketch[es] a form of life that subjects at once hold on to and test the limits of."

This potential to become newly unknown (or differently known) can help us better understand how our modes of

engagement and concepts can change something of the worlds we live in—and, hopefully, of anthropology. By and large, the respondents bypass the kind of polarizing polemics—all too common in the academy—that stage the other’s ignorance in order to replace it with one’s own knowledge and final judgment. We see so much wasted energy and missed opportunity in this style of reasoning, a willful staking out of *zones of distance and disregard*: the inverse, hollow and cold, of the kind of proximity Schuch proposes and that Angela Garcia refers to as “mutual becoming.”

We appreciate how most of the commentators shared what the article opened up for them, what they saw and felt in the stories and ideas that we conveyed, rather than simply projecting deficiencies and indicting the authors for failing to fulfill imagined promises. Either way, commentators composed their own texts, giving hints of their own intellectual adventures and ethnographic and ethical affinities—effects that the ideas and idioms of our article could not have anticipated. “We are left to imagine for ourselves,” writes Sarah Wagner. This active form of reading, in reappropriating the stories we told and the ideas we tried out, makes both writer and reader newly accountable for what emerges. “Everywhere there are starting points, intersections and junctions, that enable us to learn something new if we refuse, firstly, radical distance, secondly the distribution of roles, and thirdly the boundaries between territories” (Rancière 2009:17).

This openness to the existence of a *third*, so to speak—an *it*, an indefinite, neither text/performer nor reader/spectator, but something that, in coming about in the provisional encounter between them, generates new fields of understanding and possibility—is exactly what we long to see more often in interactions among anthropologists as well as between anthropologists and their interlocutors in the field. Along with “the anecdote, the vignette, the ethnographic incident, the organic local theorist,” as Michael M. J. Fischer beautifully puts it, this third field—fundamentally relational, the exclusive property of no single individual—can also act as “pebbles and labyrinths in the way of theory.”

The exchange that fills these pages has helped to crystallize for us the heterogeneity, creativity, and promise that marks anthropology today, contradicting orientations that mourn the passing of old *-isms* and schools while awaiting the development of a new and dominant paradigm (as if we must be bored and helpless without one). Anthropologists just “doggedly kept on writing and representing,” as Lisa Wynn points out, and productively so. The tension between empirical realities and theories is permanent and irresolvable. In leaving aside pointless debates about the hierarchy of discourses or the nature of identity, the notion of becoming can help us to capture better the fecundity of the everyday blurring of reason, life, and ethics. Attending to life as it is lived and adjudicated by people in their realities produces a multiplicity of approaches, theoretical moves and countermoves, an array of interpretive angles as various as the individuals drawn to practice anthropology. Accounting for “tragedies generated in

life” (as Catarina would put it), social determinants, and institutional and human heterogeneities may not be new or easy, much less the key to an ultimate social theory, but it never gets old or less valuable.

There is a “piercing power” in the voices of individuals that ethnography can capture, writes Vanessa Fong, and which “cannot be reduced to theoretical constructs.” There are many ways to take up the challenge of remaining attuned to life’s irrevocable complexity and “messiness” and to insist that *people must come first* in our work, that arcane academic language, solipsistic debates, and turgid prose should not be allowed to strip people’s lives, knowledge, and struggles of their vitality—analytical, political, and ethical. Like literature, ethnographic writing can push the limits of language and imagination as it seeks to bear witness to life in a manner that does not bound, reduce, or make caricatures of people but liberates, if always only partially, some of the epistemological force and authority of their travails and stories.

Allowing people’s everyday arts of existence to become figures of thought is no straightforward task. In the contemporary politics of knowledge, Fischer observes, anthropologists defer too readily to philosophers, seeking authorization in their pronouncements, “even though they [the philosophers] generally abandon any pretense to being empirically grounded.” Why, Fischer asks, does Deleuze get the power of surname-only reference and decontextualized evocation, while Catarina—or Maja and Milan—do not receive the same impersonal treatment? The point, we suggest, may not be to move our interlocutors in the field up to our level in the hierarchy of epistemological authority—or to that of the European White Male Philosopher—but to dislodge the hierarchy altogether, to argue for an equality of intelligences and to find novel public and scholarly ways to harness the creative conceptual work activated in the field.

Read in this light, our article does not privilege Deleuze’s knowledge over that of our field interlocutors. On the contrary, it is because we met and were in part transformed by people like Catarina and Maja that we feel a kinship with a handful of Deleuze’s ideas. The “and” in our title makes a difference: “Deleuze *and* the Anthropology of Becoming,” instead of, for example, “A Deleuzian Anthropology of Becoming.” We see in his reflections a way to begin to articulate and expand our intuitions—grounded much more in fieldwork experiences than in our limited reading of philosophy—of who and what people are and can become amidst the “viscosity” (as Clara Han so aptly puts it) of leaking social fields and encounters. But as Fischer has rightly suggested to us, we should also look for creative ways to personalize and contextualize theorists. Probing the worldliness and the ontological stakes in concept making restores to theorists their singularity and makes their concepts at once “more limited and more powerful (targeted, precise)” (Michael M. J. Fischer, personal communication, 2009)

We recognize and value the fact that other thinkers (such as Cixous) and traditions (such as feminist criticism), not to

mention alternative readings of psychoanalysis and of Foucault, could be very productively brought to bear on the themes addressed in the article. There is, as Fischer, Garcia, and Geary remind us, a diverse set of intellectual lineages and histories to the ideas we engage, and something perennial, rather than teleological, about anthropological wrestlings with the tensions between structure and agency, desire and power, the raw unfinishedness of experience and the false closure of theory, and ethnography as literature versus ethnography as “lab report” (Geertz 1988).

We see an important and distinctive contribution in anthropology’s long tradition of traveling with Big Ideas and reworking them through encounters with people and cultural differences: Malinowski rereading Freud in the South Pacific, Geertz thinking with Weber in Indonesia. Some of the theories in vogue in anthropology today—from Foucault’s biopolitics and Agamben’s bare life to Bourdieu’s habitus and neo-Marxian concepts of structural violence and social suffering—strike us, despite being indisputably relevant and helpful in many ways, as also somewhat overdetermining (at least in the ways in which they are taken up and applied), thus inhibiting ethnographically grounded conceptual innovation. People are plural and ambiguous, irreducible to history and populations, norms and social forces. We are marked by the unconscious, by the language of our ancestors, by knowledge and power, by scarcity and political economy, by interpersonal dynamics and desires, that is, by the immanence of worldliness. We believe that a crucial element of this immanence is the day-to-day anticipation or envisioning of alternative forms of existence.

The main characters of our works have taught us that there were *crossroads* in their lives—concrete instances of tinkering and manipulation with family dynamics, politics, ethnic affiliations, biology, and morality. Just as the past could have been otherwise, the present is not an inevitable destiny. This sense of crossroads is a condition for the pursuit of individual and collective rights to a decent life and future. “Instead of researching the already established, done, determined, and classified,” the anthropology of becoming, Shuch observes, “endeavors to understand the unfinished, the emergent, the open, the polysemic, and the uncertain.” As both Fischer and Fong note, our discipline’s relentless empiricism holds philosophers accountable to reality and allows philosophical ideas to have more—or less—currency in our conversations about concrete human conditions. If this engagement leads to the subtraction of theories, so much the better (see Nietzsche’s *Twilight of the Idols; or, How to Philosophize with a Hammer* 2009 [1888]).

We are grateful to Fischer, Fong, Wagner, and Wynn for highlighting our effort to show how theory becomes part of the ways in which lives are foreclosed or constrained on the ground: how rationality is actively embroiled in people’s destinies, complicated and opened up, day-to-day, by their struggles both to inhabit and break open the categories and diagnoses applied to them. How, we are asking, can we continue

to theorize, without being complicit with the real-world damage certain kinds of theorizing can do?

Bold and creative responses to this question are too often chastised by the self-appointed arbiters of what counts as good scholarship, attached, as they are, to fantasies of using anthropology to master the ur-conditions of knowing. Analytical distance too easily becomes a sanctioned form of disregard. Ivory tower dismissals of public anthropology or any call to greater empathy and moral commitment in our projects groundlessly assume that actively listening to and assisting the world’s most vulnerable somehow renders invalid the knowledge generated in the process; or, most bewilderingly, that it must represent a calculated attempt to set oneself up as a “savior” (as Gilbert puts it). The choice between salvation and disregard is a false one.

The question is not just—or perhaps no longer—how ethnographic authority is constituted but how it can be made to circulate as more than a footnote to philosophy or economic models and without being co-opted into the reductionist technical *modus operandi* of policy debates. Several of the responses raise questions about how the study of becoming can be made relevant for policy making and intervention without, as Wagner puts it, “eclipsing the very voices and lives we wish to open up to deeper understanding.” We take this concern to heart; our critique of the quick technical fix applies also to the quick theoretical fix, and becoming, certainly, offers neither—while still helping us to map lives and social fields in transit. There is no universal formula for relevance, and ethnographic work should not be valued solely for its immediate instrumentality. The insights anthropologists produce are often, nonetheless, urgent; thus, we must continue to challenge orthodoxies of all kinds (Farmer 2008) and seek original ways to communicate the “ordinary affects” (Stewart 2007) and categories that are significant in human experience—which the powers-that-be dismiss as “anecdotal,” nongeneralizable, and inherently impractical—to the worlds of science, policy, and jurisprudence.

This is not, as Igreja worries, to encourage an “ill-informed polarization of research methods” but rather to insist on the complementarity of approaches. While Igreja caricatures our position as ethnography (good) versus psychiatry (bad), in our view one mode of inquiry always contextualizes the other, adding nuance and exposing methodological limitations and possibilities. Wagner eloquently advances a similar argument, both in her comments and in her larger work on the crucial role of memory, meaning, and imagination in the process of using DNA science to identify the remains of Bosnia’s missing people (2008). Rather than merely dismissing psychiatry and its medicines, we argue that mental health professions and interventions could benefit from anthropology’s people-centered evidence, which, as ever, clarifies the inescapable knotting of biology, social environment, medicine, and the desire for care. On this point, it is always illuminating to revisit Mauss’s enduring lessons on *l’homme total* (see Garces and Jones 2009).

Symptoms are, at times, a necessary condition or resource



for the afflicted to articulate a new relationship to the world and to others. Catarina claimed that she had become a failed medical regimen, and ethnography illuminated how her family had come to depend on this explanation to excuse itself for her abandonment—a social side effect of the larger pharmaceuticalization of mental health care in Brazil (see Biehl 2005, 2007). However, Catarina's assimilation of her experience of psychiatric treatment into a new identity, CATKINE, was intimately related to her struggle to anticipate a more livable reality. By the same token, Locke's larger ethnographic work on Sarajevo (Locke 2009) explores how the availability of psychiatric drugs and psychosocial services has enabled new, hybrid ways of remaking lives, families, and social roles. Psychiatric rationality is utterly enmeshed in the worlds we engage, altering people's lives and desires—sometimes deleteriously, cementing foreclosures, and at other times allowing new openings and forms of care. Anthropological work is well qualified to understand this tension, bringing us closer to the politics and ethics involved in the on-the-ground deployment of psychiatric categories and treatments—increasingly outside the clinic, in homes and in people's solitary relationships to technology (Biehl and Moran-Thomas 2009).

As anthropologists, we can strive to do more than simply mobilize real-world messiness to complicate—or serve—ordered philosophy, reductive medical diagnostics, and statistics-centered policy approaches. Both the evidentiary force and theoretical contribution of our discipline might be intimately linked to giving creative form to people's arts of living. As Wynn writes, "In describing both lives and ethnography as creative works of art, we see anthropologist and informant on the same plane, collaboratively engaged and dialectically bound." This approach has the potential to circumvent "crisis of representation"—style agonizing, allowing us to linger, more productively, with the agonistic and uncertain dimensions of our field engagements.

In ethnographic writing, specific human stories can illuminate larger social processes as well as people's capacities, irreducible to any philosophical concept, to endure or transcend, humbly or grandly, the weight of history and control. This is the *immanence* of lived experience, which always includes forms of sublimation, however marginal or obscure. These impulses, as deeply human as the institutional forces that constrain them, need social recognition and care in order to be sustained and to acquire political value. By more actively cultivating this kind of recognition, ethnography has the potential to trouble the inequality that has, in Didier Fassin's words, "insinuated itself into the humanitarian politics of life . . . there are those who can tell stories and those whose stories can only be told by others" (Fassin 2007a:518).

In facing and stretching their limits, people exercise various degrees of plasticity. The subjects we worked with actively engage with new medical technologies, weave forms of spirituality into everyday labor and community, and inhabit multiple temporalities as they live with the past and think toward the future. Such becoming, we believe, is a fundamental entry

point to the work of capturing the fabric of the times and people's everyday realism. Our ethnographic works should be attentive, as some of the commentators warn, to the dangers of rendering optimism over despair or romantically projecting agency onto desperate situations. The lives we encounter are profoundly unequal, ambiguous and uncertain, and ill-disposed to clear-cut analysis and moral judgment. Yes, it requires intense listening and long-term engagement with people to perceive and understand the moments and the difficult conditions in which repetitions and flights can turn vital or deadening. Biehl recalls how startled he was when Catarina, on one occasion, became enraged and threw her dictionary to the ground. She had just heard that Biehl had been unable to convince her family to schedule a visit. Writing, in the end, could not take her back home—what she wanted most.

Becoming is not revolution, and yet, as Wagner writes, even "amid the decay of Vita and the anxiety of Sarajevo (and beside the graves of Bosnia's missing)" we find "countless moments of social interaction and expression that challenge assumptions about the limitations of life." Life bricolage—what people make, often agonizingly, out of whatever is available to them in order to endure the terminal force of realities—is a form of art, and we believe that it is not just Kafka, Joyce, and Proust, for instance, who can "invent a new language within language" (Deleuze 1997:lv). Moving away from the overdetermined and toward the incomplete, human becomings intrude into reality, enlarging our sense of what is socially possible and desirable. To endeavor to engage this dimension of human experience is, by its very nature, fraught, and will undoubtedly require greater professional freedom and bolder experiments in anthropological writing and genre. But not to represent and sustain people's sense of anticipation, even in the darkest of circumstances, is also a failure. These tensions should not paralyze our storytelling, but should find expression, so that the reader can grow closer to people.

—João Biehl and Peter Locke

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