

Becoming Ocean: Mourning-with as Multiplicitous Weaving and Becoming-with In-trouble Oceans

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Abstract: The French philosophers Deleuze and Guattari argue that the human self is a multiplicity that must be continually in the state of becoming. As contemporary time witnesses oceans in trouble, and as our entanglements with these aquatic landscapes are entanglements both imperiled and foundational to our shared futures and survivabilities, I advocate in this article for a *becoming-ocean*. *Becoming-ocean* is a multiplicitous transfiguration of human-only epistemological practices through the aesthetic-ethical work of mourning-with. It is a passageway of possibilities—creating and performing aesthetic paradigms of worlding that weave us into assemblages of affect that generate equitable practices of (co)world-building. *Becoming-ocean* is a multispecies poetic, a polyphonic and impossible hospitality that widens ecological consciousness while fostering responsible and ethical care in the ways our human impact entangles with our shared, more-than-human worlds.

Keywords: aesthetics, ethics, multispecies, mourning, poetics, hospitality, becoming

“Having become a philosopher today, I think like the dying sea or a river in its death throes, like the divine sea or the paradise river, soft wombs of rebirth.”

Michel Serres, *Biogea*

I. From Shore to Sea – an ongoing place to begin

“I was seeing like the sea.”

Michel Serres, *Biogea*

Fibers

Salt, water, body, border, tears, fluid, multiplicity—we as selves hold within our bodies a selfhood that has always been *becoming-ocean*. “In fact,” Deleuze and Guattari write, “the self is only a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities” (249). We are bodies of becoming and becoming is in itself a multiplicity, an interrelational dynamic of ongoing thresholds. The threshold that is calling to us (us as thresholds ourselves) here on the shore is the call of an in-trouble ocean. The call of the ocean is an invitation *to set sail*—within the self, within the world, amongst difference and the multiplying multiplicity of becoming. We as humans are set firmly here upon the shore and the wild landscape of the sea stretches out before us and yet we are invited to step in, invited to *see like the sea*, to mourn-with, to set sail, to become. An anchoring truth across all difference of ecology, species, language, and ways and means of thinking and creating is that we are indeed deeply entangled. Between us humans here on the shore and the multiplicity of oceanic worlds, there resides many a fiber, thread, and line that weaves us into woven entanglements and assemblages that travel from shore to sea and sea to shore.

These lines and threads of entanglement are the very lines and threads of becoming. Deleuze and Guattari, in *A Thousand Plateaus* write, “a fiber stretches from a human to an animal, from a human

or an animal to molecules, from molecules to particles, and so on to the imperceptible" (249). Upon an interconnected planet we are woven deeply together—across both the perceptible and imperceptible, across both sensible and insensible fibers—and what is revealed are the monstrous entanglements resulting from vast anthropogenic impact and presence within the space of the sea. These fibers that weave us together are the fibers that call us into becoming, a becoming that requires and performs a reworking and reworlding of ethics. "Every fiber is a Universe fiber" Deleuze and Guattari write (249), and in so doing formulate a foundational and interrelational philosophy of becoming; arguing for continual becoming as transfiguration of our human instance upon rigid borders and centers, of secure and singular identities, as well as demarcations and denigrations of difference. In order *to see like the sea*, we must see every fiber as a Universe fiber, and we must encounter ourselves as a fiber woven within cohabitational assemblages, assemblages that are in trouble. Exclusively French thinkers are the fibers this article weaves with in order to create a unique Francophone assemblage of philosophy that performs a reworlding of ethics through the aesthetic work of mourning-with an in-trouble sea. In addition to Deleuze and Guattari, French philosophers such as Derrida, Rancière, Serres, Latour, and Glissant weave together to reveal not only that *becoming-ocean* is an integral becoming, but that this becoming-with means a multiplicitous and polyphonic hospitality that is an aesthetic-ethical reconfiguration of the hierarchical borders that human thinking and ethical ideology performs.

A small, single tear spills out of the eye, containing within it a world reflective of the ocean—a universe fiber, a threshold, a molecular becoming. The ocean as well expresses, mourns, grieves, and calls out with salty tears. These molecular fibers and worlds weaving us together across shore and sea are fibers and threads not always made intelligible or sensible to our limited human sense experience and yet we are deeply entangled and are called by these entanglements to set sail within a reworking of ethics through transformative worlding practices of cohabitational becoming, mourning, creating.

Breath

Becoming is an ongoing ethical and aesthetic act that is interdisciplinary, interrelational, and a cohabitational practice of worlding across difference—a creative poesis outside of human-only epistemological practices of making, knowing, and doing. Deleuze and Guattari argue in the tenth plateau of *A Thousand Plateaus* for a becoming that is a radical opening up of the self and of thinking into a multiplicity that performs a deterritorialization of fixed and singular points of subjectivity and epistemological meaning-making. "Becoming is involu-tionary, involution is creative" (238)—an articulation that leads into "becoming-animal always involves a pack, a band, a population, a peopling, in short, a multiplicity" (239)—all of which brings together an ethical reconfiguration of interrelation along with the creative work of aesthetics, of an ethical becoming within poesis. Deleuze and Guattari advocate for a becoming-animal, becoming-woman, becoming-cosmos, becoming-intense and utilizing this framework I am advocating for a *becoming-ocean*. Becoming is not just abstract, philosophical choreography within human thinking, it has real stakes. As an "I" writes this and then as a "you" reads these words we each inhale and exhale across time and space—performing a deterritorialization of fixed identities and places.

These inhales and exhales that weave with the extraordinarily vast inhales and exhales of the entire universe, are Universe fibers that weave us as humans on land into shared assemblages with the sea. The bodies and breath of whales play a pivotal role within the carbon cycle of the entire earth. As whale bodies and breath drastically decrease, the survivability and futurability of the entirety of living beings become at stake. In a study on the impact of whaling on the ocean carbon cycle, scientists write that "in terms of their size and potential to store carbon for years or decades, marine vertebrates are the only organisms in the ocean comparable to large trees" (Pershing et al. n.p.). Whale bodies act as productive sinks for carbon, both storing and recycling it as they fertilize the ocean with their feces and urine, whale waste that is incredibly productive itself—creating the

environment for large phytoplankton blooms (Pershing et al. n.p.). A scientific study published in the journal *Science Advances* in 2020 found that “phytoplankton produce at least 50% of the oxygen in the atmosphere and capture an estimated 40% of all the carbon dioxide produced in the world...to put things in perspective, we calculate that this is equivalent to the amount of CO₂ captured by 1.70 trillion trees—four Amazon forests’ worth” (Mariani et al. n.p.). The life cycle and sustainability of our entangled globe is dependent upon these bodies and breaths of whales that act as trees, providing the clean air we take deep into our lungs, right here and now.

The threads that connect our breath to the breath of whales are threads we cannot fully sense, touch, or know, but nevertheless they are Universe fibers weaving us together in cohabitation, in becoming, in multiplicity. We breathe together, or not at all. Inhales and exhales are the work of becoming and multiplicity as they are shared, molecular, interdependent. These ongoing acts of becoming and multiplicity are ethical claims and responses, and yet, since we cannot know these assemblages and threads fully, these becomings and multiplicities perform their work as well through the creativity of multispecies aesthetics. Becoming is creation and creativity along lines of difference. *Becoming-ocean* is becoming-whale is becoming-breath is becoming-world—a multiplicity of becomings that all perform a great and important interrelation and cohabitation across species. As whale populations decrease, the sustainability of the ocean decreases, along with it too the cycles of our own human lives. There is here much to mourn and much trouble to attend to. There is a mourning deep in the sea with each shared and in-trouble breath—breath that is a continual becoming of cohabitation, survival, futures. With our collective breath inhaling and exhaling together reverberating across Universe fibers, I am advocating for the multispecies poesis of *becoming-ocean*. *Becoming-ocean* requires us to set sail. We leave the safe shore of our own human thinking, knowing, language, and mourning to set sail as the both ethical and aesthetic task of *becoming-ocean*.

Setting Sail

“To think is to voyage” write Deleuze and Guattari—an articulation that brings us into a fluidity of knowing (482). Setting sail operates as both an ethical and aesthetic journey, requiring threading and weaving across borderlines, a fluid becoming that orchestrates a multiplicity of thinking, of self, of place and space. The stakes here are worlds in trouble, oceans in trouble, worlds and beings living and dying at the sharp edges of extinction. *Becoming-ocean* is transfiguration as becoming is weaving work and “a fiber strung across borderlines constitutes a line of flight or of deterritorialization” (Deleuze and Guattari 249). *Becoming-ocean* reveals the ethical claims made from the borderlines of extinctions and troubles and sets us upon alternate routes as response. The troubled waters rumble and the landscape is a thoroughly haunted one, populated by all those who have perished in its waves, by the waters themselves suffering, by the worlds within who have been lost. *Becoming-ocean* is, within contemporary time, *becoming-a-mourning-ocean*, becoming with the multiplicity of the ethical calamities and urgencies that churn within troubled landscapes.

Michel Serres writes in *Biogea* (2015), “having become a philosopher today, I think like the dying sea or a river in its death throes, like the divine sea or the paradise river, soft wombs of rebirth” (26). The task of becoming, for Deleuze and Guattari, is a molecular transformation that requires a multiplicity of thinking *with*, of thinking *like the dying sea*. Setting sail is the call to think alongside, to think like and with the dying sea. In contemporary time, *becoming-ocean* means we become-alongside-an-ocean-in-trouble and the call of becoming is the call to become the dying sea, to *see like the sea*. As thinking is a voyage (Deleuze and Guattari), a voyage upon the sea is an anarchistic journey, a rupturing of precise and all-too-human timelines, pathways, ideologies, and discourses. *To think is to voyage* and to voyage across the sea is to set sail within differing epistemological waves that put into question anthropocentric thinkings and practices of ethics.

Becoming-ocean requires the individual self to leave the shore of singular ways of knowing, of exclusionary narratives, of anthropocentric language, ethical, and aesthetic practices and asks us to

set sail within alternate epistemological worldings. We set sail, in a poetic sense, all of us, in a single boat; Jacques Yves Cousteau, explorer and filmmaker, writes, “the sea, the great unifier, is man’s only hope. Now, as ever before, the old phrase has a literal meaning—we are all in the same boat” (Gilmore). *The same boat* we all find ourselves in is a poetic performance of our vast interconnection, interdependence and cohabitation upon a world in trouble. This *same boat* is *shared breath*: human breath, breath of the whales, breath of the ocean, breath of the world. Our entanglements across Universe fibers of difference, of taxonomy, language, ecology, landscape reveal our survivability and futurities are wound up tightly with one another. *Inhale. Exhale.*

Setting sail encounters a sea in trouble. A study by the Plymouth Marine Laboratory found that the ocean acidification’s boundary has been already reached in the year 2020, a boundary that when crossed “could lead to unacceptable environmental change” (Findlay et al. n.p.). The acidification of the ocean begets drastic changes deep below the surface, rendering these aquatic ecosystems and habitats less and less survivable and livable. Helen Findlay, the lead scientific researcher of this study urgently reveals these crucial stakes: “the waters below are home to many more different types of plants and animals. Since these deeper waters are changing so much, the impacts of ocean acidification could be far worse than we thought” (Findlay qtd. in Bachelor n.p.).

The drastic acidification of the oceans and the danger this poses to the futurability and survivability of these ecosystems and of the entirety of our shared globe reveal our deep interconnection. Throughout history, as the world became more and more connected, many human orchestrated tragedies and monstrous entanglements were enacted. The ideology of *setting sail* also conjures forth the dangerous and devastating practices of colonialization, of deportation, of slavery, of deadly othering practices that claimed and destroyed spaces, places, bodies, and entire worlds. Setting sail performs and reveals our interconnected world as well as revealing monstrous consequences of human ideology—consequences that reverberate into the present and carry us on toward untenable futures, both in terms of climate crisis and the crisis of migration, cries of the earth, cries of the marginalized, cries of worlds in trouble, cries of worlds on the move. Worlds within the world of the sea have already been lost and large swathes of ocean living have been rendered untenable. *Becoming-ocean* will carry us from these shores of our impoverished human thinking and ethical practices and into more hospitable ways of worlding, a pathway of becoming that sets sail on oceans and the becoming-molecular operation of mourning.

Becoming-mourning

Becoming-ocean requires a transfiguration of the limits of human-only epistemological practices, of human sense, of human thinking and languages practices. This ongoing becoming as the space of transfiguration becomes the flow and flux of the ethical transfigured within these becomings—becomings which are aesthetic, poetic, creative, molecular, interrelational and cohabitational. For Deleuze and Guattari thinking is voyaging, and as Serres weaves this philosophical task of thinking with the dying sea, our task here of *becoming-ocean* must be a deterritorialization of human-only language, thinking, knowing, and expressing. If we are indeed thinking-with a dying sea, if we are indeed becoming-a-dying-sea then here much mourning arises, mourning outside of human-only performance and utterance. Mourning is a crossing, a threshold, a multiplicity, fibers and threads of interconnection and interdependence. Deleuze and Guattari argue that “the error we must guard against is to believe that there is a kind of logical order to this string, these crossings or transformations” (250). *Becoming-ocean* is a re-tuning to alternate processes of knowing, of mourning, of language, of performing our shared worlds that operate and express outside of the dominate logical order. Human thinking has long been viewed as the apex of all knowing, a hierarchy that separates the human against, above, and outside of nature, the animal, the world itself. Yet, thinking like the dying sea and *becoming-ocean* ushers us into a mourning, a knowing, a performing that contests human logic, thinking, senses, language and meaning-making systems. *Becoming-ocean* within our

contemporary time of extinction, of drastic acidification, of loss and trouble requires not only a thinking—with the dying sea, but a mourning—with, a mourning—with that transfigures dangerous and human-only ethical and also aesthetic thinkings and practices.

The becoming within Deleuze and Guattari can help address the very problem of human thinking and language that delegates itself above all other. Instead of a full knowing and a full mapping of our shared oceans and the ways and means in which they mourn, speak, express, and survive we turn to becoming and mourning as an epistemological poesis that reorients our ethical and aesthetic practices within shared and in-trouble worlds. The acidification of oceans is emblematic of ontological mourning, in survival, in witness to many worlds within on the edges of extinction. In *becoming-ocean* we become-in-mourning—the stakes of which are equitable ethical relations across difference wherein the futures of worlds we cannot sense or fully know are at stake, worlds which are woven with our own.

Utilizing Deleuze and Guattari's foundational philosophical concept of *becoming*, this article advocates for the multiplicitous passageway of *becoming-ocean* as both an ethical and aesthetic interrelationality—deterritorialized, interdependent, and fluid—from which to (co)enact equitable worlding practices in response to oceans and worlds in trouble. In keeping with the thought of French philosophers, I invite the reader to set sail upon divergent and multispecies epistemologies that are at the heart of becoming-ocean: that of a poetic, haunted, impossible, and polyphonic hospitality.

II. *Becoming-ocean*—ethical waves and embodiments

“Where the waves thundered with such an intense noise that I thought I heard,
once again, behind or under this fearsome fracas,
a background of sovereign silence.”

Michel Serres, *Biogea*

Sounds of Silence

Snap, scratches, grunts, squeaks, creaks—these are the sounds of thriving, acoustic reverberations of healthy coral reefs. The bustling coral reef calls to its necessary settlers and companions through sound; at a critical life-phase coral larvae respond to acoustic cues and swim toward the sounds of reefs (Vermeij et al. 1). Coral reefs are vital ecosystems within the ocean that support a quarter of all marine life (“Why We Need Coral Reefs” n.p.). The acidification of ocean waters rapidly enacts a decomposing of coral reef ecosystems and a study published by the journal *One Earth* finds that 63% of coral-reef-associated biodiversity has declined and that the global coverage of all living coral has declined by half since the 1950's (Eddy et al. 1278). As the coral reefs die out a silence begins to reverberate, a silence that perpetuates the myriad of threats that the coral reefs encounter, impacting in totality the livelihood of the entire ocean, which threatens—in consequence—the sustainability of our shared Earth. The quieting of coral reefs reflect their deep trouble and also present to us a generative impossibility from which to think-with: the question of how to mourn-with that which is not only silent, but with that which mourns in silence, with the coral reefs whose sounds we cannot physically hear and whose sounds and silences we cannot fully know or decipher.

Mourning-with is an integral molecular, material and as well immaterial, imperceptible, and insensible (to us as humans) becoming that requires a traversing of limits. In order to mourn-with as a revitalized and multispecies thinking-with then our very structures of thinking must be transformed, and here, the space of impossibility and generative limits emerge. The crux of ethical thinking in relation to more-than-human worlds is a borderline liminality where lots of trouble and productive questions emerge. Can our human thinking even *be* ethical in regards to the more-than-human? How to think-with ethical claims and responses outside of the monolith of human exceptionalism? How to listen, respond, and mourn-with that which speaks in more-than-human

languages, with the breath of the whales that steadily declines, with the silencing of the coral reefs, with the acidification of the oceans?

The space of impossibility reveals the flux within ethical configurations inherent within the space of becoming—becoming as an alternate force to the territorialization of human thinking and knowing as in *becoming-ocean* ethical thinking becomes a matter of fluidity, of sound and silence, of movement, of cohabitation. *Becoming-ocean* is a becoming outside of human-only thinking, sense, and language. Guattari, in *The Mechanic Unconscious*, calls this a “sense without signification, a language of sensation between” (59). The language of sensation between is the aesthetic and ethical flow and flux within the acoustic worlds of the ocean and its deafening silences that reveal deep trouble, a dying coral reef, a loss of communal survival within its ecosystems. Silence as more than a space between sounds but rather a language of sensation that is a mourning, that is expressing, that is calling out, that is making ethical claims and is as well responding to its worlds in creative, aesthetic ways.

Dissensus

Sense without signification, is the work and play of sense outside of human-only language structures—a creative space within the realm of the aesthetic that allows for multispecies expressions, silence, reverberations, and alternate meaning-making practices that all transfigure the space of ethics outside of the hierarchy and territory of anthropocentrism. In the realm of sense without signification, more-than-human worlds play within more-than-human languages and meaning-making productions. All species engage, in their own ways and means, in semiosis, in creative ways of bridging the liminal gaps between beings and epistemological knowings. The interdisciplinary field of biosemiotics extends past human-only language and studies the signs and significations of all biological communication—including the semiotics of the non-verbal, of the cellular, of animal signs (zoosemiotics) and of plant signs and communications (phytosemiotics). The play of biosemiotics expresses within and reverberates outward from the the breath of the whales, the cracks and pops of the coral reefs, and even from the sounds of the silence of mourning from these in-trouble worlds. Here, we add mourning as another divergent pathway of Biosemiotics across fibers of difference, as mourning is the work of sense without signification, the becoming of the space between, the dance and play of signs outside of human-only logic systems. These alternate forms of mourning are ethical claims requiring ethical responses and yet, the problem resides within human-only ethics territorialized within human-only and limited thinking structures. Ethical thinking and practice often works along the lines and operational faculties of *consensus*. For the philosopher Jacques Rancière, “ethics amounts to the dissolution of norm into fact: in other words, the substation of all forms of discourse and practice beneath the same indistinct point of view” (192). This perpetuation of ethical thinking as consensus leads human action to not only create hierarchies of who is welcomed and who is exiled within humanity but to cast off nature, the earth, the animal, as that which is Other and cast out to the margins within ethical and aesthetic discourse and practice. The suppression of dissensus within the consensual organization of the human practice of ethical thinking is a suppression of Guattari’s urge toward a “sense without signification.” Without the alternate senses of multispecies mourning, of multispecies and divergent expression, language, and thinking we are unable to encounter that which cries out in alternate ways—the ache of the coral reef, the silencing of the coral reef, the acidification of the ocean, the slowing of the breath of the whales.

Rancière argues for the force of dissensus, as dissensus is a rupture to the established hierarchy and order not only of political structures, but of aesthetic ones; “I would rather talk about dissensus than resistance. Dissensus is a modification of the coordinates of the sensible, a spectacle or a tonality that replaces another” (Rancière qtd. in Carnevale and Kelsey n.p.). This pathway of dissensus is founded in what Rancière, in *The Politics of Aesthetics*, calls the “redistribution of the sensible” a reformation of what is visible, of what is encountered, of what can aesthetically be entangled with our own senses. We can argue here that this “redistribution of the sensible” (Rancière 45) is what is at the heart of

becoming, and specifically of the aesthetically reconfiguring ethical play of *becoming-ocean*—a “sense without signification” (Guattari 59). Weaving together the thinking of Rancière and Guattari along with the Universe fibers of our shared, multispecies worlds allows for the edges of *becoming-ocean* to become visible and sensible in alternative, aesthetic ways, to become an integral and possible/impossible becoming in which we are truly transfigured. If we get quiet right now, can we hear the silence of the coral reefs? No, we cannot. And yet, with them we must mourn. And yet, we are still called to becoming-coral-reef, to becoming-whale, to *becoming-ocean*—to becoming-ocean-in-mourning no matter how far we find ourselves tucked safely upon the shore.

Opacity

“Behind discourse the refusal to discourse speaks,” Maurice Blanchot writes in *The Step Not Beyond*, a dialogue concerned with the voices and being that have been exiled into silence (116). These spaces beyond and behind discourse are the space of the “redistribution of the sensible” and are the fluid passageway of *becoming-ocean*, a becoming that requires alternate methods not only of language but of knowing and (co)making-meaning in order for ethics to be an actually equitable ethical shared space within multispecies worlds. The refusal of discourse which speaks, the force of dissensus, the space of silence, multispecies languages and expressions—these are the becomings of multiplicitous lines and threads of difference that open up an alternate epistemological mode of communal cohabitation: that of mourning, multiplicity, opacity.

The ethical habit and practice of consensus, of silencing, of refusing dissensus all work to bring the Other into our own human ordinances of thinking, of knowing, of expressing and forces the other under our comparisons, hierarchies, and judgments. For Édouard Glissant, writer, poet, and philosopher—in opposition to ethics as consensus and the pervasive act of a full knowing of the Other—opacity is the true ethical space. As he posits, “agree not merely to the right to difference but, carrying this further, agree also to the right to opacity that is not enclosure within an impenetrable autarchy but subsistence within an irreducible singularity” (Glissant 190). For Glissant, the ethical space of opacity is not a reduction of identities into hierarchical order and is a continual and perennial space of Relation and participation and an equitable knowing of the Other outside of a full and complete knowing as domination and power. “We clamor for the right to opacity for everyone” (Glissant 194); the ethical right and space of opacity allows for multispecies breathing room needed within Rancière’s thinking of the “redistribution of the sensible” as the dissensus required within equitable ethical thinking. Within the becoming of *becoming-ocean* how can we attend to what is not visible or sensible to our limited sense experience? Opacity allows for the ethical grace of the space of not fully knowing but of acknowledging and encountering without human, physical encounter that which is beyond us but with what we are as yet still deeply entangled with and held in obligation to. How to mourn—with those whose mourning is opaque and unintelligible to us? How to mourn—with mourning that arrives in alternate languages and expressions is the impossible and generative question that entangles with both the ethical and the aesthetic and leads us into the creative possibilities within our call to *becoming-ocean*.

Impossible Mourning

“I mourn therefore I am...a mourning that is moreover impossible”—Jacques Derrida says in a 1990 interview (Derrida qtd. in Royle 8). As Derrida further clarifies, “and that is why whoever thus works at the work of mourning learns the impossible—and that mourning is interminable. Inconsolable. Irreconcilable” (Derrida 143). Impossibility itself brings forth the specter of possibility. To speak of the sea is to speak with a multiplicity of ghosts who haunt its waters, who drift toward us as revenants who ask questions of the future while pointing toward the past. The impossibility of mourning in Derrida’s writing resonates with the impossibility of becoming in Deleuze and Guattari who articulate that becoming is a radical reconfiguration of the centers and margins of the human

self and subjectivity. Mourning in Derrida's writing does much the same radical reconfiguring, a radical reconfiguring within the self through mourning's impossibilities. These impossibilities are the spaces and gaps between; the other who has indeed died is indeed Other and remains outside of us, and yet mourning pulls them into ourselves, performing an interiorization that betrays their innate difference/otherness to us. Derrida muses, "whatever the truth, alas, of this inevitable interiorization...this being-in-us reveals a truth *to and at death*, at the moment of death and even before death" (159). We are woven and marked upon by these spectral *traces of the other* that reconfigure who we are and how we take up space—hence, the material work of mourning, across lines of difference, is a radical becoming, an impossibility of otherness that has already already begun within us. This mourning work is an aesthetic-ethical reconfiguration within the otherness of more-than-human worlds and languages. In the 2002 journal article "The Animal That Therefore I am," Derrida identifies the more-than-human Other as "the wholly other, more other than any other" (380). This other of the animal, for Derrida, is more than a reconfiguration of difference or a problem to be solved, rather it is the play of call and response, a dance of languages (of biosemiotics) across the fibers of difference; "...it was to do more than announce a problem that will henceforth never leave us, that of appellation—and of *response* to a call" (382). The whales call, the coral reefs call, silence rings out, the earth cries—cries and calls that require *response*. Mourning as a multispecies biosemiotic networks creates passageways of poetics possibilities across impossible impasses of difference. Our waters, our languages, our shared worlds are thoroughly haunted landscapes. These spectral tracings, of other, of animal, of world, both within us and outside of us are the markings as deterritorialized maps on the passageway of an ongoing becoming. These tracings evoke an alternate ethical configuration, an ethics of dissensus and discourse behind the discourse of words.

These spectral traces of deceased whales and dying coral reefs speak in silences and traces, haunting contemporary time and space—becoming spectral figures who trace our own becomings, spectral figures without which there is no ethical thinking or practice. Derrida argues, "It is necessary to speak of the ghost, indeed to the ghost and with it, from the moment that no ethics, no politics, whether revolutionary or not, seems possible and thinkable and just that does not recognize in its principle the respect for those others who are no longer or for those others who are not yet there, presently living, whether they are already dead or not yet born" (xviii). The specter is a figure whose presence of absence reveals avenues of possibility within impossibility, the possibilities still yet to be of becoming, of change, of transfiguring thinking, ethics, and meaning-making practices within a troubled planet: the "possibility of the specter, the specter as possibility" (Derrida 13). Mourning is the impossible task that begs possibility and is the passageway of transfiguration into becoming-ocean, an ongoing task that as we further entangle with multispecies worlds, will further reveal the role of the aesthetic, of the poetic, of hospitality, of a deep engagement with the cry of the earth and the cry of the exiled.

III. *Becoming-ocean*—aesthetic questions and reverberations

"We heard the world open, express itself, clamor, rumble, call, demand, invade, fear, be moved, forbid. I'm telling the story of the world beginning to tell its story."

Michel Serres, *Biogeoa*

Multispecies Artists

Sense, silence, opacity, impossibility, dissensus, touch, affect, relation, texture—these are the flows, tones, and reverberations of the aesthetic within shared and multispecies worlds, divergent performances of an ongoing, more-than-human *redistribution of the sensible* (Rancière). In an interview with "Artforum," Rancière defines the aesthetic: "that's what 'aesthetics' means: A work of art is defined as such by belonging to a certain regime of identification, a certain distribution of the visible, the sayable, and the possible" (Rancière qtd. in Carnevale and Kelsey n.p.). When read and

performed through the lens of *becoming-ocean*, our definition of the aesthetic necessarily widens as what is sayable, visible, and possible within worlds that express, speak, create, mourn in vastly different, more-than-human ways requires a re-redistribution of the sensible. Raymond Ruyer, late 20th century philosopher of science, orients that within all of life there resides an inherent creative and aesthetic dimension wherein all the forms of life yield a play of aesthetic dimension; “in every domain, aesthetic forms have a non-rigid unity, ‘couples the precise with imprecision. They are midway between a meaningful language and the language of dreams where themes, while disjointed, remain just as expressive” (176). A pervasive thread running throughout Guattari’s 1989 text, *The Three Ecologies*, is that humans should set aside “pseudo-scientific paradigms” in order to think-with and alongside aesthetic paradigms (12). Through the lens of the more-than-human and our shared and multispecies worlds, not only must aesthetics be widened in how it is defined, but in who we allow and acknowledge as aesthetic and ethical beings who make creative choices and agency within their worlds.

Rancière’s argument for the *redistribution of the sensible* and the argument here for a more-than-human re-redistribution of the sensible creates new possibilities amongst the impossibilities of human hierarchical and exclusionary thinking and ethical practices within shared worlds. The marginalization of the ethical and aesthetic fodder created by the earth, the animal, the Other, is a transfiguring space of opacity/possibility for us as humans and alters the established hierarchy and sensory order set in place by human exceptionalism. Alternate modes of aesthetic work and practice, especially by the more-than-human, re-redistributes the sensible and reconfigures ethical thinking and practice and challenges our human ways of knowing, of speaking, of listening, of making-meaning—of worlding. An aesthetic worlding and widening allows us to think-with/mourn-with our oceans as not only a scientific or biological partner, but an aesthetic one. If imposing our anthropocentric epistemological practices upon the more-than-human is a breach of ethics and is a performance of consensus only and if this all-knowing mode of relational operation thwarts an interrelational knowing outside of human-only thinking, language, and ethical practices, then what other pathways emerge? How can we, as humans, engage within equitably ethical practices of *becoming-ocean*?

Woven Textures

Within aesthetics, the space of not knowing, is a foundationally creative space. In *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari rethink science, philosophy, and art as spaces that always include the ‘I do not know’—“but on both sides, philosophy and science (like art itself with its third side) include an *I do not know* that has become positive and creative, the condition of creation itself, and that consists in determining *by* what one does not know” (128). “The thought of opacity distracts me from absolute truths whose guardian I might believe myself to be” writes Glissant who opens up this ethical space of opacity as the space of aesthetics as well (192). Outside of absolute truths and the illusion of a full-knowing of the Other we find this *I do not know* space to be that of possibility; “far from cornering me within futility and inactivity, by making me sensitive to the limits of every method, it relativizes every possibility of every action within me” (Glissant 192). This is the passageway of the possibility of *becoming-ocean*. This passageway of possibility of *becoming-ocean* is an aesthetic weaving and entanglement across and within worlds of difference—weavings and entanglements that are grounded in fluid relations and cohabitation. Glissant notes, “opacities can coexist and converge, weaving fabrics. To understand these truly one must focus on the texture of the weave and not on the nature of its components” (190). What texture does our *becoming-ocean* create? These are relational, poetic, interconnected textures. In a re-redistributed sense, *becoming-ocean* is a force within us that has been taking place all along. We do not breathe alone, we breathe with the whales, the ocean, the trees. Silence is not silence but the discourse behind the human discourse of the coral reefs silencing as they suffer. We are relationally, ethically, and aesthetically woven. Baptiste Morizot, in the 2022

text *Ways of Being Alive*, writes of this deeply woven relational entanglement—"because the weakening of one form of life caught in the weave makes the web vibrate all the way to us, and reminds us that we have never been alone" (227). Possibilities, textures, webs, silence, breath, vibrations—*becoming-ocean*.

Affect

Impossibilities are generative gaps of knowledge, the aesthetic-ethical space of *I do not know* that invents and creates passageways of aesthetic and ethical possibilities. These impossible impasses—of mourning-with, of hearing silence, of encountering what we cannot encounter, of *becoming-ocean*—work the way water itself does, finding its way through cracks, finding light through impossibly dense boulders, workings its way creatively as it works out the business of the world. Within this work of aesthetics is the force of *affect*, which, for Deleuze, is the very path of possibility. In a 1978 lecture on Spinoza, Deleuze says: "to assume that there was a power of being affected which defined the power of being affected of the whole universe is quite possible since all relations are combined to infinity..." (Deleuze n.p.). For philosopher Bruno Latour, the lack of emotions and appropriate affect in regards to our shared world is what is missing within the new and contemporary ecological class (SJ n.p.). The ability to affect and be affected are ethically aesthetic concerns that are woven from a multiplicity of threads and of divergent ways and means of knowing and of making meaning. Latour articulates this as new notions of materiality that "allows for resonances"—resonances that open up "a whole series of possibilities" (SJ n.p.). As the philosopher maintains, "...they make it possible to talk about the fact that the sciences no longer come from what in English is called 'the view from nowhere,' which defines a material framework, to which then, if necessary, the spiritual, aesthetic, and moral elements can be added" (Latour qtd. in SJ n.p.). The Universe fibers of which we are woven and entangled within are reverberations of affect—a passageway of multiplicitous directions, an opening of becoming, a pathway of alternate ways of knowing, thinking, and practicing. Deleuze utilizes *affect* in a way that performs the capacity of a body to be affected by other bodies—here, we extend these bodies to include more-than-human bodies and embodiment and the ways in which we not only create impact but are impacted upon ourselves. When speaking of our anthropogenic affects upon the world, and even within the designations of this epoch of time as the *Anthropocene*, what is performed again is the hierarchical impact of effect and affect that the human has upon and against all other. What Deleuze and Latour are arguing for is a multidirectional and multilateral passageway of affect. We are opacities woven together in relation and as such these affects pass back and forth. Here, within the realm of *becoming-ocean*, in becoming through a mourning-with alternate worlds and beings we must become affected by what we often cannot fully sense, or feel, or know, or make intelligible to our human limits. This generative impossibility is the opening of the possibility of becoming—of aesthetic paradigms of worlding that weave us into assemblages of affect that generate equitable practices of (co)world building.

IV. *Becoming-ocean*—haunted, poetic, and impossible hospitality

"The wind now calls for help. I can no longer hear the surf or the hurricane without deciphering those canonic calls: mayday, help me, come help me!"

Michel Serres, *Biogea*

Haunted Cries

Haunted, hospitable, poetic, political, ecological—these are the aesthetic-ethical resonances of *becoming-ocean*. In which language does the ocean speak, in what language does it cry out? These more-than-human cries and expressions are the languages woven up within our entanglements and is the language to which we must respond as we set sail within the voyage of *becoming-ocean*. In a 2022 interview with *La Civiltà Cattolica*, Latour remarks on the text of Pope Francis who aligns the

cry of the earth with the *cry of the poor*; “by linking the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor, the pope establishes a link between ecology and injustice, and also takes note of the fact that the Earth, somehow, becomes excited, can act and suffer” (Latour qtd. in SJ n.p.). These cries, of the earth and of the marginalized, are the cries of *becoming-ocean* and require the reorientation of the singular subject that occurs within becoming. *Becoming-ocean* holds within it both political and ecological implications. Within the realm of the political, the aesthetic is engaged as it is the fight and demand of marginalized and exiled groups oppressed within the hegemony to be seen, heard, acknowledged. Rancière aligns the political with the aesthetic: “politics, meanwhile, has an aesthetic dimension: It is a common landscape of the given and the possible” (qtd. in Carnevale and Kelsey n.p.). Here, the political, the ethical, and the aesthetic are wound together in a generative assemblage of possibility along the Universe fibers and threads of *becoming-ocean*. Cries of the earth. Cries of the poor. Rancière asks, “what landscape can one describe as the meeting place between artistic practice and political practice?” (Carnevale and Kelsey n.p.). In order to immerse ourselves in this question we set sail at the generative thresholds between aesthetic and political practice at the multiplicity of borderlines within *becoming-ocean*. *Becoming-ocean* is aesthetic, political, ethical, artistic.

Becoming-ocean is a poetic, polyphonic, impossible hospitality. It is the persistent task of widening our ecological consciousness and of taking responsible and ethical care of the ways in which our human impact entangles with our shared, more-than-human worlds. Our entanglements perform and reveal the multiplicity inherent within every thread and fiber that connects us from shore to sea and sea to shore. In *becoming-ocean* we are transfigured by the ocean and its becomings, a transition from a singular entity into the many. And yet, within *becoming-ocean* we become-with what Serres calls the other *others*; “other *others*: belling or howling living things and resonating things” (196). Mourning—with these other *others* that speak, utter, and express outside of human-only languages and epistemological models ushers us into the transformative space of becoming-ocean—as mourning is both a material and immaterial reconfiguration of subjectivity, of ethical and aesthetic thinking and practices within a shared, interdependent, interrelational, and in-trouble world and is a bellowing, howling, living and resonating passageway.

Hospitality

What is at the heart of *becoming-ocean*? —a multispecies, creative, and polyphonic hospitality. The ocean is a multiplicitous body of being that welcomes unconditionally what arrives. Here, another generative impossibility emerges, that of hospitality itself. Derrida writes, “an unconditional hospitality is, to be sure, practically impossible to live; one cannot in any case, and by definition, organize it” (129). For Derrida, the law of unconditional hospitality demands an unlimited opening to the coming of the Other and makes no demands upon the guest, making this position in its essence an ethical one. As such, Derrida acquiesces that this ethical and unconditional hospitality is indeed an impossible one. Yet, the ocean unconditionally welcomes, accepting even anthropogenic waste and hindrance into its depths, having then to face such monstrous consequences. It welcomes unconditionally, performing the impossible and unconditional hospitality of which Derrida writes. Hospitality, when performed alongside multispecies biosemiotics and mourning, becomes an enlivened passageway that puts into question not only the privileged position humankind puts ourselves in, but puts into question our ethical structures within shared worlds as well. The ocean and its inhabitants mourn deeply the human excess that finds its way deep into ocean waters. In *The Beast & The Sovereign volume 1*, Derrida writes of the 130 dolphins who were washed up and stranded on the beaches of Northern France; “...a species a large number of whom, two or three weeks ago, seem to have lost their sense of direction, and doubtless through the fault of men and human pollution of the ocean depths as well as the water close to the coast, and thereby disoriented by man, those poor dolphins lamentably but obstinately became beached and died, on the beaches of northern France” (341). Can we hear the cries and calls of these 130 dolphins now dead, who yet still haunt contempo-

rary time and ecological practice and thought? These calls require response. The ghosts of human consumption and the ghosts of poor human ethical practices toward bodies and worlds on the move haunts its waters and out of it arises many a specter that put us and our worlding practices into question.

Becoming-ocean is becoming-hospitality and is as well a becoming-fluid and malleable borders and centers of not only mapping practices, but epistemological practices of thinking, of ethics, of aesthetics. The ocean blurs, blends, whirls, swirls, moves—in contrast, anthropocentric hegemonies orient the human as a solid and secure center, relegating all otherness of earth, animal, and world to the margins. Not only is there an ecological marginalization of multispecies ways of thinking, knowing, expressing but there is as well an otherness within humanity of those the dominant hierarchy has deemed as outside, exiled, less-than. *Becoming-ocean* is a continual and fluid remapping, a deterritorialization of who we allow to be at home and who we exile.

The ideology of the human at the center creates the discourse where we habitually view ourselves, whether within the delineations of taxonomy or within privileged positions within space, to see ourselves as the one who is able to offer and speak a *welcome*. This orientation of welcome is one Derrida puts into question, “to dare to say welcome is perhaps to insinuate that one is at home here, that one knows what it means to be at home, and that at home one receives, invites, or offers hospitality, thus appropriating for oneself a place to *welcome* the other...” (15). *Becoming-ocean* is a radical deterritorialization and transformation of a hierarchy of subjectivities within welcoming, hospitality, space, time, aesthetics, ethics, and politics as well. *Becoming-ocean* is a continual putting into question of the self, of the sovereign and human ‘I,’ of the one who is enabled to utter a welcome.

These impossibilities of hospitality are woven alongside the impossibilities of ethics, and too of justice. As Derrida writes: “to address oneself to the other in the language of the other is, it seems, the condition of all possible justice, but apparently, in all rigor it is not only impossible (since I cannot speak the language of the other except to the extent that I appropriate it and assimilate it according to the law of an implicit third) but even excluded by justice as law...” (17). For Derrida, the true justice of unconditional hospitality is a radical openness to the Other, so much so that identities suffer themselves symbolic deaths. Language ruptures at these seams of hospitality, revealing generative gaps of possibilities. The oceans perform these impossibilities and in *becoming-ocean* we become closer to the unconditional hospitality that is the event of ethical practice, the impossible event of justice. We are, in a sense, made whole within ethical configuration only through this *becoming-ocean*. The blurred borders and boundaries and as well the blurring of the positions of guest and host are performed within *becoming-ocean* and the possibilities here emerge to reveal how these gaps between allow for the fertile return again and again of the aesthetic as a relational sphere of alternate ways of knowing.

Poetry

The generative impossibilities within unconditional hospitality, the ethical right to opacity, the space of not fully knowing, the ruptures of ethical thinking and practice, and the impossible space of justice all reveal a generative gap—a gap wherein the poetic flows. The poetic is the passageway of the possible. In response to the impossibilities of hospitality Derrida writes that “an act of hospitality can only be poetic.” (2). *Becoming-ocean*—as it is an opening into hospitality and ethical configurations wherein identity, politics, language, and aesthetics are fluid and opaque—is an opening up into the wild space of poetics. The cry of poetry, for Glissant, is the cry of the self as part and crowd: “we know ourselves as part and as crowd, in an unknown that does not terrify. We cry our cry of poetry. Our boats are open, and we sail them for everyone” (9). The space of the unknown, the space of opacity, the space too of silence, of sounds and mournings and languages we cannot fully decipher open up the possibility of the poetic. Serres writes, “*mundus patet*: should the world open greatly, it will launch me into its silence. The totality remains silent. Knowledge expanded in elation” (198). These are the cries of poetry: Elation. Relation. Opacity.

Becoming-ocean as becoming-hospitality as becoming-poetic is made possible through poetry's ability to play within the realm of the impossible, of creation, of invention, of imagination, of working within the ruptures, of playing within the unknown, "an unknown that does not terrify," an unknown that is the ethical right to opacity. *Becoming-ocean*, as it reorders language, hospitality, identity, ethics, and aesthetics is the realm of the poetic and the poetic holds the space for silence, sensation, vibration, grace, poesis—all outside of human-only thinking, knowing, creating. It is as well the fluid space of relation, interrelation, interconnection, and interdependence.

Poetics is the relationally aesthetic-ethical force of a remapping of identity, space, and place. Glissant writes, "the poet's word leads from periphery to periphery, and, yes, it reproduces the track of circular nomadism; that is, it makes every periphery into a center; furthermore, it abolishes the very notion of center and periphery" (29). *Becoming-ocean* is the poetic work of abolishing centers and margins which oppress and exile otherness. The poetic is an aesthetic operation wherein difference is honored and respected while allowing for the threshold wherein mutual transformation occurs within the space of the borderline, the space of sense, of affect, and too of mourning.

"An act of hospitality can only be poetic"—Derrida's short but powerful assertion derives from the impossibility of unconditional hospitality to be so radically open to the Other that we ourselves are completely re-ordered. Guattari writes, "there is no boundary between the two elements. I oppress myself inasmuch as that I is the product of a system of oppression that extends to all aspects of living" (30). The opening of the poetic leads us into the ethical passageway of a political, ecological, and polyphonic hospitality wherein our identities are so reconfigured through becoming and multiplicity that we begin to see the world anew and can begin to push against the oppression of what is othered and exiled. We are once again reconfigured by the cry of poetry, the cry of the earth, the cry of the exiled.

Worlds on the Move

To *become-ocean* is to become thoroughly haunted by all those who have gone before, these absent-present figures without which there is no ethical thinking or practice. Who haunts our oceans and what do these specters ask of us? What ethical claim does *becoming-ocean* and its unrelenting adherence to hospitality, to poetics, to the ghosts of all who have gone before ask of us in participatory and relational ways? Contemporary time is marked by worlds on the move and our ethical response to those worlds on the move is the contemporary urgency, a contemporary crisis of migrations, of oceans and worlds in trouble. We are woven together, all of us, and thus, the survivability and futurities of our worlds are entangled. The residing question has been: how to hear, attune, and respond to the silences of the world, to the mourning of the oceans, to the cries of the earth—and now we turn to the cry of the migrant and the exiled who suffer on the margins of the oppressive and hierarchal systems of welcome and exile within the large-scale, socio-economic and political hegemonies. Contemporary time is marked by the proliferation of worlds and waters that are in trouble and edge toward extinction, as well as worlds that are on the move. The liminality of crossings are the spaces we must think-with, mourn-with, and become-with. Ecologies in trouble require, as Guattari writes in *The Three Ecologies*, "protagonists of social liberation" (43), and as such the migrant, both human and more-than-human, is the protagonist of social liberation whom we must become-with in impossibly hospitable and ethical ways. *Becoming-ocean* is unconditional hospitality, and as such, what does becoming-ocean mean for us on the shore? How in *becoming-ocean* are we called to become-migrant as well, and how do these becomings create more ethically responsive worlding practices?

We began this journey of *becoming-ocean* by setting sail and as such we have been cast off from the shore, from the secure land's statehood performance of secure borders and boundaries. *Becoming-ocean* requires a deep, attentive listening and attunement to the narratives of the earth, of the Other, of the silence, of the multispecies and multiplicity of mournings that transform our means of know-

ing. As Glissant declares, “we cry our cry of poetry. Our boats are open, and we sail them for everyone” (9). *Becoming-ocean* means performing an impossible hospitality to the silence, to the mourning, to the narratives that emerge up from the unceasing waves. In all the spaces between there emerge alternate Universe threads of reverberation and survival and ongoingness in the face of such devastations and silencing. These reverberations are poetic rhythms of survival out of the devastations of climate crisis, of extinction, death, loss, and the criminalization of migratory practices. In the words of Serres, “Yes, I mourn for the sea whose demanding beauty outmatches that of my words, all too human” (10). These threads weave *you* and *I* into a wild *us*-ness of becoming. Becoming-migrant. Becoming-mourning. Becoming-hospitality: *becoming-ocean*. The ocean creaks and groans in mourning. We must go mourning-with. Breath is at stake. Worlds are at stake. The earth is crying out. The suffering are crying out—in *becoming-ocean* we are enabled to hear and respond. May this setting sail return us to the shore never the same.

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