

ORDINARY AFFECTS



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Ordinary Affects is an experiment, not a judgment. Committed not to the demystification and uncovered truths that support a well-known picture of the world, but rather to speculation, curiosity, and the concrete, it tries to provoke attention to the forces that come into view as habit or shock, resonance or impact. *Something* throws itself together in a moment as an event and a sensation; a something both animated and inhabitable.

This book is set in a United States caught in a present that began some time ago. But it suggests that the terms neoliberalism, advanced capitalism, and globalization that index this emergent present, and the five or seven or ten characteristics used to summarize and define it in shorthand, do not in themselves begin to describe the situation we find ourselves in. The notion of a totalized system, of which everything is always already somehow a part, is not helpful (to say the least) in the effort to approach a weighted and reeling present. This is not to say that the forces these systems try to name are not real and literally pressing. On the contrary, I am trying to bring them into view as a scene of immanent force, rather than leave them looking like dead effects imposed on an innocent world.

The ordinary is a shifting assemblage of practices and practical knowledges, a scene of both liveness and exhaustion, a dream of escape or of the simple life.¹ Ordinary affects are the varied, surg-

¹ See Lauren Berlant's essay "Cruel Optimism" (*Differences*, forthcoming) for a brilliant discussion of how objects and scenes of desire matter not just because of their content but because they hold promise

ing capacities to affect and to be affected that give everyday life the quality of a continual motion of relations, scenes, contingencies, and emergences.² They're things that happen. They happen in impulses, sensations, expectations, daydreams, encounters, and habits of relating, in strategies and their failures, in forms of persuasion, contagion, and compulsion, in modes of attention, attachment, and agency, and in publics and social worlds of all kinds that catch people up in something that feels like *something*.³

Ordinary affects are public feelings that begin and end in broad circulation, but they're also the stuff that seemingly intimate lives are made of. They give circuits and flows the forms of a life. They can be experienced as a pleasure and a shock, as an empty pause or a dragging undertow, as a sensibility that snaps into place or a profound disorientation. They can be funny, perturbing, or traumatic. Rooted not in fixed conditions of possibility but in the actual lines of potential that a *something* coming together calls to mind and sets in motion, they can be seen as both the pressure points of events or banalities suffered and the trajectories that forces might take if they were to go unchecked. Akin to Raymond Williams's structures of feeling, they are "social experiences in solution"; they

in the present moment of a thing encountered and because they become the means of keeping whole clusters of affects magnetized to them.

² See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, vol. 1, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), and *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, vol. 2, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

³ See Lauren Berlant's introduction to *Intimacy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) and her essays "Nearly Utopian, Nearly Normal: Post-Fordist Affect in *Rosetta* and *La Promesse*" (*Public Culture*, forthcoming) and "Slow Death" (*Critical Inquiry*, forthcoming) for discussions of an individual's abstract yet contingent desire to feel like he or she is "in" something or can recognize *something*.

“do not have to await definition, classification, or rationalization before they exert palpable pressures.”⁴ Like what Roland Barthes calls the “third meaning,” they are immanent, obtuse, and erratic, in contrast to the “obvious meaning” of semantic message and symbolic signification.⁵ They work not through “meanings” per se, but rather in the way that they pick up density and texture as they move through bodies, dreams, dramas, and social worldings of all kinds. Their significance lies in the intensities they build and in what thoughts and feelings they make possible. The question they beg is not what they might mean in an order of representations, or whether they are good or bad in an overarching scheme of things, but where they might go and what potential modes of knowing, relating, and attending to things are already somehow present in them in a state of potentiality and resonance.

Ordinary affects, then, are an animate circuit that conducts force and maps connections, routes, and disjunctures.⁶ They are a kind of contact zone where the overdeterminations of circulations, events, conditions, technologies, and flows of power literally take place. To attend to ordinary affects is to trace how the potency of forces lies in their immanence to things that are both flighty and hardwired, shifty and unsteady but palpable too. At once abstract and concrete, ordinary affects are more directly compelling than ideologies, as well as more fractious, multiplicitous, and unpredictable than symbolic meanings. They are not the kind of analytic object that can be laid out on a single, static plane of analysis, and

⁴ See Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 133, 132.

⁵ Roland Barthes, “The Third Meaning: Research Notes on Some Eisenstein Stills,” in *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 318.

⁶ See Nigel Thrift, *Knowing Capitalism* (London: Sage, 2005), for a discussion of how capitalism forms an “animate surface” to life.

they don't lend themselves to a perfect, three-tiered parallelism between analytic subject, concept, and world. They are, instead, a problem or question emergent in disparate scenes and incommensurate forms and registers; a tangle of potential connections. Literally moving things—things that are in motion and that are defined by their capacity to affect and to be affected—they have to be mapped through different, coexisting forms of composition, habituation, and event. They can be “seen,” obtusely, in circuits and failed relays, in jumpy moves and the layered textures of a scene. They surge or become submerged. They point to the jump of something coming together for a minute and to the spreading lines of resonance and connection that become possible and might snap into sense in some sharp or vague way.

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Models of thinking that slide over the live surface of difference at work in the ordinary to bottom-line arguments about “bigger” structures and underlying causes obscure the ways in which a reeling present is composed out of heterogeneous and noncoherent singularities. They miss how someone's ordinary can endure or can sag defeated; how it can shift in the face of events like a shift in the kid's school schedule or the police at the door. How it can become a vague but compelling sense that something is happening, or harden into little mythic kernels. How it can be carefully maintained as a prized possession, or left to rot. How it can morph into a cold, dark edge, or give way to something unexpectedly hopeful.

This book tries to slow the quick jump to representational thinking and evaluative critique long enough to find ways of approaching the complex and uncertain objects that fascinate because they literally hit us or exert a pull on us. My effort here is not to finally “know” them—to collect them into a good enough story of what's going on—but to fashion some form of address that is adequate to their form; to find something to say about ordinary affects by performing some of the intensity and texture that makes them habitable and animate. This means building an idiosyncratic map

of connections between a series of singularities.⁷ It means pointing always outward to an ordinary world whose forms of living are now being composed and suffered, rather than seeking the closure or clarity of a book's interiority or riding a great rush of signs to a satisfying end. In this book I am trying to create a contact zone for analysis.

The writing here has been a continuous, often maddening, effort to approach the intensities of the ordinary through a close ethnographic attention to pressure points and forms of attention and attachment. *Ordinary Affects* is written as an assemblage of disparate scenes that pull the course of the book into a tangle of trajectories, connections, and disjunctures. Each scene begins anew the approach to the ordinary from an angle set off by the scene's affects. And each scene is a tangent that performs the sensation that something is happening—something that needs attending to. From the perspective of ordinary affects, thought is patchy and material. It does not find magical closure or even seek it, perhaps only because it's too busy just trying to imagine what's going on.

I write not as a trusted guide carefully laying out the links between theoretical categories and the real world, but as a point of impact, curiosity, and encounter. I call myself “she” to mark the difference between this writerly identity and the kind of subject that arises as a daydream of simple presence. “She” is not so much a subject position or an agent in hot pursuit of something definitive as a point of contact; instead, she gazes, imagines, senses, takes on, performs, and asserts not a flat and finished truth but some possibilities (and threats) that have come into view in the effort to become attuned to what a particular scene might offer.

From the perspective of ordinary affects, things like narrative

⁷ See John Rajchman, *The Deleuze Connections* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000), 4–13, for a discussion of the analysis that works to make connections.

and identity become tentative though forceful compositions of disparate and moving elements: the watching and waiting for an event to unfold, the details of scenes, the strange or predictable progression in which one thing leads to another, the still life that gives pause, the resonance that lingers, the lines along which signs rush and form relays, the layering of immanent experience, the dreams of rest or redemption or revenge. Forms of power and meaning become circuits lodged in singularities. They have to be followed through disparate scenes. They can gather themselves into what we think of as stories and selves. But they can also remain, or become again, dispersed, floating, recombining—regardless of what whole or what relay of rushing signs they might find themselves in for a while.

Walter Benjamin's 1999 *Arcades Project* is one model of this kind of thinking: his nomadic tracing of dream worlds still resonant in material things; his process of writing captions to found fragments and snapshots gathered into a loose assemblage; the way his thought presses close to its objects in order to be affected by them.

Roland Barthes's *S/Z* and *A Lover's Discourse* are models too: his attunement to the movements, pleasures, and poetics of language and things; his sense of the expansive, irreducible nature of forms of signification; his attention to the fragments that comprise things; his notion of the *punctum*—the wounding, personally touching detail that establishes a direct contact.

Leslie Stern's *The Smoking Book* assembles an array of brief ficto-critical stories united only by some mention of smoking, embedding theory in the situations encountered. The result is a mass of resonances linking precise moments and states of desire through a single, thin line of connection. It leaves the reader with an embodied sense of the world as a dense network of mostly unknown links.

Michael Taussig's *My Cocaine Museum* and *The Magic of the State* and Alphonso Lingis's *Dangerous Emotions* and *Foreign Bodies*

also serve here as examples of ficto-critical efforts to perform the intensity of circuits, surges, and sensations.

D. J. Waldie's *Holy Land: A Suburban Memoir* is a surreally realist chronicle of Lakewood, California, which in the 1950s was built, overnight, as the "world's largest" subdivision. Like the subdivision grid, Waldie's memoir is constructed out of tiny bits of personal narrative, hometown tales, and moments in the history of real estate development, all held together with the mortar of a singular though widespread form of ordinariness.

David Searcy's *Ordinary Horror* brilliantly performs the attachment to fantasy that arises out of mundane sights and situations. Many other novels, such as Edward Jones's *The Known World*, Ian McEwan's *Atonement*, or Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*, produce scenes of a world saturated by jumpy attunements.

Finally, Lauren Berlant's mode of thinking and writing on the affects of the present moment serves here as a direct inspiration and source of insight. In her work, the academic concept becomes something new and promising. Embedded in the intense and complex affective attunement of her writing, her concepts of the noncoherent, the incommensurate, and the scenic, as well as of attachment, intimacy, exhaustion, and the unlivable but animating desires for rest or for the simple life have sent me back to rethink scenes over and over again.

It was certainly not small-town values or clean living they were after, but rather the way that the synesthetic web of fabricated sights and tastes made scenes and objects resonate. It was as if they could dwell in the ongoing vibrancy of the ordinary, leaving out the dullness and possible darkness.

The imaginary still lifes they carried home from their forays held the simple but profound promise of contact.

And the charged particularity of the objects, images, and events encountered framed the importance of making implicit things matter.

POTENTIAL

The potential stored in ordinary things is a network of transfers and relays.

Fleeting and amorphous, it lives as a residue or resonance in an emergent assemblage of disparate forms and realms of life.

Yet it can be as palpable as a physical trace.

Potentiality is a thing immanent to fragments of sensory experience and dreams of presence. A layer, or layering to the ordinary, it engenders attachments or systems of investment in the unfolding of things.

TRACES

People are collecting found objects snatched off the literal or metaphorical side of the road. Things that have dropped out of the loop or have been left sagging somewhere are dragged home as if they are the literal residues of past dreaming practices.

The snatching practice mixes a longing for a real world (or something) with the consumer's little dream of spying a gem or tripping over a bargain. And in the mix, all kinds of other things are happening too.

LEARNING AFFECT

Affects are not so much forms of signification, or units of knowledge, as they are expressions of ideas or problems performed as a kind of involuntary and powerful learning and participation. Alphonso Lingis noted the jump of affect in his description of touring a mine at the Arctic Circle: “The young miner who showed me the mine put out every cigarette he smoked on his hand, which was covered with scar tissue. Then I saw the other young miners all had the backs of their hands covered with scar tissue. . . . when my eye fell on them it flinched, seeing the burning cigarette being crushed and sensing the pain. . . . The eye does not read the meaning in a sign; it *jumps* from the mark to the pain and the burning cigarette, and then jumps to the fraternity signaled by the burning cigarettes.”¹⁰

Here, the abstracted sign of collective identity—the scar tissue on the back of everyone’s hands—not only retains its tie to the problems of sense and sociality but demonstrates, or proposes, an extreme trajectory. It shows where things can go, taking off in their own little worlds, when something throws itself together.

Ordinary affects highlight the question of the intimate impacts of forces in circulation. They’re not exactly “personal” but they sure can pull the subject into places it didn’t exactly “intend” to go.

¹⁰ Alphonso Lingis, “The Society of Dismembered Body Parts,” in *Deleuze and the Theatre of Philosophy*, ed. Constantin Boundas and Dorothea Olkowski (New York: Routledge, 1993), 296.

WATER BUGS

Positions are taken, habits loved and hated, dreams launched and wounded.

And just about everyone is part of the secret conspiracy of everyday life to get what you can out of it.

She thinks it's sort of like being a water bug, living on the surface tension of some kind of liquid. Seduced by the sense of an incipient vitality lodged in things, but keeping oneself afloat, too.

And nimble. If you're lucky.

GAMES OF SENSE

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There are games you can play.

Like the game of noticing when the car up ahead in traffic is about to change lanes. Some people have developed a sixth sense about this. They can tell when a lane change is coming even if the driver isn't signaling or the car itself isn't surreptitiously leaning to the edge of the lane or acting nervous.

Or there's the game of trying to pick the quickest checkout lane in a glance. This one's harder. How fast is that cashier? Does that woman have coupons? That one looks like a check writer. That one looks like a talker. There are so many variables and contingencies. Even a brilliant choice can be instantly defeated by the dreaded price check or a register running out of tape. And once you've made your choice, you're stuck with it.

Stuck in a fast lane gone bad, you might start to feel a little desperate for something to do. But you can make a phone call, make a list in your head, get to work on your palm pilot. You can scan the surrounding bodies and tabloid headlines for a quick thrill or

an inner smirk. Or you can just check *yourself* out with a copy of *House and Garden* or *Glamour* or *Esquire*. Picture-perfect scenes flash up and snap into sense. You can relax into the aura of tactile bodies, living rooms, and gardens jumping from fantasy to flesh and back again right before your eyes. The glossy images offer not so much a blueprint of how to look and live as the much more profound experience of watching images touch matter. The jump of things becoming sensate is what meaning has become.

BEING IN PUBLIC

Sensory games spread fast, animating the pleasures and compulsions of being attuned to some kind of a common world of banal yet unspoken, or even occulted, sensibilities.

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Shifting forms of commonality and difference are wedged into daily interactions. There are hard lines of connection and disconnection and lighter, momentary affinities and differences. Little worlds proliferate around everything and anything at all: mall culture, car culture, subway culture, TV culture, shopping culture, all the teams and clubs and organizations (sports teams, dog breeding clubs, scrapbooking clubs, historical re-creation societies, homing pigeon societies, off-road vehicle users clubs, book clubs, collecting clubs, fan clubs, country clubs, professional organizations, walking clubs, home schooling groups, ethnic organizations, adoption groups, sex groups, writers groups, neighborhood hangouts, coffee drinkers), addictions of all kinds (drugs, alcohol, sex, overeating, undereating, cutting, kleptomania), diseases of all kinds, crimes, grief of all kinds, mistakes, wacky ideas. There are scenes of shared experience—of tourists, or of locals versus newcomers, or of people of color walking on a white street, or of people waiting all day at the food stamp office. There are common attachments to musical genres or to dreams of early retirement.

But everyone knows there's something not quite right.

know them all, indulging them in their tiresome games and trying to help them if he could figure out when they were being straight. But then they would slip out of reach and then call back later, starting the cat-and-mouse game again.

But at exactly 4 AM all the calls would stop dead and he would lie down on the floor to sleep for the last two hours of his shift. He said he guessed even borderlines had to sleep *sometime*. It was weird, though, how it was like clockwork.

THE AFFECTIVE SUBJECT

The affective subject is a collection of trajectories and circuits. You can recognize it through fragments of past moments glimpsed unsteadily in the light of the present like the flickering light of a candle. Or project it onto some kind of track to follow. Or inhabit it as a pattern you find yourself already caught up in (again) and there's nothing you can do about it now.

You can comfort it, like a child. Or punish it for getting off track, even for a minute.

Out there on its own, it seeks out scenes and little worlds to nudge it into being. It wants to be somebody. It tries to lighten up, to free itself, to learn to be itself, to lose itself.

None of this is easy. Straight talk about willpower and positive thinking claims that agency is just a matter of getting on track, as if all the messy business of real selves could be left behind like a bad habit or a hangover. But things are always backfiring. Self-making projects proliferate at exactly the same rate as the epidemics of addictions and the self-help shelves at the bookstore.

The figure of a beefed-up agency becomes a breeding ground for all kinds of strategies of complaint, self-destruction, flight, reinvention, redemption, and experimentation. As if everything rests on agency's shoulders. But there's always more to it than that.

ODD MOMENTS

At odd moments in the course of the day, you might raise your head in surprise or alarm at the uncanny sensation of a half-known influence.

The streets are littered with half-written signs of personal/public disasters. The daily sightings of the homeless haunt the solidity of things with the shock of something awful. They hold up signs while puppies play at their feet: “Hungry,” “Will work for food,” “God bless you.” The sign hits the senses with a mesmerizing and repellent force. It pleads to be recognized, if only in passing. It gestures toward an ideological center that claims the value of will-power (“Will work for food”) and it voices a simple dream of redemption (“God bless you”). But it’s too sad. It offers no affect to mime, no scene of common desire, no line of vitality to follow, no intimate secret to plumb, no tips to imbibe for safety or good health.

There is no social recipe in circulation for what to do about homelessness, or even what to do with your eyes when confronted with it face to face.

The eye glances off the graphic lettering of the homeless sign as something to avoid like the plague. But the sign also prompts the surge of affect toward a profound scene.

A dollar bill stuck out of a car window gets a quick surge forward and the heightened, unassimilated, affect of a raw contact. “God bless you.”

stant clash of people butting up against each other followed by the consuming dream of righteous revenge.

To say that a thing like redemptive violence is a myth is not to say that it's like a bad dream you can wake up from or an idea you can talk people out of. It's more like a strand in the netting that holds things together. A conduit for bits and pieces of political beliefs, networks, technologies, affinities, dreamed-of possibilities and events.

It can take many forms. It can be a mean pettiness, a dissolute rage, a habit of self-destruction, an overcharged and swollen will, a body in a state of alarm. It can be a derailed sensibility thrashing around at full throttle. Or something really small. It's road rage, or parents whipped into violent deeds to protect their children, or drug addicts slashing at the American dream as they spiral out of it. There's always something a little "off" in the way it plays itself out. A little sad. It's the teenagers who kill, the pipe dreams popping up all over the place, the smoldering resentments in workplaces and intimate spaces. It's Andrea Yates drowning her children to save them from eternal damnation. Or Thomas Junta—the "hockey dad"—killing his son's coach in a fight on the ice. Or Junta's brother, arrested shortly thereafter for assault and battery with a dangerous weapon when he threw a cell phone at a Best Buy employee who wouldn't let him return it without a receipt.

THE NET

Something huge and impersonal runs through things, but it's also mysteriously intimate and close at hand. At once abstract and concrete, it's both a distant, untouchable order of things and a claustrophobically close presence, like the experience of getting stuck in a customer service information loop every time you try to get to the bottom of things.

It's as if a net has grown around a mutating gelatinous substance.

It's also as if the net is full of holes, so that little pieces or whole blobs of things are always falling out of it and starting up some new thing on their own.

It harbors fantasies and fears.

It spawns trajectories.

It sets up a quick relay between things.

It induces both rage and the softly positive sense of being connected and so somehow safe (or not, but at least "in it together").

There's a promise of losing oneself in the flow of things. But the promise jumps in a quick relay to the sobering threats of big business, global warming, the big-box corporate landscape, the master-planned community, the daily structural violence of inequalities of all kinds, the lost potentials, the lives not lived, the hopes still quietly harbored or suddenly whipped into a frenzy.

Either that, or the promise of losing yourself in the flow becomes a dull, empty drifting that you can't get yourself out of.

in the mirror. The proliferating cultures of the body spin around the palpable promise that fears and pleasures and forays into the world can be made productive, all-consuming passions. But getting on track is not the simple, sober choice of a lifetime but rather a tightrope from which you can topple into ordinary sloppiness or an “epidemic of the will” like obsessive dieting.¹³ And after any decision, the body returns to its ordinary buzz.

THE BODY SURGES

The body surges. Out of necessity, or for the love of movement.

Lifestyles and industries pulse around it, groping for what to make of the way it throws itself at objects of round perfection.

The way it builds its substance out of layers of sensory impact.

The way the body is submerged in a flow and both buoyed and carried away. It strains against recalcitrant or alien forces, or it drifts downstream, eyes trained on the watery clouds overhead.

Agency lodged in the body is literal, immanent, and experimental. It no sooner starts out than it gets sidetracked or hits a wall and then holes up, bulks up, wraps itself up. It might pull itself together or pull a veil around itself, build a nest of worn clothing redolent with smells of sweat, or cheap perfume, or smoky wood fires burrowed into wool. If it gets sluggish, it might call for sweet and heavy things to match its inner weight, or for salt and caffeine to jolt it to attention.

The body knows itself as states of vitality, immersion, isolation, exhaustion, and renewal.

It can be alert to the smell of something sweet or rancid in the air or to a movement too quick, a gesture that’s a little off.

It can be ponderous, too, gazing on its own form with a zenlike emptiness. As a new lover, it dotes on revealed scars and zones in

¹³ Sedgwick, “Epidemics of the Will,” 130–42.

SOMETIMES WHEN YOU HEAR SOMEONE SCREAM . . .

A train wails in the still of the night. It often wakes her. Or it lodges in her sleep, reemerging as a tactile anxiety in the dawn.

She scans her dreamy brain for what might have happened or what might be coming. The morning air is saturated with the smells of kumquat trees and mimosa blossoms and the sounds of mourning doves and pet parrots that long ago escaped their cages and now breed in the trees.

She knows why the train cries. Danny's friend Bobby passed out on the tracks one night and was killed. He and his old lady had been down at the free concert on the river. This is a charged event for the street people. There are graceful moments: a dance gesture, a wide-open smile, a sudden upsurge of generosity, the startled amplitude of pariahs suddenly rubbing shoulders with the housed on a public stage, perhaps even playing the role of party host, making announcements or giving directions or advice. There are crashes too: the people falling down drunk in front of the stage, the vomiting, a man huddled and pale, too sick to party tonight. There are fights.

That night Bobby had a fight with his old lady and stomped off alone. He followed the train tracks to the camp. Then, in Danny's story, Bobby sat alone on the tracks, taking stock in a booze-soaked moment of reprieve. Bobby loved the romance of the train: the high, lonesome sound in the distance, the childhood memory of the penny laid on the tracks, the promise of movement, the sheer power. He lay down and closed his eyes. Then, in the middle of the long train passing, he raised his head, awakening. They say if he hadn't, the train would have passed right over him. But who can sleep with a train passing by overhead?

Sometimes now she gets stuck at the railroad crossing waiting for the train to pass. One day, a boxcar full of Mexican immigrants drifted slowly by, waving and smiling as if they were staging their own welcome to the United States. Another time she drifted into a memory of the coal mining camps in West Virginia where the coal trains would block for hours the only road in and out of town. People would get out and lean on their trucks to talk.

Once a quiet claim began to circulate that someday somebody was going get a pile of dynamite, blow the train in half, and clear the road for good.

The train shapes a story of abjection mixed with vital hopes. Something in the exuberant waving of the new immigrants, the explosive claims in the coal camps, or Bobby's lying down to sleep on the tracks, suggests an intoxicated confidence that surges between life and dream. It's as if the train sparks weighted promises and threats and incites a reckless daydream of being included in a world.

This is the daydream of a subject whose only antidote to structural disenfranchisement is a literal surge of vitality and mobility. A subject whose extreme vulnerability is rooted in the sad affect of being out of place, out of luck, or caught between a rock and a hard place, and who makes a passionate move to connect to a life when mainstream strategies like self-discipline or the gathering of resources like a fortress around the frail body are not an option. A subject who is literally touched by a force and tries to take it on, to let it puncture and possess one, to make oneself its object, if only in passing. A subject for whom an unattainable hope can become the tunnel vision one needs to believe in a world that could include one.¹⁴

¹⁴See Rajchman, *The Deleuze Connections*, 140–44, for a discussion of how all “belief in the world” is lodged in sensation.

This kind of thing happens all the time. It's an experiment that starts with sheer intensity and then tries to find routes into a "we" that is not yet there but maybe could be. It's a facility with imagining the potential in things that comes to people not despite the fact that it's unlikely anything good will come of it but rather be-cause of that fact.

It's as if the subject of extreme vulnerability turns a dream of possible lives into ordinary affects so real they become paths one can actually travel on.

Abject and unlivable bodies don't just become "other" and unthinkable. They go on living, animated by possibilities at work in the necessary or the serendipitous.

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Library of Congress

Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Stewart, Kathleen, 1953–

Ordinary affects / Kathleen Stewart.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-8223-4088-1 (cloth : alk. paper)

ISBN 978-0-8223-4107-9 (pbk. : alk. paper)

I. Social psychology—United States. I. Title.

HM1027.U6S74 2007

302'.12—dc22 2007010609