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## Love Has a Body that Feels Like Heat

*(Extra)Ordinary Affects and Genderqueer Love*

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**ABSTRACT** Genderlessness or postgendered orientations are not the same as genderqueer affect/s, yet Donna Haraway's figure of the cyborg helps imagine what a genderqueer affect might be. Genderqueer experience (including affect) can help us move beyond the limitations of gendered as well as epistemological dualisms. Affect transcends the reductive notions of materiality that return us always to dualistic constructions, including gendered ones. Kathleen Stewart's attention to affect—both experienced as well as embodied, a doing as well as a thing—provides a way into and out of the genderqueer body that is not dependent upon its materiality. **KEYWORDS** genderqueer affect; queer fragility; queer tools; trans\*; critical autoethnography

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[Ordinary affects] 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.

KATHLEEN STEWART, *ORDINARY AFFECTS*<sup>1</sup>

Love is in the depth of bodies, but also on that incorporeal surface which engenders it.

GILLES DELEUZE AND CLAIRE PARNET, *DIALOGUES II*<sup>2</sup>

*My love for you is the soft morning sky*

*Ever hopeful.*

*Your love is a “spreading line of resonance”<sup>3</sup>*

*A connection that makes everything possible*

*That snaps everything into sense, in “some sharp or vague way”<sup>4</sup>:*

*You bring me into focus*

*You make the world intelligible to me*

*And me intelligible to the world.<sup>5</sup>*

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This piece, I said to myself, this piece needs to be performed in the first person. Because I am, in this piece, the first person I see and feel when I address my subject. It is from my own subjectivity that I speak, transparently, not through or from someone else's. And by acknowledging the first personness of my account, I perform that persistent desire to give an account of myself<sup>6</sup> as a human impulse and intensity, neither as research nor by way of explanation. This account is an explosion, an experience, an all-consuming embodiment. This account does not, however, make any truth-claims about who my first person is, or anyone else's, what a "she" is, or what its function is, or any other gendered pronouns or becomings.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps I have two first persons inside of me, it suggests. My genderqueer subjectivity might mean that I have multiple or no gendered subjects inside of my first-person account at all.<sup>8</sup> The tension of performing a so-called first person account for a cluster of selves is in itself a deliciously pernicious intensity.

*We text ourselves into love.  
We write things like "I should have kissed you"  
And "IMHO we are meant for each other"  
And LOL #YouAreMyPerson #HowManySleeps #YouAreMyBestDream.  
We are women of words, so something drastic has happened:  
Words don't exactly fail but just condense, burn off the excess  
Reduce down like a good French beef jus  
Maybe touch is the haiku of words.  
LMAO. #ImSoDeep  
#ILoveYou*

## **GENDERQUEER FEROCITY**

Words and touch. Heat. How to puncture the skin of the story.

Donna Haraway asks, "Why should our bodies end at the skin, or include at best other beings encapsulated by skin?"<sup>9</sup> But genderqueers live with a healthy skepticism about skin and flesh, for our bodies have never begun or ended there. Cyborgs offer a "promise of monsters," which "define quite different political possibilities and limits from those proposed by the mundane fiction of Man and Woman," a promise that genderqueers too imagine in political ways. How might, we agree, "the possibilities for our reconstitution include the utopian dream of the hope for a monstrous world without gender"?<sup>10</sup> Monstrosity, for genderqueers, is an everyday experience, an ordinary affect, and a beautiful political project.

Haraway was influenced in her writing of “A Cyborg Manifesto” by Monique Wittig and Luce Irigaray, who

exhorted women to reject masculinist histories and instead “write the truth of their bodies” through methods like autobiography and performance. This practice, which they called “feminine writing,” influenced a generation of feminists. To a large degree Haraway’s [Cyborg] Manifesto operates in the spirit of “*l’écriture féminine*,” using non-linear, performative and autobiographical language to describe the truth of a new kind of body: that of the cyborg.<sup>11</sup>

Genderlessness or postgendered orientations are not the same thing as genderqueer or its affect/s, and yet Haraway’s figure of the cyborg helps imagine what a genderqueer affect might be. Genderqueer scholars are exploring new territories in which our monstrous selves embody the political and narrative power of non-binary gendered subjects, as and beyond the intelligible. Cyborgs are one iteration of the historically unintelligible, but there are others. In my case, cyborg theory is performed as genderqueer scholarship that punctures the too-often antiseptic skins of academia. In these collective bodies, I delight in disturbing as a means to regeneration and decay, of suturing skin-incisions, of lighting dim scholar-halls, of dust-busting, of love. Performance becomes an act of messy contagion, a performance of the intermingling of fluids (disciplinary and gender).

If writing by subaltern women<sup>12</sup> is “the pre-eminent technology of cyborgs,” then personal narrative and critical autoethnography<sup>13</sup> is an effective (and affective) act of resistance against the appropriation of writing as a positivist technology by the academy. Queers (as well as genderfluid subjects) use language in the cyborgian ways that Haraway associates with those like Cherríe Moraga and other radical women of color, and while Haraway does not refer specifically to gender/queer<sup>14</sup> subjects, she addresses the ways the cyborg figure blurs the lines between men and women.

This performance text is a love story, but also a genderqueer autoethnography that performs affect more than narrative. Rather than resting in the intensities of falling in love, I explore what a genderqueer affect might be. Judith Halberstam has argued, for example, that “The violence of a specifically queer posthumanity is realized when what [Michel] Foucault calls the ‘reverse discourse’ becomes something else, something more than the ‘homosexual talking on his/her own behalf.’”<sup>15</sup> What is the value of moving beyond a voice of sexual or gender intelligibility? Genderqueer subjects, like Halberstam’s posthuman

body, believe there is value here, and are driven to “explode into more disjointed multiplicities”<sup>16</sup> of desire, while allowing our *queer intrigue* to vibrate through words where our colonized and surveilled bodies fail.

For Halberstam, the gender/queer posthuman body importantly does other work besides desiring, pleasuring, and sexing. The genderqueer body intrigues,<sup>17</sup> not only in its doing of all these things, but also in its loving; where intelligibility is an intrigue not only regarding *who* one loves and is loved by, but also *how* one operationalizes those intensities, intensities that move beyond pleasure, sex, and love, but also beyond words.<sup>18</sup>

*What is a genderqueer affect?*

*Like most posthuman experiments, it includes queer tools but refuses to be limited by the visible, or the instrumental:*

*what does it mean to feel nonbinary-gendered without something to show for it?*

*Despite a long history of sexual and genderfluidity, we still struggle:*

*Trans\*<sup>19</sup> we can understand now, genderqueer we can't.*

*Gay marriage we can handle, polyamory we can't.*

*Always the craving of fixity.*

*“What is so difficult about feeling differently gendered anyway?” people ask. “What’s the big deal?”*

*Is it an internal orientation or an intersubjective one?*

*Well it’s both of course but:*

*Is a rose really still a rose by any other name?*

*Isn’t a rose a little different if you call it an orchid, just a little?*

*Perhaps we crave fixity because it offers us the cruel optimism<sup>20</sup> of hope for understanding, for empathy: if I can name you,*

*I can know you.*

*But like most cruel optimisms, it’s a chimera.<sup>21</sup>*

The “it” here denotes the possibility of knowing. Knowing through encounter rather than knowing through recognition, this essay and performance text questions the materiality-to-affect relationship of genderqueer intelligibility through genderqueer love (as an affective becoming when recognition fails). The genderqueer body in this poem can be conveyed by its affect of heat rather than its queer tools,<sup>22</sup> an important part of the social disruption of genderfluidity. More common readings of a queer posthuman attend to the materiality of bodies rather than the affects of genderqueer desire.<sup>23</sup> But can genderqueer and trans\* prostheses be said to have affects of their own?<sup>24</sup> What does it mean to

feel like something else (boi, for example, or boigirl) without a bodily or material expression of it that is, in some generalizable way, intelligible to others? Judith Butler reminds us that intelligibility is an act of culture and sociality, not biology, and that the social construction of bodies that matter (and those that do not) depends upon this relationship between the subject and its social context:

“Sex” is, thus, not simply what one has, or a static description of what one is: it will be one of the norms by which the “one” becomes viable at all, that which qualifies a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility.<sup>25</sup>

While recognizing Butler’s “fixity of the body, its contours, its movements” as “fully material,” and understanding gender neither as “the body’ [nor] its given sex,”<sup>26</sup> genderqueer subjectivity problematizes this notion of intelligibility—but not necessarily in a quest for the intelligibility for which Butler has argued.

Haraway says “we are all chimeras,”<sup>27</sup> but are we? Trans\* is a way of challenging the materiality of bodies, but still conforms to a normative sociality of gender binarism. Something we might call an object-oriented ontology of humanness that pivots not on the flesh, but rather on the flesh’s relationship with (and need of) things. But genderqueers cannot rest on material bodies, even object-enhanced ones, at least not on bodies free of alteration, so we live in the affective realm, in the moments and intensities of intersubjective exchange. We do not measure our experiences in success or failure to “pass,” we do not crave a binarized desire to “become coherent and unitary.”<sup>28</sup> Instead, we choose to ride from intensity to intensity, the heat of genderfluidity, to insert into social contexts the posthuman intrigue to “become other and to become itself.” For genderqueers, there is no craving of fixity, but there is an embrace of becoming “*intrigued and intriguing*.”<sup>29</sup>

*Your eyes split me in two on a summer morning under the Hollywood sign  
at the reservoir where we walked and walked and walked until I got my nerve up.  
You said don't take my picture  
#IHateSelfies.*

*I told you stories, my usual way of stalling.*

*We sat on a bench and a young couple came by with a dog or was it a kid or  
maybe it was just a jogger and we looked out over the brown hills and  
bluegreen reservoir water side by side trying to touch and trying not to look at  
each other and breathing a bit too fast and my feelings about LA changed as  
my feelings about you changed and I wondered how I'd explain it to others in*

*my life and we both wondered about a lot of other explanations but it was already set in motion and nothing could pull us back.*

Both trans\* and genderqueer scholarship and popular media coverage often remain focused on language. Debates about pronouns are, at their heart, about desire and belonging.<sup>30</sup> They too often return to cisgendered and binary notions of bodies. Haraway's cyborg offers a means of thinking about the genderqueer subject who is as yet unintelligible in wider society.<sup>31</sup> This intelligibility does not rest alone on being physically recognizable; it includes the ways in which our feelings, emotions, and intensities are persistently rejected or invisibilized by others. Yet these affective deaths are not limited to genderqueer subjects.

*In her 80s, my mother stopped eating and wanted to die.  
Of course that's not acceptable behavior, even in the very old.  
It's unsightly and besides and even worse, the doctor told me, it is impractical:  
Starving oneself to death is a slow and painful process.  
So they told her that if she did not begin to eat again he wanted to give her  
shock treatments.  
Still she wouldn't eat.  
"You're suicidal," he named her, "you need an intervention."  
"I'm tired," she said. "And your words do not define me."  
Only my brother and I held out against her sprawling Indiana family and in  
the end, even he rolled over. She called me on the phone in Australia.  
"I'm scared," she said.  
"If you don't want it," I said, "I will not let them do it to you."  
"I'm afraid I'll forget who I am," she said. "I'm afraid I'll lose myself."*

*This is not an unreasonable fear.  
In fact, shortly after that they did do the shock treatments to her  
And she did lose herself.  
I was not able to stop it.  
She didn't know who she was, and she didn't recognize her surroundings.  
But she ate.  
She ate for three miserable months until she stroked out and died, just like  
she wanted.*

*Her fear and her question were not unreasonable.  
They are questions I ask myself on a regular basis:  
Who am I?*

*Have I lost myself?*

*Gender nonconforming people often ask themselves these questions, as many conforming people do.*

*But intelligibility is a two-way street.*

*Or what we call “intersubjectivity” here in the land of fancy words.*

*What we don’t talk about is How do we know who we are if the world doesn’t see us?*

Stewart says that ordinary affects

pick up density and texture as they move through bodies, dreams, dramas, and social worldings of all kinds. . . . 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.<sup>32</sup>

Is this a promise (cruel or otherwise) of liberation from the body—for both genderqueer subjects and others whose bodies fail them, like elderly mothers? Perhaps it is a liberation from the idea of singular and separate bodies (or dreams or dramas) and into the sociality of affect—Brian Massumi’s idea of contagion.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps it is a liberation from the idea of non-bio bodies beyond prosthetics. One only has to look into the eyes of a dog to see the perfection of its sensory communication, as one can look into the eyes of a lover in the moment of crisis or climax, to experience how these are communal acts, shared rituals, intersubjective, and therefore “public” performances. They are affective meetings of agency, or what Stewart calls “circuits, bodies, moves, connections,”<sup>34</sup> in which agency is always co-created with its opposites. Thus we see that genderqueer agency is indeed

lived through a series of dilemmas: that action is always a reaction; that the potential to act always includes the potential to be acted on, or to submit; that the move to gather a self to act is also a move to lose the self; that one choice precludes others; that actions can have unintended and disastrous consequences; and that all agency is frustrated and unstable and attracted to the potential in things.

It’s not really about willpower but rather something much more complicated and much more rooted in things.<sup>35</sup>

But what kind of “things” can be considered human, and what kind cast off as “other”? To genderqueers, the line blurs, and human/non-human is as unhelpful a binary as is male/female. Genderqueer scholarship—including new materialist, practice-led research, and digital, new media, and posthuman scholarship—continues to ask: What happens when genderqueer bodies “fail” to

be intelligible, even to the “self”? For Robin Bauer, “a woman with a penis is not intelligible as a woman to most people, while in trans\* communities biological sex has mostly been detached from gender and its symbolic inscriptions.”<sup>36</sup> Many genderqueer individuals and scenes, extending Haraway’s distinction, prefer a “politics of affinity rather than identity,”<sup>37</sup> both in affect and political orientation, affinities that are not reliant on genitals and prosthetics.

Jane Bennett describes *Vibrant Matter* as both a philosophical and a political project, in which the philosophical is led by a desire to

think slowly an idea that runs fast through modern heads: the idea of matter as passive stuff, as raw, brute, or inert. This habit of parsing the world into dull matter (it, things) and vibrant life (us, beings) is a “partition of the sensible” to use Jacques Rancière’s phrase.<sup>38</sup>

This slowing down of ideas in fast heads is a formidable project, not only philosophical and political, but also radically intersubjective and affective. We are scared to slow down. We see speed as progress and usefulness. This partitioning of the sensible and sensory is killing us. I would extend Bennett’s claim that even in our desperation to distinguish between the material us and them, we are slowly abandoning our human selves into the dull matter basket as well. Nothing is quite vibrant enough any more. In this posthuman world that is eating us alive as we build it, only productivity is vibrant. Genderqueer matter (prosthetics) are often portrayed as dull or dead matter, a machine or thing to augment one’s organic vibrancy, but I do not experience it that way. My prosthetics have affect and lives of their own.

Like Bennett, Stewart talks about speed and slowness, quiet and stress, which for Stewart is “the lingua franca of the day.”<sup>39</sup> So when we talk about gender and genderqueer subjects beyond any binaries at all, it means that our ontology as intelligible beings must be changed, and change is hard.

*We write ourselves into love and out of long distance  
We can write things to each other that we’ve never been able to say.  
“That’s why you’re a writer,” I tell you.  
That’s why we’re here.  
But change is hard, and love is frightening.*

## QUEER FRAGILITY

By shifting focus from the materiality of genderqueer to the affect of it, I fold back into *intrigue* a revised notion of the return, a return to desire as a doing rather than an orphaned sexuality, a sensory slowing down rather than a

quickening. If Bennett is right that a consideration of the posthuman stimulates additional human-focused anxieties (both virtual and organic), what might this spotlighted fragility offer those who wish to lean into the intrigue that gender-queer can offer, the release from gender-situated desire? Can the genderqueer “body without organs”<sup>40</sup> (or gendered body *beyond* organs) become a building site of gender affect that offers a release rather than a claim-staking of gendered territories? Ultimately, genderqueerness returns to a concern with what this body can *do*, not what it may or may not *be*.

Following Sara Ahmed’s offering of *queer fragility* not as loss but “as a quality of relations. . . . a quality of what is built. . . . a movement,” gender-queer can take us beyond even trans\* notions of what bodies can do, into new affective territories of loosening, sliding, and transiting (more than transitioning). Ahmed’s fragility is a “quality of relations we acquire,” and for genderqueers this happens through both desire and intrigue.<sup>41</sup> Such dissident collaborations (as between gender and sexuality, desire and intrigue) offer thrilling possibilities (if not quite optimism) for genderqueer affect. Building on Gilles Deleuze’s conception that desire and sexuality are both virtual and artful, Frida Beckman asserts: “If linking sexuality to the virtual enables a rethinking of the relation between body and pleasure, [then] linking it to art further expands its territories.”<sup>42</sup> Such territories are affectively experienced and charted, the relational movements between genderqueer subjects and their objects. If art, as Beckman claims, is about “the creation of territories,” which for Elizabeth Grosz includes sexual territories that “are marked by a rhythm and a refrain that exceeds the bare necessity of survival,” then creativity and sexuality share a territory of chaos that is productive.<sup>43</sup> Here Ahmed’s queer fragility as a way to “mess things up[, to] survive what is messed up,”<sup>44</sup> points to the possibility of queering the necessity for gender at all. The genderqueer subject, through body, pleasure, desire, and performance, understands the body “not as representation, but as the creation of affects and intensities,”<sup>45</sup> a dance among genderqueer subjects, the tools we employ, and the objects of our affect/ion.

*The affect of queering gender is  
its own pre-verbal performance of desire.  
An enactment of the posthuman (if only the audience could see), but  
even that’s too binary for me  
like there was ever a before and after,  
like there can be a boundedness to being human that is possible  
to imagine, either from within my skin or from without it.*

*My genderqueer life throbs in “circuits and failed relays, in jumpy moves” as I navigate and become its “layered textures of a scene.”<sup>46</sup> Scenes can be many things, most of them frosted with desire, but sexuality and gender seem to always take the cake.*

*Gender can be, above all, an attitude, an affect that takes the “jumpy moves” of sexuality (even including unconscious desires) out of the land of hopes and dreams and broken hearts and disappointments and assumptions and experiments—Stewart’s land of “failed relays”<sup>47</sup> — and moves it into a place of wide-awakeness and creativity. You can be anything you want to be, if you have the right toys. And the swag.*

*In sexual scenes, sexual actors can “surge or become submerged” in Stewart’s words.<sup>48</sup> Sex is the sea of all of it, and gender the boat in which we sail. It honors that we all have different desires, different needs, not limited by bodies, that can only be felt, performed, and not understood from outside. Isn’t sex just living? Can I be pre-human and well as post-gendered? #WordsDoNotDefineMe. #ILoveYouMom.*

## TOWARD A GENDERQUEER AFFECT

Moving toward a notion of genderqueer affect, we might consider Bennett’s attention to the ways in which affect “is also not specific to humans, organisms, or even to bodies: the affect of technologies, winds, vegetables, minerals”; and importantly, Massumi’s “autonomy of affect.”<sup>49</sup> These animations of affect suggest the ways in which affect is both experienced as well as enacted, an event as well as a place; a way into the genderqueer body that is not dependent upon its materiality but simultaneously does not relegate “inanimate” prosthetics to the lifeless. Genderqueer affects are located in/on “the fugitive, the fleeting, the sensual, and on unfolding activity.”<sup>50</sup>

*I cry at our firsts:  
The first time I hear you read  
The first time we kiss  
The first time we are together  
Between the urgent hunger and the joyous release, there are tears.*

*Stewart reminds me that “the senses sharpen on the surfaces of things taking form”<sup>51</sup>*

*And yes my senses sharpen along all our surfaces that are touching*

*As this thing*

*This powerful awakening takes form.*

*Love has a body.*

*Love has a body that feels like heat, that sits in time and can be held.*

*Love is not an idea, it’s a doing.*

*A quiet, simmering, tightrope-walk through a landscape of landmines and*

*When it happened?*

*It was deafening,*

*It “pick[s] up density and texture as [it moves in and] through [our] bodies” and spaces.<sup>52</sup>*

*It “shroud[s] and punctuate[s].”<sup>53</sup>*

*You shroud and punctuate me.*

*If I was Tom Cruise I would jump on Oprah’s couch.*

*Thankfully, #IAmNotTomCruise.*

So how can genderqueer subjects and our genderqueer tools together perform an affective relationship with the world, one that is both personal and political, both intelligible and unintelligible? For Beckman, “All bodies are made of other bodies,”<sup>54</sup> and the genderqueer body is indeed iterative as well as inter-subjective. The genderqueer body performing this text was made of the sun, the lake, the southern California dirt, the hawks flying overhead, and the blue eyes of my lover as we fell in love in a particular place and time, memorialized in the words in this essay that I have called a poem. That does not mean that our love is intelligible<sup>55</sup> to you as a reader, nor to the audiences who have seen me perform this piece, some of whom experience me as genderqueer and others who were confused by this language, this concept, and simply let the words of heterosexual romantic love and anxiety wash over them. This is the love story and mother-loss story of this poem, not the genderqueer affect of it. The genderqueer affect that can be read between these lines remains at least partially unintelligible to all who are not genderqueer or trans\* or who love or have loved one who is (a claim that Foucault and Stewart and others might challenge but which is a lived truth nonetheless). These breaths, souls, actions, and passions are not just bodies, but they are intensities that pass only between beings who live some form of fluidity, between those who surrender to unfixity—as constellations are intelligible only to those who can read the stars.

For a genderqueer affect to be articulable (if still unintelligible), I draw on Félix Guattari's notion of transversal connections, which must "allow the acceptance of the other, the acceptance of subjective pluralism."<sup>56</sup> For Guattari, any affective "I," is always a "multiplicity within oneself,"<sup>57</sup> as it is for genderqueer subjects or what I called the multiple/undefined "I" at the opening of this essay. Community here is not so different from acceptance of a plural and fluid self: "It is a matter not only of tolerating another group, another ethnicity, another sex, but also for a *desire for dissensus, otherness, difference*. Accepting otherness is a question not so much of right as of desire."<sup>58</sup> For Guattari, as for me in the falling-in-love moment, "the multiplicity of intensities overlaid within a body means that, "at the same time, we are bursting out of this situation."<sup>59</sup>

Guattari articulates both "sharable" and "non-sharable affects,"<sup>60</sup> including "non-human" aspects in this ongoing assemblage, which "share" their own "temporal contours" and "affective logics."<sup>61</sup> Any affect that is genderqueer may not be intelligible in the social assemblage, but between two people in the moment of desire and of pleasure. Guattari's "affect sticks to subjectivity,"<sup>62</sup> fully realized in the stickiness of love and the slipperiness of lust, in desire and pleasure both delayed and satisfied.

*Love:*

*being met,*

*letting go,*

*control and release, control,*

*release.*

*#FallingFeelsLikeFlying.*

*And you got in your car and drove away and the  
whole world shifted on its axis, it did.*

*It didn't just feel like that, it*

*actually happened.*

*Our "jumpy moves" became the "layered textures of a scene"*

*Our scene*

*A scene that becomes an enactment of a love beginning a surge,*

*"the spreading lines of resonance and connection that become possible."<sup>63</sup>*

*#EverythingIsPossible.*

Stewart asserts that "stress can motivate you, or it can puncture you, leaving you alone in times of exhaustion, claustrophobia, resentment, and ambient fear."<sup>64</sup> The affective collaboration between stress and desire, intrigue and love, can help us to understand, for example, mornings like the one in

the Hollywood Hills as love began to congeal out of the great maw of desire, and “to deliver new emphases on the fugitive, the fleeting, the sensual, and on unfolding activity.”<sup>65</sup> This is a performance of genderqueer affect, and not a teleological sense-making exercise of genderqueer. My mother’s dissolution was equally a performance of bodily fluidity, a release of fixity, a letting go.

It is also a taking up of the instruments of affect, a political promise of queer sexuality through genderqueer affect. In these dissonant experiences one might begin to see the fleeting shadow of genderqueer as the anti-teleological promise of queer, having less to do with gender and sexuality than it does with the ontology of being human in cyborgian/more-than-human times.

*Our unfolding was all intensities and sunlight.*

*If I were to write my own Ordinary Affects or my version of “ficto-critical accounts of random episodes of ordinary affects,”<sup>66</sup> my book would surely start with you.*

*It would not be a book for the faint-of-heart.*

*It would be for the scared, for the lost,*

*For those who have forgotten who they are.<sup>67</sup>*

*For you and me, walking under the shadow of the super-sign of Hollywood(land),*

*The intensity of our attraction denied was turning on my body.*

*Not to mention it was about 100 degrees out there.*

*Hard to woo a girl under such adverse conditions.*

*#I’mSweating.*

*#BringItHome.*

*#Crunchtime.*

*#LoveFindsAWay.*

So, finally, how might a genderqueer affect work with genderlessness? If genderqueers “write the truth of their bodies”—led by attention to affect rather than representation—we might just “describe the truth of a new kind of body.”<sup>68</sup> Stewart’s enactment of affect and Haraway’s figure of the cyborg help conjure the notion of a genderqueer affect. If the “beyond gendered” cyborg, as Haraway suggests, “is our ontology,” then genderqueer affect can serve as both a human and a more-than-human “way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves.”<sup>69</sup> Affect is, of course,

material; yet while we are still as dependent upon organic materiality as we are the categories of male/female, or even masculine/feminine, we are constrained to return always to the gender binary.

Like Halberstam's queer posthuman body, genderqueer is not "driven by a teleological desire. . . to become coherent and unitary,"<sup>70</sup> but rather it intrigues because it queers. The genderqueer body queers affect because it is intrigued and intriguing, and the affect of intrigue is released from the need for intelligibility. The unintelligibility of genderqueer affect is its keyhole to freedom and gender creativity. This freedom extends Haraway's cyborg beyond performances of gender, sex, and sexualities (taken together) not only as a repetition of acts in Butler's sense, but also usefully as a repetition of intensities.<sup>71</sup> Unintelligible affects are not limited to genderqueers but include the invisibility of femme sexuality, and the monstrosity of butch and other sexual outlaws.<sup>72</sup> We become intelligible to each other through our intrigues and our doings. Femmes become interlocutors among trans\*, genderqueer, butch subjects, and mainstream culture, between our multiple selves, between this moment and the next, a momentary transcendence, a flow.

*Who am I?*<sup>73</sup>

*Have I lost myself?*

*Stewart helps us bring into focus scenes "of immanent force,"<sup>74</sup>*

*Helps us reassert our faith in worldless knowledge.*

*You and I, with our too-muchness in love, constitute a scene*

*We are, quite literally, making a scene.*

*We are a scene.*

*We are seen.*

*Felt.*

*In this moment.*

*This intensity.*

*As the sun rises up*

*Noble and persistent*

*And breathes her hot breath on us again.*

*My love for you is the soft morning sky*

*Ever hopeful. ■*

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ANNE HARRIS is Associate Professor and Research Fellow in the Faculty of Education at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. She teaches and researches in the areas of creativity, performance, and diversity. She is funded by the Australian Research Council (DECRA), and is the series editor of

*Creativity, Education and the Arts* (Palgrave Macmillan). She has published over 50 articles and 8 books, including her latest: *Video as Method* (Oxford University Press, 2016). Correspondence to: Anne Harris, Faculty of Education, Monash University, Building 902, 1st Floor, Clyde Road, Berwick, Victoria 3806 Australia. Email: anne.harris@monash.edu.

## NOTES

1. Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 4.
2. Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 65.
3. Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*, 4.
4. Ibid.
5. The text in italics is the performance text that I performed during our affect panel at the International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, while the roman (standard) text is the more theoretically-informing thinking I wrote together with the performance text but did not perform. They work together to pursue my formulation of a genderqueer affect, two arms of the same cyborg body.
6. Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005).
7. Stewart affectively problematizes a need for pronouns like “she” in suggesting that its use might not necessarily denote subject positions or any other fixities: “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” (*Ordinary Affects*, 5). Indeed, genderqueer and other genderfluid and gender-unintelligible “points of contact” must often lever such handy but insufficient terminologies.
8. Tiffany Jones, Andrea del Pozo de Bolger, Tinashe Dune, Amy Lykins, and Gail Hawkes, *Female-to-Male (FtM) Transgender People’s Experiences in Australia: A National Study* (Armidale, NSW: Springer, 2015).
9. Donna J. Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,” in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 178.
10. Ibid., 180.
11. Theresa Senft, Reading Notes on Donna Haraway’s ‘Cyborg Manifesto,’ 2001, <http://cccapproaches.weebly.com/cyborg-manifesto-notes.html>, accessed 3 January 2016.
12. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women*. She is referring here specifically to women of color, but I am extending this to queer and genderfluidists.
13. Stacy Holman Jones, “Living Bodies of Thought: The ‘Critical’ in Critical Autoethnography,” *Qualitative Inquiry* 22, no. 4 (2016): 228–37.
14. I use the variation gender/queer here advisedly, as a shorthand to mean both genderqueers and other queers, who (in this instance, not in all instances) blur distinctions between binary genders and gender roles.

15. Michel Foucault, qtd. in Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingstone, eds., *Posthuman Bodies* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1995), 15. This could also be a way of defining critical autoethnography, where the critical is primary, and the ethnography troubles the self–other binary, both informing each other as they co-emerge. For more on critical autoethnography see Holman Jones “Living Bodies of Thought”; Tony E. Adams, Stacy Holman Jones, and Carolyn Ellis, eds., *Autoethnography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

16. Halberstam and Livingstone, *Posthuman Bodies*, 14.

17. Ibid.

18. The genderqueer body and its affects also ask how one queers that love—as in Sara Ahmed’s observation that queering is a practice that works to “disturb the order of things” (*Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006], 161).

19. The use of the asterisk in some contemporary transgender literature recognizes the diversity of non-biological (cisgender) gender perspectives, orientations, and subjectivities, including an acknowledgement of the rapid proliferation of fluid, multiple, and sub-identifications such as transgender, transsexual, female-to-male (FTM trans), male-to-female (MTF trans), cross-dressers, and other non-binary gender orientations, including genderqueer, genderfluid, gender creative, gender diverse, two-spirit people, androgynous, bi-gendered, and third-gendered. However, it is important to note that some non-binary gender identifications have begun moving away from trans\*, as the mainstreaming of trans-only gender identifications continues to sideline less binarized gender identifications. And importantly, while I want to flag the affiliations between trans\* and genderqueer identifications and in some cases performances, the focus of this essay is squarely on the ways genderqueer remains unintelligible while in contemporary Western society trans\* has become more widely intelligible—a difference that disallows the conflation of these two “categories” here.

20. Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

21. Stewart calls affects “immanent, obtuse, and erratic,” an uncanny description of genderqueerness too (*Ordinary Affects*, 6).

22. Stacy Holman Jones and Anne Harris, “Queer Tools: An Intervention,” *Performance Research* 20, no. 5 (2015): 42–43.

23. Cris Mayo, “Disruptions of Desire: From Androgynes to Genderqueer,” in *Philosophy of Education 2007* (Urbana, IL: Philosophy Education Society, 2007), 49–58; Katelynn Bishop, “Moments of Transformation: Gender, Sexuality, and Desire among Partners of Trans Men (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2012).

24. Sara Ahmed, *Willful Subjects* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

25. Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York: Routledge 1993), 2.

26. Ibid.

27. Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto,” 150.

28. Halberstam and Livingstone, *Posthuman Bodies*, 14.

29. Ibid., emphasis added.

30. Anne M. Harris, "A Kind of Hush: Adoptee Diasporas and the Impossibility of Home," in *Stories of Home: Place, Identity, Exile*, ed. Devika Chawla and Stacy Holman Jones (Lanham, MD: Lexington Press, 2015), 161–74; "Queer Refugeities and the Problematics of Homo/homelands," *Gay and Lesbian Issues and Psychology Review* 8, no. 1 (2012): 22–33.

31. Cyborg: (a) a cybernetic organism, (b) a hybrid of machine and organism, (c) a creature of lived social reality, and (d) a creature of fiction. Haraway's second definition is most widely associated with the contemporary cyborg ("A Cyborg Manifesto"). Senft, like Haraway, encourages us to think creatively about the dualism of "machine" and "organism," as all new materialist theory does. She asks us to consider that what may have been considered organically alive and not-alive in the past is changing—rapidly and more deeply than anticipated—and also to think more fluidly about distinctions between things like "lived social reality" and "fiction." According to Senft, for Haraway, "the four descriptions of the cyborg (cybernetic, hybrid, of the present, of the future) are not discrete, but rather co-determinate [and] the cyborg is outside gender" ("Reading Notes on Donna Haraway's 'Cyborg Manifesto'").

32. Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*, 6.

33. Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

34. *Ibid.*, 86.

35. *Ibid.*

36. Robin Bauer, *Queer BDSM Intimacies: Critical Consent and Pushing Boundaries* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 29.

37. Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," 155.

38. Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), vii.

39. Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*, 43.

40. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (New York: Continuum, 2004).

41. Sara Ahmed, "Queer Fragility," blog post, *feministkilljoys.com*, 21 April 2016, <https://feministkilljoys.com/2016/04/21/queer-fragility/>, accessed 16 June 2016.

42. Frida Beckman, *Between Desire and Pleasure: A Deleuzian Theory of Sexuality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 9.

43. *Ibid.*, 9–10.

44. Ahmed, "Queer Fragility."

45. Beckman, *Between Desire and Pleasure*, 9.

46. Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*, 6.

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Ibid.*

49. Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 60; Brian Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect," in *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, ed. Paul Patton (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996) 217–39. Massumi's "autonomy of affect" problematizes bodily processes against theoretics and has been taken up widely, including by Patricia Clough, Elizabeth Grosz, and Kathleen Stewart. This "broad 'school' understands affect as a lively virtual force and endorses the

most general, ‘post-human’ definitions of affect” (Margaret Wetherell, *Affect and Emotion: A New Social Science Understanding* [Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2012], 54). For more, see Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002); Patricia Clough, “The Affective Turn: Political Economy, Biomedicine and Bodies,” *Theory, Culture and Society* 25, no. 1 (2008): 1–22; Elizabeth Grosz, *In the Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution, and the Untimely* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

50. Wetherell, *Affect and Emotion*, 54.
51. Kathleen Stewart, “Atmospheric Attunements,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 29, no. 3 (2011): 448.
52. Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*, 3.
53. Stewart, “Atmospheric Attunements,” 448.
54. Beckman, *Between Desire and Pleasure*, 9.
55. The “intensity of falling in love” I noted at the beginning of the essay is, in some ways, more about this intensity of falling in an intelligible love/desire/pleasure—an intensity that passes between certain kinds of beings. It is both the “I can’t believe I found you” (the “love” story) and the “I can’t believe I found the you who can see/enter into/surrender to the ‘I’ that I am living” (the “affect” story).
56. Pierre-Félix Guattari, *The Guattari Reader*, ed. Gary Genosko (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 216.
57. *Ibid.* See also Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, trans. Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton (London: Athlone, 2000).
58. Guattari, qtd. in Lone Bertelsen and Andrew Murphie, “An Ethics of Everyday Infinities and Powers: Félix Guattari on Affect and the Refrain,” in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 152–53.
59. Guattari, *The Guattari Reader*, 216.
60. Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, trans. Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis, (Sydney: Power, 1995), 6.
61. Félix Guattari, *Chaosophy: Texts and Interviews 1972–1977*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer, trans. David L. Sweet, Jarred Becker, and Taylor Adkins (New York: Semiotext(e), 1995), 9.
62. Guattari, *The Guattari Reader*, 158.
63. Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*, 4.
64. *Ibid.*, 43.
65. Wetherell, *Affect and Emotion*, 54.
66. *Ibid.*
67. Rebecca Solnit, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2010).
68. Senft, “Reading Notes on Donna Haraway’s ‘Cyborg Manifesto.’”
69. Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto,” 150, 181.
70. Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 14.
71. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

72. While space has not permitted me to delve more deeply into femme intelligibility here, I still want to acknowledge that femme sexuality and subjects are not only the “recognizable” map markers for bringing genderqueer subjects into intelligible relief to majoritarian subjects, but also our necessary companions on the way to getting lost. See Joan Nestle, ed., *The Persistent Desire: A Femme-Butch Reader* (New York: Alyson Publications, 1992); Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*; Minnie Bruce Pratt, *The Dirt She Ate: Selected and New Poems* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003); Leslie Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues* (New York: Firebrand Books, 1993).

73. Foucault, qtd. in Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*, 30.

74. Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*, 6.