



A paper with an interest in rhythm

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Abstract

This paper is a performative effort to move with and through the expressive and theoretical spaces of an interest in rhythm. This interest emerges initially from the middle of an encounter with the 5 Rhythms™, a contemporary somatic practice that uses rhythm to facilitate and catalyse expressive movement. Rather than seeking to excavate representational meaning from an encounter with the practice or using it to critically diagnose the corporeal politics of contemporary society, this paper apprehends the creative movement emerging from an encounter with/in the non-representational, performative potential of the 5 Rhythms™. By becoming a deliberately playful effort to hold onto the lines of movement emergent from the affective, kinaesthetic territories of this practice, the paper works to avoid either falling back upon a representational ethics that stops this movement dead in its tracks or becoming seduced by an aesthetics of weightless escape. This effort draws particular support from Deleuze and Guattari's writing on the refrain, a concept that provides a vehicle through which the lines of an interest in rhythm gain expressive and theoretical consistency. Because the territories of the refrain open onto lines of movement that are as much figural as discursive, the paper works to animate the lines of movement emerging from an encounter with the 5 Rhythms™ through a series of non-representational diagrammatic interventions. Finally, in drawing the diagrammatic lines of this movement in-between, the paper becomes not so much a series of lines about moving, but a series of lines *moving about*.

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1. Refraining from beginning, or, how does one do?

“Yet here it is, a rhythmic heave that suggests that something other is about to happen—although not immediately” (Heaney, 1988, p. 105).

“Where Space and Time meet, there is Line” (Appia, 1989, p. 255).

“One ventures from home on the thread of a tune. Along sonorous, gestural, motor lines...” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, p. 311).

This paper is a performative effort to move with and through the expressive and theoretical spaces of an interest in rhythm. An interest in rhythm that emerges, at least in part, from an encounter with a somatic movement practice called the 5 Rhythms™. An encounter precipitated initially by an advertisement such as this:

“The 5 Rhythms™ are a dance form created to give the space and permission for people to move freely. This easy and effective practice is a moving meditation that brings us home to our bodies, gives expression to our emotions and catalyses our innate capacity to dance. For all ages and dance ability, it's great exercise and fun”.¹

Such an advertisement opens up a number of initial responses, indifference and skepticism amongst them, but another one of which realises itself in the middle of a hall, perhaps a converted church,

With wooden floors, bare walls, and perhaps 1... 2... 3... 4... 5... 6... 7... 8... 9... 10 or so people inside, some stretching and walking and lying on the floor. At the side, 1... 2... 3 others on benches, changing or removing shoes. One joins and sits, rooted, looking around

¹ Text from an advertisement for a 10 week 5 Rhythms™ course run in Bristol in 1998 by an accredited teacher. For a list of teachers trained in the practice see (www.ravenrecording.com/gabrielle.html).

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while trying not to look, prolonging the act of removing shoes, while at the other side a man standing at a sound desk changes tracks and James Brown! **GET UP, GET ON UP, GET UP, GET ON UP.** . . . for a moment, at least, back to 1992 at the Point Theatre in Dublin someone's birthday it was, before coming back to taking off shoes **GET UP, GET ON UP** but not yet, the next song then, yeh, then **GET UP, GET ON UP** go on, do it as more people arrive and get into the same routine **STAY ON THE SCENE** and begin doing something at least like *Stretching, Stretching, LIKE A SEX MACHINE* and God I can't touch my toes **LIKE A LOVING MACHINE** how long is it since I did that? Since GAA training, touching toes, and standing with feet apart. . . shifting pressure from one knee to another, and that one where you grabbed your foot and tried to pull your leg up as far as it would go **HUUHHHH! GET UP, GET ON UP** and now, another look, more people, at least 25, with James Brown fading out, and the guy at the side asking *can we all come together in a circle please?*²

We find we can, and from the middle of such beginnings, an interest in rhythm begins to emerge, somewhat tentatively, somewhat nervously, but with an undeniable force through which things begin moving. . .

Have we any new people tonight? Three or four hands. We have. Well, for those of you have not been here before, what usually happens is that we go through a wave of the rhythms, through flowing, staccato, chaos, lyrical and stillness. At this point there is nothing more you need to know, except perhaps that, at least here, there is no failure, and that you should trust the fact that your body, you, know what to do. So, find a place in the room, and the circle breaks, and one finds a corner, with nothing, or no-one behind, and a good view of the hall, and then music, gentle, working its way into the space, followed by an invitation to close your eyes, and with your eyes closed, begin to take yourself inside yourself, and begin to focus your attention on your feet, feeling where they touch the ground, slowly shaking out all the tension in your feet, gently, and after some time, now shifting your attention to your knees as they also begin to move, following the music, moving in gentle circles, before your attention moves up to your hips, that's it, anyway your hips can move, letting them do it, letting them take the rest of you with them, and from your hips let the movement come up into your spine, slowly, letting your spine move at its own pace, taking care, breathing into its gentle curves. . .

Warming up through such movements, an interest in rhythm begins moving on through the imperatives of its own kinaesthetic force, moving along sonorous, gestural, motor lines, moving through spaces that sense, feel, and sweat beyond any attempt to explain, to figure

out, the when, where, and why of what happens when body, sound, and light come together with different degrees of intensity. An interest in rhythm that at some point, begins to realise how, perhaps, after all,

“One writes initially through a wave of music, a groundswell that comes from the background noise, from the whole body, maybe, and maybe from the depths of the world or through the front door, or from our latest loves, carrying its complicated rhythm, its simple beat, its melodic line, a sweet wafting. A broken fall. One cannot grip one's pen but this thing, which does not yet have a word, takes off” (Serres, 1995, p. 138).

At some point an interest in rhythm emerging though movements that do not yet have a word finds itself here, becoming entangled in the lines of a paper, lines that become an effort to give ethical and aesthetic consistency to the performative potential of an encounter within the kinaesthetic territories of the 5 Rhythms™. But initially such an effort encounters problems and is faced with questions. How does one give a word to a wordless movement without stifling the life of that movement? How, when such movement is often below the cognitive threshold of representational awareness that defines what is admitted into serious research, does one give a word to a movement without seeking to represent it? How does one move along the lines of a paper with an interest in rhythm when such movement is not given consistency by the intentional actions of an individual subject, but by a multiplicity of contingent, affective encounters, relations, directions and speeds? How does one do justice to the animating potential of a “an implosive viscerality that would seem to hurl us beyond the world of the symbol and that penny-in-the-slot resolution called meaning” (Tuassig, 1998, p. 226).

In the face of such persistent questions the emerging lines of an interest in rhythm encounter conceptual orientation from a number of sources, not least of which are the creative fissures of non-representational practice and performance opening up throughout Geography (Thrift, 1997, 2000a; Thrift and Dewsbury, 2000; Dewsbury, 2000; Smith, 2000). Such work suggests that the interest in rhythm emerging from an encounter with the 5 Rhythms™ need not be understood or causally interpreted through the representational spaces of the individual subject. Instead, this work enlivens an emerging interest in rhythm by drawing attention to the possibility of creatively apprehending the rhythms of movement through an animated space given consistency by non-subjectifying forces as much as by subjectifying forces. And it foregrounds the importance to such apprehensions of a responsiveness to the mutual implication of ethics and aesthetics, to the fact that what

² Music and lyrics T. Wright and J. Brown.

happens is always also a matter of the style in which this happens.

The importance of rhythm to such apprehensions is strengthened further through an encounter with the interest in rhythm evident in the writings of Henri Lefebvre. For Lefebvre rhythm produces an “animated space” which is an “extension of the space of bodies”, a space to be apprehended through the mutually implicated corporeal and conceptual interventions of “rhythmanalysis.” Significantly, though it has been appropriated in terms of its implications for understanding urban life (Soja, 1996; Borden, 2001; Crang, 2001), a paper with an interest in rhythm takes much from Lefebvre’s claim that the “field of application par excellence [of rhythmanalysis], its preferred sphere of experiment, would be the sphere of music and dance, the sphere of ‘rhythmic cells’, and their effects” (1991, p. 205–206 (see also Lefebvre, 1992)), the sphere in which, perhaps even now, someone is offering an invitation to

Let the rhythm of your movement find its way from your spine up into your head, taking care with your neck, and when your head wants to, allow it to pass the movement down through your neck, flowing down into your arms, and now your arms begin exploring their movement, as you allow them to go wherever they want to go, exploring the shapes they can make, the spaces they can make, and now begin taking this movement into your hands as they too are beginning to enter into your dance, before all of you at once, begins moving, perhaps finding a pattern, a line, following it for a while, before allowing another to emerge...

Through such an invitation an interest in rhythm continues to emerge, gaining further crucial support through an encounter with the thinking of Deleuze and Guattari (1988), for whom, like Lefebvre, rhythm is an important pragmatic concept. In the writing of Deleuze and Guattari, the importance of rhythm emerges through the concept of the refrain. The refrain provides a conceptual and creative vehicle through which the lines of an interest in rhythm emerging from an encounter with the 5 Rhythms™ gain expressive and theoretical consistency. As an interest in rhythm becomes more and more entangled in the lines of a paper, the concept of refrain works to animate an effort to do justice to the non-representational, performative aspects of the practice. By becoming swept up in a deliberately playful effort to hold onto the rhythmic lines of movement emergent from the affective, kinaesthetic territories of this practice, the rhythmic refrains of the paper begin to work to avoid either falling back upon a representational ethics that stops this movement dead in its tracks or becoming seduced by an aesthetics of weightless escape.

This effort is further facilitated by the way in which the expressive and theoretical consistencies of the refrain

open onto lines of movement that are as much figural as discursive. Drawing upon this figural potential of the refrain, the paper works to animate the interest in rhythm emerging from an encounter with the 5 Rhythms™ through a series of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 non-representational diagrammatic interventions. Such interventions work not so much as efforts to recover or represent what happens within the kinaesthetic territories of a practice such as the 5 Rhythms™. Instead they allow a paper itself to become a kind of emergent happening, a movement of lines that are take off in different directions and with different speeds. Lines that are moved, at least here, not so much by the question—*why* does a paper with an interest in rhythm do, but by the question *how* does a paper with an interest in rhythm do? A paper with interest in rhythm therefore becomes not so much a series of lines about moving, but a series of lines *moving about* that provide one way of apprehending the animating potential of an interest in rhythm, lines that continue to take something from, while always remaining partially implicated in the movements emerging in the kinaesthetic territories of the 5 Rhythms™, territories in which there is a certain pattern, a pattern that emerges during the course of the paper, but that works to avoid choreographing any particular steps in advance. In this way a paper with an interest in rhythm works hopefully to enliven the repertoire of ways in which the animating movements of the world are creatively enacted and apprehended.

2. Refraining from thinking about the 5 Rhythms™

An interest in rhythm emerging from the kinaesthetic territories of the 5 Rhythms™ gains further orientation by the writings of Gabrielle Roth, an American dancer and artist who developed the practice. In her books *Maps to Ecstasy* and *Sweat Your Prayers: Movement as Spiritual Practice* Roth (1998, 1997) writes about how the 5 Rhythms™ offers five distinct but mutually implicated rhythmic “maps” (flowing, staccato, chaos, lyrical and stillness) that can catalyse the expressive potential of the moving body. Roth does not claim to have created these maps herself.³ Instead, her confidence in offering them has emerged, according to Roth, as a result of the insights and experience she has gained over the course of her life as a dancer. Describing herself as “cartographer obsessed with surveying the geography of inner space”, Roth (1998) suggests that through working on her own and with students and clients, she has become familiar with the “basic geography of emotions” (p. 59). This affective geography is articulated in terms

³ This does not prevent Roth from trademarking the practice, a move that makes good business sense in a burgeoning competitive economy of New-Age practices.

of identifiable rhythmic patterns of movement existing as “an infrastructure underlying all our experience, a living language” (p. xix).

The first of the rhythms, *flowing*, is described by Roth as “the state of being fluid, of hanging loose and being flexible” connecting “us to the flow of our individual energy, our base current”. Roth offers the example of “Michael Jordan playing basketball” as “the essence of flowing. His internal rhythm connects with the energies of the ball, his team, his opponents, and the court, until they all merge into one organic entity and it becomes as natural for the ball to swoosh through the net as it is for breath to flow in and out of our bodies” (Roth, 1997, p. 51).⁴ In contrast, the second rhythm, *staccato*, is characterised by a kind of “dancing with your bones, creating all kinds of angles and edges like geometry in motion. Lines erupt out of curves, articulating our separateness, creating walls or breaking them down”. Again Roth offers an example, this time of a bartender at one of her favourite restaurants:

“He doesn’t move from one position to the next, he starts and spins on an invisible edge that only he can see. He dodges the other bartender as if he were dribbling a basketball. He doesn’t stoop to get the ice from under the counter, he does a series of sit-squats. He whips the glasses out of the rack, throws the ice into the martini shaker, spews it into the glasses, sets it down, picks up the money, pivots right, flicks the register, slams the money in, pivots left as his right hand leaps from his side to slide back his hair and his dark eyes dart across the crowd” (p. 85).

Following on from this, “the rhythms of flowing and staccato collide and create the rhythm of *chaos*”, a rhythm that “awakens the mind and roots it in the feet” (p. 114; 119, emphasis added). Chaos uses a particular foot pattern that shifts body weight from one side to the other, something that Roth compares to “shifting the mind from one side of the brain to the other. With each step we give permission to our wild mind to take over. Whatever physical or emotional energy is unleashed creates patterns of movement that express our individual style, our soul” (p. 119).

After the heavy step of chaos is *lyrical*, the most “complex” of the rhythms. This is lighter, but no less grounded, because, as Roth (1997) suggests, in lyrical “we realise that we have the freedom to keep shifting energies so as to never get stuck in any one possibility

and to know that all possibilities are available to us at all times” (p. 163). The last of the rhythms mapped by Roth (1998) is *stillness*. She describes the movement from lyrical into stillness thus:

“Finally stillness enters your dance, calling you into spaces between the beats, between your bones, between your moves. Your body shifts through many shapes, sometimes holding them, feeling their vibration, sometimes letting them go. Your attention is drawn to your inner dance, where everything is alive, awake, aware. You have disappeared into the dance, and the dance has disappeared into you” (p. 33).

For Roth (1998), the aim of moving through these rhythms is to open up a transformative pathway, a pathway that leads ultimately to an ecstatic state. As she puts it,

“*Maps to Ecstasy* implies that ecstasy is a place and that we can get there with a good set of directions. The key to entering this place is some form of radical surrender, a ritual shattering. For me this has taken place on countless dance floors, when the music was really pumping and I stopped caring about what anybody else thought of my dance, my hairdo, my brain, or my butt. Through dancing I navigated the badlands of endless headtrips and found my way back to the stomping ground of my own two feet. Through dancing I discovered that when you put the psyche in motion, it heals itself” (p. xviii).

Roth considers the facilitation of this kind of process to be a form of modern day shamanism, in that the movement itself embodies a healing potential.⁵ Roth (1998) continues

“Ecstasy is an ego-less, timeless state of being. It’s a state of total alignment and unity. Unity of body, heart mind, soul, and spirit. It is what we need to heal our psychic dismemberment. We can’t access it if we are divided, body against mind, mind against heart, or any other way. We can only reach ecstasy through wholeness. One way to experience being whole is through meditation. The purpose of meditation is to still the mind and surrender to the moment. The fastest way I’ve found to still the mind and be aware of the moment is to move the body.

Movement isn’t only meditation; it’s also medicine that heals the split between our minds and hearts, bodies and soul. Movement as meditation makes

⁴ By moving in this way, Jordan has become the world’s highest paid geography graduate, having majored in the subject at the University of North Carolina. Roth’s use of the word swoosh also suggests how corporate identity, in this case that of Nike, is implicated in the production of everyday kinaesthetic vocabularies.

⁵ See Tuassig (1998) for a discussion of the relationship between “shamanism”, faith and viscerality.

us aware that there's a lot of stuff between us and the ecstatic experience. By stuff, I mean all forms of inertia—physical, emotional, mental. Each of us must carve a path through our own inner wilderness. Movement as medicine gives us a way to dynamically transform that inertia into energy and, ultimately, ecstasy” (p. 2).

As this suggests, there is a kind of kinaesthetic spirituality implicated in the transformative effort of moving through the 5 Rhythms™. For Roth (1997), the thermal and fluid economies of corporeality become an essential element of an opening onto the spark of the infinite that can be realised during the practice of the 5 Rhythms™. In *Sweat Your Prayers: Movement as Spiritual Practice*, Roth puts this more starkly, suggesting that “sweat is an ancient and universal form of self-healing, whether done in the gym, the sauna, or the sweatlodge. I do it on the dance floor. The more you dance, the more you sweat. The more you sweat, the more you pray” (p. 1).

Initially, quite frankly, an interest in rhythm baulks at such ideas, in particular finding this emphasis on kinaesthetic spirituality slipping beyond the pale of what can be easily taken seriously on its own terms by well formed habits of critical thinking. As a result, it considers giving an encounter with the kinaesthetic territories of the 5 Rhythms™ some critical bite by situating it in relation to broader cultural transformations in corporeal practice. Roth (1997) herself suggests that her rhythmic practice can be seen as part of wider cultural processes of self-renewal through movement, observing that

“There seems to me a dancing revival going on these days, from tango to tap, from samba to salsa. Not only are people longing to dance, but it seems that they're longing to dance with each other again after years of dancing alone. I believe this reflects a culture-wide yearning not only for a reunion of body and spirit, but of men and women and lovers of all persuasions. Instinct has drawn us back into the beat, back into the body to begin to sort out our confusion. Whether we turn to dances with steps, rave all night in clubs, or aerobicize till we have buns of steel, the idea is to get moving. Once your body surrenders to movement, your soul remembers its dance” (p. 8).

As Roth's comments suggest, the 5 Rhythms™ can be understood as another one of many commercialised technologies of the embodied self that capitalise on the ontological and existential insecurities of the contemporary (Giddens, 1991; Bauman, 1995) and provides a complement to technologically facilitated fitness practices (McCormack, 1999). But for an interest in rhythm emerging from an encounter with this practice, the potential problem with such an approach is the way in

which it short circuits the creative potential of the practice by reducing it to a symptom of wider shifts in cultural and political economies.

Clearly the 5 Rhythms™ can be understood in terms of the geographies of “New-Age” somatic practices and their associated “expressive identities” (Hetherington, 1998) and “networked spiritualities” (Holloway, 2000).⁶ It can also become and is implicated in the production of the kinds of active subjects emerging through the “performing cultures of the new economy” (Thrift, 2000b). Yet this does not also mean that it must inevitably become bound up in a story of critical disenchantment. Instead, it can also be apprehended as one of many sites in which a pragmatic concern with the enlivening performance of the present can perhaps provide new modes of ethical and aesthetic inhabitation (Thrift, 2000c; Guattari, 2000). Such apprehensions demand the cultivation of an ethos of generosity and responsiveness to the forms of affective attachments emerging from such practices (Bennet, 2001), but also involve a willingness to foster different modes of aesthetic intervention that do not rely solely upon representational imperatives. Such an ethico-aesthetics

“Has the potential to expand the bio-political domain, to make it more than just the site of investment by the state or investments by transnational capitalism. It may well explain the deep affective investments that are made by so many in a politics of nature, investments which move far beyond the cognitive and which are often figured as a restitution of all that has been lost. Perhaps, though, the outcome might be figured more accurately as new appreciations and anticipations of spaces of embodiment, best understood as a form of magic dependent upon new musics of stillness and silence able to be discovered in a world of movement” (Thrift, 2000c, p. 49).

An interest in rhythm finds further support for the possible differences an encounter with the movements of such practices might make in an encounter recounted by Roth of the time she spent at the Esalen Institute in California;⁷

⁶ Other, more familiar types of geographies of this practice could of course be explored. According to Roth's web-site there are accredited 5 Rhythms™ teachers working in Austria, Belgium, Bosnia, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Malta, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

⁷ Founded in 1962, the Esalen institute was established in the midst of the emergence of the human potential movement. A range of holistic practices and workshops are offered there. These are offered under the aegis of “experimental education”. See www.esalen.org/info/general.shtml.

“Gregory Bateson, the noted anthropologist, was there. He had become Esalen’s community sage. He was dying of cancer, and he was doing it openly, bravely, gracefully. He participated in several of my ritual theater labs, and we even co-led a workshop we called ‘The Shaman and the Anthropologist,’ his last appearance as a teacher. Gregory was one of the most inspired and inspiring individuals I ever knew. Many powerful teachers had appreciated my work and recommended it to their students, but Gregory actually did it. He surrendered himself to it totally. Seventy-seven years old, his lungs shot, his feet so swollen he could barely walk, he never missed a beat, much less a session. My workshops are intensely physical, and yet this frail giant explored all the phases of the movement and immersed himself in the massage and ritual theater work. He was able to play with his prodigious intellect and vast knowledge and simply be in what he was doing. His mind was both full and empty. [...] Gregory and I—the thinker and the dancer, a most unlikely duo—met on a common ground, coming from different directions. We had both spent our lives investigating what Gregory called ‘the patterns which connect’. I call them maps, maps to choreograph our energy and lead us to ecstasy, wholeness. Gregory’s work was intellectual, mine physical. I’m sure he understood mine better than I his. But his validation of my intuitive discoveries was a crucial inspiration, and it was he who first urged me to write this book” (1998, p. 24–25).

An interest in rhythm is not aware of what Bateson might have taken from an encounter with the 5 Rhythms™, or indeed, why he participated. But here at least, the reasons behind such an encounter are not particularly important. Instead, such an encounter illuminates something of the ethos evident in Bateson’s writings about the mutual implication of different forms and styles of thinking. At the very end of his essay, *Form, Substance and Difference* Bateson (1973) highlights the importance of thinking in terms of relational ecologies of “mind” that neither prioritize particular levels of thought nor incorporate one way of moving into another. Given the encounter recounted above, this approach to thinking has particular resonance. Bateson (1973) ends his essay in the following way:

“And at last, there is death. It is understandable that, in a civilisation which separates mind from body, we should either try to forget death or to make mythologies about the survival of transcendent mind. But if mind is immanent not only in those pathways of information which are located inside the body but also in external pathways, then death takes on a different aspect. The individual

nexus of pathways which I call ‘me’ is no longer so precious because that nexus is only part of a larger mind” (p. 439–440).

While there may be problems with Bateson’s tendency to concentrate on individual “units” of information, his idea that different forms of thinking are implicated in pathways that move beyond the individual is an important one, full of pragmatic potential. It points to the possibility that an interest in rhythm, an interest emergent here and there in that hall and others can move along pathways for which thinking is neither separate from emotion nor limited by the individual, embodied subject. Instead, the moving, feeling and thinking of an interest in rhythm become mutually implicated in a relation of connectivity rather than causality. Here movement precipitates feeling and thought as much, if not more than the other way around. This, in turn has ethical implications, if, as Connolly (1999) suggests,

“Thinking is periodically inspired by unexpected encounters that jar it into motion out of stupor or that call into question chunks in the conventional storehouse of thought. Changes in thinking affect, over time, the shape and quality of the ethical sensibility from which one acts. And tactical interventions into sensibilities installed at several layers of being can make a significant difference to the quality of thought and action” (p. 28).

It also has aesthetic implications, which an interest in rhythm finds in Bateson’s (1973) emphasis on the importance of moving along bridges between different types or styles of thinking, without reducing this movement to any particular mode of apprehension. As he puts it,

“It seems to me the artists and poets are specifically concerned with these bridges. It is not that art is the expression of the unconscious, but rather that it is concerned with the relation between the levels of mental process. [...] Artistic skill is the combining of many levels of mind—unconscious, conscious, and external—to make a statement of their combination. It is not a matter of expressing a single level. Similarly, Isadora Duncan, when she said, ‘If I could say it, I would not have to dance it’, was talking nonsense, because her dance was about combinations of saying and moving” (p. 439–440).

These lines of Bateson’s thinking provide a way of beginning to realise the importance of a facilitating the emergence of an interest in rhythm, an interest in rhythm not limited to the representational terms of a thinking, feeling subject, but an interest in rhythm in which

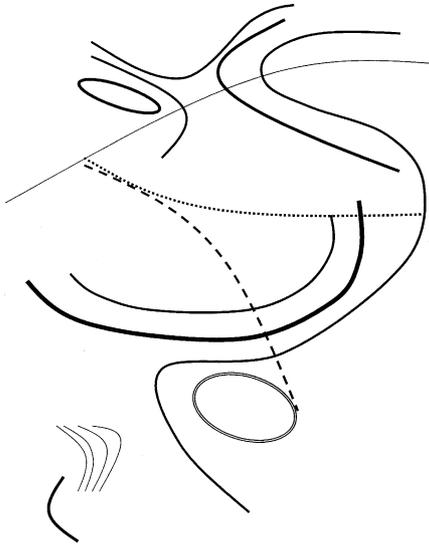


Diagram 1.

thinking and feeling are implicated, an interest that continues to return, *now* and *again*, *here* and *there*, to *that hall* (and others) in and from where, in different ways,

*One ventures from home on the thread of a tune, along sonorous, gestural, motor lines, lines now warmed up, becoming familiar with movements that seem to come from nowhere, yet without thinking, taking hints from others, as a voice invites a **moving into the first rhythm, flowing, the rhythm of curves, circles**, and one begins looking for the security of a phrase, a gesture, a line, something within and along which to move, before becoming more adventurous, as that phrase, that gesture, that line becomes something other by moving through me, moving beyond what it was, through moving something of mine beyond me, and now a track change, and music comes with curves that circle around, picking up and folding into the speeds and directions of another phrase, another gesture, another line, here and there, until before long a roomful of bodies becomes a multitude of curves, each of which is enhancing, inhaling, rising, expanding, and opening, into the curves of another...*

3. Refraining from the refrain

“Movement itself is expressive, regardless of intentions of expressivity, beyond intention” (Cunningham, 1985, p. 103)

For an interest in rhythm Bateson’s thinking provides a way of moving beyond the apparent choice between being thoughtfully critical about a practice like the 5 Rhythms™ and becoming ethically and aesthetically responsive to the creative potentials emerging from an immersion in the pre-cognitive, pre-discursive relationalities of its kinaesthetic territories. While it does not

itself provide the conceptual field with which an interest in rhythm can move on from here, Bateson’s work forms a pragmatic bridge onto such a field, through the concept of *plateau*. In another of the essays in *Steps to an Ecology of Place*, Bateson (1973) famously observes that within Balinese culture “the perhaps basically human tendency towards cumulative personal interaction is muted [...] and it is possible that some sort of continuing plateau of intensity is substituted for climax as the child becomes more fully adjusted to Balinese life” (p. 85).

And, perhaps equally famously, this notion of plateau is taken up by Deleuze and Guattari (1988) as a way to give their work a non-reducible, non-linear intensive and conceptual consistency. These plateaus have no single point of orientation and they do not aim towards a particular point of meaningful closure. Instead, their intensive consistencies are traversed by a multiplicity of non-subjectifying relations that bridge and open onto a multiplicity of ways of thinking, feeling, and perceiving. As such, they map a territory of potential that can enter into critical and creative relations with other territories, those produced in the lines of other plateaus, some conceptual, but others visceral, such as those catalysed in the kinaesthetic territories of the 5 Rhythms™, a practice “that begins and ends in movement” (Roth, 1998, p. 33).

The most resonant plateau encountered by an interest in rhythm emergent from the lines of this or that hall is *1838: On the Refrain* in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1988). This chapter has a movement of its own, but one that, after some time, begins to move with the force of an interest in rhythm. In doing this, it gives an interest in rhythm a forceful consistency through the concept of the refrain, or *ritournello*.⁸ “In a general sense” a refrain is defined as “any aggregate of matters of expression that draws a territory and develops into territorial motifs and landscapes” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, p. 323).⁹ But this concept, in turn, gains consistency from a number of other concepts, or sub-conceptual components. *Chaos* is a condition of generative potentiality, a “non-localisable, non-dimensional...tangled bunch of aberrant lines” (1988, p. 313), from which emerge specific spatio-temporal orderings, or *milieus*. The milieu is

“Vibratory, in other words, a block of space-time constituted by the periodic repetition of the component. Thus the living thing has an exterior milieu of materials, an interior milieu of composing elements and composed substances, an intermediary milieu of membranes and limits, and an annexed milieu of energy sources and actions–perceptions” (1988, p. 313).

⁸ For other encounters with the conceptual potentials of the refrain see Stivale (1994), Grossberg, 1998 and Seigworth (2000).

⁹ Emphasis in the original.

Importantly as far as the lines of this paper are concerned, *rhythm* is that component of the concept of the refrain which gives consistency to the relations between heterogeneous milieus. The organisation produced by this rhythmic consistency of milieus is not the “dogmatic” metrics of quantitative units. Thus, a “milieu does in fact exist by virtue of a periodic repetition, but one whose only effect is to produce a difference by which the milieu passes into another milieu. It is the difference that is rhythmic, not the repetition, which nevertheless produces it” (1988, p. 314).

Deleuze and Guattari argue that from the rhythmic relations between and within milieus, *territories* emerge. But this emergence is not simply a functional territorialisation, a mechanical organisation of milieus as extensive space. What defines a territory is not simply its functional components, but also the expressive qualities that emerge in the rhythmic play between milieus. Thus, “there is a territory precisely when milieu components cease to be functional to become expressive. There is a territory when the rhythm has expressiveness. What defines the territory is the emergence of matters of expression (qualities)” (1988, p. 315).

These expressive qualities do not exist as self-contained entities, but enter into relations with one another, relations that constitute “territorial motifs”, and “territorial counterpoints”. Through the interplay of these motifs and counterpoints, a particular territorial “style” emerges, a style that is apprehended in terms of the refrain. Importantly, this is not a question of evolution. Rather, it is one of passages, bridges and tunnels between the chaotic, milieu, rhythmic and territorial components of the refrain.

These notions of bridging, passage, movement are important because the refrain enters into critical and creative relations with other concepts, also becoming a matter of *affect*, *duration*, *consistency*, and *individuation* (or *haecceity*). With regard to the first, the affective qualities of the refrain are not defined in terms of its emotional content. They are defined in terms of the potential of the refrain to catalyse expressive relations between bodies, where bodies are no longer discrete, organic entities, but are redefined along a Spinozist geometry as capacities both for affecting and being affected. This affective geometry provides a way of apprehending not what a body is, for that would be to render it immobile in a containing form, but rather what a body can do. Thus “we know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of another body, either to destroy that body or to be destroyed by it, either to exchange actions and passions with it or to join with it in composing a more powerful body” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, p. 257). This notion of affect forges a way out of the personalised space of subjective affectivity. It facilitates

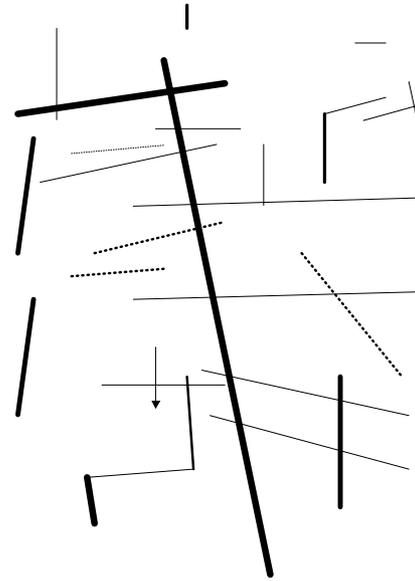


Diagram 2.

the emergence of a way of thinking that does not necessarily *move* with reference to an individual subject or corporeal body, but which nevertheless moves with the territorialising expressiveness of a refrain that, again and again, has the potential to

*Venture from home on the thread of a tune, along sonorous gestural, motor lines, lines that move on through another track change, another vocal intervention, this one offering an invitation to **begin moving into staccato, the second rhythm**, moving to the rhythm of a pulsing beat that demands a clarity, a definition, a gestural geometry, and now, as you move into the rhythm of staccato I want you to move as if you are showing the limits of your space, telling others with your movements that this is your territory, your living space, beginning to explore how it is to have others enter that space, crossing lines, exploring how you want to respond, reject, embrace, exclude, open those lines, as movements begin to delineate, demarcate with an angle of elbow, a degree of knee jerking up and down and in and out, marking space, making space...*

In addition to those of affect, the concept of the refrain engages with matters of duration, a concept drawn from Bergson (1911a,b), who challenges the idea of space as plane of extensive simultaneity along which things move. Instead of apprehending the movement of a mobile body by means of an intellect that cuts reality into individual frames, for Bergson it is imperative to “concentrate attention on that which we have that is at the same time the most removed from externality and the least penetrated with intellectuality. Let us seek, in the depths of our experience, the point where we feel ourselves most intimately within our own life. It is into pure duration that we plunge back, a duration in which the past, always moving on, is swelling unceasingly with a present that is absolutely new” (p. 210).

This duration or lived time has its own rhythms. Bergson frequently speaks of the fact that there are rhythmic changes in duration that can be apprehended through intuition, a method that allows one to get to the “palpitating heart of reality” (McKellar Stewart, 1911, p. 5). Thus Bergson (1911a,b) suggests that because all movements possess a rhythm it is therefore “possible to imagine many different rhythms which, slower or faster, measure the degree of tension or relaxation of different kinds of consciousness, and thereby fix their respective places on the scale of being” (p. 268). He also writes of rhythm not simply as a quality of the pure temporality of duration (Antliff, 1993). Instead the expansions and contractions that comprise the differentiating rhythms of duration are mixtures of space and time. As Antliff notes, for Bergson “concrete extension is composed of nothing more than changes of tension and energy, in short qualitative movement” (1993, p. 100).

Yet this is not entirely unproblematic. In his writings, Bergson again and again criticises any attempt to “freeze” the movement of thought, advocating instead the development of an intuitive method that might apprehend life as motion, flow, as an unquantifiable qualitative change. This insistence on durational continuity is criticised by Game, for whom Bergson “is so concerned to preserve the principle of flow that he will not allow for any discontinuities or disjunctions being integral to the movement of lived experience” (Game, 1997, p. 121).¹⁰ However, as Game rightly points out, this problem does not short-circuit the entire force of Bergson’s philosophy. Instead as she goes on to suggest, Bergson’s notion of duration needs to be informed by an

understanding of the way in which “change and transformation need ruptures which, in turn, lean on the shadow of continuity” (1997, p. 122; Clément, 1994).

Game’s argument that the notion of rupture is not based upon a clear conceptual exclusivity between rest and movement, flow and stasis is significant here because it resonates with Deleuze and Guattari’s argument about the importance of the refrain. While it is a matter of affect and duration, the refrain is not a matter of continuity. Instead it is one of “*consistency*: the ‘holding together’ of heterogeneous elements” (1988, p. 323).¹¹ Consistency is not effected through a model of linear, externally imposed hierarchical order. Nor does it reduce produce homogeneity where previously there was heterogeneity. It is an emergent “act that produces consolidated aggregates, or succession as well as of coexistence, by means of three factors [. . .]: intercalated elements, intervals,” and a “superposition of disparate rhythms, an articulation from within of an interrhythmicity” (1988, p. 329).

Furthermore, consistency in these terms is not an ethnological, but an *ethological* concept, where ethology

“Can be understood as a very privileged molar domain for demonstrating how the most varied components (biochemical, behavioural, perceptive, hereditary, acquired, improvised, social, etc.) can crystallise in assemblages that respect neither the distinction between orders nor the hierarchy of forms. What holds all these components together are *transversals*, and the transversal itself is only a component that has taken upon itself the specialised vector of deterritorialisation. In effect, what holds an assemblage together is not the play of framing forms or linear causalities but, actually or potentially, its most deterritorialized component, a cutting edge of deterritorialisation. An example is the refrain...” (1988, p. 336).

Clearly, ethology does not privilege the moving subject as a site of consistency. Yet it does not exclude the possibility of an individual, or more accurately of an *individuation* that at times crosses a threshold of existential consistency.¹² It is just that this consistency can

¹⁰ This is an aspect of Bergson’s aesthetics that is also criticised by Levinas on the basis that, in thinking of rhythm in terms of the graceful pulse of duration, the former automatically short-circuits any appreciation of a form of alterity that is always inscrutable (Peters, 1997). In the course of his development of a form of rhythm analysis, Bachelard adds a further critical note. In *The Dialectic of Duration* he takes issue with the implicit optimism of Bergson’s thinking, arguing that that the latter’s “philosophy is a philosophy of fullness and his psychology is a psychology of plenitude. This psychology is so rich, so multifarious and mobile that it cannot be contradicted” (2000, p. 23). As a result, in Bergson’s philosophy “life is never absolutely and unconditionally at risk” (2000, p. 27). In contrast, Bachelard argues for the importance of an approach to duration that considers it in relation to the possibility of its own negation or destruction. For Bachelard, this dialectic provides the ethical condition of risk against which the imperative of activity occurs. Because of this condition of risk, duration comes to be considered as an effort, as something that must be “maintained”. If not, the “creative value of becoming is limited by the very fact of fundamental continuity” (2000, p. 24). As Bachelard suggests “we shall see that there is a fundamental heterogeneity at the very heart of lived, active, creative duration, and that in order to know or use time well, we must activate the rhythm of creation and destruction, or work and repose” (2000, p. 29). Cray (1999) makes a similar point about James’s stream of consciousness and the rhythms of Dewey (1934) both of which incorporate notions of rhythm into an aesthetic of continuous flow and grace (Cray, 1999).

¹¹ Emphasis in the original.

¹² Deleuze and Guattari do not dispense entirely with any notion of subjectivity, or indeed of the human. Guattari explicitly makes this point in *Chaosmosis* (1995, p. 9) when he states that “it would be to misjudge Deleuze and Foucault—who emphasised the non-human part of subjectivity—to suspect them of taking anti-humanist positions! That’s not the issue. Rather, it’s a question of being aware of the existence of machines of subjectivation which do not simply work within the ‘faculties of the soul’, interpersonal relations or intra-familial complexes”. Elsewhere Ansell-Pearson argues that philosophy on Deleuze’s model “remains faithful to the human, to the forces of finitude that constitute and consume its corporeality, by allowing it the freedom of the incorporeal event, and by seeking to demonstrate the possibility of a thinking ‘beyond’ the human condition” (1999, p. 224).

be composed of a multitude of refrains, and that it has more of the character of what Deleuze and Guattari call a *haecceity*, a mode of individuation that is not a subject, even though at times it is entangled in modes and machines of subjectification. As they put it,

“A season, a winter, a summer, an hour, a date have perfect individuality lacking nothing, even though this individuality is different from that of a thing or a subject. They are haecceities in the sense that they consist entirely of relations of movement and rest between molecules or particles, capacities to affect and be affected. [...] Tales must contain haecceities that are not simply emplacements, but concrete individuations that have a status of their own and direct the metamorphosis of things and subjects. [...] A haecceity has neither beginning nor end, origin nor destination; it is always in the middle. It is not made of points, only of lines” (1988, p. 261–263).

In these terms, an interest in rhythm is apprehended as an individuation given consistency by the conceptual territory of the refrain in a way that opens onto a multitude of affective relations (Guattari, 2000). Thus, in the middle of that hall, within and from which one is venturing from home on the thread of a tune, there is a movement between milieus that are composed of motor, sensory, neurochemical, others that are brought into a relation of affective consistency through the rhythmic track of the music.¹³

What emerges from the rhythmic consistency of these relations is up for grabs, but they are sometimes seized bodily by the style of a territorialising refrain of an interest in rhythm. However, if the refrains of this consistency are not to fall into the patterns of “deathly repetition” (Guattari, 1995), they must be open to the potential that event-full encounters with other bodies may bring. This refigures what matters as far as an interest in rhythm emergent from the

territories of the 5 Rhythms™ is concerned. In the territory of *flowing*, for instance, one finds oneself (where one is a mode of individuation) experimenting with a particular gestural curve, exploring its pathways, its limits, its speeds, until the curve becomes the movement itself, becomes a refrain, a style that has durational intensity for who knows how long, until from somewhere else another possibility arises, and the affective pathway of another curve takes over. Each rhythm has its own such possibilities, and at some point, these begin moving between rhythms, as one begins experimenting with staccato-chaos, or flowing-chaos. Hybrid, bridging rhythms emerge, passing from one territory to another through the refraining movement of a hand, an arm, a leg, a hip. Returning time and time again, session after session, night after night, the gestural refrains of each rhythmic territory emerge without effort, without the act of thinking what should one do. But this takes time. And sometimes it does not work, and then everything falls flat on its face in a bundle of self-consciousness tied loosely together with the question—*what am I doing here?*

But sometimes it works wonderfully, and then, for a moment, the concept of the refrain also takes seriously the infinite potentials of the kinaesthetic territories of the 5 Rhythms™. Roth (1998) summarises this in the following terms:

“More and more the worldviews of advanced physics, chemistry, and astronomy parallel those of the traditions such as Buddhism and, in effect, the esoteric core of the great traditions. We find that the deeper we probe the matter of creation the more we bump up against the mystery of nonmatter, uncreated energy, infinity. In a word, spirit. As the Hasidic masters taught, the spark of the infinite that energises each of us derives from the same ultimate source. We needn’t interpret this source theistically, but it is easy to think of it as a universal energy in which everything participates to some degree. Hence, freeing the spirit means fanning the spark of infinity into a consuming fire, channelling the ultimate into the now, embodying the infinite in our finite lives” (p. 176).

While by no means offering a spiritual theism, as far as an interest in rhythm is concerned, Deleuze and Guattari articulate an ethico-aesthetics of the refrain through which the finite is dynamised by the potentialities of the infinite.¹⁴ This is developed through the idea

¹³ Neither the music, nor the 5 Rhythms™ teacher dictate this process. As one such teacher puts it “I choose [the music] moment to moment, I don’t plan what kind of music to use. All the time I’m trying to sense what’s happening in the group and what needs to happen next. It’s almost like helping a butterfly to unfold. I’m sensing what needs to happen next in a group and then picking a track that will support that to happen. The music is really the most powerful tool I have. When we were training, the first 6 months of teaching we had to teach with no words. We just had to hire a space and put on music and just use music to follow the group and not say anything because that’s the most fundamental skill and its the most powerful tool definitely. So I just choose it moment to moment” (from a personal interview, Bristol 1999).

¹⁴ For a consideration of the relation between Deleuze’s thinking and religion see the essays in Bryden (2000).

of the *Cosmos*, a space of infinite molecular movement. For Deleuze and Guattari, the forces of the *Cosmos* can be captured by the consistency of the refrain at the same time as they always move beyond the threshold of individual perception. This movement is “*like a passage from the finite to the infinite*, but also from territory to deterritorialisation. It is indeed the moment of the infinite: infinitely varied infinities” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 181).¹⁵

Yet, for an interest in rhythm, by invoking the notion of the *Cosmos* there is a risk of becoming lost in a kind of mystical, mobile intoxication that becomes seduced by the effort to escape any containing corporeal form in a moment of cathartic deterritorialisation.¹⁶ Such an effort can become as dogmatic and as deadening as remaining in stuck in “deathly” repetitions. Thus, for an interest in rhythm the point of invoking the *Cosmos* becomes not to escape or overcome the flesh, or what usually passes for the body. Instead, it involves a radical commitment to admit the creative potentialities of incorporeal bodies and forces in the imperatives of corporeality. This has as much to do with “holding on” as it does with “letting go”. As Deleuze and Guattari suggest, because

“Sobriety [...] is the common prerequisite for the deterritorialisation of matters, the molecularization of material, and the cosmicization of forces [...] your synthesis of disparate elements will be all the stronger if you proceed with a sober gesture, an act of consistency, capture, or extraction that works in a material that is not meagre but prodigiously simplified, creatively, limited, selected. For there is no imagination outside of technique” (1988, p. 344).

¹⁵ Emphasis in original.

¹⁶ As Pini (1998) notes, this is especially problematic in writings about rave culture in which such practices are thought of as instantiating a form of creative becoming in an unregulated space, an ‘example’ of the temporary dissolution of the self in the midst a collective effort at making oneself into a body without organs. This is problematic insofar as it posits a sharp difference between regulated and unregulated spaces, territorialisation and deterritorialisation, based upon a critique of any form of organisation or stratification. What is lost here is a critical appreciation of the ways in which apparently ‘unregulated’ spaces are themselves dependent upon regulatory and stratifying practices, a point well made by Pini. In addition, the costs of creative becomings are ignored, despite a warning from Deleuze and Guattari that “if you free it with too violent an action, if you blow apart the strata without taking precautions, then instead of drawing the plane you will be killed, plunged into a black hole, or even dragged toward catastrophe” (1988, p. 161). Without such sobriety, there is a real danger that thinking in terms of movement leads simply to a nave vitalistic escapism. Territories and strata choreograph movement in very specific ways.

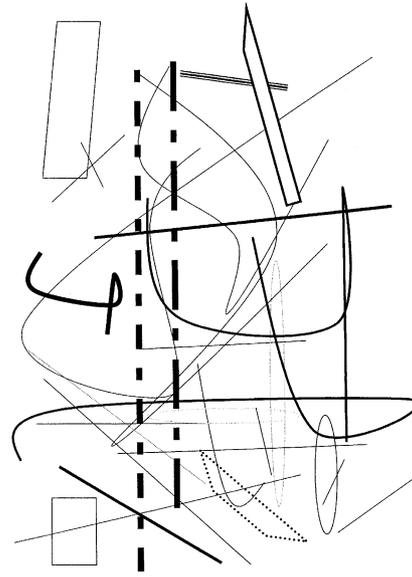


Diagram 3.

As far as an interest in rhythm is concerned then, the important act here becomes that which works to realise how the concept of the refrain provides a way of moving, a vehicle, that touches upon the affective intensities of corporeality at the same time as it touches upon or opens onto the incorporeal, the virtual, the infinite. In this way, there is still a sense in which molecular speeds and directions are entangled in the viscous imperatives of the rhythms of corporeality, without ever being reducible to the organic matter of the body, yet speeds and directions that, from time to time,

*Venture from home on the thread of a tune, along sonorous, gestural, motor lines, lines that move on through another vocal intervention offering an invitation to **begin moving on into the next rhythm, Chaos**, as a track changes, sounding on into a heavier, pounding, bass thumping beat that finds feet finding it, and, **still dancing, could we begin forming a circle, a wide circle, a dancing circle**, while keeping the feet of that bass rhythm, while as if from nowhere, the pathways of lighter rhythms begin to arrive, taking arms and moving through the still thumping bass while heading in directions with speeds and lines that take off from no point in particular, **and whenever you want, take your dance into that circle, one, two, or three at a time**, moving into the middle, moving in between for a moment...*

4. Refraining from diagrams

At some moment then, an interest in rhythm becomes a matter of *moving*, of moving through a refraining

consistency that always “strains towards three different poles: concepts, or new ways of thinking; percepts, or new ways of seeing and construing; and affects, or new ways of feeling” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, pp. 164–165). A matter of moving that proceeds by “inventing vibrations, rotations, whirlings, gravitations, dances or leaps which directly touch the mind” (Deleuze, 1994, p. 8). Because the territory of the refrain holds together an ethics of expressive potential, this matter of moving is also a question of aesthetics and style, where style is not something added on after the important work has been done, after the groundwork has been laid. *How* one does something is, in this scheme of things, as important as, or at least cannot be divorced from *what* one does. Modes of intervention therefore become less an effort to record, to represent, and more the manifestation of a willingness to witness and apprehend the movement of an event-full life no longer limited to the ethico-political or aesthetic territories of the human (Thrift and Dewsbury, 2000).

In these terms, the lines of a paper become an effort to *write with* the animating potential of an interest in rhythm, and not only to write an interest in rhythm. They become an effort to draw a creative consistency that moves between the affective territories of the 5 Rhythms™ and the conceptual territories of the refrain. They become modest but hopeful scriptural interventions that work to open themselves onto a theatre of promise rather than delimiting the judgmental politics of a theatre of proof, in the vein of what Phelan (1997) suggests when she writes that

“Much of what I am trying to articulate here exists only in a zone patrolled by regulated syntax, proper footnotes, blushing italics. In nominating performative writing as a way to intervene in the deadly asperities of contemporary thinking, I realise I am also reciting redundancy, flirting with a new marketing ploy, re-naming something that has existed for a very long time with little or no fanfare. Yet I risk these things because I want to promise that there is a way to move even within the stone vaults to which too many of us have been vanished. I want to promise it rather than prove it. I may be wrong and we’ll be frozen forever on cold rocks. But I may not be wrong (which is different from being right) and to dream of dancing while whiling away the hours in the waiting room is better than some other alternatives I can think of” (p. 17).¹⁷

Equally, a paper with an interest in rhythm can open onto and move along the passages of other types of lines, lines that are more sonorous than scriptural. Again, these lines do not necessarily work on the register of the subject, or of an individual perception or emotion. Because they are not ethnological, but ethological, they are not limited to the creative activity of the human. They also admit the expressive territories of animality. Thus, as Deleuze and Guattari point out,

“Every morning the *Scenopoetes dentirostris*, a bird of the Australian rain forests, cuts leaves, makes them fall to the ground, and turns them over so that the paler, internal side contrasts with the earth. In this way it constructs a stage for itself like a ready-made; and directly above, on a creeper or a branch, while fluffing out the feathers beneath its beak to reveal their yellow roots, it sings a complex song made up from its own notes, and at intervals, those of other birds that it imitates: it is a complete artist. This is no synesthesia in the flesh but blocs of sensations in the territory—colours, postures, and sounds that sketch out a total work of art. These sonorous blocs are refrains; but there are also refrains of posture and colour, and postures and colours are always being introduced into refrains: bowing low, straightening up, dancing in a circle and lines of colours” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1995, p. 184).

By highlighting this Deleuze and Guattari are not claiming that the expressive qualities of this territory are more authentic than those emerging from and between milieus that have a more human flavour. Nor are they attempting to anthropomorphize animality. Instead, the postures and colours and lines of the refrains of birds work towards and the consistency of an expressive territory in a manner that operates on the same plane as that of the “human” artists.

However, if Deleuze and Guattari cannot place the animal and the human in a relation of priority or superiority, they do concede a greater force to refrains that are sonorous. As far as an interest in rhythm is concerned, this is not particularly helpful, or at least not here in these lines, unless these lines have the capacity to take on a sonorous quality. Without this assurance, an interest in rhythm must work along the lines of the material available, the lines of a refrain that are as much figural as discursive. The figural dimensions of the refrain can draw support from a number of sources, including the graphic efforts of artists like Klee and Kandinsky to compose territories of figural refrains that “consist in dynamic trajectories and errant lines, ‘paths that go for a walk’

¹⁷ See also Cooper Albright (1997), Cixous (1990).

in the surroundings” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1995, p. 184).^{18,19} An interest in rhythm also takes note of how Kandinsky draws upon a familiarity with dance in order to articulate an aesthetic of composition, observing, in *Point and Line to Plane* that,

“In the dance, the whole body—and in the new dance, every finger—draws lines with very clear expression. The ‘modern’ dancer moves about the stage on exact lines, which he introduces in the composition of his dance a significant element. The entire body of the dancer, right down to his fingertips, is at every moment an uninterrupted composition of lines. The use of lines is, indeed a new achievement but, of course, is no invention of the ‘modern’ dance: apart from the classic ballet, every

people at every stage of their ‘evolution’ work with line in the dance” (1923, p. 100).²⁰

The possibility of a dynamic graphics that apprehends without representing a movement that opens onto the potentiality of non-subjectifying forces gains further support from other aspects of the relationship between a figural graphics and the movements of dance. The point here is not to find a way of graphically representing the bodyspace from which emerges an interest in rhythm.²¹ Instead the aim is to find a way of apprehending something of the movement that animates this space. Thus, in her extensive exploration of rhythm and movement, Goodridge, 1999, p. 91 notes that contemporary choreographers frequently use “gestural track notation in the form of free-style drawings” to get a sense of rhythmic movement without copying or predicting it. Moving beyond this, the collaborative work of Merce Cunningham and John Cage draws attention to the possibility of a choreographic diagrammatics that is open to the possibilities of chance, improvisation, and slips of the foot, and indeed of the mouse (Cunningham, 1968; Pritchett, 1993; Kostelanetz, 1998), a diagrammatics that has the potential to enliven some of the apprehensions employed by geographers (Thrift and Dewsbury, 2000).

In working towards this, an interest in rhythm begins moving as much with the graphic possibilities of a pen or, in this case a mouse, as with the lines and pathways of arm, a leg or a head, or a word.²² Playfully moving along the lines emerging in and from the kinaesthetic territories of a hall, *there*, becomes part of a playfully emergent movement along and within the lines on the page, with this page, *here*, this line, *here*, this keystroke, *here*, this _____, *here*. So, for want of something else to do, an interest in rhythm draws, or composes, lines on a page, these $\sqrt{\zeta}$, lines that at some point in their drawing take on a territorial consistency, becoming, somehow, in the process, Diagrams 1–5.

The drawing of these lines is not a question of prioritising one matter of expression over the other. Nor is it a question of thinking of these lines in terms of snapshots, outlines, essential moments. Instead, their drawing becomes a question of moving along the

¹⁸ Bergson also provides a reference point, through the way that his ideas about the rhythms of duration informed the work of particular cubist and rhythmist painters at the beginning of the 20th century (Antliff, 1993). In the belief that they had a privileged intuitive access to the duration of things in the world, these artists attempted to apprehend the intensity of durational rhythms by means of breaking down the unified extensity of the image on the canvas. As Antliff points out, in these paintings, “objects portrayed frequently dissolve into abstract planes, causing our attention to fluctuate between the representational content and the non-representational volume. It is the rhythmic interrelation of such volumes which instigates our intuitive apprehension of the painter’s organisational matrix” (1993, p. 53).

¹⁹ In the introduction to Kandinsky’s *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1977), Sadler (1977) highlights how Kandinsky’s work is an effort to “paint music”. This does not mean that he is attempting to represent music. Instead, as Sadler goes on to suggest (rather boldly), “the power of music to give expression without the help of representation is its noblest possession. No painting has ever had such a precious power. Kandinsky is striving to give it that power, and prove what is at least a logical analogy between colour and sound, between line and rhythm of beat” (1977, p. xx). Kandinsky writes about the “basic elements” of this kind of painting in *Point and Line to Plane* (1979). The first of these is the incorporeal, invisible singularity, materialised in the graphic intervention of the point. The second is the line,

“A force which develops not with the point, but outside of it. This force hurls itself upon the point which is digging its way into the surface, tears it out and pushes it about the surface in one direction or another. The concentric tension of the point is thereby immediately destroyed and, as a result, it perishes and a new being arises out of it which leads a new independent life in accordance with its own laws. This is the Line” (1923, p. 54).

In turn, points and lines enter into relations of composition on a third element, Plane. As far as an interest in rhythm is concerned what matters about Kandinsky’s graphics is less the way in which they attempt to delimit the fundamental geometry of spiritual harmony on the canvas, and more the way in which they are an effort to develop a kind of abstract graphic movement as the basis for composing non-representational expressive territories.

²⁰ Kandinsky’s interest in dance emerged in the context of and resonated with important rhythmic experiments conducted in the early part of the 20th century. The most notable of these was developed by Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, the founder of *eurhythmics*, a corporeal practice that attempted to act upon and improve individual aesthetic sensibility through rhythmic movement (see Jaques-Dalcroze, 1912, 1921). See also Segel (1998).

²¹ That is not to say that dance notation is not useful. See Laban (1966) and Farnell (1999).

²² For explorations of the relationship between graphic and scriptural lines see Rasula and McCaffrey (1998) and Lomax (2000). See also Hurren’s (1998) attempt to move along the lines of a more poetic map.

transversal lines of a process, not of a product, a process that has consistency, but not necessarily continuity.²³ But drawn together, the figural and scriptural lines of the refrain hold together the non-representational diagrammatic component of a *pragmatics* that works upon and through the movement between different regimes of signs (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, p. 145).²⁴ This diagrammatic component “consists in taking regimes or forms of expression and extracting from them particle-signs that are no longer formalized but constitute unformed traits capable of combining with one another. This is the height of abstraction, but also the moment at which abstraction becomes real” (1988, p. 145–146). The lines of these diagrams have no beginning or end. Instead, they are a cutting edge open simultaneously onto the limits of several matters of expression, holding these together in non-subjectifying relations of consistency, while at the same time offering potential trajectories of rupture, along which the finite becomes animated by potentialities of the infinite. As Lorraine (1999) (p. 199), citing Deleuze, observes:

“A diagram not only maps a specific formation of power relations in terms of a non-unifying immanent cause but also marks the points at which that

²³ Genosko usefully illuminates the importance of the concept of transversality as this is articulated in Guattari’s work. As he puts it;

“It seems to me that stripped of its overt psychoanalytic scaffolding (except for the modified theory of partial objects) and the institutional analytic framework in which it was originally conceived and practices for some 30 years, the concept is radically opened to hitherto unimagined mutations and complexifications across all sorts of domains. In other words, transversality still signifies militant, social, undisciplined creativity. Guattari was well aware of the risks of this kind of openness and of the concepts progressive deterritorialisation from existing modelisations. He emphasised that transversality was not a given, an ‘already there’, but always to be ‘conquered through a pragmatics of existence’. In his early works, transversality needed to be released and consolidated through some specific institutional activity, but not toward a norm given in advance. Transversality was an adjustable, *real* coefficient, decentered, and non-hierarchical, and *Chaosmosis* put the accent on its inbetweenness. Transversality as a ‘bridge’ (i.e. across strata in an ontological dimension, or in relation to one or more dimensions) is an idea that occurs several times; the concept retained its break with horizontal and vertical coordinates, its deterritorializing character, its social and political experimentality, and connection with production, especially the production of subjectivity, and the collective assemblages of enunciation. Transversality remained a line rather than a point. A line that picks up speed in the middle as it travels between relatively autonomous components of subjectification” (Genosko, 2000, p. 151).

²⁴ In these terms a diagram is not limited to representational functions. In *Foucault*, Deleuze defines the diagram as “the map of relations between forces, a map of destiny, or intensity, which proceeds by primary non-localizable relations and at every point passes through every point” (1988, p. 36).

specific formation destabilises. It is at such points that the possibility of alternative formations of power emerges. The outside from which these new possibilities emerge constitutes the limit to thinking. Conventional sentences and objects are formed within the realms of the sayable and the perceivable. Real thought, however, comes from the outside. The thought of the outside is a thought of resistance, and Deleuze insists that the social field offers more resistance than strategies. Foucault as cartographer maps out a social field in terms of the lines of flight that break free from the realms of the perceivable and the sayable: ‘From this we can get the triple definition of writing; to write is to struggle and resist; to write is to become; to write is to draw a map’”.

Thus, in the words of Deleuze,

“What we call a ‘map’, or sometimes a ‘diagram’, is a set of various interacting lines (thus the lines in a hand are a map). There are of course many different kinds of lines, both in art and in a society or a person. Some lines represent something, others are abstract. Some lines have various segments, others don’t. Some weave through a space, others go in a certain direction. Some lines, no matter whether or not they’re abstract, trace and outline, others don’t. The most beautiful ones do. We think lines are the basic components of things and events. So everything has its geography, its cartography, its diagram. What’s interesting, even in a person, are the lines that make them up, or they make up, or take, or create” (1995, p. 33).

And so also with a paper, the diagrammatic lines of which have an interest in rhythm. Through the movement of these lines of an interest in rhythm, a paper becomes a different thing altogether, not a movement about rhythm, but the rhythms of a *moving about*, a *moving inbetween*. A paper becomes a matter of interweaving ethics and aesthetics so that they no longer content to remain “residing in the relation between a subject and an object, but rather in the movement serving as the limit of that relation, in the period associated with the subject and object”, a movement in which perception is in “the midst of things” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, p. 282). A paper that begins to realise how thinking needs eventful encounters from, through and against which to emerge and move and that one never knows in advance what kinds of encounters will prove most animating in this regard. And a paper becomes the dissociation of movement from the self-evident presence of an “I” that perceives, and weaves it back into the emergent lines of a world of performative

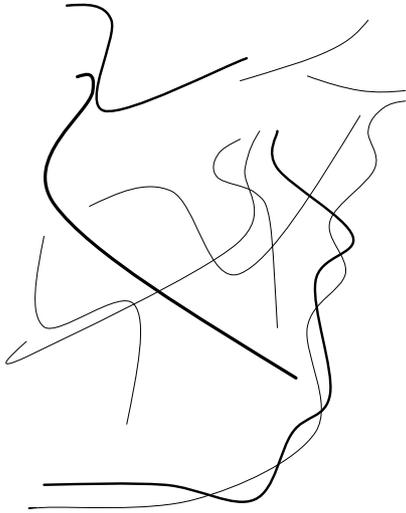


Diagram 4.

relations, events, and encounters, a world in which, in the words of Louis McNeice (1966)

“We are still doing and making
Not to display our muscles but to elicit
A rhythm, a value, implicit in something beyond us”.

A world in which an interest in rhythm is always
Venturing from home on the thread of a tune, moving along sonorous, gestural, motor lines, lines that move on from chaos, through another track change, another vocal intervention, this one offering an invitation, now, beginning to move out of chaos into lyrical, into lighter notes, lifting sounds, and find yourself a group of three, a moment of apprehension, of glancing around another glance, taking one towards two, into mixed movements, one leading another, an arm tracing an arc into a phrase and following begins for a time until beginning then follows, moving beyond giving and taking, and at some point two becoming three, moving faster, touching, feinting, darting away, in a play of ducking and weaving and chasing through lines that always seem to be opening on to others...

5. Refraining from concluding, or, how has one been doing?

“The final moment is arriving. The return to measured time. The music stops. A brief encounter, life starts again. But it is no longer altogether the same” (Clément, 1994, p. 257).

“The thing is, everyone has habits of thinking: I tend to think of things as sets of lines to be unravelled but also to be made to intersect. I don’t like points; I think it’s stupid summing things up. Lines aren’t things running between two points; points are where

several lines intersect. Lines never run uniformly, and points are nothing but inflections of lines. More generally, it’s not beginnings and ends that count, but middles. Things and thoughts advance and grow out from the middle, and that’s where you have to get to work, that’s where everything unfolds. So a multilinear complex can fold back on itself with intersections and inflections that interconnect philosophy, the history of philosophy, history in general, the sciences, and the arts. As though these are so many twists in the path of something moving through space like a whirlwind that can materialise at any point” (Deleuze, 1995, p. 161).

““Well?” said the geographer expectantly...” (De Saint-Exupéry, 1995, pp. 63–64).

Where does all this get a paper with an interest in rhythm? Perhaps it is not so much a question of where, but of how, of how, of how, quite simply, a paper with an interest in rhythm works to become responsive to the lines of movement emerging from an encounter with the 5 Rhythms™, lines of movement that might, if taken up, enliven the repertoire of ways in which geographies are creatively enacted. Not that these territories are the only ones from which such lines of movement. Nor are they necessarily the best, as the almost narrative like movement of the *flowing-staccato-chaos-lyrical-stillness* wave can become restrictive, laying down a dogmatic choreographic track that can be difficult to revive. But things always have to begin in the middle of somewhere, and what becomes important is a responsiveness to the possibility that, given conceptual consistency by concepts such as the refrain, encounters with/in the kin-aesthetic territories of a practice like the 5 Rhythms™ can facilitate the emergence of a way of moving that refuses to be more than an animating composite of vibrations, resonances, and reverberations. A way of moving that refrains from concluding with any certainty, but that from time to time and here and there creatively gestures and ventures from home. A way of moving that playfully writes through the lines of refraining fragments, footnotes and moments drawn from event-full encounters. Encounters that are never simply personal, never incorporated in organic form, in a subject, in an act, but that are always caught up in the speeds, intensities, and affects of corporeal, intercorporeal and incorporeal forces. Yet a way of moving that is also not simply seduced by the attraction of speed, that is not afraid to stop, and perhaps to breathe. Indeed, a style that is not afraid to admit (without demanding) the apprehension, if only fleeting, of the “subtle pleasure of inventing, within the plurality, one’s own conduct, one’s own language, one’s own individual work and private existence, one’s body itself” (Serres, 1995, p. 138). A way of moving where such bodies are at best a refraining

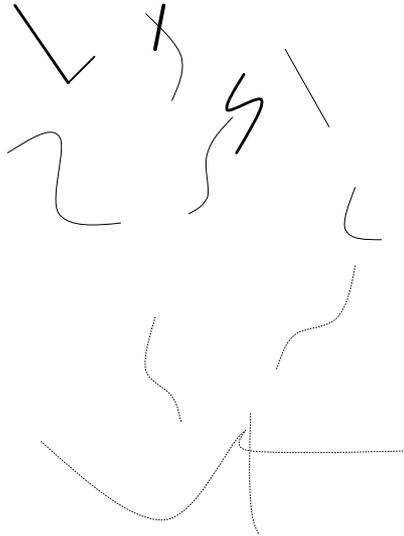


Diagram 5.

composition of many forces, many movements, bodies given life by

*Venturing from home on the thread of a tune, moving along sonorous, gestural, motor lines, through one more track change, one more vocal intervention, inviting one to **begin moving into the last rhythm, stillness**, with slower sounds, and gestures that begin to wind down while allowing other lines of movement to come into play, lines emerging through the flow of sweat, the rhythm of a re-emergent pulse. Lines still caught up in the after-affects of movement, the kinaesthetics of desire, resonating, reverberating, more gently perhaps, though no less intense. Lines that are always moving, even when movement is imperceptible, when movement becomes stillness, when movement approaches pure breath. Lines still moving, moving still, still making a difference that is itself always in the making. Lines...*

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