In the Threshold
Writing Between-the-Two

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Abstract In this paper, we describe our encounters in and passes through the figuration of the threshold as producing writing between-the-two: or, loss of the individual subject. We describe how in the threshold, we meet in that in-between space, a space of shared deterritorialization in which we constitute one another. Also, we describe writing between-the-two in the threshold as a site of embodiment, of affect. In thinking of how to articulate our way of thinking and writing together as between-the-two and as different than a collaborative project where two "I"s contribute pieces both with and independent of the other, we take our cue from Ken Gale and Jonathan Wyatt's (2009) *Between the Two.* In this book, they articulate a way of thinking and writing inspired by Deleuze and Guattari's collaborative work as that which is not a working together, but a working in the gap "between the two" (Deleuze & Parnet, 1987/2002, p. 13). This spark of creativity in the gap is both like and unlike what we will explain in this article. Like Gale and Wyatt, we lean on figurations and concepts in the writings of Deleuze and Guattari as a referent; however, our between-the-two is pursued more deliberately through a materialist knowing in being that produces our becoming with and in a digital threshold.

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Thinking is not something 'we' do; thinking happens to us, from without. There is a necessity to thinking, for the event of thought lies beyond the autonomy of choice. Thinking happens.

> (Colebrook, 2002, p. 38)

Think of a threshold. In architecture, a threshold is in the middle of things. It exists as a passageway. A threshold has no function, purpose, or meaning until it is connected to other spaces. That is, a threshold does not become a passageway until it is attached

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to other things different from itself. Thresholds contain both entries and exits; they are both/and. A single threshold can be not only an entryway, but also an exit; therefore, the structure itself is not quite as linear and definitive as one might think. In other terms, thresholds can denote excess, such as in having a low threshold for pain. The excess of a threshold is the space in which something else occurs: a response, an effect. Once you exceed the threshold, something new happens.

We offer the figuration of the threshold in order to situate our writing between-the-two (Gale & Wyatt, 2009) and as a way to emphasize movement, openings, and a production of the new. In this paper, we describe our encounters in and passes through the threshold as producing writing between-the-two: or, loss of the individual subject. Certainly, in some ways we are indeed two authors, but in the threshold, we meet in that in-between space, a space of shared deterritorialization in which we constitute one another. Also, we describe writing between-the-two in the threshold as a site of embodiment, of affect—despite the fact that we live on opposite ends of the United States and we rarely, if ever, collaborate while inhabiting the same physical place. Rosi Braidotti carefully explains that "figurations are not figurative ways of thinking, but rather more materialistic mappings of situated, or embedded and embodied positions"(Braidotti, 2002, p. 2). So in this paper, we map how our becomings emerged in the middle of things, in the threshold.

In thinking of how to articulate our way of thinking and writing together as between-the-two and as different than a collaborative project where two "I"s contribute pieces both with and independent of the other, we take our cue from and Ken Gale and Jonathan Wyatt's (2009) *Between the Two.* In this book, they articulate a way of thinking and writing inspired by Deleuze and Guattari's collaborative work as that which is not a working together, but a working in the gap "between the two" (Deleuze & Parnet, 2002, p. 13). This spark of creativity in the gap is both like and unlike what we will explain in this article. Like Gale and Wyatt, we lean on figurations and concepts in the writings of Deleuze and Guattari as a referent; however, our between-the-two is pursued more deliberately through a materialist knowing in being that produces our becoming with and in a digital threshold.

Becoming in a Digital Threshold

We have recently completed a book project entitled *Thinking with Theory in Qualitative Research* (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). Before that project, we co-edited a book, *Voice in Qualitative Inquiry* (Jackson & Mazzei, 2009). Between those two large projects, we have co-authored four journal articles, one book chapter, and have presented

four conference papers and three workshops together (if not co-written, we served on the same panels and presented individual papers that usually arose from our joint theoretical interests and/or research projects). To the point, bits and pieces of each other are always in our work, be it individually "authored" or formally co-authored. For all of these projects, we were on opposite ends of a country, and in some cases, different continents. For the practical aspects of writing—of putting words onto a document that we could easily access and share—we used Buzzword, a software program that allows document sharing and collaboration and is most likely nothing new to readers by way of online collaboration. Yet what we have come to imagine is the digital space as part of our threshold experience in that it allows us to map materiality and embodiment even as we work at a physical and temporal distance. Part of what we have learned, and what we detail in the following two sections, is that writing between-the-two in the threshold is not a process of working individually to contribute to the whole but is a process of producing something not possible outside the space of the threshold where the "two" produce thinking not possible otherwise.

What has occurred for/to/with us in the threshold is what Claire Colebrook describes in the opening quote for this article as simply "thinking." Our collaborative processes have enabled a thinking between-the-two that produces new thought, new connectives, new affects, new becomings. And how we were constituted in this process of thinking and writing between-the-two was not fully predicted or expected. What has emerged as a result of thinking and writing and mapping our thoughts together has become more apparent and articulable as a result of our thinking data and theory together (see Jackson & Mazzei, forthcoming 2013). Such thinking and writing refuses a distancing or separation of the two in the same way that our writing in the threshold refuses a contribution by our individual author selves in a writing between-the-two. While extremely productive in terms of thought not possible by our singular "selves," such thinking and writing is at times not merely exhausting in the sense of fatiguing, but exhausting in that we are constantly pulled back into the threshold, into the data, into this between-the-two, into new thinking that refuses to lose its hold on us.

What we will present in the remainder of this article are two examples of what it looks like to pass through the threshold—how the intensities produced something new not only in terms of writing but also our subjectivities. Of course, the danger in writing of our subjectivities is that we risk a centering of "selves." However, as prompted by Deleuze, we will first present our ideas of how such a process works, a resultant loss of the subject in the between-the-two, and conclude with a brief discussion of the deterritorializations that are produced as a result. Such a focus on

process, we hope, will pull us out of our "selves" that prompts a decentering of the "I" in the space of the threshold.

Affect and Embodiment

> *In an interview celebrating his 86th birthday, Joan Miró tried to explain his creativity to questioning interviewers. He said such things as, "The paper has magnetism," "My hand is guided by a magnetic force," "It is like I am drunk."*
>   (cited in Noddings, 2003, p. 22)

From a posthumanist perspective, agency is distributed. In other words, intentionality is not attributable to humans, but, according to Karen Barad, is "understood as attributable to a complex network of human and nonhuman agents, including historically specific sets of material conditions that exceed the traditional notion of the individual" (Barad, 2007, p. 23). Agency then is an enactment, not something that an individual possesses. The above response provided by the painter Miró speaks to the mutually constitutive agency and affect produced by/through/with/in the text and how we approach the text as agential in the way that Barad writes.

To illustrate agency as enactment, we offer an example of what it looks like as we pass through the threshold to think and write between-the-two. We have described a figurative threshold but we also acknowledge the materiality of a digital "holding space" where we "meet" to think and write. Our movement in the threshold is a zigzag in that our collaboration is neither linear nor hierarchical nor bound by our bodies. Deleuze's conceptual play with the idea of the zigzag (Deleuze & Parnat, 1987/2002) is also helpful in thinking our zigzag movements as the lightning bolt spark of creation, "unpredictable, undisciplined, anti-disciplinary, and non-static" (Stivale, cited in Mazzei & McCoy, 2010, p. 505). As each of us makes a pass through the threshold, newness is created. By that we mean that one of us leaves words, fragments of ideas, half-baked thoughts, snippets of quotes—all pieces of language that fall from us not at the level of the individual but from what came before (and that which produces what is to become). Each pass through the threshold extends our "selves" and our thoughts/ideas to the point that, indeed, "the paper has magnetism" and we are "guided by a magnetic force." As Gregg and Seigworth (2010) wrote, "The capacity of a body is never defined by a body alone but is always aided and abetted by, and dovetails with, the field or context of its force-relations" (p. 3). The body here is not restricted to our physical bodies but also the embod[y]ments of the text that are produced by passings through the threshold.

So in the threshold, the text, with its magnetic force, draws us in and produces affect. We have confessed to each other that entering the text produces pleasure and excitement upon reading what the other wrote during a pass-through; the material force of the text also induces frustrations when we get stuck in thought-places; our passing through the threshold is mutually constituting in that as we make matter, matter makes us:

> Affect arises in the midst of *in-between-ness*: in the capacities to act and be acted upon. Affect is an impingement or extrusion of a momentary or sometimes more sustained state of relation *as well as* the passage (and the duration of passage) or forces or intensities. That is, affect is found in those intensities that pass body to body (human, nonhuman, part-body and otherwise), in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds, [and words] *and* in the very passages or variations between these intensities and resonances themselves. (Gregg & Seigworth, p. 1)

Those intensities circulate via the text, language, ideas, passions, frustrations, dead-ends, and so on. The text as material resonates with expression and emotion and does not reflect our intention but is *produced by our writing between-the-two.* And in a mutual constitution, the text produces a loss of the subject and deterritorializes traditional "authorship" in academic writing.

Loss of "the" Subject

While qualitative researchers have written about the complicated nature of the writing-up aspects of research, we go to Braidotti (2002) and her discussion of the writing style for *Metamorphoses* that she describes as being "post-personal" (pp. 9–10). One of the ways she characterizes this style is that it is working against the writer/reader binary. The writer/reader binary assumes a separation of the two and does not allow for a mutual creation/constitution of the text between-the-two of writer and reader. Taking our cue from Braidotti, we describe our style as working against the writer/writer binary in terms of two "I"s and also against the writer/text binary that we mentioned above. Being in the threshold, writing between-the-two, has produced a way of writing that collapses the divisions between our "selves" and our selves and the text.

Oftentimes, people ask us how we came up with the idea for our current book, *Thinking with Theory in Qualitative Research.* When we are asked that question, we look at one another and laugh because we are not quite sure. The idea for the book happened in the threshold: in the middle of what we had been doing all along in

terms of "post-coding," our previous work, our training as doctoral students, our reading separately and together, our theoretical and conceptual interests, and so on. In this complex assemblage of our history, culture, and materiality, the book irrupted as a line of flight, taking it with us.

Although our writing together produces a loss of "the" subject, it begins with what we each bring in terms of thinking, sensing, and doing. We each do bring these fragments of selves and ideas to the threshold, but once they and we come together, any sense of singularity quickly dissolves into the in-between.

Our process is a process that works for us, or that has become us, or that we have become. When we enter the threshold, we are instantly caught up in lines of flight that choose us and take us into realms of new thought. We then engage in the process of adding words, thoughts, questions, and examples to the emerging creation. Indeed, when we first began writing together, we could more easily identify our own words or thoughts in the final document, but as we have continued to work together, this becomes more and more difficult and, more importantly, unnecessary. This exemplifies the "in-between-ness" of the threshold—a space in which the machinic and productive forces of words, thoughts, questions, and examples function immanently in their becoming. Deleuze & Guattari (1987) write, "When one writes, the only question is which other machine the literary machine can be plugged into, *must* be plugged into in order to work" (p. 4). Colebrook (2002) offers an example of machines "plugging in" in order to work differently. The bicycle is a machine that does not work or have a particular meaning or use until it connects up with another machine. When it connects up with a cyclist, it becomes a vehicle; when it is placed in a gallery, it becomes an artwork. Similarly, we view our writing in-between as an immanent process of "plugging in" not only our selves to produce something new (textually) but also the text produces our in-between-ness as antithetical to two separate, distinct authors in a hierarchical, linear relationship. It is our plugging in to each other, to the text, to the process (not the product necessarily), to the sensations, and so on that produce the becoming-text.

For example, of our most recent project, a reader commented that "it's as if you wrote every word together," and to some extent, that's true: we read, refined, and rewrote each other's words and thinking together. We each contributed, but not in a singular sense. We both do read every word and completely trust one another to continue to add thoughts, punctuation, questions that extend and stretch the text and our thinking between-the-two in ways not possible by our individual selves. And we never "begin" with just our selves, but prompted by these provocations that we think with in the threshold—what we are reading and have read, current and past

research projects, and so forth. Early in our experience of writing together, we were more tentative about changing the other's "words," but our trust (and success) has taken us to the point that words and thoughts produced in the threshold no longer belong to one of us (as if they ever did) but are produced by the force that we make and that makes (and unmakes) us.

One of the things that has worked to our advantage is the temporal difference that separates us. Time difference and schedule allowed us to work the same parts at different times of the day or different days of the week. We both tend to write in the mornings and/or evenings, and because our mornings and evenings occur at different times, we can often work on the same sections of a project in the same day without having to wait for the other to finish. Such a temporal difference also heightens the energy at times because there is an anticipation and practice of logging into our shared space often to see what treasures have been deposited or movements opened up by the other. We have expressed to one another that entering both the digital and the conceptual threshold is akin to opening a gift from the other. The threshold, in this sense, becomes a material space that feels like "home" where our shared collaborative history is not simply stored but is a becoming-place. This affect and this materiality are constitutive of the "between-the-two" that becomes us and that we become.

The threshold for us is a site of diffraction—an opening that spreads our thoughts and questions in unpredictable patterns of waves and intensities. In *Thinking with Theory in Qualitative Research,* we wrote that the excess of a threshold is the space in which something else occurs: a response, an effect. Once we exceed the threshold, something new happens. For us, writing between-the-two is not merely about the process of producing writing, nor is it about shared labor. It is about mapping a becoming in-between. For example, in the last days of intensive writing and revising together in the above mentioned book, the distance of a continent was insignificant. In the space of the digital threshold, there was a tangible sense of presence and buzz of energy as texts were flying, words were coming in and out of focus, and intensities were produced and being produced. This is not something that can be captured and reproduced, for becomings cannot be prescribed in advance. The unfoldings of selves, texts, sensations are consequences of becomings, not neatly-packaged experiences that can be reflected upon. Becomings happen in the event of connection, in the threshold; they are that which must be lived, not described.

Massumi (1992) warns us that becoming "cannot be adequately described. If it could, it would already be what it is becoming, in which case it wouldn't be becoming at all" (p. 103). What Massumi explains here is that the event of becoming

cannot be predicted or prescribed in advance; that is, no one can write out rules for what becoming should be in a particular social field (for example, specific rules for collaboration). But what can be enumerated are ways in which becoming might be mapped, and that is what we have set out to do in this contribution.

Becoming Between-the-Two

In the threshold, we have begun to think and enact collaborative thinking and writing differently because once we have worked in the threshold, there is no possibility of doing otherwise. In the threshold, the divisions among writing, thinking, data, participants, and researcher selves collapsed. To write and think this way is about becoming something other than two "I"s: it is our becoming between-the-two.

Just as the process of losing our selves in the process of writing forces us to take our place in the Deleuzian desiring machine, the process of writing this "narrative" that places us as authors and selves is not without trouble. In fact, we like to think of ourselves as always in trouble, but we cannot be in trouble without leveling the same critique on ourselves and the desire to describe our experience of collaboration and the need to trouble at the same time. That is, while we "describe" our collaborative process here we also acknowledge (to the best that we can be "aware" of them) the limitations of our descriptions.

For this article we attempted to avoid describing "the thing itself" (Husserl, 1960)—or "our experience of writing together" and focused instead on the deterritorializations of what gets produced: loss of the subject and the productions of affect in seemingly cognitive work. What we offer is merely a capture, an arrest, a glimpse into a working threshold. We do not claim to be fully conscious subjects who presume to "know" what it "means" to collaborate; nor do we treat our experiences of writing in-between as self-evident, straightforward, and immediately perceptible experiences. As Fuss (1989) explains, "Experience is never as unified, as knowable, as universal, and as stable as we presume it to be" (p. 114). Therefore, our descriptions of being in-between in the threshold are more incitements of becomings and irruptive, immanent flows rather than so-called "tried and true rules" that we intend to follow as we continue to write and think together in future projects.

Like Deleuze (1968/2004), we wish to disturb thought so as not to reproduce what we already think, know, and experience. With this we realize that our approach to our collaboration produces, over and over again, an in-between, "becoming-I" that has no form or identity but is constructed in the threshold. It is an in-between, "becoming-I" that is fluid and contradictory—an "I" that is bound to relations of

power and is therefore neither self-identical nor stable within those relations. Such an in-between-becoming-I cannot be determined, known in advance, or completely self-evident. The in-between-becoming-I is constituted by the act of collaboration (which it needs to produce itself), but this "I" is always already limited by its in-between-ness because it cannot fully and completely reside there. It is always carried away into lines of flight, which in turn limits its self-expression and reflection on experience.

In this approach, the experience of our collaboration is "not the origin of our explanation, but that which we want to explain. This kind of approach does not undercut the politics by denying the existence of subjects, it instead interrogates the processes of their creation" (Scott, 1991, p. 797). To interrogate the process of constituting an in-between-becoming-I is to expose the uncertainty of "who" that "I" could become, and to open up what can be known about the "I." The point is that the in-between-becoming-I has endless, indefinite possibilities for transforming itself because it is never a fully expressed product that needs a foundational experience to rest upon. Simply put, we cannot adequately explain how we collaborate; we can barely gesture toward what it has produced, and what it might still produce.

The limit of experience and self-understanding subverts any attempt of descriptive unity and coherence of our writing/collaborative processes. The hardest task in this contribution was *writing linearly about something that happens simultaneously*. As we write and think and plug in and dip in and out of the threshold, we find it very difficult to write about what is happening in a way that is coherent to others than ourselves. This present writing is limiting in that it is difficult to capture this simultaneity—this present writing, too, is becoming in that it connects with something else to produce indecidability. It is a Deleuzian flow, producing something that is not expected.

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