



This is the post-peer reviewed version of the following article:

Charteris, J., Jones, M., Nye, A., & Reyes, V. (2017). A heterotopology of the academy: mapping assemblages as possibilised heterotopias. *International Journal Of Qualitative Studies In Education*, 30(4), 340–353.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2016.1250178>

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* on 1st February 2017, available online: <http://www.tandfonline.com/10.1080/09518398.2016.1250178>

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## **A heterotopology of the academy: Mapping assemblages as possibilised heterotopias**

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2016.1250178>

### **Abstract**

Heterotopias are counter-sites of enacted utopias through which reality is simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. They are physical or mental spaces where, although norms of behaviours are suspended, there are connections with a plethora of other spaces. This article constructs a collective biography as a heterotopology of the academy. Academic subjectivities are produced and often constrained within powerful Higher Education discourses. Constructing an affective assemblage of becomings as a heterotopology, the authors deploy poststructural philosophy to re-story academic life experiences and conceptualise agency in the academy. Taking license with the notion of academicity and heterotopia, the article describes how spaces in the measured university can be deterritorialised through generative lines of flight. An affective assemblage is presented that ruptures the discursive orientation of category boundary work where academics are constituted as ‘productive metric-minded knowledge workers’. The collective biography research approach facilitates a mapping of affective cartographies as a heterotopology and a critique of the discursive production of selves. The subjectivations of identity politics in matricised assemblages may be, even if momentarily, evaded, refused and agentically resisted.

### **Introduction**

Despite a metaphysical heritage associated with the broadest themes of humanity’s self-understanding and relationship with the world, Higher Education (HE) has become increasingly closed in by shifts toward corporatisation and associated entrepreneurial climate (Barnett, 2011). Although an oppressive weight of neoliberal structures constitute the academy, we (the authors) are dissatisfied with the recursive malaise of “melancholia” that frames “the dominant mood and mode of relation” (Braidotti, 2010, p. 42). Barnett (2011) argues that thinking and debate about the university can adopt critical tones but there is also apathy inherent in a sense of powerlessness that there is no alternative. In writing, we construct generative other spaces or

heterotopias that provide opportunities to reimagine possibilities for ourselves and the university.

Located in a regional Australian university, we are four teacher educators with a shared interest in post-qualitative research (Lather & St Pierre, 2013). We pursue these new spaces in the academy where we can “learn how to invent new motions, emotions, thoughts [and] languages”

(Arsic, 2005, p. 130). In this article we provide the heuristic of a heterotopic assemblage.

Heterotopias are spaces that mirror, distort, unsettle or invert other spaces. “They suspend, neutralize or reverse the set of relations that are designated reflected or represented by them”

(Foucault, 1984, p.178). The heterotopology in this article comprise a collective biography

assemblage of four academic spaces that are examined in such a way that circumvent hidden or

underlying explanations (Johnson, 2006). While heterotopias function as a concept within human geography that form spaces of otherness, heterotopology in this article pertains to the assemblage

of heterotopias that are analysed collectively. As a heterotopology of deviation (Foucault, 1984),

we juxtapose the spaces of our storied universities to critique norms of academic practice from a

place outside of them. Stephen Ball (2013) invites us to reconsider notions of useful research to

recognise that we are freer than we perceive. He reminds us that the things we take for granted

are contingent and revocable, that “knowledge is not for knowing” but rather to cut, and that

evidence and assumptions are to be reexamined, shaken up, and re-evaluated if we are to

participate in the formation of political will and truth-telling (Ball, 2013).

Collective biography offers a process of “selving” (Davies & Gannon, 2006, p. 7) and in this

article we illustrate acts of rhizomatic agency or lines of flight that flee the subjectifying force of

assemblages to form a heterotopic space in the academy. Within assemblages we understand

affective intensities, as pre-personal and pre-discursive sensations that move between bodies, always in flux and “always reassembling in different ways” (Potts, 2004, p. 19). In particular, affect both preempts and supersedes the feelings of individual subjects. It is not to be confused with individual emotion, neither residing in a subject, body, or sign, nor being attributed the status of an object possessed by a subject (Ahmed, 2001).

We view affectivities as currents of dispositions that flow through diverse educational contexts and meeting points to create relations that surpass individual emotions and passions (Kenway & Youdell). A ubiquitous presence, affect enables us to engage with the flows of relations across the academy. We map affect through a diffractive reading (Barad, 2007) of interwoven, co-constitutive relationships. Diffraction allows us to view convoluted, transient, transitory and entangled ontologies (Barad, 2007). Material entanglements provide an analytical frame through which flows of affect can be read. We engage with the power politics of assemblage theory that ravel together our everyday lives and are spoken into existence through various, and sometimes competing, discourses in the academy.

In this article, we explore heterotopias where discourses become reframed through lines of flight that rupture the territories of the academy and demonstrate that “things are not as necessary [or as inevitable] as all that” (Ball, 2013). Like Haraway (1992), we see lines of flight as a diffractive movement, “a mapping of interference, not of replication, reflection, or reproduction...where the effects of difference appear” (p. 300). The heterotopology of deviation illustrate diffractive movements that create other spaces.

We commence with a discussion of “academicity” (Petersen, 2007, p. 475) (the identity constructions of being academic), affective assemblages, and the way that we have brought these

disparate elements together in this research. An account of our writing process is provided to contextualise our work within a collective biography research framework. Against this background, we present stories of academicity as an affective assemblage or heterotopia that ruptures the taken for granted conventions of academy territories. We add to the previous scholarship of Charteris, Gannon, Mayes, Nye & Stephenson (2016), who emphasise the value of collective biography and the generative possibilities of analysing affective assemblages for creating new relations within HE spaces. The article concludes with our thoughts about possibilities for engaging with heterotopias that transcend the traps and constraints of the discursively produced category of being academic.

### **Becoming academic**

We frame sites of identity work in the academy in which academics negotiate the formation of their academic selves, and continually maintain, negotiate and challenge boundaries. ‘Selving’ occurs through the categories as a framework of boundaries that discursively produce them. Academic subjectivation has been theorised as category boundary work requiring unequivocal and relentless annexation of the frontiers of academia (Petersen, 2007).

Within a discursively produced framework, the category ‘academic’ is understood to be unstable in that it does not work the same way for all scholars across time and space. Being academic can have different nuances in different contexts since a range of commonalities frame work within the academy: for instance, an emphasis on publish or perish; impediments to career progression on the basis of performance reviews and outputs; and the formal and informal calculations and recognition of individual’ and organisations’ scholarly impact. In the measured university academics are constituted as ‘productive metric-minded knowledge workers’. However, the

relational dynamics within HE organisations vary immensely as identity category boundaries are negotiated, surveilled and policed and academics find themselves “continuously engaged in inclusionary and exclusionary discursive practices... The boundaries around the category ‘academic’ and the subject position ‘academic’ ...[are] forever being produced, reproduced, challenged and negotiated” (Petersen, 2007, p. 479).

For the purposes of this paper we use Petersen’s notion of “academicity” (2007, p. 475) to consider the category boundary work that takes place in the academy. Academicity can be viewed as tree-like with a “nuclei of rigidity” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 249) in which knowledge is organised along systematic and hierarchical principles that stem from roots and flow through branch like systems. In contrast, it can be seen through a Deleuzoguattarian lens as rhizomatic, in which,

unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature ...[T]he rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entranceways and exits and its own lines of flight. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 21).

While we associate tree-like structures with rigid academic territories, it is possible to recognise agency through becomings in academia’s affective assemblages as the creation of heterotopias.

### **Assemblages of affect in the academy**

Affect is a resonance of the social rather than an internalised performance of individual consciousness or cognition. It is produced through assemblages of bodies, objects, feelings,

images and words. There has been a growing interest in affect theory over the last fifteen years (Clough, 2008; Massumi, 2002; Seigworth & Gregg, 2010). Affect is evoked through bodily connections in the spaces of places, for example, Thrift (2004) alludes to the euphoria of a Nazi rally. Affect can manifest by indirect means, for instance electronic media: an email, a video, a text, or an electronic image that goes viral. In his translator's preface to Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) *A Thousand Plateaus*, Massumi describes affect as "a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or *diminution in that* body's capacity to act" (p. xv). Interpreting Massumi, Shouse (2005) writes that affect is not conscious - that as a "moment of unformed and unstructured potential... cannot be fully realized in language... because affect is always prior to and/or outside of consciousness" (para. 5). Affect influences the body in ways that cannot be framed through language; it "doesn't just absorb pulses or discrete stimulations; it infolds contexts..." (Massumi, 1995, p. 90).

Affect is instrumental to politics, positioned at "the cutting edge of change. It is through it that things-in-the-making cut their transformational teeth" (Massumi, 2015, p. ix). Through affect, we generate powerful responses to information about the world. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) note that affect is not a determinant personal feeling as "it is the effectuation of a power of the pack that throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel" (p. 265). Youdell (2011) observes that, "becomings might even have the potential to escape the power set ups through which individuals are subjectivated, that is, to be anti subjectivation" (p. 32). Mindful of the generative power of an affective analysis, we seek these moments of deterritorialisation as affective intensities of becoming (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

The data assemblage following is based on a rhizoanalysis of lines of flight in stories shared through collective biography research. We critically analyse the influence of discourse in the

academy to explore how academics ‘do’ academicity and also possibilise heterotopias as a means of points of departure (anti-subjectivation) and escape. We explore acts of agency as a heterotopological assemblage.

### **A collective biography heterotopology**

Collective biography is a research methodology that emerged from the adaptation of Haug’s (1987) collective memory work, which she undertook with her colleagues. It is informed by feminist poststructural discourse analysis (Davies & Gannon, 2006). As a research approach it enables us to turn from the risk of “incurable melancholia” (Braidotti, 2011a, p. 19) that can emerge from the “oppressive effect of discourse on individuals” (Davies & Gannon, 2012, p. 359). Such melancholia is connected with constitutive frameworks of subjectivity, with associated normative subject positions, that Braidotti (2002) suggests drives an affect economy of loss. Conceiving of selves as figurations, the “nonunitary image of multilayered subjects” (2011, p. 14), we engage in postidentitarian politics to explore multiple processes of becoming. In our collective biography we conceive subjects “as emergent in each moment, moments that are simultaneously discursive, relational, and material” (Davies & Gannon, 2012, p. 359). These are a set of postmetaphysical figurations of the subject in which “[f]igurations such as rhizomes, becomings, lines of escape, flows, [and] relays...break through the conventional schemes of theoretical representation” (Braidotti, 2011a, p. 36). With this in mind, we plugged into Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) ‘tool box’ to read our collective biography texts in terms of how they worked as affective intensities rather than what they meant as ‘truth tales’.

Collective biography enables us to explore the ways in which *we resist and speak back to politics in the academy*. We bring together diverse discipline backgrounds (History, Humanities, English and Gifted Education) to our work in an Australian regional teacher education context. The



collaboration emerged through conversations where we expressed interest in exploring expectations in the academy and conditions of academicity. We delved into the poststructural theoretical literature to consider how we sought escapes in higher education spaces. With this common interest, we met together over four sessions to tell our stories and restory our experiences of becoming academics. As mentioned above, this article extends a previous collective biography project (two of the authors) that employed affect theory to explore the promises of the ‘knowledge economy’ and the figuration of ‘emotional knots’ (Thrift, 2008, p. 206) in the academy or ‘academic city’ (Charteris et al., 2016).

Collective biography as a writing and listening practice (Davies & Gannon, 2006) enabled us as researchers to verbally exchange stories, listen intensely, and question each other to elicit further detail (Gonick, 2015). We noted that the methodology is a radical break with the literal ‘truth telling’ of phenomenology.

[It] understands memory to create the moment again each time it is remembered, and that memories are always bumping up... against new knowledges, creating for the first time the moment in which the memory is told, as well as the remembered moment. (Gonick, 2015, p. 66)

Kern, Hawkins, Falconer Al-Hindi and Moss (2014) note that through memories we can constitute selves and through their collective analysis, we can engage with “broader social and cultural patterns, forces and power relations that contribute to shaping particular subjectivities” (p. 839). Interested in the subjectifying forces of the academy, we commenced the project by discussing our work as academics and the pressures to ‘publish or perish’. From there, we determined the following two questions to frame our writing: How do I resist, appropriate or

reframe discourses to speak back to politics in the academy? How do I act strategically to be academic? Having penned the stories, we explored these short detailed embodied moments. We initially clarified our dialogical process of articulating, writing and listening to the stories. Rather than produce generic accounts of academicity, we realised that we wanted to drill down into moments. We agreed to avoid interpretation, explanation, clichés and generalisations in the stories (Kern, et al., 2014).

The act of sharing our memories felt dangerous and vulnerable, yet cathartic. It enabled us to reflexively examine our figuring in the academy and our moments of challenge and resilience. After talking together, we rewrote our accounts to focus on the sensory experiences of the moments as embodied memories, rather than simply producing coherent narratives. These memories provided data that we collectively analysed to frame the academic category boundaries that are continually “produced, reproduced, challenged and negotiated” (Petersen, 2007, p. 479) around about us.

The collective biography draws on an analytical framework of Deleuzoguattarian rhizomatics and Baradian diffraction (Gannon, Walsh, Byers & Rajiva, 2014). Diffractive readings produce a relational difference of intra-action. As “inventive provocations” that are “good to think with” diffractive research methods leverage theories and texts not as “preexisting entities”, but as forces “from which other texts come into existence” (Barad, 2012, p. 57). Seeking to diffract collective biography enables “entanglements of matter and meaning through which we are co-implicated in the generation and evolution of knowing and being” (Davies & Gannon, 2012, p. 362). Diffractive analysis is an approach where,

research problems, concepts, emotions, transcripts, memories, and images all affect each other and interfere with each other in an emergent process of coming to know something differently... The agency of the researcher, in a diffractive analysis, lies not in such tracings of the already-known, but in making new mappings, onto-epistemological, ethical mappings, in which something new might emerge. (Davies, 2014, p. 734)

And so it is that in this instance, writing provides an opportunity to turn from theming and finding commonalities or patterns, to listening to fragments that ravel together as entwined restoried experiences. Like Mazzei and Jackson (2011), we avoided "...writing up transparent narratives that do little to critique the complexities of social life; such simplistic approaches preclude dense and multi-layered treatment of data" (p. 2). The following stories provide accounts of subjectivation in the academy. The ensuing rhizoanalysis surfaces deterritorialising and reterritorialising moves within and across heterotopologies of academic assemblages. It is "not a method", rather "an approach to research conditioned by a reality in which Deleuze and Guattari disrupt representation, interpretation and subjectivity" (Masny, 2014, p. 345). The stories convey disjuncture and associated flight. We are reminded of Gloria Anzaldúa, (1987)'s conception of subjectivation as escape and transformation.

Every time she makes 'sense' of something, she has to 'cross over', kicking a hole out of the old boundaries of the self..., to make a hole in the fence and walk across, to cross the river, to take that flying leap into the dark, that drives her to escape...(p. 49).

In the ensuing analysis we provide an account of heterotopic spaces in academia, where diffractive lines of flight are imbued with affective intensities.

## The fire dance

*The fire dances and she within. Winter with its' churlish drafts of iciness lie beyond the cloistered sanctuary of soft light and warmth and safety that is her home. Curled in gentleness, Eva searches her emails one last time to address the beseeching pleas of students plunging toward the midnight deadline. They're strangely quiet, perhaps slumped in resignation or relishing their triumph. She searches, 'What more could I have done?' Although once fearful balancing the disparate discourses of her context, she senses a shift, a knowing, of coming into being.*

*One last email, an attachment overlooked, and she could sleep. Instead Eva reels and senses the warmth and saltiness of streaming tears. Darting and desperate thoughts escape from all too familiar darkness; her heart is wrenched, she dares not breathe. "This is not written surely?' She feels bereft, not just for herself but, for her colleagues labeled thus for all their world to see.*

*Weeks pass, grief and anger retreat. Eva uses the shattering as a catalyst for claiming legitimacy, for fervently articulating her intellectual productivity and for asserting agency, 'I will not enter the land of binaries, of resist or comply'. There is another space, a space of trust, of agency, of generative writing to which Eva has been invited. She is freer to question, 'Who am I in this academic world?', freer to tussle, 'How do I position myself, lest I be positioned?', and freer to unravel the very tendrils that bound her in all too familiar voice, 'Not good enough.'*

*It is not the discourses of the academy that Eva must counter for they are tumblings of contradictions, of inclusion and empowerment, of generative fields and desiccated wastelands of derision and shame. They are only to be feared when unwittingly they plait with her's, the voices of unease already embedded in caustic loop, 'I am nothing.' For even now Eva recognises and summons from the labyrinth that is her mind the inner discourses that tussle for the upper hand. 'I am not defined by others nor by the sullenness of voices that echo from within. 'I am no more, no less', she asserts. How sad a dereliction, as if ranking by its measure held a truth.*

Eva engages in a binary framework that constructs success and failure in the academy; of measuring and not measuring-up. The governmentality of metrics, articulated in the email, constructs an affective flow across the faculty and within Eva. Sellar (2015) writes of the efficacy of data as a “governance mechanism” that “shift[s] perceptions of performance” (p. 131). As an aspect of the assemblage, it prompts a pre-personal affective flow that impacts the

individual and the social. Eva finds herself 'infolded' (Massumi, 1995) into a governance assemblage where pre-personal sensation overwhelms her and she tastes the 'saltiness of tears'. She is brought into the awful present in the story before subjective or emotive meaning (Hickey-Moody & Malins, 2007, p. 9) are articulated.

Affect taps what is already within the constructed tightly woven world of Eva's "all too familiar darkness" that had previously raveled, unraveled and enraveled her. These eruptions and flows of affectivities, of bodily sensation and intensities, offer alternative ways of thinking, an escape from the bounds of subjectification that is inherently implied in the email. She 'kicks a hole in the wall' that attempts to bind her. In diffractive move she becomes alert to "other ways of being ... of becoming" (Youdell, 2011, p. 49), a new heterotopia. These moves challenge the familiar threat - the "tendrils" of her shadow thinking that tie themselves together and, through their collective strength, pull her in. It is a suspended moment where time stands still for Eva.

Eva and her colleagues are labeled for all the world to see. This pressure of academic performance -heralds a matrix of intelligibility where Eva and her peers are located as recognisable and legitimate academics, *or not*. The affective act of reading the email destabilises the territory in the story. Fleeing the tyranny of the category boundary 'not good enough', Eva refuses to be bound at the bottom of the academic hierarchy. Evading the binaries of good and bad, of active and inactive research subjectivities. Eva is 'a becoming', "no-one defines" her, instead, she moves to another heterotopic space rejecting the imposed criteria inherent in category academic. Where once she cowered beneath a shroud of external and internalised conflicting discourses, she now stands emboldened by her line of flight yet mindful of the

necessity for “a significant degree of openness and circumspection” (Youdell, 2011, p. 51), “I am no more, no less.”

## **Academic Figurations**

### **Introduction**

*It is seven years ago since Peregrino finished his PhD. He feels fortunate to have professorial tenure track at one of the top universities in the world. He is acutely aware of the international rankings game and the pressure of the staffing saturation point that could see enrollment numbers falling by almost 30 per cent. There are rumblings in his University corridors about the need to generate much needed savings, the moratorium on hiring casuals and the massively increased workloads for full-time staff. These undercurrents pull staff in different directions as they jostle for eligibility to be tenure-track academics.*

*A big crush looms. In the pivotal upcoming ‘year nine’, those academics deemed worthy will remain and those who were not will be asked to leave. A formal set of sessions with tenured professors is organised for the aspirants. Being in his sixth year, Peregrino is required to join these sessions. He listens intently as a seasoned academic portrays to all the rarefied air of their world-class university from his secure lens as a tenured Professor.*

*Retreating to the perceived safety of his office, Peregrino engages in a long discussion with three tenured staff; these are colleagues he collaborates with in various research projects. Raised voices in his room:*

*“Why do we need to jump these hoops?”*

*“Why do they change the goals posts each year?”*

*In a panic, lest their clamour called attention to his apparent complicitness, Peregrino tries to hush them.*

*“Corruption of the institution!” one of them hollers.*

*“Be careful who you trust!”*

*Lose tenure, Peregrino thinks? The ground opens up before him.*

*“Why not leave?” Peregrino questions them in turn.*

*“I am seriously looking, but my publications and areas of expertise are focused in this country. My chances of getting another career overseas are small,” one counters.*

*“My family is here, my parents are here, I am a citizen of this country, I have nowhere to go,” another interjects.*

*“But since you are not a citizen of this country, you have choices, which unfortunately we don’t,” another emphatically points out.*

*Sickened, Peregrino realises that he faces two choices. He can continue to play the game and conform to the demands of a hyper-competitive, highly-individualistic academic world or, he can go elsewhere. Peregrino ponders his uncertain future.*

The original ordered perspective of Peregrino’s positionality as a tenure-track academic, making sense of university scholarship and interpretation of academia experiences a steady unraveling. Peregrino’s is a world with academic figurations framed through stringent requirements. These prepare him to perform in the prestigious university’s pursuit as one of the world’s best.

Peregrino’s story highlights how the category boundaries of tenured academic identities are made, remade and unmade. The tenured staff, as established academics, face great pressure in ensuring that their scholarship track records are maintained as they risk losing tenure. Rather than experiencing career stability, the academic boundaries are reframed in keeping with encroaching neoliberal parameters that constrain and enable enactments of academicity. The “rumblings in the corridors” are the affective flow and although they appear to be self-censorship in these illicit conversations, there is seepage. The rumblings are a social production that is not linear, rather they are rhizomatic -a branching, rupturing flow that facilitates Peregrino’s eventual agentic line of flight. Lines of flight are not necessarily positive and it is an uncertain future that awaits him.

The categories of tenured and non-tenured staff undertake a drastic re-definition for Peregrino. The three tenured academics working with Peregrino on “various research projects” appear to play their official part: responsible staff who seemingly embraced the reforms undertaken by the

University to its tenure system. When speaking with tenure-track staff, like Peregrino, who are genuinely bewildered by the changing system, these tenured colleagues are highly- critical to the point of making serious (i.e. libelous) statements against the institution. Peregrino's anxiety highlights the category boundaries of compliant and resistant academic. Whereas initially Peregrino sees himself, an academic on the tenure-track as the proverbial "us" and "they" the tenured academics as the "others," these dichotomies are fluid.

The ground opening up before Peregrino suggests helplessness against the seemingly arbitrary and incoherent hoops he is required to jump through. This is a world of unhappy and unfulfilled tenured academics. Peregrino ruptures this territory by 'kicking a hole' (Anzaldúa, 1987) and fleeing the subjectifying force of this assemblage for a heterotopia that is "relevant and humane". While there is an escape for Peregrino, this is not necessarily a 'happy narrative' offering simplistic solutions or idealised resistance. The story offers no commentary on the ongoing circumstances of the other three academics. The unhappy, unsettled and bitter tenured staff, more senior to Peregrino, who speak out in his office, have no voice in the collegial body of professors. They argue at that point (in that time and place) that their options are limited. If there are lines of flight, they are unknown.

## **The Knowledge Fields**

*The physicality of cell lives is visible as Ruby walks the university corridors. Academics hunch over screens and stand at desks, reading intently. Beneath the friendly demeanor and civility lie the hierarchical gauges of both metrically measured achievement and contributions of creative and influential scholarship. Ghost-like, outside the university, loom the legion of casual academic staff- a cyborg army visible only in the learning management system and academic email inboxes.*

*What privilege to labour in the knowledge fields, Ruby muses at her desk. She knows the privilege of tenure: the door of her office bears her name, a neat stack of printed business*



*cards and a shiny magnetic name tag lie in in her drawer. Ruby thinks back to the wilderness years on the red couch, slippered, agonising over dense doctoral literature and the coupled instability of casual work. She re-tastes that sense of liminal despair of working the edge of the academy - a threat that could punctuate her forever, that there would be no ongoing job at the end of her scholarly project. Nevertheless the faded and scratched leather couch was a space for timeless deep thinking; an intellectual space for strange apprenticeship. It was a place where Ruby wrote to destabilise research that offered neatly packaged solutions and unproblematic “what works” formulas and recipes.*

*Ruby ponders her own making, unmaking and remaking, considering how her research activities define and position her in the academy. She wonders how her research can have influence and impact. Why write what no-one reads, she thinks as she clicks on the citation progress of her articles. The researcher profile stretches before her into an intelligible and visible self that other scholars can see and ‘know’. Ruby vacillates; shifting between critiques of research that obfuscate the richness and influence of heritage, colonisation and context, and the construction of expeditious survey research to remain competitive in the academy. This researcher position is as deeply paradoxical as her office bookshelf with its proliferation of poststructural texts and modernist schooling textbooks. She knows she must engage in knowledge production practices **and** retain her fragmented and relativist vision of the world.*

The story speaks to Ruby’s multiplicitous subjectivities as tenured academic and casual ‘ghost’ - doctoral student. It explores the exercise of intellectual freedom as a neoliberal technology of audit and accountability through which her academic subjectivity is constituted, regulated and ascribed value (Bansel, 2011). Ruby’s account is a rejection of the impetus to simultaneously retain a continuous thread of recognisability in order to engage in scholarship that can potentially frame currency and relevance as central tenets. It is a fraught position as she risks erasure in the academy in producing a non-coherent self. Ruby’s work is an “immanent experimentation” (Just & Wojtaszek, 2014, p. 160). It is “a creative process that is not configured by unfolding a fixed essence” (Braidotti, 2005, p. 306) where a coherent profile in the academy is forged.

While there is a pervasive affective flow of nebulosity in the latter world, there is also the sense of freedom to take lines of flight to escape forms of research that have mainstream

currency in the academy (MacLure, 2011). These lines of flight are different in the academy assemblage when Ruby has the trappings of a legitimate academic identity. An academic risks shame and high stakes failure. The story demonstrates a threshold between the spaces of legitimised academia and an inauthentic world on the limens that is marked by casualisation and doctoral scholarship. The signifiers of her tenure are formations of the category boundary ‘academic’.

Although once devoid of the performative pressures experienced by full time staff, Ruby is now figured by them. A multiplicity, Ruby’s spatiotemporal becomings are a continuous process of transformation in the academy assemblage. Her story collapses “spacetime matters” (Barad, 2014, p. 168). An object of the past, the freedom and uncertainty of the couch is blended with the present when she re-tastes her affective connection with the sociohistorical moment. The individualism of academia enfolds the historicism of monastic scholarship - both physical undertakings acts of writing enclosed in cell rooms. Braidotti’s (2011b) “diagrams of thought” as lines of becoming weave both a “strange apprenticeship” of writing perched on a worn couch and a projection of the successful academic profile, visible to all and manifest in the digital clicks of online figurations (p. 248). Here we see spaces of doctoral scholarship with a category of pseudo-academic doctoral student as a fringe dweller, who hovers in uncertainty on the liminal threshold of legitimacy. Likewise, there are academy spaces that prioritise competitive performance where productivity can be demonstrated by the impact of tangible and measurable outputs.

Ruby’s doctoral journey can be understood as a line of flight from conventional ‘truth tale’ research, a deterritorialisation. In her engagement with the spaces of the academy, as a tenured

academic, she reterritorialises to construct a new theoretical, intellectual and material assemblage, replete with shiny nametag, business cards and varied textbooks. In this reterritorialisation, deterritorialised elements recombine and enter into new relations in the constitution of a new assemblage, in which “matter and meaning are mutually articulated” (Barad, 2007, p. 152). Thus she creates a heterotopia, deviant from the conventional space of traditional postgraduate research.

The story raises a question around the nature of impact and the nature of what constitutes important work. Ruby could be seen as the neoliberal subject who aligns with the politically acceptable and economically viable subjectivity whose “project is a pragmatic one of survival within the terms of government” of the entrepreneurial institution (Davies & Bansel, 2010, p. 9). Her resistance of coherence is a line of flight from a hegemonic emphasis on identity profiling. The specter of casual work is visible even if only over trimesters in the cyber world of the University.

Deleuzoguattarian rhizomatics frame thought as nomadic, and knowledge as sedentary (Deleuze, 1987). We see Ruby’s thought as an affective nomadic escape in the academy of this story. Cole (2015) writes how Deleuze enables us to “question capitalist modes of production, not only through critique and transcendence, but by activating forms of nomadism, that burrow through sedentary overlays of capitalist codes and subjectivation immanently” (p. 24). This story tells of fleeting nomadic activism within the continuous motion of becomings with academy assemblages .

***Betwixt an interdisciplinary path***

*The halls of the department are a familiar space; Ellen walks past each door looking for the right name. She has an appointment with a potential supervisor and wonders what lies ahead. Feeling a little shrill, she breathes to calm herself. Of course she could do this, all she needs to do is to speak about her research ideas that have been percolating away for the past two years.*

*Finding the room, she is welcomed with a smile and ushered into a pleasing space. Quirky bits and pieces sit alongside walls of academic books. This is how it will be she thinks -intellectually challenging, colourful and engaging -the joyous pursuit of knowledge.*

*After a few moments of explanation, she tells the Professor her ideas about pedagogy and theory -the anxiety, the wondering, the ideas and possibilities. The supervisor looks upon her with a kind smile “Are you sure you don’t want to do **real** history?” For a moment Ellen is suspended, hovering above and looking down.*

*The frozen moment is collapsing upon itself. She imagines a multitude of responses and recriminations. What is authentic or real? Where are the boundaries and why is she locked outside looking in? Is there no space for the in-between or ideas about the intersections of theory and practice in learning?*

*Of course she wants to fit, to be worthy, why would she want otherwise? Yet the drive to explore this betwixt interdisciplinary path is unrelenting and she nervously reaffirms her research question. A shrug and a nod tells her she is in. Suppressing an inner squeal of delight, she leaves the office and races off down the hall, momentarily lamenting a missed opportunity to be an authentic scholar within the discipline and wondering what she might instead grow to be.*

Ellen’s story is an uneasy acceptance that she cannot be a ‘real’ history scholar. The real historian brokers new knowledge through a recognised grid. The grid marks out history methods and theory. As a new graduate of the discipline, Ellen is well versed in the territorial rules and disciplinary boundaries of History. She recognises the value and reach of this world. It has captivated her for numerous years and she has been immersed in the chronologies of historiography. Her problems arise when she begins to imagine a story of the betwixt-that tells of a leakage. Her research proposal is an interdisciplinary query that grew through her undergraduate years and emergent pedagogical practice. Ellen’s story raises questions about boundary riding in the disciplines and suggests that it is a risky pathway. Boundary riding relates

to the gatekeeping of category boundaries (Charteris, Jenkins, Jones & Bannister-Tyrrell, 2015, p. 11). If one is not perceived as being real and belonging to the disciplinary tribe from the earliest stages of postgraduate studies, a professional future is unsure.

While momentarily suspended we might imagine Ellen surveying this uncharted future, clinging to her much loved research proposal. She is at once a child- frantic in this moment. Should she fold, comply, resist or challenge as she teeters towards one boundary or another? There are also flickers of shame coursing through her body. It is an intensely personal proposal that Ellen puts forward that has emerged through her fascination with the possibilities for the intersections of pedagogy and epistemology. As Ellen hovers, she weighs the value of performing the *'real'* as an act of belonging in the hallowed halls of the Historical profession, and pursuing her long held desire to both trouble and trace the betwixt.

By fleeing the constraints of the category boundary 'traditional historian', Ellen pursues a research agenda to engage in "economies and apparati of desire" (Braidotti, 2011a, p. 34). Thus she launches a line of flight. Fleeing the weight of the grid, she hurls towards the unknown. This line of flight deterritorialises the traditional discipline. In this instance, Ellen's bodily movement is an affective flow toward a new scholarly lifeform and in a profound sense this flight is agentic, Academic autonomy is replete with possibilities for contrary disruption of hegemonic bounds as Davies (2004) suggests, "even potentially overwriting or eclipsing them" (p. 4). In the shrillness of this escape Ellen departs into the unknown. Her childlike joy erupts in an affective overflow, embracing both the terror and exhilaration that are raveled together in that moment as she ruptures the territoriality of real history. She is unaware that, in this line of flight, she is becoming nomad (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) through planting "a seed of permanent revolution"

(Deleuze 2004, p. 78). Thus she makes a tentative space as a heterotopia that can become her own.

### **Transcending boundaries and rejecting subjectivations**

Heterotopic spaces were created through rupturing of affective academic becomings. The lines of flight in the stories are not necessarily inherently positive, however they reveal lines of escape. Eva refuses the matrix of intelligibility in her faculty and the ‘truth’ of ranking. Peregrino, likewise, evades a high profile tenure track and opts to leave his prestigious university. Ruby escapes the capture of a coherent academic profile. Ellen flees the territory of “real” history to “trouble and trace the betwixt.” These stories speak to the affective flows within and across assemblages that transcend the capture of categories and thus create heterotopias. Through these spatiotemporal flows of affect, the constraints of the category boundaries are transcended. Affective flows escape the politics of ideology. As Massumi (1995) observes,

[a]ffect holds a key to rethinking postmodern power after ideology. For although ideology is still very much with us, often in the most virulent of forms, it is no longer all encompassing. Ideology no longer defines ... the functioning of power. (p. 104)

In his later work Massumi (2015) suggests that rather than resisting the affect of ideological power we can “learn to function on the same level- meet affective modulation with affective modulation” (p. 34). Affective responses are evident in all four stories. As affective assemblages, they breach the discursive orientation of the identity politics category of boundary work and scatter the subjectifying force of the assemblage (Charteris et al., 2016).

As researchers, our knowledge production activities can shake up understandings of our constitutive construction to enable a reevaluation of our participation in the formation of Higher Education politics. In short, we can and should resist 'truth tales'. For Ball (2013) researchers it is desirable for academics to engage in research that demonstrates how we are freer than we think we are. He posits that circumstances are contingent, few things are irrevocable, and knowledge is not for knowing. If we are to transform the enterprise of research, we argue that the academy itself ought to recognise transformative capacities as sophisticated forms of rhizomatic agency - embodied flows of affect.

The stories draw together "anti subjectivation" occurrences that influence affective flows in the theoretical, intellectual and material academy assemblage. While focused on individual subjects pursuing their individual careers, the storied assemblage illustrates how collective biography fosters relational processes. These facilitate heterotopic spaces moderated by our affective intensities that allow for political engagement and critique. Affective flows in these heterotopias can destabilise neoliberal structures of audit and surveillance. Bansel (2011) writes that "technologies of audit and surveillance, of self-audit and self-surveillance, are not simply discourses of responsibility and accountability but technologies for the production of responsabilised and accountable subjects" (p. 9). In the stories there are tinctures of shame, which can be seen as a powerful form of affect that can be linked to the neoliberal subjectivation. Probyn (2010) suggests that shameful moments are "where ideas and experiences collide, sometimes to produce new visions of life" (p. 98). Through telling and analysing stories, we connect with prepersonal intensities that provide a deeper understanding of our Higher Education milieu and the possible becomings in this space. Deleuze (1994) writes: "Something in the world

forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter” (p. 139).

As pedagogical encounters, the stories open up possibilities to rethink the melancholic (Braidotti, 2010), and ensnare frameworks of resistance to revel in the affective flows that embody lines of flight. Rather than sinking into the recursive melancholia of neoliberalism, we suggest a generative critique of the circumstances of academic category boundary work. A reading of affect enables not only recognition of ‘how things work’ and ‘what is produced’ but also the virtual potential to become (Masny, 2014). We take action in the academy- through our bodies in academic spaces, sharing collective biography, and in the becomings of our writing that can be plugged into other assemblages. As Deleuzoguattarian agency that is very different to sovereignty of feelings, where one can get lost in the mire of troubles, affect readings mobilise action as a counterattack that is very different to feeling.

Affect is the active discharge of emotion, the counterattack, whereas feeling is an always displaced, retarded, resisting emotion. Affects are projectiles just like weapons; feelings are introceptive like tools ... Weapons are affects and affects weapons. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 466)

No longer reluctant and unsure, the academics in the stories are driven to escape, ‘kicking a hole out of the old boundaries of the self’ (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 71), where they are remade anew and formulate new insights. Fleeing the control society of the academy with its stable and organised classification systems, they find hope in the spectrum of possibilities, the lines of flight, that now radiate. Thus the flow of affect becomes a weapon. Rejecting the subjectivations of the academy assemblage and “becoming-otherwise” the four subjects risk a possibility of being marginalised



(Deleuze & Parnet, 1983, p. 98). Highlighting that social and spatiotemporal processes of subjectivation cannot be captured within continual and continuous flows of affect in assemblages (Buchanan, 2008), the stories demonstrate how power and control structures in the academy may be evaded and refused.

Research embedded in Deleuzian geophilosophy escapes the focus on individual human agents to take up a posthuman assemblage (Braidotti, 2013). “[T]he concern is no longer with what bodies or things or social institutions are, but with the capacities for action, interaction, feeling and desire produced in bodies or groups of bodies by affective flows” (Fox & Alldred, 2015, p, 402). Through working outside the normative frameworks or matrices of intelligibility (Butler, 1990), we mediate the transgression of neopositivist orthodoxies (Done & Murphy, 2014). The binaries of academic categories may be resisted in affective flows, yet there is always motion with resistance as an ongoing project of becoming with deterritorialisations and reterritorialisations in academy assemblages.

## **Conclusion**

Employing collective biography as a methodological approach influenced by diffractive analysis, we are able to provide accounts of heterotopic spaces in academia permeated by our affective intensities. Through the embodied relationality of collective biography, academics can engage in deliberate scholarship as a process through which to notice, recognise and respond to the socio-material assemblages through which they are produced. A Deleuzian materialist ontology of assemblage, affect and (de) (re)territorialisation enables the creation of heterotopology in Higher Education spaces. A rhizoanalysis of affect in the academy allows the social and political dimensions of intimate facets of experience to be framed. Scholarship of adversity produces a

generative momentum to frame new kinds of identity work. Although academic spaces can be imagined immovable, if we rethink ourselves, they lose their power to capture and we can support alteriority to forge new heterotopic possibilities. Through lines of flight we can move to alternative spaces, bringing “something new into existence” (Wallin, 2010, p. 10). Through writing, we become larger than we were, and yet, in the partiality of our fragmentary scholarship we are smaller than we will become (See Deleuze’s (1969) use of *Alice in Wonderland*). Writing the liminal spaces of becomings – we enact the frontiers of our knowledge in an effort to come into understandings.

In these spaces we are decentered, un-done and anti-representational. Here importance is placed on the “connecting relations in sensations and affect/becoming that deterritorialize and reterritorialize relations” in the measured academy assemblage (Masny, 2014, p. 351). Although there are no settled solutions offered, we share possibilities for lines of flight and the heuristic of heterotopias for constituting generative spaces for positive engagement with university politics.

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