No cover image available

The Oxford Handbook of the Phenomenology of Music Cultures

Harris M. Berger (ed.) et al.

https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190693879.001.0001

Published: 2021 **Online ISBN:** 9780190693886 **Print ISBN:** 9780190693879

CHAPTER

The Aesthetics of Proximity and the Ethics of Empathy

Deborah Kapchan

https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190693879.013.15

Published: 08 September 2021

Abstract

Where does affect reside in a phenomenology of perception? How should we understand ethics when bodies are close? What changes when we are distant? In this chapter, the author illustrates the "aesthetics of proximity," degrees of spatio-temporal as well as spatio-*tactile* closeness between sounds and bodies, and the implications for an embodied ethics of response. Using Merleau-Ponty's notion of the "flesh," which he defines as an element (like water or fire), the author explores the relation of feeling and matter in close encounters, evoking Sufi sounds of worship in Morocco and France, as well as the Black Lives Matter movement during a global pandemic.

Keywords: aesthetics, affect, body, distance, empathy, ethics, flesh, listening, proximity, sound

Subject: Ethnomusicology, Music

Series: Oxford Handbooks

Collection: Oxford Handbooks Online

> "One's own body is in the world just as the heart is in the organism."
>
> Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 2012, 209)

In the *Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty's last and uncompleted work, he defines the concept of flesh (*chair*) as an element:

> Flesh is not matter, it is not mind, is not substance. To designate it we should need the old term element in the sense it was used to speak of water, air, earth and fire; that is, in the sense of a *general thing*, mid-way between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea, a sort of incarnate principle that brings a style of being wherever there is a fragment of being. The flesh is in this sense an "element" of Being.... If we can show that the flesh is an ultimate notion, that it is not the union or compound of two substances but thinkable by itself, if there is a relation of the visible with itself that traverses me and constitutes me as a seer, this circle which I do not form, which forms me, this coiling over of the visible upon the visible can traverse, animate other bodies as well as my own. (1969, 139–140; emphasis in the original)

If, as Merleau-Ponty says, one's body exists in the world as the heart does in the body, where is the place of affect? Might we think of affect as the fascia, the connective tissue joining body and world, being and its milieu? In this chapter, I suggest that conjoining Merleau-Ponty's concept of flesh with theories of sound and affect can provide a way of understanding configurations of social aesthetics and ultimately their relation to ethics—that is, the political ramifications of styles of being and embodiment in the world.

Where does affect reside in a phenomenology of perception? And what is the relation of affect (and its translation into empathy) to aesthetics and ethics? Evoking Sufi sounds of worship as I have recorded and experienced them over the last two decades in Morocco and France, I illustrate what I call the "aesthetics of proximity," one based on the friction between sounds and bodies, and its implications for an embodied ethics of response. I begin, however, with what Merleau-Ponty says is the only means of approaching experience—phenomenological description.

Phenomenological Description I

> "Phenomenology" says Merleau-Ponty, "is accessible only through a phenomenological *method*.... It is a matter of describing, not of explaining or analyzing ... [of returning] 'to the things themselves'"(Merleau-Ponty [1945] 2012 viii, emphasis added).

As soon as Sanae approaches the sanctuary, the rhythms of her metabolism change. I know this because she grasps my arm to steady herself and lets go a long sigh, "allah." We are not yet inside, but we are on the threshold. There is a long corridor to the women's entrance. We walk down a cement hallway in the semi-darkness and approach the door. We knock and hear someone shuffling in slippers on the other side.

Shkun? *who is it? A woman's voice asks.*

Qarib, *a relative, Sanae answers. It is a rote question and a rote answer, meant only to determine the gender of the person seeking entry. Of course we are not blood relatives but we are "close"—which is what* qarib *actually means: proximate. And the proximity comes from being in the circle of the shaykh, a member of the Qadiriya Boutchichiyya Sufi Order.*

The door opens and the young woman embraces us on both cheeks. I have seen her many times at Sufi gatherings but I don't know her name. She is Moroccan, but lives in Paris and comes regularly to the sanctuary, the zawiya.

Once inside, we follow the faqira *to one of the closed sitting rooms that surround the open courtyard. There are women everywhere—sitting on banquettes, moving efficaciously in the kitchen, lifting large* mukraj *or kettles of boiling water off* butagaz *stoves and pouring the scalding liquid into several steel teapots* (berred) *filled with sugar, fresh mint, and green gunpowder tea from China. There are huge plates of* minsimmin *and* baghrir, *two variants of Moroccan pancakes, as well as cookies and some hard-wheat bread; there are several small plates of apricot jam and butter. These are brought past us as we stop at the threshold of the open door to remove our shoes. It is difficult to find a place to sit, but a hefty woman in a pink jellaba motions for us to approach. She encourages the seated women to scrunch together, pushing herself up and over against them, and making room for us. Before sitting, however, we both say "*salam alay-kum*" to the congregation and proceed to embrace each and every woman in the room on both cheeks. Luckily Sanae and I do not take up much room. We squeeze into the space allotted and are both handed a glass of steaming sweet tea by the pink-jellaba-ed woman, which we take from the rim so as not to burn our fingers.*

Bismillah, *we both say, "In the name of God," and take a sip.*

Tafadl, *says another woman nearby, "Help yourself," and she motions to the tray of sweets. With another* bismillah, *we each tear off a piece of pancake from the larger portion and eat it slowly, savoring the soft buttery*

texture in our mouths.

Al-baraka dyal sidi rabi, *the second woman says, "The blessing of our lord." It is a kind of communion, a ritual of hospitality that plays out every time a new guest arrives at the zawiya. And there are hundreds of women here in this house.*

After a while we are all escorted to a very large and carpeted hall. The older women are allowed to sit on the banquettes that line the walls, but most of us find a place on the floor.

bismi'llah er-rahman er-rahim *... The Yassine prayer from the Qur'an opens the liturgy. We intone a few other prayers and then, allah, allah, allah, allah, allah, allah, allah, allah, the chanting begins.*

The women push the last unvoiced syllable of allah out of their diaphragms forcefully—allah-ah allah-ah allah-ah allah-ah allah-ah allah-ah allah-ah allah-ah—making this not just an invocation and intoning of the name of God but an exercise in rhythmic breathing. Indeed, most women chant each name using a major second, beginning on the note above (al—) and ending on the tonic (-llah), adding a third largely unvoiced syllable of exhaled breath—/ h—after the first two. This vocalization gets louder and more forceful as the repetitions increase. There is the buzz and tension caused by overlapping notes—like the sensations produced by half steps sung simultaneously, or the overtones caused by such friction. To me it sounds dissonant, but of course dissonance is a cultural interpretation. These are sound waves in close proximity, what Austrian ethnomusicologist Gerald Florian Messner (1990) calls the phenomenon of Schwebungsdiaphonie, *beat diaphony.*[1] *They are the beats that are caused by the interaction of two sounds that are close in frequency.*

During the repetitions of these vocables—quick, forceful—the atmosphere changes. One becomes aware of the voices of others and how their synchronicity creates an energy that is palpable. No one is instructed on what note to begin, though it is generally understood that the invocations should be in tune and in sync. Because these are not songs but invocations, however, half-steps inevitably occur as voices ascend unevenly and pitches vary. It is a form of sensory stimulation. The repetition of these words is often accompanied by what in Sufism is called al-hal. *Literally, a "state," the hal is a spiritual state of sublimity sonically signaled by the individual's departure from the same repetition with others and the interjection of new rhythms and sounds. Al-hal is the rapturous response to the sublime object. And the sublime object itself is the affect identified as* muhabba, *divine love, circulating among those present.*

And then a woman breaks with the rest. She lets go a long al-llaaaaaah that sails over the ostinato of the repetitions like a wave. And she follows this with short staccato syllables that descend chromatically like a sigh: llah llah llah llah llah ... The energy in the circle has changed for all of us. As if on cue, another woman breaks off in a cry, echoing the last syllables but in a syncopated rhythm. It is a conversation, an exchange of affect. She interjects allah*! I feel her body jump next to mine, which makes my body jump. We are all listening. And our listening is moving. We hear one woman crying, though we are not supposed to look. After several hundred invocations the leader slows the rhythm down again. We move on to another invocation.*

My inquiries in this chapter arise from my experiences in the ethnographic field, in this case, twenty-five years of frequenting Sufi women's events in the Moroccan Qadiriyya Boutshishi order both in Morocco and in France. The "return ... 'to the things themselves'" ([1945] 2012, viii) that Merleau-Ponty mentions—for him, a return to their materiality—comes from Edmund Husserl (2001), but there is no return without encounter and description, and description is a *method*—a path toward, a quest, as well as a way of going. Insofar as my discussion relies on memories of things, people, words, and feelings, my methodology is necessarily a *return* to the things themselves. But it is also a *moving toward*, what Merleau-Ponty in his later work calls "intercorporeity," a place of intersubjectivity where affect resides in the flesh, as flesh resides in and indeed constitutes the world.

My experiences at these Sufi rituals, where a kind of deep listening is practiced, has alerted me to the power of listening to transform not just subjectivities but intersubjective milieux (Becker 2004; Oliveros 2005). As Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari note,

> Bird songs: the bird sings to mark its territory. The Greek modes and Hindu rhythms are themselves territorial, provincial, regional. The refrain may assume other functions, amorous, professional or social, liturgical or cosmic: it always carries earth with it; it has a land (sometimes a spiritual land) as its concomitant; it has an essential relation to a Natal, a Native. A musical "nome" is a little tune, a melodic formula that seeks recognition and remains the bedrock or ground of polyphony (*cantus firmus*). The *nomos* as customary, unwritten law is inseparable from a distribution of space, a distribution in space. By that token, it is *ethos,* but the ethos is also the Abode.
>
> (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 313)

This place-making through sound creates a sympathetic field of resonance. Deleuze and Guattari call it "abode-making"; all such homes are imbued with affect, whether home is the discrete body, or bodies and things in conjunction within a social field. Affect is the *place* of abiding, of feeling in common (con-sensus, notes Dorothy Noyes [2003, 132], is feeling together). Affect is a sanctuary in which humans may find refuge, and flesh is the substance that resonates with the sounds and presences of others, sentient and non-sentient. The body is a place, but it does not stop at the limits of the skin; rather it joins and enjoins the flesh of the world.

Second- and third-generation French North Africans, as well as French converts to Islam, are initiated into the liturgy by "learning to listen" (Kapchan 2009). Despite the fact that many do not speak Arabic, they enunciate the liturgy beautifully by learning its component phonemes, attentive to where the voice rises and falls, where there is a breath, where there is a pause. After the liturgy, the women chant the names of God over and over: *allah, allah, allah, allah*, or *ya latif, ya latif, ya latif, ya latif* (oh subtle one, oh subtle one). It is at this point that the Sufi women go into states of rapture. Beginning together with monophonic and regular repetitions of the names of God, someone eventually breaks off, initiating a new rhythm on another proximate note. Others follow suit; cry breaks and syncopations ensue. This creates a rich a-harmonic fabric punctuated by polyrhythms. Unlike singing traditions where intervallic proximity is desirable and microtones are produced on purpose—to "ring like a bell" in the ears of appreciative listeners—the Sufi women in this tradition are instructed to chant *in unison* before they begin. The production of microtones is not deliberate. They nonetheless veer into chanting unwilled (if recognized) beat-producing seconds, and this modulation always *co-occurs* with a spiritual and affective departure into al-hal (Duranti 1986; cf. Schafer 1977; Turino 1993; Rice 2004).

Listening to these improvisations is also listening to the women listening to each other as they respond to changes in pitch, rhythm, and timbre. This has much in common with what ethnomusicologist Charles Keil has called "participatory discrepancies"—the way improvising musicians are intentionally slightly off the beat and out of tune as a way of communicating with each other (Keil 1987; cf. Keil and Feld 1994). A similar phenomenon is found in the Sufi *dhikr* ("remembrance") ceremonies, with the difference that no one would claim intentionality, at least not in the sense of conscious volition.[2] To the contrary, these changes of state are thought to be divinely inspired and unpredictable. But insofar as intentionality inheres in all actions (as an orientation toward the world), these sublime performances are in fact the axiological adhesive that binds subjects with the intersubjective and empirical world.[3]

Performances like the one above take us beyond the limits of the human to an affective experience that is no less material for being experienced as transcendent. For what is transcended is not materiality per se, which may be posited as the very immanent unit of being (energy, sound), but the enculturated and perceived

limits of the human within materiality—what Sufis consider to be the veils that separate the human from the larger phenomenal environment. (This continuity, I would argue, is what Merleau-Ponty calls the flesh.) Immanence and transcendence are not opposites for the Sufis. Indeed, the divine is immanent, present in every molecule. What is transcended is the illusion of separateness. Audition and sound have a primary role in facilitating this movement.

The Aesthetics of Proximity

The polyphonic aspect of these invocations creates what I call an "aesthetics of proximity"—degrees of spatio-temporal as well as spatio-*tactile* closeness between sounds and bodies. Although the women are supposed to chant in unison, very soon after the chanting begins some women veer up or down in pitch, employing quarter-tones and other micro-tones.[4] These notes in close proximity create a sound mesh, a cacophony of beats and overtones, and it is this heterogeneous aesthetic that co-occurs with the emergence of sublimity in the Sufi ceremonies I have attended.[5] To a Western ear (my own), consonance disintegrates and is replaced with dissonance, and yet it is not the positive or negative charge that is important here, but the intensity of the *affect* that is collectively generated.

Sound waves vibrate at a range of different frequencies.[6] When people sing in unison they are literally on the same wavelength; the frequency ratios are simple, the harmonics align, and although there are multiple voices, there is often a perception of consonances. In many cultures, this produces a sense of pleasure. And yet chanting, the voices unintentionally diverge; the frequency ratios are more complex (e.g., when the vocalists produce pitches that are within three semitones of each other), the notes share fewer harmonics (thus increasing the total number of the harmonics present), and subsequently more "beats" are produced. In many Western traditions, this is perceived as a dissonant or "rough" aesthetic.[7] Understanding the psychoacoustics of consonances and dissonance is beyond the scope of this paper; however, it is important to note that the more complex the frequency ratio between tones—that is, the more proximate they are in the pitch space—the thicker the sound mesh. It is from within the mesh of sonic instability that sublimity arises in the ceremonies examined here.[8] Intervallic proximity amplifies the affect of bodies in proximity, a phenomenon that I call "body proxima." Indeed, it is this amplification in sonic and embodied proximity that accompanies the Sufis from one *hal* to another.

Extrapolating from this phenomenon, I assert that the "thicker" the sensorial inter-relations (overtones, beats, but also sonic, visual, tactile, and gustatory cues), the more potential for empathy is generated, and this, because *proximity forces an intimate encounter with difference that displaces the boundaries of self-same*. Consonance is comfortable, as is community. But both ideals are rarely realized. Close affecting aesthetic encounters, however, disintegrate illusions of harmonic continuity, placing subjects firmly within the tension of difference, to linger in what may be a productive discomfort. Paradoxically, the fact of listening to many voices at once—voices that distinguish themselves rather than unify on the same note—creates a communality, not in sound, but in the act of *listening*. There is an intimacy forged in the recognition of diversity. (This is beautifully exemplified in the songs of the BaAka, documented by Michelle Kisliuk [1998, 2017], but is also present, I would suggest, in the chants of Black Lives Matter protests).

This is not only relevant for the work that audition creates in the Sufi worlds examined here. More generally, it bears upon what Judith Butler calls the "obligations of proximity"—one's ethical relations to the stranger evoked in (mediated) connections that make the distant suffering of others (refugees, for example, or victims of structural racism) if not a present, up-close reality, then a social responsibility.

The Ethics of Proximity and Distance

Academic and theoretical emphases emerge from social contexts and political moments. With the current rise in social upheavals (the Arab Spring, wars in Syria and Yemen, refugees in Europe, the clash of secular and sacred worlds, global warming, economic and ecological crises in the rainforests of Latin America and elsewhere, to say nothing of the structural racism that has fueled the Black Lives Matter movement amid a global pandemic), it is not surprising that social theorists have turned to ethics as the pertinent philosophical landscape. For example, in her Neale Wheeler Watson Lecture at the Nobel Museum in Stockholm, Butler discusses the way "human suffering at a distance" implicates the witness in a non-consensual relationship, one she calls an "unwilled ethical encounter" instigated by mediated images and discourses of human misfortune (Butler 2011). We can think of Susan Sontag's work here on the visual witnessing of the pain of others (Sontag 2003). Sontag finds that such images of suffering paralyze the viewer, eclipsing ethical action, but Butler questions this conclusion. Rather, she charts what she calls the "obligations of proximity," an ethical relation to the stranger resulting from a "reversibility" of distance and closeness in human relations: the provocations for ethical action are distant, she asserts, but the actions inspired are proximate.

For Butler the contemporary moment is characterized by such changing relations to proximity and distance —that is, distant suffering inhabits the intimacy of our private spaces through mediated images and subsequently provokes a response. (The recorded murders of George Floyd and Ahmaud Arbery, for example, circulated and ignited protests across the globe.) What's more, Butler emphasizes that the circumstances of the contemporary moment render human life—all human life everywhere—precarious in a way it has not been before. Terrorism and violence have transformed civilians into soldiers and changed citizens of one nation into refugees in another, making the fragility and vulnerable relationality of all life apparent (Appadurai 2005). "If I am confounded by you, then you are already of me," she asserts, "and I am nowhere without you. I cannot muster the 'we' except by finding the way I am tied to 'you,' by trying to translate but finding that my own language must break up and yield if I am to know you. You are what I gain from this disorientation and loss. This is how the human comes into being, again and again, as that which we have yet to know" (Butler 2004, 49).

This beautiful passage delineates Butler's relational ontology: it is one of connection, often (she notes later) through the experience of grieving. Knowing the other even in the imperfection of translation entails a loss of self, which nonetheless reconstitutes itself in the advance toward the not-yet-known. In Butler, beings only become human through a methodology reminiscent of Jacques Derrida's "promise of translation" (1985). While translation will always fail, the promise keeps the life-force alive, while always grieving for what is lost in the process—the self, the other. For Butler, some lives are deemed more grievable than others —resulting in disparate and often unethical responses to human suffering. (We see this in how the United States has allowed violence toward Black and Brown bodies to continue unpunished.)

While Butler clearly acknowledges the interdependence of humans, her starting point is different from that of Merleau-Ponty, for example, for whom intersubjectivity arises from a shared sensate and phenomenal field. For Butler, the relations forged through visually witnessing and identifying with the suffering of others *at a distance* in mediated images creates ethical relations of engagement that did *not* exist before electronic media. While she does not engage phenomenology explicitly, her position assumes that technology informs if not determines our perceptions; by extension, such mediated images at a distance produce an embodied and ethical response. This is a post-phenomenological position, one that takes account of the role of technology in perception. And certainly insofar as "phenomenology investigates the conditions of what makes things appear as such," understanding the role of technology in perception is necessary (Ihde 1993, 133). The difficulty in such work lies in understanding the way mediation and technology are *translated* into ethical response. For Butler, "visual and linguistic translations" are what

make ethical responses to distant suffering possible. But what becomes possible when the aesthetics of *sonic proximity* supersedes the visual and linguistic tropes of modernity?

Butler's meditations on the ethical response evoked by mediated images of suffering recall the debate about the value of "liveness" in the 1990s between performance studies scholars Peggy Phelan and Philip Auslander. Phelan (1993) argued that embodied live performances were different (newly emergent) every time, and thus not only ontologically different from mediatized performance, but a priori (fundamentally prior to mediatized ones). Auslander (1999), on the other hand, found that position to be a romanticization. For him, live performance was not prior to or more essential than the mediated, nor did it create more community (or communitas); rather it was only one of many forms of performance. At first sight, Butler would seem to fall in Auslander's camp; in fact, her arguments advance this debate, as she asserts that viewing mediated images of suffering actually *spurs the viewer into action* by virtue of being moved—affected—in the first place. For Butler, mediated images are a form of activism with issue in the world. Seeing is a form of knowing after all. And witnessing the suffering of others does implicate the viewer in an ethical relationship.[9] In light of what we know about the transmission of affect and sound, however, these ideas are due for review.

Music and sound more generally create not only place, but a way of inhabiting it—what Merleau-Ponty might call a style of being that is necessarily intersubjective. What's more, the aesthetic expression has an "existence in itself"; it is not a translation of meaning into a medium, but an actualization, an embodied performance. Merleau-Ponty notes that

> The musical signification of the sonata is inseparable from the sounds that carry it; prior to having heard it, no analysis allows us to anticipate it. Once the performance comes to an end, we cannot do anything in our intellectual analyses of the music but refer back to the moment of the experience. During the performance, the sounds are not merely the "signs" of the sonata; rather, the sonata is there through them and it descends into them.... Aesthetic expression confers an existence in itself upon what it expresses, installs it in nature as a perceived thing accessible to everyone, or inversely rips the signs themselves—the actor's person, the painter's colors and canvas—from their empirical existence and steals them away to another world. No one will object that here the expressive operation actualizes or accomplishes the signification and is not merely a matter of translating it. ([1945] 2012, 188)

It is not spurious that Merleau-Ponty draws upon the example of music to delineate the somatic power of aesthetic experience. When listening, one is "in" the experience, quite literally touched and moved by the sounds, and *inseparable from them* (Connor 2004). This is an "experience-near" phenomenon, to invoke Clifford Geertz (1976). Music is proximate. It entrains the body and the senses, and may thus be said to create sympathy—resonances at similar wavelengths, literal and symbolic. It creates an affective abode. This is not necessarily what Butler means when she refers to an unwilled ethical encounter, but it is certainly *unwilled and empathic*. Does empathy always imply ethical engagement?

Aesthetics that are proximate are ultimately aesthetics that are transformative, on all scales of magnitude.[10] This is exemplified poignantly in the theater arts, but is no less true off stage. No one would argue that seeing mediated images of violence is the same as being present to the violence. As theater director Joanna Settle noted in a recent conversation, "If we are in Gaza, we pick [the wounded] up and have blood on our hands. Watching the same moment on CNN leads me to 'consider' the 'conflict' or 'tragedy,' but it remains other than me. On location, whatever I do becomes *a part of me*. When watching the news, my observation is action-optional" (personal communication, May 2019).

Theater scholar Ana Pais echoes these sentiments in her analysis of affect in live performance, insisting as well upon the action of *listening*:

> the activity of the spectator involves an intensification and amplification of affect, enabling a moving together, a reciprocal movement between stage and audience. This movement, in turn, … [is] conceptualized as a co-motion that takes place through a specific kind of *listening—an affective resonance*. By influencing the quality of the event, that is, the charged, circulating, and fleeting affective quality of live performance, commotion produces the ontological difference of theater. (2017, 238; emphasis mine)

Proximate bodies are bodies in commotion, bodies that are informed by an affect that is *not* "action-optional" because they are somatic and part of a larger fabric or milieu. While encounters are always mediated, the *form* of the mediation does affect the experience—phenomenologically at least. There is a qualitative inter-sensorial aspect of live performance that does not exist in the same way in mediation, if only because the density of sensory information is different. While an ethical response may be evoked at a distance, it is not necessarily translated into direct action. "There is a difference in time signature," notes Settle, and I would add that there is a difference in the sensorial thickness of the experience as well. There are ethics that are immediate and somatic, and others more cognitive—like those invoked by Butler—that take place in a longer durée. These are surely coiled together and it is precisely their intertwining that evokes empathic response. Had the images of George Floyd's murder been silent, for example, the protests may not have happened in the same way. But they were accompanied by his voice—"I can't breathe"—and this voice, I assert, made all the difference. We saw this in the way people turned up on the street in the midst of a pandemic, risking their health (and possibly their lives) to create an enfleshed abode, a "magnified" sound body insisting on justice (Kapchan 2015; Kisliuk 2017).

The Phenomenological Body: Affect in Proximity

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) defines the body as "the complete physical form of a person or animal," and yet the body is never "complete" but is forever changing, sloughing off old cells, generating new ones. The OED says that the body is "an assemblage of parts, organs, and tissues that constitutes the *whole* material organism" (emphasis mine). But what of the lived body, its hormones, chemicals, synapses, nerves; what of the plethora of molecules shedding and spreading beyond the skin, responding to the rhythms of the environment?

Anthropologist Thomas Csordas draws upon phenomenology to define what he calls "somatic ways of knowing"—that is, "culturally elaborated ways of attending to and with one's body in surroundings that include the embodied presence of others" (Csordas 1993, 138). In order to ground perception in its cultural life, Csordas adds Bourdieu's concept of "practice" to Merleau-Ponty's understanding of pre-objective perception (wherein subject/object relations are not fixed), as well as to the stances embedded therein.[11] This synthesis, he says, "suggests that embodiment need not be restricted to the personal or dyadic micro-analysis customarily associated with phenomenology, but is relevant as well to social collectivities" (137). This is an extremely important expansion of phenomenology in anthropology, but in fact, Merleau-Ponty's concept of flesh anticipates Csordas' delineation of embodiment as something that mediates the subjective and the intersubjective.

Building upon Csordas, I assert that another way to elaborate the notion of embodiment is to consider both sound and affect as actants in this phenomenal field. The body sounds, but it also resonates in the milieu it inhabits and creates, including the virtual. "When I think of my body and ask what it does to deserve that name," notes theorist Brian Massumi, "two things stand out. It *moves*. It *feels*" (Massumi 2002, 1; emphasis in the original). We can also say, it sounds. Every oscillation is in fact a vibration, and every vibration has a sound, however inaudible to the human ear. What we cannot hear, we can feel or intuit. Following Butler, this unwilled ethical encounter is qualitatively different than that produced by images at a distance,

however. Audition and affect are both proximate experiences that do important work in the world. I assert that *for empathy to fully enter the realm of ethics, intersensorial proximity is required.*

Phenomenological Description II

It is the summer of 2016 and I am driving through the fields and vineyards that line the potholed roads of southern France. I pass through small villages and hamlets, on narrow roads with speed bumps every few meters. I enter the outskirts of a larger town, one with rent-controlled apartments on the periphery. I find a space in the parking lot outside the building where I am going. I put a scarf on my head before getting out of the car, and look at the black socks on my sandaled feet as I get my bag out of the passenger seat and walk across the broken cement sidewalk to the lobby. The sun is strident.

I am not exactly sure which apartment is the right one. I consult my phone and send a text. I hear a door open on a landing above me and proceed up the stairs.

marhaba alalla,[12] *welcome sister, says the young woman by the door. I take my sandals off as soon as I enter.*

la toilette? *I inquire.*

It is understood that I will do my ablutions before joining the group in the ceremony.

When I have washed my face, my ears, my arms, my feet, I put my socks back on my feet and tiptoe into the room with the other women. The wooden slats of the blinds are lowered and a fan whirs. I sit on a quilted mat on the ground next to seven others. We are fewer today. It is summer and no doubt some women are traveling, or have obligations at home. The women are mostly silent. The only sound is that of their wooden prayer beads as they adeptly manipulate them, and their lips moving quickly in tandem, aspirating vocables under their breath. I tuck my legs under my djellaba and begin to do the same, silently intoning the first half of the testimony of faith: llah ilaha ila lllah, llah ilaha ila lllah, llah ilaha ila lllah, *there is no deity but God, there is no deity but God, there is no deity but God. It is like a mantra, and although we are each in our own inner sounds and rhythms, nonetheless our bodily rhythms align and concentration increases as soon as we are seated next to each other. Body proxima.*

Soon after I sit down the muqaddema, *the overseer or leader, intones* "bismi'allah er-rahman er-rahim, *in the name of God the merciful and compassionate," to initiate the* wadhifa *or ceremony. Like the word "liturgy" in English, the word* wadhifa *comes from the root "to work"* (wa dha fa *in Arabic). It is a labor for the community, an investment of time and intention (*niya*). We all open our chapbooks to the same page: Arabic on the left, its transliteration in the Latin alphabet on the right. We begin with the Yassine Sura from the Qur'an. It is long and I have not memorized it, so I turn to the correct page, though many of the others know it by heart.*

We then begin to intone aloud: the Fatiha prayer ten times, allah ilaha ila llah *100 times. And more. This is called* dhikr, *remembrance. It is an invocation of some of the 99 names of God, in order to both remember God (to invoke divinity) and to "re-member" the community. The atmosphere of the room changes. As we chant* allah, allah, allah, *the voices get stronger and louder. Although we begin on the same tone, one of the women has migrated a half-tone up. Someone else follows. We are ascending in pitch and amplitude. Then someone else migrates further. We do not follow, but the voices get more distinct. Between each allah, there is a conscious and quick exhale, which makes the uptake of the inhale more forceful as well. The weave of voices is now thicker, like a mesh of tones. One woman lets go a long wail:* allaaaaaaaah *and follows it with* la ilaha ila llah, *even though we are not chanting that phrase. Another woman lets go a loud* al-lah! *And my nervous system starts.*

She is in al-hal, *a state of inspiration, of unity, of transformation. A state of grace. A state different than those we inhabit outside the "labor" of the group.*

*Later, when I ask S about her experience of al-hal she says: "I used to have such dramatic states (*ahwal, *pl.;* hal *sing.). As soon as I would approach the sanctuary, I would break down and cry. During the ceremonies, I would be seized, jump up and cry out over and over. But now things have quieted down. Now my states are silent."*

A few months later, the shaykh of the order, Sidi Hamza, passes. He is ninety-five, a descendent of the prophet and has been the spiritual leader of the order since 1975. I learn that the new shaykh—his son Sidi Jamal—predicts that there will be fewer expressions of al-hal *going forward. I wonder why this is so. Is the fervor of the order diminishing? Will it be replaced with another affect? No one has an explanation.*

And yet, it is the affect of the sanctuary, and of the smaller sanctuaries abroad, that hold a palpable magnetism for adherents. They contain al-baraka dyal sidi rabbi-i, *the blessing of our lord, the Sufis say.* Baraka *(blessing, grace) in the North African Muslim context is thought to be contagious. Like the* hal, *it resides in a place, and creates an atmosphere, at the sight of the tomb of Sidi Hamza, for example, or in his body.*

"At the funeral of Sidi Hamza," said the husband of one of the sisters to me the following summer, "the wife of Sidi Jamal fainted. When she came to, she said that she had seen the baraka of Sidi Hamza rise up from the tomb of the shaykh and land on his son, Sidi Jamal."

What the baraka looked like, she didn't say. But it traveled, from death to life, from body to body, like a vibration, like an intensity. Like affect. And this intensity caused her to faint, to expire, to enter another state.

Can There Be a Phenomenology of Affect?

What is circulated in the ceremonies evoked above? Is this the "transmission of affect" that Teresa Brennan (2004) talks about—a preconscious transmission of energy that subsequently changes the hormones and nervous system of the individual, the social collective and ultimately the milieu of performance?

The terms *emotion*, *affect*, *feeling*, and *sensation* have been debated and revised many times over the last centuries and with renewed vigor in the last several decades (Gil 2017). What's more, these definitions are, in part, a matter of disciplinary perspective. For example, philosophers have often pondered the "meaning" of emotions and their relation to rationality (Sartre 1970; Rorty 1980). Are emotions intentional? Are they judgments (Solomon 2004)? Do humans will them into being or do they happen to us (Schmitz et al. 2011)? What part of emotional experience is culturally determined and what part neurologically hard-wired? Are emotions human and cross-cultural or an inter-species phenomenon?

In 1980, Amélie Rorty noted that emotions are those parts of human experience that refuse to be categorized, and she asserted that a unified theory of emotions was far from being constructed. Indeed, various attempts have been made since 1980 to substantiate this theory, with debatable results. Constructing a theory from the emotions of anger or disgust will result in a very different perspective than if one begins with joy and contentment, for example. While all *affect* is in motion and thus changes the social field, negative *emotions* seem to be more involved in direct social political action, since dissensus arises from conscious discomfort.

Neurocognitive psychologists are more interested in what happens in the brain of an individual than in the feelings that sweep over large populations to create historical movements; however, these topics are related. What happens in the brain when an emotion is realized and experienced? What is the relation of that feeling to its object and to the subject experiencing it? Where is affect located? How does it move people and others into action? And is there value in understanding the agency of one particular emotion as it is evoked, experienced, and transmitted across bodies and spaces?[13]

For the purposes of this discussion, here I follow a particular trajectory in affect theory that builds upon the philosophy of Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677). For Spinoza, affect is the *experience* that always links the mind and the body, insisting upon the relation between the two. He defines "the affections of the body whereby the body's power of acting is increased or diminished … together with the ideas of these affections" (Spinoza 1959, part III quoted in Schmitter 2010). Affect is a vital force that circulates unconsciously with sociopolitical ramifications. It has a power on the body and the mind. For scholars influenced by this line of thinking (including Deleuze and Guattari 1987, as well as Clough 2007 and Massumi 2002) affect is a pre-cognitive intensity that is *translated in context* as a particular emotion, such as fear, disgust, or rage. In this chapter, I espouse the definitions synthesized by Eric Shouse, who holds that "feelings are *personal* and *biographical*, emotions are *social*, and affects are *prepersonal*" (Shouse 2005). On this view, there is a material force to affect that is felt and only subsequently *translated* into individual and social realms.

This is congruent with Brennan's work on the "transmission of affect" (in her 2004 book of the same name). Brennan challenges the notion of the contained self, blaming this concept for skewed notions of the subject in psychology. She brings attention to how affect is transmitted both chemically and biophysically (through gestures as well as pheromones, for example). As a pre-personal intensity, *affect*, she asserts, creates an *atmosphere.* (Her opening gambit is the question: "[i]s there anyone who has not, at least once, walked into a room and 'felt the atmosphere'?" [Brennan 2004, 1]).[14] Atmosphere is psychological, material, and profoundly social.[15] What's more, the transmission of affect circulates through bodies in ways that are experienced both positively and negatively.

Human enmeshment with affective worlds does not stop or start at the skin. Rather, affective intensities challenge the limits and agencies of things and bodies, including our relation to technology. Patricia Clough, in *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, puts it this way:

> [a]ffect constitutes a nonlinear complexity out of which the narration of conscious states such as emotion are subtracted, but always with "a never-to-be-conscious autonomic remainder." In this conceptualization, affect is not only theorized in terms of the human body. Affect is also theorized in relation to the technologies that are allowing us both to "see" affect and to produce affective bodily capacities beyond the body's organic-physiological constraints. The technoscientific experimentation with affect not only traverses the opposition of the organic and the nonorganic; it also inserts the technical into felt vitality, the felt aliveness given in the preindividual bodily capacities to act, engage, and connect—to affect and be affected. The affective turn, therefore, expresses a new configuration of bodies, technology, and matter instigating a shift in thought in critical theory. (2007, 2)

What Clough does not say explicitly, but assumes, is that bodies no longer have the shape they did in the Enlightenment. Human experience does not begin and end at the visual parameters of the body, but is intermeshed and continuous with other bodies, technologies, and environments. This idea is not anti-humanist but is post-humanist, and requires a post-phenomenology, one that expands the notion of the human to encompass both technology and the social-affective milieu of experience (Ihde 1993).

Would Brian Massumi agree? He argues that affect has a life that is separate from individual cognition. For example, he discusses an experiment conducted by Hertha Sturm and her colleagues wherein children's responses to film of a "melting snowman" were charted (Massumi 1995). The results showed that the children were often more "pleasantly" stimulated by the tragedy of the snowman's disappearance and death than they were by his continued existence. And yet their verbal explanations did not calibrate with their affective responses. From this data, Massumi deduces that affect has a life of its own. It is not a rational and logical response, nor is it limited to an individual; rather it circulates and stimulates. It is "autonomous" to the extent that it does not arise from or depend upon one human subjectivity. It does,

however, depend upon *transmission* from body to body, and these bodies are themselves vibrating with life (and resistance). These bodies are chiasms inhabiting the flesh of the world.

Affect is like a sound wave, circulating, touching, and transforming the bodies that it encounters. Indeed, affect, like sound, relies upon touch. It is thus always experienced as proximate—*even when it is virtual.* A phenomenology of affect must include an examination of what moves (humans, animals, even plants) through space. In such an understanding of affect, its potential to create new worlds (and subjects) is evident, since subjects are always *inter-subjects*, and subjectivity is, in the words of Anahid Kassabian (2013), always "distributed" across bodies with different cultural histories and intentions.[16] Bodies are enfolded in the flesh of the world.

Affect is always phenomenologically proximate, by which I mean it is felt at the level of the body by the senses, enfolding the subject into a larger environment. Sound is likewise proximate. (Even when below or above the threshold of human hearing, its vibrations are felt.) But if affect is pre-personal, if it is distributed not only across human bodies but across technology as well, then a phenomenology of affect is one that must begin *not* with the discrete body per se but with milieu, with place and abode. What Merleau-Ponty calls "chiasms"—places of condensation and conjoining (including subjectivity)—are always present. Styles of being are discrete at any given moment. And yet these experiences are always pieces of a larger sonic-affective milieu that disperse in time and to which consciousness only sometimes has access.[17]

If affect is not personal, how should we describe the feelings, sensations, and perceptions of the affective field? When we expand the limits of the body to the environment or to a larger set of bodies, are we reifying transcendence? Are we repeating, as Ruth Leys asserts, the mind/body split, favoring a mentalist world of imagination, and projecting ourselves within it? When we leave the five senses, and include intuition (the sixth sense according to Henri Bergson), what happens to phenomenological description? Are we in another realm (fantasy? science?) or is there a way of maintaining a sensate ground in the more-than-human realm of affect?

For some, a phenomenology of affect is a contradiction in terms. By this logic, affect is pre-experiential and pre-interpretive ("autonomous," in Massumi's words), and one cannot access and describe the feelings and sensations of the affective field, except through the mediation of subjective interpretation. But this conundrum rests on a misunderstanding, since most phenomenologists concur that humans are inter-subjects in direct contact with the world. Sentient beings (including humans) are part of the larger environment and "subject" to, even created by, its vagaries. All things arise from within the flesh of existence—interdependent, like plants whose photosynthesis creates the air that other species breathe. Both phenomenology and affect theory examine the fundamental entwinement of person and world. (This is why the epoché, the phenomenological reduction, is so important: it is the *method* by which the world is known.)

While it is impossible to address all of these subtleties here, we can observe that Merleau-Ponty points us in some productive directions on this topic, particularly in his later work. Merleau-Ponty's elaboration of the notion of the flesh allows us to join the ground of lived experience (the basis of phenomenological description) with a Spinozian-informed theory of affect through an examination of intersubjective and sonic experience at the level of milieu—the chiasm where bodies intertwine with other forms. Sound and affect create what Deleuze and Guattari would term territory (place, abode), and while such spaces are pre-experiential (fish are not aware of water), they can nonetheless be discerned. To understand affect, the task is not to engage in interpretation (though translation cannot be avoided), but to return to the milieux themselves, the intersubjective and phenomenological ground of experience.

Phenomenological Description III

Before his death in 2017, I visited the abode of the shaykh Sidi Hamza. I took the train from Rabat north to Oujda, getting out at a small station before the train's terminus. It was the stop for the shaykh's summer residence. The terminal was small, the benches broken and there were posters in French dating from the colonial period on the wall. One of the shaykh's disciples was waiting for me, and we got in his car, traveling the pot-holed road through a small village and into the countryside. In thirty minutes we arrived, the driver beeped the horn and the guardian opened the gate. He parked and pointed me in the direction of the women's quarters.

Inside the walls was a large garden, with palm trees, a lawn, and wild roses on a pergola—a stark contrast to the sandy scrub of the region, with its aloe and prickly pear cactus. There was a large house in the center, and there were also buildings to the left for women and to the right for men.

It was around five in the afternoon, just after the ʿasr *prayer. When I entered the compound, some women were still doing their prostrations. Then I saw someone I knew, who greeted me and showed me around. There were several large rooms, all carpeted. I put my things down among other bundles—backpacks, small suitcases and clothes tied up in large scarves. These were the sleeping quarters, but in fact, not many would sleep that night. After washing off the dust of my journey in the bathroom, I put on my djellaba and scarf, and joined a group of women sitting in a circle. They had already begun the liturgy and most kept their heads down, but a few made eye contact with me and acknowledged my presence.*

Hasbunallahu wa ni'mal wakil, Hasbunallahu wa ni'ma wakil, Hasbunallahu wa ni'mal wakil, *they were chanting when I sat down,* "God is sufficient and He is the best disposer of affairs." *I joined in. But then they began another chant:* huwa hu, huwa hu, huwa hu. "He is He, there is only Him."

The women pushed up the aspirated /h/ from deep within their bellies, our bodies were in sync. Like an orchestra we pulsed with a common breath. All at once, the woman next to me jumped up, lifting her bottom off the floor. Huwa! *she cried. She might as well have discovered a scorpion beneath her. But no, she was taken up in the hal. I jumped too. My heart raced. Another woman broke from the repetitions, crying "allah" loudly above the others. The affect of the group was changing, heating up.*

When the liturgy was over we got up and went together to the women's section of the main house. There were more than forty women, some sitting on brocade banquettes, some seated on the thick carpets. There were small tables within everyone's reach, and tea and sweets were set down. We helped ourselves.

Soon, someone began to sing.

> Nadra nadra ah shaykh-i, anta sahibun al-hadra
> Nadra nadra ah shaykh-i, anta sahibun al-hadra

The gaze, the gaze, oh sire, you are the friend of presence …

The song was addressed to the shaykh, from whom only one glance was enough to transform one's state. Indeed, the shaykh rarely spoke to the women, who filed past him when he gave them audience and often swooned from the effects of his regard.

We sang for most of the night, weaving the visible into the invisible, forming a new flesh.

In *The Visible and the Invisible,* Merleau-Ponty employs the metaphor of the specular to delineate the difference between what can be seen (thus known) and what always eludes the seer—what is hidden from sight:

> it is by looking, it is still with my eyes that I arrive at the true thing, with these same eyes that a moment ago gave me monocular images— now they simply function together and as though for good. Thus the relation between the things and my body is decidedly singular: it is what makes me sometimes remain in appearances, and it is also what sometimes brings me to the things themselves; it is what produces the *buzzing* of appearances, it is also what silences them and casts me fully into the world. Everything comes to pass as though my power to reach the world and my power to entrench myself in phantasms only came one with the other; even more: as though the access to the world were but the other face of a withdrawal and this retreat to the margin of the world a servitude and another expression of my natural power to enter into it. The world is what I perceive, but as soon as we examine and express its absolute proximity, it also becomes, inexplicably, irremediable distance. (1979 8; emphasis mine).

For Merleau-Ponty, what is perceived by the closeness of the senses is also never completely graspable; there are always aspects that are withdrawn, distant. The experiences of the Sufi women exemplify this paradox: their performances create aesthetic proximity (discernable in sounded and embodied response) that nonetheless marks their ultimate separation from a non-human and thus unknowable God. This is a characteristic of the sublime. In the pre-Romantic era, for example, experiences of the sublime were characterized by distance: a magnitude that overwhelmed the human, like standing before a mountain range or a raging sea (Kant [1790] 2000). It was what made humans feel small. In the performances examined here, however, the sublime is found in proximity, in the friction between notes and bodies that produce rapture. As Butler correctly notes (2011), there is a reversal of notions of proximity and distance in modernity.

It is important to remember, however, that proximity and distance are always relative. Like the situations described in Zeno's paradoxes, the more we divide the line, the farther the distance to the destination seems. While Merleau-Ponty (1969) employs the visual world to understand intercorporeity, he also evokes sound and silence, as well as language and the unsayable. Indeed, the visible world "buzzes." But it is also without sound. His work brings out the enigmas of perception, as well as the way a figure arises from a ground that also creates it, since figure and ground are interconnected.

Proximity and distance are like the visible and the invisible—interdependent dualities. Like the senses, they rely on each other. Sound is touch and—as the song above attests—even the gaze can move its object, as well as be moved by it. There is "a relation of the visible with itself that traverses me and constitutes me as a seer, this circle *which I do not form, which forms me,* this coiling over of the visible upon the visible … [that animates] other bodies as well as my own."

Think of proximity as a cipher, as an index of inter-sensorial thickness, of intertwining and density. Proximity is not just spatial; it is also temporal. As such, sound may be proximate even if it is acousmatic (i.e., even if the sound's origin is not visible). And images on a screen may trigger mirror neurons that activate body memory, so that the past inhabits the present as co-immanence (Casey 1987).

Sounding the Visible and the Invisible: Merleau-Ponty and a Phenomenology of Affect

For Merleau-Ponty, phenomenology is a philosophy based in the senses and particularly in the embodied *human* senses. One need only think of Merleau-Ponty's famous experiment of one's left hand touching one's right hand (and vice versa), to remember that subjectivity and objectivity are oscillating and contextual perceptions.(Merleau-Ponty [1945] 2012, 95). This may seem obvious, but the assumption that the subject is bound by the skin, discrete, rational, and conscious continues to blind us to other possibilities. While scholars often assume individual perception to be the starting point of phenomenological investigation, in fact it has always recognized the intersubjectivity of experience. In affect theory the concept of the subject is likewise revised. Not only has the divide between the human and the technological blurred (pace Donna Haraway's notion of the cyborg [Haraway 1991]), but research on affect and its transmission demonstrates that we are not separate until we come together (in social groups, families, or the sexual act) but rather that humans share an affective environment that over-determines them chemically, hormonally, and psychologically; we are, in fact, together until we create our separateness.

The Spinoza-inspired affect theory considered above might be deemed anti-humanist because it emphasizes the pre-experiential. However, if we broaden sensate feeling beyond the bounds of the human skin, what we might call the skin ego, and include what Merleau-Ponty calls the flesh of the world, then a phenomenology of affect may still be possible. Indeed, if we expand concepts of the body to include what I call the sound body—"a body able to transform by resonating at different frequencies" (Kapchan 2015)—then perception and intuition also expand to include a larger field of phenomena. Sound bodies are mutable bodies that *transduce* the sound affects of the environment. Thus "reading" the sound body is also reading its abode or milieu as the sound body transduces the effects of atmosphere. What's more, sound bodies defy the mind/body split cemented into discourses of modernity whose effects, it may be posited, are experienced at the level of feeling, understood as emotions, and circulated as intensities across a phenomenological field.

As observed above, for Merleau-Ponty flesh is an element of being like water, air, earth and fire. It is a porous, reversible, and renewable substance. The human body is flesh, but it intertwines with the flesh of the world like a pulsing rhythm or a condensation of vibrations. Flesh is the continuity that links the perceiver's body with the world. In this work, Merleau-Ponty is reaching for a vocabulary of the interstitial. His writing is poetic, analogical. He is creating a philosophical concept from a material all humans (and mammals) share—flesh. But he extends it beyond the human, talking about the flesh of the world and of the encounter of self and other, world and Being. Flesh is an isthmus, a kind of fascia or connective tissue. It traverses at the same time that it forms. It is, we might say, always *trans*forming. Might we think of flesh as the affective intensity that links humans with other humans, with other bodies and environments?[18] And if so, might this be the entry point into a phenomenology of affect?

For Merleau-Ponty, flesh is the continuity that links the perceiver's body with the world, but "this continuity is marked by chiasms," intersections, and differentiations. A chiasm is based on the double helix of genetics, it is one strand made up of two coils. For Merleau-Ponty, there are nothing but chiasms, what he also refers to as the "thickness of flesh between the seer and the thing" (Merleau-Ponty 1969 135). Taken into the realm of sound, flesh is vibratory. It is an arrangement of sine waves in particular formation. Taken into the realm of affect, flesh is that pre-personal intensity that, when contextualized and translated, forms the chiasms of psychosocial experience. Sounding out the possibilities of flesh in Merleau-Ponty's work, we might say the aesthetics of proximity are here in the flesh.

Empathy and Ethics—Sacred and Secular

The intertwining of person and world is brought home in both the ethics of Butler and in the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty. Following Butler (2011) human experience is not narrowly personal, individual, or subjective; rather Butler emphasizes the interdependence of human lives and their (often socially uneven but nonetheless existentially generalizable) conditions of vulnerability. This is what makes us human, she asserts, an incapacity to thrive without the thriving of others. Following Merleau-Ponty, the null-point of human perception is the self. Looking out from my eyes, I see you, but I need "you" to reflect myself back to me, in language, in gesture, in empathic response. And yet the boundaries of the self are not fixed. They do not stop at the skin but extend out like rays of affective and energetic feeling. The self is a node in an invisible but very present matrix of affective relations in which consciousness (and meta-consciousness) appear as a blinking lighthouse in an otherwise dark sea.

If the self is fundamentally relational, then proximity and distance are critical concepts for ethics; Butler shows that at this moment the relations between them are shifting. Can ethics be maintained solely in distal relations to the bodies of others?

Let me respond with a socio-political example from one of my field sites. In France, I would argue, Muslims are the sacred figure on the secular ground of society. Much of the time, this causes friction because sacred performances (whether sartorial or ceremonial) are either prohibited by the state or not tolerated by a majority of non-Muslims in public. Were these relations purely distant—mediated only by Facebook or Twitter and actual miles—the ethical call to answer the hatred and racism that arises in the encounter with the other would be qualitatively different, found in a response that is more comfortable because it is intellectual. However, the encounter is close: face-to-face, in schools and other public institutions, often resulting in violent reactions on both sides. (Think of the 2016 scandal, for example, of the French police making a Muslim woman disrobe on the beach in Marseille.) Visual distance resonates differently than embodied proximity. Indeed, ethics are easier to delineate at a distance and much harder to enact close-up, where prejudices are visceral.

Despite shifting relations of distance and proximity at this moment, I am not convinced that an "unwilled ethical encounter" necessarily produces empathic response. And such *affecting* empathy, I assert, is a requirement if ethical action is to have any long-term effect: it is not just ideas or even laws that need to change but the ways humans interact with each other and their quotidian environment. The revolution is affective. But what is an ethics of empathy at a time when physical proximity is dangerous to individuals, communities, and humanity?

Conclusion: Proximate Bodies in a Time of Technology

As I finish this chapter, the world has changed. A global pandemic has forced most people into their homes and apartments and out of the workplace. People are dying and suffering at racially disproportionate rates.

People are also communicating across time and space with an ease unimagined just a few months ago. But theses interactions are virtual. Family, friends, and colleagues, artists, and audiences are now images and voices on a screen. As physical beings we are distant, but we are socially proximate as cyborgs: the flesh of the world extends to the flesh of technology like a second skin.

What happens to the body—its tastes and smells, its resonances and sensations—in this new reality? Where and what is affect when bodies are absent, one from another? If the aesthetics of proximity produce empathy and states of change, what happens in conditions of embodied distance?

With the quarantine, the Boutshishi Sufis began online liturgies every day, with prayers for the healing of the religious and global community. This allowed practitioners from all over the world to attend; time zones and space were transcended. There was a difference, of course. Not everyone could turn on their audio at once, as that would have caused pandemonium—hundreds of individual voices colliding over Zoom. So we listened to one small household praying and chanting, while others intoned to themselves in the privacy of their individual rooms. Many people left their cameras on so their praying could be observed if one scrolled through the faces, but the audio remained mute. Consequently, the dense mesh of voices, the aesthetic proximity, was absent. The difference was palpable. Listening practices changed; it was no longer possible to respond to the vibration of other bodies, the familiar ground of intersensorial experience that usually accompanies the ceremony. No one went into rapture. There was no hal. Rather, the liturgy did what liturgy does: it brought the community into being. And for this to happen, a co-presence in shared time was necessary, even if bodies were distant.

In moments of confinement, mediated sociality (when accessible) becomes more salient. Collectivities and audiences show up together "live" on screen. The actual presence of the other *in the same time* (and space of the platform) is important. It affords a different kind of imagined community—not one of nation per se (Anderson 1983) but of peer group, audience, and collectivity, whether based on religion or on the performances of taste. Watching a recording asynchronically is not the same, insofar as there is no imagined time-space continuity between participants. Showing up live in the coterminous virtual realm is a signal of belonging and commitment, a tattoo on the flesh of fluctuating existence. Presence, even in virtual performance, is a requirement for the threading of bodies into a shared affective weave.

But what is absent is also significant: the intersensorial thickness of flesh. In *The Absent Body*, phenomenologist Drew Leder asserts that the body appears to itself most poignantly when it is sick (1990). The body, he says, appears to itself in dysfunction—it "dys-appears." Much of the time, humans walk around incognizant of their embodiment and distant from their own sentience, but in sickness, the body is experienced as other than the mind, becoming an object of accusative awareness. While Leder talks about this in terms of the discrete individual, it also holds true for the collective. The global pandemic has made the social body aware of its ailing materiality—as institutions with insufficient hospital beds, as schools unable to respond to the needs of children. The social and political body appears to itself most poignantly when it no longer "works."

This is also true of democracy and all the more poignant in the examples of the Black Lives Matter movement. The murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Aubrey, Tamir Rice, and others were first seen and heard by the global public in online videos and, despite the risk of COVID-19 infection, people across the United States and around the world took to the streets. The sick social body appeared to itself in the extreme dysfunction of structural racism through videos that went viral and the response was, and had to be, an embodied co-presence.[19] Only such proximity forces an intimate encounter with difference that displaces the boundaries of self-same (in this case, the United States with its unmarked and misrecognized racism). What Butler calls the "obligation of proximity" is this: an immediate and corporeal response.

Why did the video of George Floyd's murder—so distant from the majority of its viewers—incite embodied resistance when those before it did not?

Perhaps it was the iteration of the death knell of Eric Garner's "I can't breathe." Perhaps it was Floyd's plea for the policeman to stop, the murderer's challenging stare into the camera, Floyd's calling for his mother, or the breathlessness of the pandemic as a backdrop. The combination of images, sounds, and his voice evoked an inter-sensorial density that triggered a collective trauma—a memory in the Black bodies of America (and throughout the world) that made the past a present and immanent reality, one that could no longer be ignored. Floyd's voice passed through mediated form and straight into the heart:

> I can't breathe officer

> don't kill me
> they gon kill me man
> come on man
> I cannot breathe
> I cannot breathe
> they gon kill me
> they gon kill me
> I can't breathe
> I can't breathe
> please sir
> please
> please
> please I can't breathe
>
> (Floyd quoted in Lithwick 2020)

This voice, this plea, sent people to the streets raising their own voices: "no justice, no peace," a call and response, a wave of affect surging from behind closed doors and screens into the public sphere of history.

To be an ethnographic ear to sonic acts such as these, or to those of Sufi Muslim worship in secular Europe described above, it is necessary to resonate with the sound knowledge transmitted and to witness—indeed to empathically experience—the disintegration of the self-owning rational self of the Enlightenment (what I call the "juridical body") as it gives way to another, the sound body, a collective and affective sonic ontology (Kapchan 2015). Audition is a techné on this path, produced in part by the aesthetics of proximity—microtones, inter-sensorial thickness, social dissonance, and *lingering in the space of discomfort* long enough to resonate with the same.[20] It is not the human as such that is annihilated in this encounter, but the conception of a consciousness limited to the body rather than extensive with the affecting flesh, the fleshly affect, of the world.

Acknowledgments

My thanks to Harris Berger, Michelle Kisliuk, Robert Rowe, Kati Szego, Katharine Young, and an anonymous reader for comments that helped improve this paper.

Works Cited

Abu-Lughod, Lila. 1986. *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Ambrazevicius, Rytis. 2017. "Dissonance/Roughness and Tonality Perception in Lithuanian Traditional Schwebungsdiaphonie." *Journal of Interdisciplinary Music Studies* 8 (1&2): 39–53.
Google Scholar WorldCat

Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Appadurai, Arjun. 2005. *Fear of Small Numbers*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Auslander, Philip. 1999. *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*. New York: Routledge.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Barad, Karen. 2007. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Becker, Judith. 2004. *Deep Listeners: Music, Emotion, and Trancing*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Berger, Harris. 2009. *Stance: Ideas about Emotion, Style, and Meaning for the Study of Expressive Culture*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Bloch, Ernst. (1959) 1986. *The Principle of Hope*. Translated by Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, and Paul Knight. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Brennan, Teresa. 2004. *The Transmission of Affect*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Butler, Judith. 2004. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London: Verso.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Butler, Judith. 2011. "Precarious Life: The Obligations of Proximity." The Neale Wheeler Watson Lecture, Nobel Museum, Svenska Akademiens Börssal, May 24, 2011. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJT69AQtDtg.

Casey, Edward. 1987. *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Clough, Patricia Ticineto. 2007. "Introduction." In *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, edited by Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Halley, 1–33. Duke University Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Connor, Steven. 2004. "Edison's Teeth: Touching Hearing." In *Hearing Cultures: Essays on Sound, Listening, and Modernity*, edited by Veit Erlmann, 153–172. New York: Berg.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Csordas. Thomas. 1993. "Somatic Ways of Knowing." *Cultural Anthropology* 8 (2): 135–156.

Google Scholar WorldCat

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Derrida, Jacques. 1985. "Roundtable on Translation." In *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation*. Edited by Christie McDonald. Translated by Peggy Kamuf. New York: Schocken Books.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Duranti, A. 1986. "The Audience as Co-Author: An Introduction." *Text & Talk* 6: 239–248.
Google Scholar WorldCat

Ekman, Paul. 1972. "Universal and Cultural Differences in Facial Expression of Emotion." *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation*, edited by J. R. Cole, 207–283. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Feld, Steven. 1980. *Sound and Sentiment*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Geertz, Clifford. 1976. "From the Native's Point of View: On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding." In *Meaning in Anthropology*, edited by Keith Basso and Henry A. Selby, 221–237. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Gil, Denise. 2017. *Melancholic Modalities: Affect, Islam, and Turkish Classical Musicians*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Gilbert, Jeremy. 2004. "Signifying Nothing: 'Culture,' 'Discourse' and the Sociality of Affect. *Culture Machine* 6.
https://culturemachine.net/deconstruction-is-in-cultural-studies/signifying-nothing/.

Haraway, Donna. 1991. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Husserl, Edmund. 2001. *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis: Lectures on Transcendental Logic*. Translated by Anthony J. Steinbock. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishing.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Ihde, Don 1993. *Postphenomenology: Essays in the Postmodern Context*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Kant, Immanuel. (1790) 2000. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Edited by Paul Guyer. Translated by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Kapchan, Deborah. 2001. "Exchanging Lies and Creating Truths: Intentionality in Moroccan Marketplace Performance." In *New Approaches to Theater Studies and Performance Analysis*, edited by Gunter Berghaus, 97–110. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Kapchan, Deborah. 2009. "Learning to Listen: The Sound of Sufism in France." *The World of Music* 52 (2): 63–88.
Google Scholar WorldCat

Kapchan, Deborah. 2015. "Body." In *Keywords in Sound*, edited by David Novak and Matt Sakakeeney. 33–44. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Kassabian, Anahid. 2013. *Ubiquitous Listening: Affect, Attention, and Distributed Subjectivity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Keil, Charles. 1987. "Participatory Discrepancies and the Power of Music." *Cultural Anthropology* 2 (3): 275–283.
Google Scholar WorldCat

Keil, Charles, and Steven Feld. 1994. *Music Grooves*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Kersten, Fred. 1996. "Intentionality." In *Encyclopedia of Phenomenology*, edited by Lester Embree et al., 350–355. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer-Science+Business Media, B.V. Option
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Kisliuk, Michelle. 1998. S*eize the Dance: BaAka Musical Life and the Ethnography of Performance*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Kisliuk Michelle. 2017. "Writing the Magnified Musicking Moment." In *Theorizing Sound Writing*, edited by D. Kapchan, 86–116. Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Leder, Drew. 1990. *The Absent Body*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Lithwick, Dahlia. 2020. "American Gasps for Air." *Slate*. May 30, 2020. https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2020/05/america-gasps-for-air.html.

Lutz, Catherine A. 1990. "*Endangered Emotions: Gender, Power and Rhetoric of Emotional Control in American Discourse.*" In *Language and the Politics of Emotion: Studies in Emotion and Social Interaction*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Lutz, Catherine A., and Lila Abu-Lughod, eds. 1990. *Language and the Politics of Emotion: Studies in Emotion and Social Interaction*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Massumi, Brian. 1995. "The Autonomy of Affect." *Cultural Critique* 31 (Autumn): 83–109.
Google Scholar WorldCat

Massumi, Brian. 2002. *Parables for the Virtual*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. (1945) 2012. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Translated by Donald A. Landes. New York: Routledge.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1969. *The Visible and the Invisible*. Translated by Alphonso Lingus. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Messner, G. Florian. 1990. *Schwebungsdiaphonie*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Muñoz, José. 2009. *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York: New York University Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Noyes, Dorothy. 2003. *Fire in the Plaça: Catalan Festival Politics after Franco*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Nussbaum, Martha C. 2001. *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Oliveros, Pauline. 2005. *Deep Listening: A Composer's Sound Practice*. New York: iUniverse, Inc.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Pais, Ana. 2017. "Almost Imperceptible Rhythms and Stuff Like That: The Power of Affect in Live Performance." In *Theorizing Sound Writing*, edited by Deborah Kapchan, 233–250. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Phelan, Peggy. 1993. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. New York: Routledge.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Rosaldo, Renato. 1989. "*Introduction: Grief and a Headhunter's Rage.*" In *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*, 1–24. Boston: Beacon Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Rice, Timothy. 2004. *Music in Bulgaria: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Rorty, Amélie Oksenberg, ed. 1980. *Explaining Emotions*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1970. *The Emotions: Outline of a Theory.* translator Frechtman, Bernard. New York: Humanities Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Schafer, R. Murray. 1977. *The Tuning of the World*. New York: Knopf.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Schmitter, Amy M. 2010. "Spinoza on the Emotions." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta. Stanford University. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/emotions-17th18th/LD5Spinoza.html.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Schmitz, Hermann, Rudolph Owen Müllan, and Jan Slaby. 2011. "Emotions Outside the Box: The New Phenomenology of Feeling and Corporeality." *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 10: 241–259.
Google Scholar WorldCat

Searle, John. 1979. "*Indirect Speech Acts.*" In *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts*, 30–57. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Shapira Lots, Inbal, and Lewi Stone. 2008. "Perception of Musical Consonance and Dissonance: An Outcome of Neural Synchronization." *Journal of the Royal Society, Interface* 5 (29): 1429–1434. doi:10.1098/rsif.2008.0143.
Google Scholar WorldCat

Shouse, Eric. 2005. "Feeling, Emotion, Affect." *M/C Journal* 8 (6). http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0512/03-shouse.php.
Google Scholar WorldCat

Solomon, Robert. C. 2004. *Thinking about Feeling: Contemporary Philosophers on Emotions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Sontag, Susan. 2003. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
Google Scholar Google Preview WorldCat COPAC

Tramo Mark Jude, Peter A. Cariani, Bertrand Delgutte, and Louis D. Braida. 2001. “Neurobiological Foundations for the Theory of Harmony in Western Tonal Music.” *Annals of the New York Academy of. Science* 930: 92–116.
Google Scholar WorldCat

Turino, Thomas. 1993. *Moving Away from Silence: Music of the Peruvian Altiplano and the Experience of Urban Migration.* Chicago Studies in Ethnomusicology. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Notes

1 Discussing this concept, Rytis Ambrazevicius (2017, 40) explains that *Schwebungsdiaphonie* refers to “the style of performance where dyads of parts form predominantly rough sonorities (or at least result in audible beats). The notion can be extended to music with more than two parts. Examples of *Schwebungsdiaphonie* are found in the Balkans, Indonesia, and elsewhere.”

2 I use the term “intentionality’” in the sense developed by the analytic philosopher John Searle, not in the sense that this term is given in the phenomenological tradition. Searle (1979) distinguishes between Intentionality (with a capital “I”) and intentionality as a state of intending-to-do-something. The former is an orientation toward a propositional content with particular conditions of satisfaction, whereas intentional—that is, volitional—states are simply one example of the above. Given this micro-theory of the philosophy of mind, which assumes the existence of an empirical reality apart from my perception of it (i.e., naïve realism), the individual acts upon the world according to Intention, and that world also acts upon the individual, causing perceptions and responses to them. On the use of the term intentionality in phenomenology, see Kersten (1996).

3 For more on intentionality and performance, see Kapchan (2001).

4 Not only is *tawhid* (unity with God) one of the explicit goals of chanting the dhikr, but instructions are given for maintaining one pitch.

5 Similar aesthetics are found in non-sacred compositions as well, as in the works of William Basinski, Pauline Oliveros, or Arvo Pärt.

6 There is still much to be understood about why *perceptions* of consonance and dissonance differ. See, for example, Shapira et al. (2008).

7 However, there is also some research that suggests that when two notes with more complex frequency ratios are sounded, they activate different neural pathways from those activated by two notes with simple frequency ratios. See Tramo et al. (2001).

8 I use the word “instability” because in many musical traditions—including those of the Arab world—intervals with complex frequency ratios are perceived to be unstable until they find resolution on the tonic.

9 Merleau-Ponty notes that in the observation of gesture, “everything happens as if the other person’s intention inhabited my body, or as if my intentions inhabited his body” ([1945] 2012, 191), and surely intersubjectivities happen in all senses and through all senses, including the visual. We know as well that in observation, mirror neurons fire and replicate the experience in the somatic nervous system of the spectator.

10 In the analysis of media images, it is important to account for the positionality and perspective of the viewer. On a television, for example, the viewer is bigger than the story while at the movie theater the spectator is smaller. Videos create an archive that the spectator builds upon in deciding their next ethical (or unethical) response. While edited film directs the spectator’s gaze to particular aspects of the performance (the closeup, the explosion), in live performance it is the personal history of the audience member that determines whether one attends to one detail of the story or another. What’s more, the *affect* elicited by a character will inform how that character is encountered and perceived in subsequent scenes. As in life, there is an affective accumulation, as well as a feedback loop, between audience member and actor that is vital. (My thanks to my esteemed colleague Joanna Settle for her insights here.)

11 Developing related ideas, Harris Berger (2009) defines *stance* as “the valual qualities of the relationship that a person has to a text, performance, practice, or item of expressive culture.” For “traditions that understand the composition as an

entity existing before the performance," he notes, "the musician will clearly have a relationship to that composition as she plays it—whatever its ontological status. This relationship is the most straightforward form of the notion of stance."

12 *Lalla* literally means "Miss"; it is a nominative of respect used by all the women in the Sufi order. Sister (*khutti*) is also used.

13 Philosopher Martha Nussbaum (2001) has argued that emotions are not the opposite of rationality. As she observes, all rational decision-making is emotionally inflected and there is not a single decision taken that is not in some way informed by emotion. Likewise, the division between the thinking brain and the feeling body is patently false, as these functions of the person are inseparably linked. Embodiment is somatic, but the brain and the human capacities for language and reflection are also fundamentally embodied.
It is not only the case that feeling and thought are connected. Anthropologists studying emotion have elucidated the ways that culture determines subjective emotional experience. Paul Ekman, for example, delineated the human gestures portraying emotion. For Ekman (1972), there were genres of emotion, visual expressions—for disgust, surprise, anger, sadness, grief—that were pan-human. The apparent universality in the way these emotions are expressed in bodily gesture and visually interpreted, however, does not mean that emotions and their responses were not learned, nor does it imply that the same stimuli produce the same reactions across cultures. In the 1980s, Steven Feld brought attention to the inextricability of aesthetics and the feelings that differing forms of behavior bring forth in an individual or group. For Feld, ways of being are connected to styles of expression (cultural aesthetics and form), and emotion imbues all expressive culture (1980). For Catherine A. Lutz and Lila Abu-Lughod as well, emotions are not "natural" but emerge from socially prescribed discursive contexts (1990). In order to understand the cultural force and agency of emotion—its performativity—anthropologists developed studies of particular emotions in specific social contexts. Renato Rosaldo, for example, delineated how grief and rage came to define certain aspects of Ilongot culture (1989). Abu-Lughod (1986) demonstrated how emotions that were taboo in mixed-gender contexts—desire, love, disdain—found poetic expression among Bedouin women in Egypt, while Lutz brought attention to the way emotions are gendered and how that gendering creates stereotypes with social consequences (1990). Throughout this literature, emotion that is felt at the level of the individual body is also an integral factor in social life. What part of emotion, then, is shared? This is the question that theorists of affect ask.

14 Brennan also questions the current emphasis on genetic determinations for human behavior, noting that until the effects of "socially induced affect" are understood we cannot make genetic arguments.

15 Hermann Schmitz, who is credited with founding the "new phenomenology" (see, for example, Schmitz, Müllan, and Slaby 2011), begins his philosophy of emotion with a unique perspective on the phenomenological notion of the *Leib* (the lived body). For Schmitz, emotions are "spatial atmospheres" that are not limited to the individual but are nonetheless experienced at the level of the body. Indeed, these spatial atmospheres inhabit a realm of what he calls "surfaceless spaces," which include what might be called (following Brandon Labelle) "acoustic territories" or (following Schafer 1977) "soundscapes" but which also may take in regions of the body or even forms of weather! While abstract, this concept is consistent with a Spinozian orientation, which understands affect as precognitive and agentive.

16 As Kassabian notes, "listening, and more generally the input of the senses … produces *affective* responses, bodily events that ultimately lead in part to what we call emotion. And it is through this listening and these responses that a nonindividual, not simply human, *distributed subjectivity* takes place across a network of music media" (2013, xi; emphasis in the original). For Kassabian, it is through a (non-attentive) listening to sounds and music that affect is circulated. Indeed, Kassabian goes on to say that "[*a*]*ffect* is the circuit of bodily responses to stimuli that take place before conscious apprehension. Once apprehended, the responses pass into thoughts and feelings, though they always leave behind a residue…. This residue accretes in our bodies, becoming the stuff of future affective responses" (xiii; emphasis in the original).

17 This is exemplified in the work of the late performance studies scholar José Muñoz (2009), who builds upon philosopher Ernest Bloch's *The Principle of Hope* ([1959] 1986) to distinguish utopias that are ideal from those that are rooted in history. These "concrete utopias" are like material abodes brought into being by hope, an emotion with power to do things in the world.

18 There are resonances here with Karen Barad's notion of an "agential cut"—the way experience is intersected in any given time and place (Barad 2007). Building upon insights from quantum physics, Barad insists that independent objects, which she prefers to call *relata*, do not in fact exist independently of one another, but that all experience arises from a (performative) "cut" in the space-time continuum. World and human are not inter-related for Barad, but are co-produced in what she calls "intra-action." Phenomenological indeterminacy is itself the ground of being, punctuated by a myriad of

possible intra-actions. While a full analysis of Barad's theory is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is clear that Merleau-Ponty's notion of the chiasm—forming a unique experience from the element of flesh—finds great resonance here.

19 Not all chiasms are equally affecting. Just as there are wounds that mend quickly and others that take a longer time to heal, there are affective valences that reverberate for shorter or longer periods of time and over shorter and longer distances.

20 As Jeremy Gilbert put it, "Music has *physical effects* which can be identified, described and discussed but which are not the same thing as it having *meanings*, and any attempt to understand how music works in culture must … be able to say something about those effects without trying to collapse them into meanings" (2004; emphasis in the original).