

A Transmaterial Approach to Walking Methodologies: Embodiment, Affect, and a Sonic Art Performance

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Abstract

Bodily methodologies that engage with the affective, rhythmic, and temporal dimensions of movement have altered the landscape of social science and humanities research. Walking is one such methodology by which scholars have examined vital, sensory, material, and ephemeral intensities beyond the logics of representation. Extending this rich field, this article invokes the concept *trans* to reconceptualize walking research through theories that attend to the vitality and agency of matter, the interconnectedness between humans and non-humans, the importance of mediation and bodily affect, and the necessity of acknowledging ethico-political responsibility. While theoretical and empirical research about embodied, emplaced, and sensorial relations between moving bodies and space are well developed in the field of walking studies, their entanglements become profoundly altered by theories of *trans* – transcorporeality, transspecies, and transmaterialities. Taking up *trans* theories we experiment in thinking-with a sonic art performance, *Walking to the Laundromat*, which probes bodily, affective, and gendered labour.

Keywords

affective labour, embodiment, ethics, transcorporeality, transmaterialities, transspecies, walking methodologies

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Extra material: <http://theoryculturesociety.org>

Bodily methodologies that engage with the affective, rhythmic, and temporal dimensions of movement have altered the landscape of social science and humanities research (Blackman, 2012; Clough, 2007; Manning, 2012; Massumi, 2015; Seigworth and Gregg, 2010; Springgay, 2011). A focus on affect shifts the perception of a body as a bounded entity to bodies as assemblages and processes where movement, choreography and time play active roles in the differential relations that ‘reveal the imperceptible dynamism of matter’ (Blackman, 2012: 5). Walking is one such affective and bodily methodology (Springgay and Truman, 2016, 2017; Truman and Springgay, 2016). Using walking as a mode of inquiry, scholars have sought ways to examine vital, sensory, material, and ephemeral intensities beyond the logics of representation (Thrift, 2008; Truman and Springgay, 2015; Vannini, 2015).

This article emerges from a multi-year research-creation practice on walking directed by *WalkingLab*. *WalkingLab* is the collective practice of Stephanie Springgay and Sarah E. Truman, and intersects social science methodologies, artistic practice, and pedagogy. *WalkingLab* often works in collaboration with other artists and scholars, and the online hub¹ archives these networked activities. We frame walking methodologies as research-creation, which draws attention to the conjunctive at work in its process. Instead of perpetuating an idea of art as separate from thinking, the hyphenation of research-creation engenders ‘concepts in-the-making’ which is a process of ‘thinking-with and across techniques of creative practice’ (Manning and Massumi, 2014: 88–9). Research-creation is the intersection of art, theory, and research.

We begin the article with a brief overview of how embodiment has been enacted and theorized in walking scholarship. We then examine the different ways that sound walks contribute to embodied understandings of walking research. We discuss the ways that sound has been used in social science research, including soundscapes and sonic walks. These two opening sections are important because they contextualize how embodiment and sound are addressed in walking research.

Following this we extend Alaimo’s (2010, 2016) concept of transcorporeality through feminist, queer, and trans theories that emphasize movement and affect. Transcorporeality expands embodiment to include ‘material interchanges between human bodies, geographical

places, and vast networks of power' (Alaimo, 2010: 32). Whereas some theories of embodiment propose an understanding of an individual and undivided self (Ingold, 2011), transcorporeality posits humans and non-humans as enmeshed with each other in a messy, shifting ontology. Transcorporeality cleaves the nature–culture divide and asserts that bodies do not pre-exist their comings together but are materialized in and through intra-action. Alaimo (2010) contends that in order to refuse human exceptionalism we need to attend to ethical and political practices of transmateriality. We follow scholars like Hird, Puar, Chen, and Colebrook in thinking beyond trans as a transition or as transgression, toward trans as assemblage, affect, movement, and intensity, and invoke Chen's (2015) productive use of trans as a way to disassemble and disturb taxonomies, and confound the notion of an embodied, coherent self.² To frame our discussion of trans theories we experiment in thinking-with a sonic art performance called *Walking to the Laundromat* created by Rebecca (Bek) Conroy for *WalkingLab*.

Walking to the Laundromat consists of a 106-minute audio track that participants listen to while doing their laundry at a public laundromat, interspersed with walks around the neighbourhood in between cycles. The audio track parodies the form of a 'self-help' audio book. It is produced as a binaural sound file. Participants are greeted by a voice that instructs them about the particulars of their walks and washing. Intersected with this masterful and controlled voice are sounds that emerge as part of neoliberal life, including a 1950s laundry detergent commercial, new-age mindfulness music, and well-being affirmations. Another layer intersperses intensive matterings about capital, money laundering, and affective labour – particularly the gendered and domestic/service labour performed by those who clean, wash, and perform care in underpaid domestic or service jobs, and who are often subjected to violence. The article probes bodily, affective, and gendered labour to question how some bodies are perceived as disposable in order for other bodies to thrive (Mbembe, 2003; Puar, 2007). *Walking to the Laundromat* arouses what Alaimo describes as corporeal ethics, where 'ethical action arises, then, from the recognition of one's specific location within a wider, more-than-human kinship network' (2016: 30). Transmateriality, we contend, enlarges understandings of corporeality and takes into

account more-than-human movements and entanglements that are immanent, viral, and intensive.

Embodiment in Walking Research

Walking researchers insist that walking is embodied because it is immediate, tangible, and foregrounds the bodily experience of moving. As we walk we are ‘in’ the world, integrating body and space co-extensively. Pink et al. (2010: 3) argues that walking is significant because ‘it is in itself a form of engagement integral to our perception of an environment. We cannot but learn and come to know in new ways as we walk.’ Pink’s work in visual and sensory ethnography – including her important contributions to walking methodologies – emphasizes the ways that moving and sensing bodies are fundamental to knowledge production. She contends that an interest in walking is in tandem with the development of alternative methods for conducting ethnographic research, including those that enable a multi-sensorial and emplaced approach.

Much walking research places embodiment at the centre of discussion, often through the figure of the flâneur, a walker who takes in the surrounding environment through leisurely perambulation. Embodied accounts of walking research have demonstrated the importance of individual accounts of the lived experience of walking, an attention to a relational-social mode of moving collectively and civically, and an emplaced, haptic, and affective understanding of movement. In this section, we offer a brief review of the ways that embodiment emerges in walking research: as corporeal or physical; as relational-social; and as emplaced, haptic, affective, and material. We isolate these examples as a pedagogical tool, recognizing that in many instances these three instantiations of embodiment are intertwined.

Embodiment is crucial to walking research; however, as we will argue, embodiment needs to move beyond an individual and sensuous account of the body in space towards a different ethico-political engagement. Alaimo (2010: 17) writes that the ethics that emerge from trans relations are ‘uncomfortable and perplexing’ and do not place human mastery at the centre. In our larger book project, we similarly problematize place, affect, and rhythm – concepts that are common in walking research – from a more-than-human framework (Springgay and Truman, forthcoming).

Embodiment as Lived Experience

Embodiment appears in walking research as a corporeal or physical response to the textures of a place. For example, Vergunst's (2008) ethnographic work in Aberdeen takes note of the bodily ways that walking marks an awareness of surfaces and textures. Vergunst's work foregrounds the routine, everyday walking practices that create a rhythmic understanding of place. Place is shaped through the embodied way that feet, gravel, pavement, and grass mark out a particular rhythm underfoot. Walkers become attuned to the different surfaces, which, in turn, shape how a walker makes sense of a place. Place, as such, becomes constructed through a responsiveness of the body to the landscape. Likewise, Phillips' (2004) project in the Kimberly region of Australia combines ethnographic, artistic, and scientific methods along with walking to think about the wildness of place. She argues that the field or site of research is 're-corporealised' by walking because it is a bodily not a visual practice (Phillips, 2004: 158). The bodily practice of walking, Heddon and Myers (2014) maintain, can be demanding, severe, and gruelling. In contrast to embodied narratives of walking that extol the virtues of meditative drifting, their *Walking Library* project reflects the arduous nature of walking across different landscapes, carrying heavy packs, and in the blistering sun. They emphasize the ways in which the physicality of knowledge is shaped through movement.

Additional accounts of walking and embodiment are figured in the work of Lorimer and Lund, who recount a group mountain summit walk as a process of encountering a trail through 'toes, heels, and soles' (2008: 186). Similarly, Wylie describes the rhythm of walking as a corporeal event. Depths and surfaces – the topology of place – are distilled 'into knees, hips and shoulder blades' (2002: 449). Wylie's work speaks to the ways walkers experience their own muscular consciousness on a walk, in relation to the slopes and peaks of a landscape. Lund's walking ethnographies similarly foreground corporeality such as postures, speeds, and rhythms, which 'shape the tactile interactions between the moving body and the ground, and play a fundamental part in how the surroundings are sensually experienced' (2005: 28). Significant among these walking scholars is an attention to how an individual body moves in relation to the surfaces of a place, and how such embodied movement creates rhythmic,

textured, and contingent understandings of place. Typically, though, these descriptions assume that surfaces and textures are pre-given and that it is the walker who interacts with and experiences these different typologies. As such, the embodied human occupies a privileged position.

Ingold's work is frequently cited by walking scholars interested in embodiment. He writes that walking is a 'more literally grounded approach to perception . . . since it is surely through our feet, in contact with the ground (albeit mediated by footwear), that we are most fundamentally and continually "in touch" with our surroundings' (2004: 331). He proposes that walkers 'hear through their feet', emphasizing the proprioception of movement (2004: 331). While Ingold's work has been significant in understanding movement (walking) as a mode of perception that does not always privilege vision, his focus on the individual walker risks a framing of embodiment that emphasizes an interiority of self. Moreover, Ingold's (2004) oft cited walking paper 'Culture on the ground' details a developmental model where the evolution of the human is linked to bipedal movement and the changes in the mechanisms of footwear. Ingold's theses don't sit easily with the trans theories we develop later in the article.

Embodiment as Relational and Social

Embodiment is also attended to by walking researchers for its relational-social understanding of movement. One method that foregrounds the relational aspect of embodied walking is the 'go-along' interview. Walking interviews, Evans and Jones (2011: 856) argue, 'produce more spontaneous data as elements of the surrounding environment prompt discussion of place'. Evans and Jones differentiate between *mobile methods* and *sedentary methods in motion*, stating that although a person on a train is technically moving, the participant's 'movement is experienced as a visual flow through windows and the primary haptic sensation is merely that of background vibration' (2011: 850), whereas walking through a crowded street or cycling up a mountain would expose both interviewee and interviewer to more 'multi-sensory stimulation of the surrounding environment' (2011: 850). Walking interviews offer evidence about how people specifically relate to place as a process rather than a 'biographical account of their history "in place"' (2011: 856). Jones

and Evans suggest in walking interviews that ‘rather than place being bounded, inward-looking and resistant to change, place becomes a dynamic concept, interpenetrated by connections to other social and economic worlds’ (2012: 2320). As opposed to a point on a map that is circumscribed, place becomes porous and emergent.

Anderson similarly uses walking interviews to examine the social construction of knowledge and place with environmental activists. The walking interview, he notes, enables him to have a different access to his participants’ knowledge because walking helps overcome the typical power arrangements between researcher and participant. The go-along interview shapes a co-constitutive understanding of people and place. He writes: ‘Through talking whilst walking, by conversing and traversing pathways through an environment, we are able to create a world of knowledge (or pathways of knowledge through the world) by taking meanings and understandings into existence’ (Anderson, 2004: 260). Walking interviews allow a researcher to physically go to a specific place with a participant, in order to re-create that place, rather than recall place via memory. However, as we will discuss in the next section on sound, typically researchers do not attend to any recorded sounds that emerge from the walk, focusing most of the time on the discursive interview data.

O’Neill’s research on walking borders uses the form of walking tours and walking interviews to examine place in relation to asylum, migration and marginalization. She writes:

Taking a walk with someone is a powerful way of communicating about experiences; one can become ‘attuned’ to another, connect in a lived embodied way with the feelings and corporeality of another. Walking with another opens up a space for dialogue where embodied knowledge, experience and memories can be shared. (O’Neill, 2017: n.p.).

In the section on sound, we show how O’Neill extends the method of walking interviews to include all of the sounds recorded on a walk.

Embodiment as Emplaced, Haptic, and Affective

Scholars like Pink (2015 [2009]: 24) have used the term ‘emplacement’, which ‘attends to the question of experience by accounting for

the relationships between bodies, minds, materiality and sensoriality of the environment'. Here Pink is drawing on the work of David Howes (2005: 74), who notes that emplacement 'suggests the sensuous interrelationship of body-mind-environment'. Emplacement, according to Pink (2011: 354), locates the body 'within a wider ecology, allowing us to see it as an organism in relation to other organisms and its representations in relation to other representations'.

Macpherson (2010) has written extensively on walking and embodiment, and in particular the emplaced and material entanglement of body and landscape. Drawing on non-representational theories, she argues for an understanding of body and place as dynamic and active, where landscape is more-than mere background to walking research. Working with visually impaired participants, her research emphasizes how bodies and place are co-extensive to one another and co-produced through walking. Embodiment for Macpherson includes sensations, movements, and context. Body-landscape, she argues, is topological in that it is shaped through contours, textures, and feelings.

While not a walking scholar per se, Hayward's haptic theorization of *fingeryeyes* enlarges Howes' (2005) emplacement to include: 'texture, animation, galvanizing drives, such that emplacing is defined by the quality of invigoration and its transfiguration of future emergings, of senses and species that may yet emerge' (Hayward, 2010: 592). Hapticality – or touch – enfleshes us affectively within an animate world. Hayward's thesis is significant because it expands embodied and emplaced understandings of research methodologies from a trans movement framework. We will return to her work in our trans section.

Hapticality is often referred to as an embodied spatial perception that reflects space's tactile qualities, such as pressure, weight, temperature, and texture. The haptic is sometimes organized around kinaesthetic experience such as muscles, joints, and tendons which give a sense of weight, stretching, and angles as one walks. It can also be described as affective.³ This haptic knowledge, states Paterson (2009), shifts embodied knowing towards a more complex, enfolded engagement with space. Commenting on Wylie's research walking the South West Coast Path, Paterson argues that Wylie's thick haptic descriptions 'include a range of affects and somatic sensations such as pain, weariness, movement, vertigo, bodily bearing, assurance, jouissance, rhythm, rest, trudge-heavy joy, or exhaustive openness to the landscape that surrounds' (2009: 783).

Embodiment theories are significant for the ways that corporeality is foregrounded in walking research. The challenge that persists is how to emphasize how bodies are not only in relation to their immediate environment, but within larger more-than-human networks and events. Stephens et al. (2015) argue that embodiment theories need to account for more politically emplaced, spatially distributed, and assemblaged understandings of bodies and space. Tuck and McKenzie likewise note that particular accounts of embodiment are too often expanded on to make universal claims about the emplaced subject and, as such, neglect ‘the situated realities of historical and spatial sedimentations of power’ (2015: 36). Here, specifically, they refer to the ways that theories of emplacement have perpetuated ongoing settler colonial practices. Similarly, Alaimo contends that while embodiment articulates the body’s emplaced and immediate epistemological connection, it does little to account for ‘networks of risk, harm, culpability and responsibility’ within which humans find themselves entangled (2016: 3). For Haraway, ethics needs to be conceived as abstractions, which ‘are built in order to be able to break [them] down so that richer and more responsive invention, speculation, and proposing – worlding – can go on’ (2008: 93). Drawing on the work of Stengers, Haraway argues that such knotted relatings are risky; they are ‘an opening to what is not yet’ (2008: 93). If walking enmeshes human and non-human bodies with place, we need different accounts of embodiment that take responsibility for the intra-active manner by which space, time, bodies, events, and things – including labour – are interactively performed and produced. This, we contend, is where the work of trans becomes important. Before we shift to our discussion of trans theories, we introduce the ways that sound has been included in walking research.

Soundscapes, Sound Walks, and Sonic Art

Walking and sound have increasingly been combined in order to explore the sonic ecologies of place. Sound walks can take on many different forms and are known by many different names including soundscapes, sonic walks, and audio walks. One type of sound walk includes the method of walking in silence, while paying close attention to ambient sounds. This might be called a sound walk. Sound walks are a practice of active listening and present an embodied,

tactile, and auditory understanding of place. For example, on Lorimer and Wylie's (2010) *Loop* walk listening 'lend[s] intricate texture to experience' (2010: 7). In these instances of sound walks, recording devices are not used.

Other types of sound walks combine other methods with listening, such as recording devices, mapping practices, or reflective journaling to capture the experience and understanding of sound to a place. Iscen (2014), for example, uses walking and sound diaries (sounds recorded using a portable recording device) to examine how immigrants translate sounds in a new environment through the sensory repertoires they have brought with them from other places. This is discussed as 'soundscape competence', whereby a newcomer's experience of different sounds in a new urban context clashes with previous sound habits and ways of knowing (Isцен, 2014: 128). The ethnographic data are later mixed into an acoustic sound composition and played using loudspeakers in an installation-type set-up. In this example, the focus is on ambient sounds, not on interviews with participants.

Some researchers, like O'Neill (2017), have combined walking interviews with ambient sound walks in order to examine the ways in which borders and places are shaped. O'Neill (2017) discusses how the intersection of sounds from birds, the wind, and the ocean, when combined with walking interviews, reveals a more complex, embodied, and intimate understanding of a particular environment.

In addition to mobile listening and field recording practices, researchers and contemporary artists combine walking and sound to create what is commonly referred to as an audio or sonic walk. On an audio walk, participants listen to audio tracks, downloaded to their phones or other electronic devices, while being guided via the voice(s) on the audio track. Audio walks create a type of immersive environment and invoke a heightened sensory experience. Canadian artist Janet Cardiff has created dozens of audio and audio-video walks that emplace the participant in a particular environment. Schaub writes that Cardiff's audio walks invoke a heightened sensory experience, '[y]ou can smell what she is describing and you can taste the salt from the sea air' (2005: 132).

However, Saunders and Moles (2016) argue that not all sonic walks create embodied or emplaced experiences of place. Many audio walks that are produced for tourists reinscribe normative narratives of place and as such offer neat, accessible, and power-laden

stories. Creating community-produced audio walks in Cardiff, Saunders and Moles think alongside Ingold's meshwork and Deleuze's assemblage to suggest that some forms of audio walks can be 'ragged and messy happenings that occur in the interstices of, or relationality between, self and world' (2016: 69).

Further to the above noted sound work in walking, sound has been explored from an affective perspective. Here sensory studies and affect theories become entwined over a shared concern for non-conscious, non-cognitive, transcorporeal, and non-representational processes. Despite the fact that sensory studies and affect studies emerge from different conceptualizations of sensation, both, we maintain, prioritize corporeal and material practices. One example of an affective attention to sound is Gallagher's (2015) audio drifts. Gallagher, along with participants in his research, uses recording devices to document different ambient sounds experienced on a walk. Gallagher has even attached recording devices to his shoes. These various recordings are then mixed together into one audio track. The new composition combines the multiple recordings from the field work. This composition is then downloaded to a mobile device and new walkers/participants return to the location and listen to this new composition of sound as they walk. As one walks, one hears both ambient sounds and the pre-recorded sounds on the audio file. This is different from O'Neill's work discussed earlier, where the recorded sounds are only ambient sounds alongside the interviews.

Gallagher writes that the composition of sounds brings 'a variety of voices back into the site [which] will help to unsettle an all-too-easy narrative' (2015: 474). The sound track that is played on the subsequent walks doesn't *represent* place, but holds in tension the multiplicity of sounds and affects that are evoked through movement. Gallagher's sound work emphasizes an emplaced, haptic, and affective understanding of body-place. The sonic realm of these projects doesn't focus on how an individual participant hears or experiences an environment (representation), but rather exemplifies how sound becomes a kind of threshold (affect). If affect demands that sensation be understood as intensities, vibrations, and forces that are transcorporeal, as opposed to located in a particular body, then the affective dimensions of the compositional sound walk foreground a kind of pulsing intensity that becomes entangled with a walker's movements. As Manning (2012: 28) writes: 'Affect never locates itself once and

for all on an individual body. Affect courses across, grouping into tendential relation not individual feelings but preindividual tendencies.’ Affect signals a capacity for the body to be open to the next affective event, an opening to an elsewhere. Stewart (2007: 24) writes that affect isn’t about being positive or negative, but that it rests on an unpredictable edge where it can take on ‘the full charge of potential’s two twisted poles – up or down, one thing or another’. In the Gallagher example, because the sound files have been composed, they are no longer of a place or of an individual body – as in representationally descriptive or individually experienced – rather, they operate by force and intensity, activating the body’s sense registers which consequently shift the body’s movement and feelings of being enfolded-with place and others.

Writing about the sonic realm in media art, Ikoniadu argues that what is needed are ‘less anthropocentric’ modes of understanding the sonic event, where the affect of the event ‘does not belong to a body’ (Ikoniadu, 2014: 142). In Gallagher’s example, the compositional sound files that walkers listen to while walking in an environment mean that what one hears is not directly linked to the experience of the place. Rather, the multiplicity of sound produces what Blackman calls a threshold. The rhythmic mediation of the event occurs when vision, movement, and sound collide, and a ‘threshold experience is produced’ (Blackman, 2012: 23). This threshold is ‘at the interface or intersection of self and other, material and immaterial, human and non-human, inside and outside, such that processes which might be designated psychological (are) always trans-subjective, shared, collective, mediated, and always extending bodies beyond themselves’ (Blackman, 2012: 23). It is this porosity or mediation between bodies, movement, affect, and place that trans theories add to embodiment and walking. In the next section of the article, we turn our attention to trans theories, to extend our discussion of walking research.

Walking to the Laundromat: Affective Labour and Transmaterialities

Rebecca Conroy’s audio walk *Walking to the Laundromat*, commissioned as part of the larger *WalkingLab* research, performs transmateriality. In this section, we introduce trans theories cut together with direct quotes from the audio track (in italics) in order to transduce

and shape the writing *with* rather than *about* the sonic walk. In thinking trans, we invoke a trans writing practice that attempts to rupture a reliance on lived description of artistic and bodily work. A challenge of writing and thinking-with more-than-human methodologies, and their experimental, material practices, is how to attend to their fleeting, viral, multiple, and affective intensities without reducing walking and art projects to mere background. Additionally, the tendency is to ‘interpret’ contemporary art practices, privileging the researcher’s voice over the artist’s. Rather, we approach Conroy’s sonic walk as an instantiation of theory. The walk enacts and engenders the concepts that we attend to in this chapter. As such the theories are immanent to the project, not outside of it. The audio walk soundtrack can be accessed at www.walkinglab.org. We encourage the reader to listen to it while doing a load of laundry and taking a series of short walks between cycles. The section is organized through three subsections. The first introduces trans theories. From there, we take up the sonic walk in relation to gendered and affective labour. Following this we consider transspecies in relation to the viral in order to destabilize linear movement. This leads to a concluding section where we think about the regulation and control of sounds that continue to dehumanize some bodies over others. Transmaterial thinking-in-movement, we contend, is necessary for moving beyond the leisure typically afforded to walking practices towards an understanding of walking as trans, viral, and intensive.

Trans Theories

In using the prefix ‘trans’ we understand that trans and non-trans people have different stakes in the field of trans studies (Elliot, 2016). Namaste (2000) warns that queer and feminist theorists often use the term trans while simultaneously ignoring and consequently erasing the material and social conditions of transgendered people’s lives. Namaste argues that when transgendered and transsexual people are ‘reduced to merely figural: rhetorical tropes and discursive levers invoked to talk about social relations of gender, nation, or class’, there is a real possibility of rendering them invisible (2000: 52). Stryker et al. (2008) invoke the prefix ‘trans’, not as a move from one fixed location to another, but as assemblage. ‘Transing’, they write, ‘is a practice that takes place within, as well as across or

between, gendered spaces. It is a practice that assembles gender into contingent structures of association with other attributes of bodily being, and that allows for their reassembly' (2008: 13). Braidotti (2006) proposes the concept of transpositions as transversal movement. Transposition is not a weaving together but the play of difference within movement itself. Transpositions are non-linear and nomadic and, as such, accountable and committed to a particular ethics. Transpositions occur by 'regulated disassociation' of bonds that normally maintain cohesiveness (2006: 5). Puar articulates trans, following Deleuzian thought, as 'an ontological force that impels indeterminate movement rather than an identity that demands epistemological accountability' (2015: 59). As Hayward and Weinstein (2015) write, trans shifts the focus from a being or a thing, to intensities and movement. Hayward and Gossett (2017), like many of the scholars cited in this article, insist on a refusal of trans as a movement of 'this to a that'. Such an understanding of trans is about a linear understanding of transition. Rather, trans, they argue, 'repurposes, displaces, renames, replicates, and intensifies terms, adding yet more texture and the possibility of nearby-ness' (2017: 21). Trans refutes the nature–culture divide proliferating in non-human forms. More importantly, Puar (2015) contends, trans includes the interventions of critical race studies and postcoloniality in posthuman or more-than-human conceptualizations of difference, where difference is not between entities, but constituted through movement and affect: a trans touching materiality. If the human is predicated on anti-blackness, and slavery and settler colonization founded on animality and flesh, then trans, as an undoing of animacy categories, foregrounds Black and Indigenous Studies (Hayward and Gossett, 2017). Abraham Weil (2017) writes that trans and Blackness are always associated with animality. He argues that therefore it is not an issue of one or the other, but their entangled linkages, or transversality. Trans, for Weil, becomes a process of pollination and murmuration, or what we call the viral later in this article.

Affective Labour

The sonic walk *Walking to the Laundromat* was first performed in Sydney, Australia. Participants not only listened to the audio file, they walked, and washed and folded clothes in a coin-operated public

laundry, thereby generating the performance through their own bodily labour. The mechanics of washing and folding are composed on the audio file, so the actions become routine, conditioned by the habits of domestic labour, the abject gendered body, and capitalism. The sonic walk connects to other projects Conroy has initiated, including an artist-run laundromat, which functions as an artist studio space, a gallery or performance space, and a site that supports paid labour for artists.

Labour is addressed in the sonic walk through the intersections of reproductive labour, capitalism, and affective labour. Affective labour refers to the relationship between emotion and work (Vora, 2017). Affective labour is performed in the service industry and by maids, nannies, and sex workers. Affective labour produces commodities of care and comfort that are not physical objects but still circulate and are consumed. Affective labour, which is often performed by women and people of colour, is linked to exploitation. Hochschild's (2012) work on emotional labour is significant here. Women, she contends, in the service of being kind and generous, make emotional work into resources that are then made profitable by patriarchy and capitalism. One example of affective or emotional labour are the smiles that service workers must deploy, which add value for their employers. The smile becomes the emotional product that circulates (Flowers and Swan, 2015; Hochschild, 2012).

One of the ways that labour gets circumnavigated in walking research is the reliance on two specific tropes: the *flâneur* and the *dérive* (drift). The *flâneur* emerged as a distinctive figure in early 19th-century Paris. He was portrayed as a disinterested, leisurely observer (invariably male) of the urban scene, taking pleasure in losing himself in the crowd and becoming a spectator. Countless writers and walkers allude to the *flâneur* as a methodology informing their practices. The *flâneur* remains anonymous and detached from the city and thus is supposedly able to observe the world around him. The idealized *flâneur* is a problematic genealogy for walking methodologies. In the 19th century it would have been impossible for a woman to walk the streets in the manner of a *flâneur*. In fact, had a woman taken up the same wandering she would have been marked as licentious and immoral, and associated with the figure of the prostitute – a 'street walker'. The *flâneur* is both gendered and geographically marked.

Throughout the 20th century, aesthetic and critical approaches developed in tandem with the flâneur, including work by the Dadaists and Situationists in France, and later with the psychogeographers in Britain. One of the practices the Situationists developed was known as the *dérive*, a ‘drifting’ on foot through urban spaces that would in turn produce alternative patterns of exploration and protest against the alienation of life under modern capitalism.

Heddon and Turner contend that the history of walking research engenders ‘an implicitly masculinist ideology. This frequently frames and valorizes walking as individualist, heroic, epic and transgressive’ (2012: 224). They remark that the legacy of the flâneur, the Romantic poets, and naturalists was founded on the ideas of adventure, danger, and the new. The walker is presumed to be uninflected by gender and thus male, reinforcing the position of the autonomous male walker who leaves behind everything in order to tap into the wildness of place.

Walking to the Laundromat resists the tropes of the flâneur and the *dérive*, underscoring the labour, violence, and structures that enable some bodies to walk more freely than others. In fact, we insist that walking researchers need to stop returning to these tropes to understand their work, and instead consider transmaterial walking practices. It is imperative that walking research resist reifying the flâneur and the *dérive* as methodological choices par excellence. The flâneur and the *dérive* are not inherently radical activities. This isn’t to suggest that one can’t ever use or incorporate the *dérive* practice, but that researchers must start recognizing that walking is not always a leisure activity and that particular bodies already labour over walking as work. Some bodies literally walk on foot for miles carrying laundry, water, or other commodities. The often underpaid, dirty, and invisible labour of doing laundry and care work is emphasized both through Conroy’s audio track, but also in the labouring performance enacted by the participants who are asked to walk and do their laundry. On the audio track, we are instructed to think-with reproductive labouring bodies and the structures that produce poor immigrant bodies in the Global South that are exported to the Global North in a chain of care jobs (Vora, 2017).

Walking to the Laundromat interrogates the ways that capitalism and neoliberalism render some lives disposable, and critiques the violence and whiteness of colonial sovereignty. The mindfulness

soundtrack questions the ways in which mental illness and the internalization of labour impact productivity. Women's bodies and labour are foreground on the soundtrack and in the physical walk to and from the laundromat. Washing clothes, for instance, is outsourced labour that is shifted to racialized and poor bodies. These gendered labouring bodies are perceived as excess matter, and as such function as surplus value. The narrative is layered with ambient sounds like water rushing, street noises, and the ding of a cash register. These multiple layers create a haptic vibration that is enmeshed with the sounds of the laundromat and the city where the walk takes place. Like the previously discussed example by Gallagher (2015), and Blackman's (2012) work on the threshold, Conroy's sonic walk brings together sounds on the audio track with sounds of the physical location of the walk. These two sonic realms are discordant, which further unsettles the listener.

Hayward, writing about her methods of working with cup corals and the interplay between vision and touch, invokes the term 'fingeryeyes to articulate the in-between of encounter, a space of movement, of potential: this haptic optic defines the overlay of sensoriums and the inter- and intrachange of sensations' (2010: 581). Hapticality, for Hayward, becomes a methodology that proposes different practices of observation. It is the haptic that enabled her to conceive of trans movement as tentacular. In the original Sydney performance, walkers strolled along a busy commercial street in the heat, the roar of cars mixed with the toxic smells of rotting garbage, exhaust, and the pre-recorded sounds on the audio file. The voiceover on the audio file states:

prepare your laundry detergent and reflect on the nitrogen infused waters that will soon empty into the sea. Increasing the algae swarms and killing plankton.

The walkers' bodies become enmeshed in the smells of laundry detergent, exhaust fumes, and the slippery green of seaweed.

Edelman's (2014) research into 'walking while trans' underscores how brown trans feminine bodies are constructed and articulated through heteronationalistic understandings of a viable life. Brown trans feminine bodies are marked simultaneously as dangerous and in need of regulation: they are perceived as threats to social order

because they are perceived as ‘sex workers’, and should therefore be controlled, while at the same time rendered disposable and open to attacks, which are often under-reported or erased by the very forces that should protect them. Walking while trans cannot be explained through the figure of the flâneur. Bodily labour – whether it’s laundry, care work, or underpaid service work – ‘permits the healthy life of some populations to necessitate the death of others, marked as nature’s degenerate or unhealthy ones’ (Clough, 2008: 18). The performance of doing laundry while walking and listening to the audio track further emphasizes the hapticity of gendered labour and disposable bodies. Public laundromats, unlike private and often ‘sanitary’ home washing facilities, emphasize the toxicity of laundry detergents through the strong odours and the intensive hum of multiple machines. These affects stick to certain bodies – labouring bodies, immigrant bodies, gendered bodies – rendering them smelly, noisy, and toxic. Listening to Conroy’s sound track while doing laundry transcorporeally connects these affects with amniotic fluids, menstrual blood, and breast milk, bodily effluences that also stick to some bodies and demarcate them as less than human (Springgay and Freedman, 2010).

Transspecies and the Viral

Building on the concept of transcorporeality, we turn to Livingstone and Puar (2011: 3), who summon the term ‘interspecies’ to refer to ‘relationships between different forms of biosocial life and their political effects’, where the human can no longer be the dominant subject of analysis. Referring to the body of literature within animal studies that traces anthropocentrism, anthropomorphic projection, incorporation and invasion, transmutation, and exotic alterity, Livingstone and Puar (2011) write about the productive tensions between the growing body of scholarship often called posthumanism and what they refer to as inter or transspecies. They note that while posthumanism seeks to ‘destabilize the centrality of human bodies and their purported organic boundedness’, not all posthuman scholarship attends to a posthuman politics in that it ‘unwittingly reinscribe[s] the centrality of human subject formation and, thus, anthropomorphism’ (2011: 4). Consequently, the optimistic reading of posthumanism proliferates another version of humanism where

some bodies remain less than human. Inhumanism is exemplified in the sonic walk as the extra-sensory sounds and smells of the laundromat signal migratory crossings of domestic (illegal) labour. In opposition to posthumanism, which they contend is grounded in neoliberal Western European conceptualizations of subjectivity, interspecies ‘offers a broader geopolitical understanding of how the human/animal/plant triad is unstable and varies across time and space’ (Livingstone and Puar, 2011: 5). Interspecies also departs from privileged sites in posthuman work – the human and the animal – or what Haraway calls companion species, to include ““incompanionate” pests, microscopic viruses, and commodified plants – in other words, forms of life with which interspecies life may not be so obvious or comfortable’ (Livingstone and Puar, 2011: 4). Inter or transspecies, then, is important for the ways it disrupts what is considered animate or vital. The performance voice on the audio file says:

I believe in me...I am swimming in a sea of wealth...and money keeps flowing to me...I am open to receiving money now...I am brilliant...I am open...I am mentally willing to receive...I am following my intuition...

Transformation of salary to employee into human capital...facilitated by contemporary management techniques: individuation...subjectification and exploitation...

Capital Reaches Deep and Penetrates the Soul

In one instance, the audio file suggests an openness to neoliberalism, echoing the techniques used in self-help audio books and by meditation specialists. But other discordant sounds sweep in and the viral penetration undoes these tidy, human-centric narratives. ‘Being open’ becomes transspeciesially linked to exploitation and environmental degradation.

Colebrook (2015) introduces another trans concept – transitivity – which emphasizes the linkages and intra-actions between entities. Colebrook uses the term ‘transitive indifference’ to undo the notion of difference ‘from’. For example, when a human is said to be different from an animal, this continues to structure a binary or an axis of difference. Indifference, for Colebrook, stresses the

self-differentiating singularities of becoming. The audio track and performance of walking and washing is an instantiation of transitive indifference, if we consider the dirty laundry, washing machines, water, labouring bodies, dirt, and money not as distinct and different entities from one another, but that they create various flowing assemblages. These assemblages have vectors, speeds, rests, modes of expression and desiring tonalities (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987).

Barad (2015) forms another reading of trans as a process of self-touching animacy, regeneration, and re-creation. Drawing from studies in quantum field theory, Barad deconstructs the reductionist ontology of classical physics and describes instead how indeterminacy is entangled through all being. For Barad, matter operates agentially, ‘where trans is not a matter of changing in time, from this to that, but an undoing of “this” and “that,” an ongoing reconfiguring of spacetime mattering’ (2015: 411). Trans unravels a reliance on difference that situates something as different from, which emphasizes a fixity of one term over the other. Trans, for Barad, is about a ‘radical undoing of “self,” or individualism’ (2015: 411). Trans, as we’re building it in this article, emphasizes movement as flows, vectors, and affective tonalities. Trans shifts the focus from a being or a thing to intensities and movement.

Moulding the clothes into sappy bundles, participants listen to audio compositions that connect laundry detergent to fish, to finance capitalism and menstrual blood. As participants drop their coins into the coin-operated machines, the performer’s voice links biopower to forms of financialization that obscure material bodies and labour:

centuries of exploitation – recycled as a share economy that turns out to not care at all – dirty female bodies violated in capital’s time – biopolitical context is a ground to investigate the relationship between affect and value.

Say goodbye to your dirty deeds . . . Let the great unwashed be washed. Reflect on these outer layers – were these underpants taken off in a momentary lapse of reason? Did love enter your frontal cortex?

However, rather than a kind of phenomenological reflection happening in the laundromat, as participants on the sonic walk are asked to think about the larger networks of laundry, gendered labour, and

exploitation, a trans understanding emerges through the sonic realm. This is created by the narrative track, the sounds on the audio file that discordantly puncture the sound track, and the sounds and smell of the actual laundromat where the performance is taking place. This trans thinking is non-linear and non-metric.

Although she does not evoke the prefix trans, Blackman's (2012) work on mediation and affect underscores rhythm's transmutation, as gaps are created between relational connections and affective intensities. *Walking to the Laundromat* operates at this threshold. Enacting transmateriality the sonic walk asks questions about a more-than-human conceptualization of embodiment. Colebrook argues that the limit of a humanist conceptualization of embodiment is that it excludes that which is 'in a form of rampant and unbounded mutation' (2014: 136). For example, she notes that a virus cannot be defined as 'embodied' because it is not a living system: it exists only as a parasite. Viral life is a 'process of invasion, influx and (to a great extent) non-relation' (Colebrook, 2014: 136). Similar arguments are made by Chen (2012), who argues that the taxonomy of animacy continues to render some bodies as more alive than others. For Colebrook, an understanding of humanistic embodiment does not move us towards an ethics of the future. She speculates on how to re-think embodiment in such a way as to consider inorganic potentialities, a kind of trans viral politics where there's no self-defining body, only mutant encounters.

Walking to the Laundromat enacts a virality of mutation through intensities of affect – sounds, vibrations, and repeated rhythms – and by thinking transmaterially across different bodies and spaces. *The audio walk* demonstrates how humanist critiques of capitalism are inadequate to the task of explaining the history of exploitation or the consequences of neoliberalism. As Puar (2013: 41) notes, virality underscores the 'multiplication and proliferation of difference, of making difference and proliferating creative differentiation: becoming otherwise of difference'.

Puar (2013) notes that virality as 'intensified speed', most notably that of the internet, 'also refers to indiscriminant exchanges, often linked with notions of bodily contamination, uncontainability, unwelcome transgression of border and boundaries while pointing more positively to the porosity, indeed the conviviality, of what has been treated as opposed' (2013: 42). The audio track emphasizes this

bodily contamination – bodies leak, money is laundered, water bodies are toxic, each penetrating the other. The voice on the audio track hints at the impossibility of removing these contaminations. They are permanent stains. The voiceover says emphatically:

Out, dammed spot!

Puar uses the idea of the viral to untether sexuality from identity and hetero reproduction, and instead to think about sexuality ‘as assemblages of sensations, affects and forces’ (2013: 24). Hayward’s use of the term ‘tranimal’ similarly reconfigures heteronormative sexuality and reproduction. For Hayward, tranimal perverts embodiment that relies on bounded and distinct entities to consider reproduction as ‘excess, profusion, surplus’ (2010: 590). Trans, for Hayward, like many of the scholars we include in this article, is about a kind of viral movement. This isn’t a movement from one point to another. Rather, it replicates as difference. Regarding the viral, Puar and Clough write: ‘In its replications, the virus does not remain the same, nor does that which it confronts and transits through . . . it is replication without reproduction, without fidelity, without durability’ (2012: 14). In the viral, repetition is affective and affecting modulation. It is speculative, activating potentiality and futurity through mutant replication. While viruses operate parasitically and they penetrate a host, they are not adjacent or simply touching a host, but alter and stretch the host. The voice and sounds on the audio track are viral, linking together neoliberalism, environmental degradation, rampant individualism, and reproduction for profit:

Don’t think about all the well-known politicians, thugs, rapists, international businessmen getting away with the money laundering – it’s just business as usual. Don’t think about the Great Barrier Reef, hospitals under austerity measures.

Breathe. Gratitude.

I’m known for my positive energy and abundant lifestyle . . . money flows freely and abundantly into my life . . . I love having a prosperous career . . . I’m surrounded by people who are eager to contribute to my abundance . . .

Women’s labouring bodies are made to disappear. Birthing labour – giving birth to bodies that are transformed into human capital.

*Financialization. Promise of salvation lies in the return in investment
– get out more than what we put in!*

In shifting from embodied theories that perpetuate a coherent sense of subjectivity, trans theories insist on walking as ethical and political. Transversing from trans as a movement from one place to another, towards trans as a multiple morphology deprioritizes trans as a product of culture. Thinking alongside transpeciation, Hird (2006) argues that trans interrogates the idea that there is ever a natural body – the one we are born with – which must also parallel particular normative behaviours and desires. Trans, according to Nurka, ‘radically reinvigorates posthumanism as a decentering exercise, in which the human vis-a-vis nature is repositioned in terms of fluid relationality’ (Nurka, 2015: 220; see also Hird, 2006).

Feminists have long argued that bodies’ capacities to think and act are affected by the environments in which they move, or are prevented from moving. Furthermore, biocapital insists that bodies are never enough – healthy enough, wealthy enough, relaxed enough – and thus are ‘always in a debilitated state in relation to what one’s bodily capacity is imagined to be’ (Puar, 2009: 167). *Walking to the Laundromat* instantiates this. Participants hear and then enact similar actions:

Women’s bodies the most flexible, bendable, prone.

Mould clothes into shape of a small human put it in dryer (furnace).

As Puar states, while poor health prevents some bodies from having the capacity to labour, other bodies are offered or made available for injury precisely because they are expendable in order to ‘sustain capitalist narratives of progress’ (2009: 168). Cycling back through our load of laundry, the bodies of immigrant labour that operate coin laundromats or work as domestic workers in private homes, often for long hours and for inadequate pay, are disposable labour because they are never fully human. The voiceover asks the participants to ‘separate and sort’, to become part of the ‘devastating tangle of clothing’. The invisible labourers – in their shops, laundromats, and restaurants – press on our soapy, soggy, pile of clothes. If washing your clothes is part of a particular notion of what it means to have a viable life, of maintaining a particular understanding of what it

means to be human, Conroy's transmaterial sound walk ruptures the commonplace understandings we have with the sounds and smells of clean laundry. The discordant sounds on the audio file, the loud drone of the industrial washing machines, the toxic smells of too much detergent, weighed upon the walkers an intensity that was not easily dismissed.

Trans theories are invested in thinking about assemblages and viral replication rather than heteronormative future-oriented reproduction. Trans insists that the transitive state is not that some bodies matter while others continue to perish. Rather, 'what is reproduced is not the human subject, identity, or body, but affective tendencies, ecologies of sensation, and different ontologies that create new epistemologies of affect' (Puar, 2013: 43). Trans emphasizes movement and vectors.

Clean Garments: Create a Cloth Uterus

Embodiment has become synonymous with walking research. Researchers attend to the corporeal and lived dimensions by which a walker moves through space, considering the surfaces and textures of the ground as part of the production of space. Qualitative researchers have found the link between walking and ethnographic work important because walking interviews and other group walking practices shape a relational understanding of place. Moreover, hapticality suggests an emplaced and immersed conceptualization of the moving body. Sound also features widely in walking scholarship, from listening practices, to soundscapes, and sonic interventions. Attending to and recording ambient sounds enables researchers and participants to think-with the topology of place beyond visual and tactile dimensions of walking. Composing audio tracks that assemble different audio files that can then be replayed on subsequent walks enables walkers to shift from a representation of place to an intensive, threshold experience of the body in a sonic environment. It is here that sonic walks like *Walking to the Laundromat* intervene into the landscape of walking research.

In our review of the literature on walking and sound, researchers tend to privilege sounds sensed in the 'natural' landscape – such as on hiking trails or in the countryside – or on the streets in cities. Less often analysed are the sounds of labour and the relationship between walking and work. This is in part because of the reliance on the

flâneur as a way of understanding walking that is disconnected from labour. The kinds of sounds one hears in public laundromats in larger, densely packed, cities are quite different from the soundscapes in parks or other nature reserves. Further, the kinds of sounds that are heard in gentrified urban spaces, such as hotel lobbies and trendy clothing stores, are markedly different from the ones that feature prominently in Conroy's sonic walk. For example, corporations often market particular sound tracks that are played over and over again as part of their branding. These sounds convey a sense of orderliness and conviviality. An example could be the sound track played in the lobby of the W Hotels worldwide. In addition to a branded scent that greets visitors the minute they step into the hotel, particular sounds (a compilation of easy music) are used to suggest cleanliness, uniformity, and regulation. These are directly linked to neoliberalism and White supremacy, where the sounds, smells, and leakages of inhuman bodies are made to disappear (Springgay, 2011). The laundromat, whether in the basement of a large hotel, or a public facility on a street corner, contradicts these sterilized sounds.

Walking to the Laundromat as a trans thinking-in-movement emphasizes the underpaid, repetitive, and bodily labour of service work. The project also intervenes into the comfortable ways that walking is described as relational and convivial, recognizing that not all bodies are able to move freely. Walking while trans, Edelman (2014) contends, is a reminder of the ways that walking regulates, violates, and criminalizes trans feminine bodies of colour. Service work, in Edelman's writing, extends the labouring body from laundromats, to shops, to factories, and to sex work.

In bringing trans theories to bear on walking research we open up and reconfigure different corporeal imaginaries, both human and non-human, that are radically immanent and intensive: as an assemblage of forces and flows that open bodies to helices and transconnections. Trans activates a thinking-in-movement. By conceptualizing walking methodologies as trans, we shift from thinking of movement as transition (from one place to another) or as transgression (that somehow walking is an alternative and thereby empowering methodology) towards trans as transcorporeal, transitive, transspecies, and as viral in order to activate the ethico-political indifferentiation of movement. Trans activates new

ways to talk about, write about, and do walking methodologies that take account of viral, mutant replication, and recognize the intra-active becomings of which we are a part.

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Notes

1. See: www.walkinglab.org
2. Chen (2012) engages with trans theories in order to undo the animacy hierarchy. Drawing on the work of Aristotle, Chen demonstrates how inhuman others are excluded from the taxonomies of vitality. According to Aristotle, things that eat, reproduce, and grow can possess a soul. Humans and then animals and then vegetables possess souls and are therefore 'alive', while entities like stone do not, and are therefore excluded from the hierarchical chain (Springgay and Truman, 2016). Along with not being alive, rocks are also not considered dead because to be dead assumes the capacity for life. As inert, rocks are insensate, which, according to Chen (2012: 4), is an 'ontological dismissal' of their vitality. Further, what transspecies emphasizes is that the human and non-human entanglements stretch beyond human and animal, or human and other entities already considered forms of 'life' to include animacy of land, water, rocks, and inhuman others that have traditionally be denied the category of life and the human. Steinbock et al. (2017: 1) in their editorial introduction on *Transimacies*, write that trans 'enmeshes . . . transgender, animal, animacy, intimacy'. The frictional intimacies of trans undo animacy hierarchies.
3. Hapticality has been theorized across a range of disciplines, including visual culture and geography. For instance, Marks (2000) writes about haptic visuality to emphasize the ways that intercultural cinema engages a viewer's sense of touch, smell, and taste. Here she draws on the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 492) who write "'Haptic" is a better word than "tactile" since it does not establish an opposition between two sense organs but rather invites the assumption that the eye itself may fulfill this nonoptical function.' The haptic emphasizes the visceral register of sense events. Affect studies similarly prioritizes corporeal, pre-linguistic, and non-representational practices, asking questions about what affect *does*. Focusing on pre-, post-, and trans-individual bodily forces, and the capacities of bodies to act or be acted upon by other bodies, the 'affective turn' signalled a means to theorize the social

beyond the discursive (Seigworth and Gregg, 2010). Hapticality and affect, we recognize, are not synonymous. This article lacks the space to go into detail of the differences between sensory inquiry, hapticality, and affect theory. For a further discussion of these, as they appear in walking research, see Springgay and Truman (forthcoming).

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