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**READING SENSATION IN JOHN BURNSIDE'S
POETRY**

MA thesis

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I declare that this thesis is my own original work. Where texts by other authors, their fundamental ideas, sources and data has been used, this has been properly acknowledged and referenced in accordance with departmental requirements.

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INTRODUCTION

‘Listen, without worrying too quickly about whether you understand or not. Give yourself over to a poem the way you give yourself over to your own night dreaming, or to a beloved’s tales of the day. And then, try to listen first to a poem the way you might listen to a piece of music – the meaning of music isn’t some note by note analysis or paraphrase, it’s to find yourself moved’ (Fallon).

This is the response of the poet Jane Hirshfield when she was asked what is the most important thing to do when reading a poem. What makes a poem a poem and how to understand one has been debated since Aristotelian times. To ask what kind of elements account for meaning in a poem is a standard point of departure and procedure in literary theory. However, often before understanding or attempting to understand a poem, the reader senses its impact, finds him or herself affected by it. On the basis of a reading of the poetry of the contemporary Scottish author John Burnside, the aim of the current thesis is to illuminate what happens in the encounter between the reader and the poem and to establish whether this sphere of sensation is noteworthy only in conjunction with meaning-based analysis or if it can be regarded as a self-sufficient approach.

John Burnside was born in 1955 in Dunfermline, Fife. His first published collection of poetry, *The Hoop* (1988), won a Scottish Arts Council Book Award. Since then he has published seven novels, three memoirs, three collections of short stories, and fourteen collections of poetry. The material for the current research comprises the collections *The Light Trap* (2002), *The Good Neighbour* (2005), and *Black Cat Bone* (2011). By the time the collection *The Light Trap* was published, it had already been established that the same characteristic sensation had evolved as a single movement in Burnside’s poetry; hence the choice of this collection along with two others from the following ten-year period of Burnside’s creative output.

John Burnside’s poetry is often characterised as evoking a sense of the numinous, playing in the gap between ‘self’ and ‘other’ by obscuring the boundaries between these

oppositions through the use of compelling images. Yet, attempts to pinpoint what his poems are about uncover nothing that is obviously otherworldly. Burnside writes about things that are known to all of us: love, pain, childhood, home and, above all, nature. He employs spatial and temporal thresholds. The physical borders may coincide with personal and sensual ones. The common in-between spaces represented in his work are suburbs, seashores, windows, doors and hedges. What adds mysteriousness is the temporal liminality, twilight and dawn, ‘the small hours.’ Furthermore, the poetic *I* often muses about liminal creatures. While an animal stealing through the hedge is, if not common, then certainly not otherworldly, the same cannot be said of the shapeshifters, half-men, half-animals. More unexpected are the casual encounters with the ‘true self’ of the poetic *I* ‘in the fit between sleep and wakefulness,’ or the flight of a bird or the sound of the rain that act as portals to an other world. Merely stating that such phenomena are present in the poems and attributing creative power and imaginativeness to them does not facilitate an understanding of the effect that they have on the reader. How, then, could this inexpressible sense be approached? In order to attempt an answer to that question, the current paper turns to affect theory, more precisely, to sensation as viewed by the French philosopher, Gilles Deleuze.

Burnside’s poetry has previously mostly been analyzed from an ecocritical perspective, identifying poetic responses to landscape and dwelling (Louisa Gairn, Ben Smith, David Brothwick, Tom Bristow, etc.). The sensations evoked by his poetry seem to inspire constant debate in most of the current research, but what unites all so far has been the application of either representational or phenomenological methods. The insufficiency of meaning-centred and normative approaches in describing the attempt to interconnect consciousness and the world, the presence of which in Burnside’s poetry is generally agreed upon, has also been implied (e.g. Bristow 55). Although the aim of the current work is to propose if not an alternative, then a method complementary to the previous approaches, it also claims that the meaning- and representation-centred approaches are not sufficient. This is what Deleuze’s theory allows us to do: to establish how and what sensation is produced in and effected by the poems, as well as to explicate what poetry does.

The thesis is divided into two main chapters. The first part of chapter one provides a brief introduction to affect theory in general and is informed by the views of the Estonian literary scholar Epp Annus. Annus suggests that the currently meaning- and metaphor-centred social and cultural studies would benefit from making space for and paying more attention to the affective spheres, as they can usefully broaden the scope of research and support or enhance the resulting normative/meaning-based data.

A close examination of how affect is presented in the theory of literature of Gilles Deleuze, and how it is informed by his philosophy follows in part 1.2 where, first, the impersonal nature of sensation is established, then parts 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 show how Deleuze's immanent metaphysics, inspired by the philosophy of Baruch Spinoza, renders such impersonality possible. Part 1.2.3 defines the terms 'affect' and 'percept,' the intensities that form a block of sensation – the essential core of a work of literature.

The second chapter proposes a reading of John Burnside's poetry from the three named collections, presenting possible ways of extracting affective intensities from his poetry, and explicating how the different forces identified act. Parts 2.1 and 2.2 explore affect and percept within the dimensions of formal and imaginative landscape, a classification proposed by John Clay, a literary scholar who has employed Deleuze's complex theory of literature extensively in his readings of British innovative poetry. The sensations evoked by the formal landscape are viewed according to Deleuze's theory of language and the imaginative landscape according to Deleuze's own readings of a variety of authors. While both approaches are concomitant with Deleuze's immanent metaphysics, the chapter also resorts to the ideas of other radical empiricist authors such as William James and Henri Bergson.

In part 2.3 sensations are discussed in terms of their capacities to affect in either deterritorializing or reterritorializing ways. More specifically, the discussion centres on sensations that act as a framework that keeps a work of literature grounded. Finally, within that context, an attempt is made to unite the reading of sensation and the representational approach, by establishing a connection between the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and ecocriticism through the underlying theories of the Romantic movement and Spinoza.

1. GILLES DELEUZE'S PHILOSOPHY OF SENSATION AND HIS APPROACH TO SENSATION IN LITERATURE

1.1 Affect Theory

Affects have been explained as the intensities that arise from the in-between of bodily encounters, when not necessarily regarding a body purely as a material entity delimited by the skin, but also non-human, part-body, and otherwise. They are seen as forces and resonances that move around bodies, as if an excess of the encountered; as forces, the effect of which may not be conscious, yet also not unconscious: 'visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing' (Gregg and Seigworth 1). These affective forces, regardless of their intensity, may urge or trigger us into movement or suspend us motionless through reciprocal effect; thus, they also, have an impact on our relations with the world (Gregg and Seigworth 2). Gregg and Seigworth seem to believe that Baruch Spinoza's idea of the indeterminateness of the capacities of the body¹ is what best explains and drives research in the field of affect theory (2).

The general interest in affect theory has also been seen as a move towards simplicity; as a reaction to the complex reasonings of poststructuralist thought after the linguistic turn, the impact of which exceeded even the subsequent minor (e.g. spatial, ethical) turns. Nevertheless, the ethical turn and the emergence of cultural studies paved the way for affect theory, particularly by drawing attention to the local and the quotidian, alongside the global and the historical (Annus, 'Afektiivne pööre' 173). The new millennium has seen the expansion of this rather vague and ambiguous theory to a considerable number of spheres ranging from philosophy to cybernetics. It is not, however, so much a surprising explosion of a new mode of thinking as the rise of one that has always been present in the 'preceding [logocentric] paradigm' (Annus, 'Afekt, kunst,' 66).

¹ Baruch Spinoza's often cited idea from *Ethics* : 'No one has yet determined what the body can do' (qtd. in Gregg and Seigworth 2).

Although affect theory has in some cases been seen as a complete dismissal of the poststructuralist epistemology and an aspiration towards an autonomous post-deconstructivist ontology that would provide an alternative to the reflective or political judgment of the dominant social norms, (e.g. Hemmings 557), it has been noted by many researchers in the humanities that the aim of affect studies is not to gain a dominant position in place of the currently still predominant language and discourse centred mode of thinking.² Epp Annus suggests that the system of fixed meanings is, perhaps, sufficient for describing the social and cultural processes in modern society, yet it leaves no room for the role that bodily, or extra-discursive, experiences play ('Afekt, kunst,' 67). In poetry, the sensation effected by meter, the variation in stanza combined with aural qualities, the effect of rhyme or phonetic rhetoric devices and their impact on the content of the poem have certainly been considered relevant probably longer than in any other area of research. The analysis of the content of the poem, however, to a large extent corresponds to what has been said by Annus.

Amongst the most influential theorists in the affect theory in cultural studies are Brian Massumi, Sarah Ahmed, Lauren Berlant and Nigel Thrift whose research interests range from fear, trauma, happiness, and the quotidian aesthetics to capitalist consumerism, politics and economy. Kathleen Stewart's work is noteworthy for its blurring of the line between the scientific and the poetic, creating a new, affective methodology. In Estonia, affect theory has been introduced by Epp Annus in cultural studies and the poetics of the quotidian.

The influence of Gilles Deleuze's³ theory in research on affect has been considerable. What is mostly elaborated on is either his notion of sensation in general or affect alone. Yet his rather more complex approach to sensation caught in and evoked by the work of art has been extensively applied in Jon Clay's work on innovative poetry and will also provide the ground for this paper. How the notion of affect informs Deleuze's philosophy, and how it

² According to Epp Annus ('Afekt, kunst,' 66-7), although the aim of deconstruction was to diffuse the subject and fixed meanings, it still retained the view that society is a 'discursive formation and that reality can be regarded as a complex system of representation.'

³ Although the present thesis will draw on books co-written with other authors, due to the prevalent use of material of his authorship alone, the theory can be regarded as Deleuzian.

can be applied to the analysis of literature, specifically poetry, will be the focus of this chapter.

1.2 Literature as a Block of Sensations

Deleuze regards literature as one of the arts, and the writer primarily as an artist ‘who invents unknown or unrecognized affects and brings them to light as the becoming of his characters’ (*WP*⁴ 174). The following subchapter discusses the role of sensation within a work of literature, and also art in general, as seen by Deleuze.

A work of art, according to Deleuze, is a ‘block of sensations’ – a composition of percepts and affects. He sees works of art as autonomous beings in themselves which, by means of the material and method used by the artist, extract the percept from perceptions of ‘objects and the states of a perceiving subject’ (*WP* 167) and the affect from affections ‘as the transition from one state to another’ (*WP* 167). An artist, thus, sculpts, composes and writes sensations and with sensations (*WP* 164).

The material of a literary work, according to Deleuze, is words and syntax (*WP* 171, 192), just as the material of a painting is the canvas, the paints, even the way pigments as the physical material are mixed; the material of Western music is its twelve tones, the instruments that the music is played on, scales, and pitch (*WP* 192). Although he believes technique to be relevant to the final work of art, it is not the reason that works of art are produced. Deleuze claims that in literature also ‘[a]esthetic figures, and the style that creates them, have nothing to do with rhetoric. They are sensations: percepts and affects, landscapes and faces, visions and becomings’ (*WP* 177).

To explain how the artist can first render an instant in life durable and make it autonomous, Deleuze uses Virginia Woolf’s idea of ‘(s)aturat(ing) every atom,’ ‘eliminat(ing) all waste,

⁴ To save space in the parenthetical references, the following abbreviations are employed for Deleuze’s works: *TP* (*A Thousand Plateaus*), *WP* (*What is Philosophy?*), and *LS* (*The Logic of Sense*).

deadness, superfluity,' (qtd. in *WP* 172) from our lived perceptions and keeping only sensation. A finished work of art, as a block of sensations, however, is autonomous in the sense that it does not contain perceptions, affections and sentiment in the form of attitudes, opinions or other subjective feelings, neither of those who created it nor of those who experience it, its audience. It is precisely this lack of subjectivity that gives the work of art the ability to stand on its own (Colombat 216).

Yet there is still a different manner of assembling affects and percepts in every respective author's work that modifies the effect of the sensations on the audience when encountering familiar or unfamiliar forms. For instance, in the analysis of Francis Bacon's work, Deleuze sees a series of three paintings which 'exudes' rhythms that can be extracted from the way the figures on the paintings, which are 'neither figurative nor beyond figuration but accumulations and coagulations of sensation' (Conely 248), change. Regarding Kafka's writings, Deleuze agrees with Walter Benjamin's proposal that Kafka's work be taken literally, instead of trying to interpret it as a representation of something other than itself. It is the mad vector, becoming an animal (not turning into an animal physically but in sensation) and being minor that are characteristic to his work. In Deleuzian terms such an approach could be termed practicing a 'writing machine' as an 'experimental machine, a machine for effects, as in physics' (Cochran xi) which would not reduce the assemblages of effects, of 'heterogeneous orders of signs' neither to a binary system, nor to a 'dominant or transcendental signifier' (Cochran xi). Machines, in the works of Deleuze cowritten with Guattari, are non-technological assemblages that, according to their area of operation or production and aim, are variously named, respectively, as war machines, desiring machines, abstract machines, etc. A writer, thus, in the state of an impersonal, shifted consciousness, is a writing machine.

The claim that the work of art is composed with/of sensations which do not consist of the author's attitudes or opinions resonates with Roland Barthes' and the post-structuralist/deconstructionist idea of the death of the author, according to which an author is socially and historically constituted, does not exist prior to or outside of language and becomes a writer in the process of writing. His intentions and biographical data are not regarded as important when interpreting his writing. Deleuze's intention, however, surpasses this, for

he believes that to extract the affects and percepts from which the author composes the work of art, the author himself becomes a shadow of his subjectivity, he becomes what he creates (*WP* 171). The impersonal and extra-subjective character of the sensations that, for instance, a poem is composed of, and the ambiguous state of the writer raise the question of what happens between the reader and a work of art.

This is the very question addressed by Jon Clay, who adopts Douglas Oliver's⁵ concept of regarding a poem or a fictional narrative as a performance. A performance in this case is understood as something being written or read on one occasion, whether silently or audibly: 'this is specifically not simply reading aloud or performance for an audience, but rather the actual practice of reading – usually silently – as opposed to an abstract analysis of the poem in terms of structure or linguistic rules.' (qtd. in Clay 51) Clay therefore proposes that each reading be thought of as 'the analysis of an individual, experimental, performance' which 'implies a unique event, differentiating and individuating on each occasion' (52). This idea is in accord with Deleuzian theory, as Clay notes, for performance 'implies an active poetry' (52), a poetry that 'does' something.

John Burnside, relying on the empiricist ideas of the Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711 - 1776), believes that in the case of lyric poetry there is an implied observer who becomes indistinguishable from the observed. 'The fact that we are bundles of sensations', Burnside maintains, allows the reader, through transcending time, to find a space 'that can be found anywhere', that he can call home ('Poetry'). The ideas of both Oliver and Burnside seem, on a certain level of in-betweenness to coincide with Deleuze's view of the path of a subject becoming an Other; the zone of indiscernibility, of imperceptibility (*WP* 32). In order to explicate how his theory of art originates from or is based on his radical empiricist philosophy, a short introduction to Deleuze's immanent metaphysics follows, along with an elaboration of how the understanding of a work of art, including a work of literature, could fit into that model.

⁵ Douglas Dunlop Oliver (1937-2000) was a poet and novelist, who belonged to the Cambridge poets, a group which today is acknowledged as an important epicentre of innovative poetry in the UK.

1.2.1 The Immanent Metaphysics of Gilles Deleuze

Gilles Deleuze is one of the most influential postmodern French philosophers of the second half of the twentieth century, though his ideas are substantially different from the main currents of 20th century continental thought. As an empiricist and a vitalist, he considered himself to be a ‘pure metaphysician,’ ranked alongside such thinkers as Nietzsche and Whitehead (Villani vii). Deleuze’s concepts are employed and his philosophy cited by researchers in a wide range of fields – film studies, architecture, anthropology, urban studies, gender studies – yet as Alain Beaulieu emphasises: ‘[o]ne cannot appreciate Deleuze without navigating this metaphysical landscape’ (5). His metaphysics, however, has not been handled much in secondary literature, which, according to Beaulieu, is due to the scarcity of his own comments on the subject (5).

The word ‘metaphysics’ was first used as the title of a collection of books by Aristotle, the subject matter of which – the science of first causes/principles or unchanging things – set the tone for metaphysics for centuries after. The ‘beyond’ was not implied in Aristotle’s ‘First Principles,’ the term ‘metaphysics’ indicating simply that it came after physics. Although metaphysics evolved from then on, the question of what metaphysics is was not reconsidered until the ‘radical critique’ undertaken by the philosophers of the 20th century. (Beaulieu 1). The goal of the ‘contemporary landscape’ of philosophy then was to ‘reverse, destroy, go beyond or deconstruct Western metaphysics’ (Beaulieu 3). Arnaud Villani, argues that given the state of metaphysics, a justification of Deleuze’s immanent metaphysics might have been expected (vii). Yet, it is the transcendent metaphysics – or as Deleuze says, the kind that ‘believes itself to be or pretends to be transcendent’ (Deleuze qtd. in Villani vii) – that requires justification instead (vii). Unlike transcendent metaphysics, immanent metaphysics ‘de-hierarchizes’ the worlds of here and beyond: there is no other world beyond this world which is external to it or ontologically superior (Beaulieu 5). Immanent metaphysics is ‘linked to the immanence of a world that continues to exist despite the forces that are pulling it in opposite directions and tending to make it explode’ (Beaulieu 5).

In *What is Philosophy?* (1991), Deleuze claims that it is Sartre who ‘restores the rights of immanence’ by ‘presuppos[ing] of an impersonal transcendental field’ (47) and who no longer thinks of ‘immanence as immanent to a transcendent’, but ‘transcendence within the immanent, and it is from immanence that a breach is expected’ (47). There are two interconnected sides of one reality in Deleuze’s philosophy that Beaulieu distinguishes: the ‘sensible states-of-affairs’ and impersonal forces, the latter being a part of inorganic life that affects the former (Beaulieu 5). The concept of immanence was adapted by Deleuze from the work of Spinoza, namely the fifth volume of *Ethics* (*WP* 48):

When immanence is no longer immanent to something other than itself it is possible to speak of a plane of immanence. Such a plane is, perhaps, a radical empiricism: it does not present a flux of the lived that is immanent to a subject and individualized in that which belongs to a self. It presents only events, that is, possible worlds as concepts, and other people as expressions of possible worlds or conceptual personae. The event does not relate the lived to a transcendent subject = Self but, on the contrary, is related to the immanent survey of a field without subject; the Other Person does not restore transcendence to an other self but returns every other self to the immanence of the field surveyed. Empiricism knows only events and other people and is therefore a great creator of concepts. Its force begins from the moment it defines the subject: a *habitus*, a habit, nothing but a habit in a field of immanence, the habit of saying I. (*WP* 47-8)

Deleuze’s philosophical work is built upon the repetition of the notion of immanence from different perspectives, in an attempt to show how aspects of life are based on the same principles. It is therefore difficult to establish ‘the conceptual architecture’ (Smith, Protevi) of his philosophy. This may be so, first, because of his inconsistent terminology, and second, because of the risk of removing ‘the performative effect of reading the original’ (Smith, Protevi). However, this might be the very reason why Deleuze’s work has proved applicable in a variety of fields. The following subchapter is an attempt to outline Deleuze’s ideas of the plane of immanence.

1.2.2 The Plane of Immanence

In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze explores what the plane of immanence is from different perspectives. The translator, Brian Massumi, considers it necessary to explain that the French word *plan* designates both a “plane” in the geometrical sense and a “plan”; whilst it is primarily used in the first sense, the second also seems to be present in the discussion of the plane of organization (xvi-xvii). Deleuze elaborates upon a Spinozist idea concerning a certain plane of consistency or composition which is composed of infinitely small parts that have no form or function. Their only distinctive quality is movement and rest, slowness and speed. The relation of the movement of these particles and their relation to whatever they enter is what determines and belongs to an Individual – an assemblage, who/which in turn might be part of another, perhaps a more complex relation, etc. They are ‘ultimate parts of actual infinity’ and are abstract, yet ‘perfectly real’ (TP 254).

Deleuze sees the plane of immanence as ‘a section of chaos’ which ‘acts like a sieve’. Chaos is characterized by the ‘infinite speed’ of the shaping and vanishing of determinations which fail to establish connections between them, because of their non-simultaneous occurrence and difference in kind (‘one appears as disappearance when the other disappears as outline’). Chaos ‘undoes every consistency in the infinite’ and ‘instituting’ the plane of immanence, its ‘variable curves’ are what help ‘retain the infinite movements that turn back on themselves in incessant exchange, but which also continually free other movements which are retained.’ In Deleuze’s view, this kind of consistency – ‘without losing the infinite into which thought plunges’ – is needed by philosophy and art, whereas science renounces the ‘infinite movements and speeds’, and ‘seeks to provide chaos with reference points.’ Philosophy and art, however, ‘mark out the intensive ordinates of these infinite movements [...] at infinite speed, variable contours inscribed on the plane.’ (WP 42)

Deleuze also speaks of another plane – the plane of organization. This is the plane of forms or developments of forms, subjects or the formation of subjects, of structure and genesis. It is hidden, existing in the supplementary dimension and it is not a given: ‘(i)t is always

inferred.’ Even if it is said to be immanent, it is so only by absence, analogically (metaphorically, metonymically). For instance, the tree is given in the seed, but as a function of a plan(e) that is not given’ (*TP* 266). One continually moves from the plane of consistency or composition to the plane of organization and back ‘by unnoticeable degrees and without being aware of it, or one becomes aware of it only afterwards. Because one continually reconstitutes one plane atop another, or extricates one from the other’ (*TP* 269). It can, therefore, be inferred that there is two-way movement between the planes, and that this movement is indiscernible.

The forms and subjects, organs and functions on the plane of organization are termed ‘strata’ or relations between ‘strata.’ The plane of consistency or immanence, then, ‘implies a destratification of all of Nature, by even the most artificial of means. The plane of consistency is the body without organs. Pure relations of speed and slowness between particles imply movements of deterritorialization, just as pure affects imply an enterprise of desubjectification’ (*TP* 270). In this statement, Deleuze has recourse to yet another Spinozist idea of ‘a degree of power’ that corresponds to every relation of movement and rest, speed and slowness which group together an infinity of parts – an individual. These corresponding degrees of power, or intensities, affect the individual, ‘augmenting or diminishing its power to act’ regardless of whether the intensities come from ‘external parts or from the individual’s own parts.’ The body has a latitude and a longitude where the former is ‘made up of intensive parts falling under capacity,’ and the latter of extensive parts falling under relations between them. Latitude, thus, is concerned with the affects of which the body is capable within a given degree of power. The body, again, is determined by ‘what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of another body. [...] Affects are becomings.’ (*TP* 256)

Although the plane of consistency has no forms or subjects, there are, according to Deleuze, haecceities, affects, and subjectless individuations that constitute assemblages: ‘Nothing subjectifies, but haecceities form according to compositions of nonsubjectified powers or affects’ (*TP* 266). This plane is ‘necessarily a plane of immanence and univocality,’ it has no supplementary dimension that transpires upon it, although it may

have multiple dimensions itself which is what makes it natural⁶ and immanent. Unlike the plane of organization, it is not ‘tied to a mental design but to an abstract design.’ Although the number of dimensions of the plane of consistency continually increases, the process is not an evolution or the development of forms, nor a ‘regression leading back to a principle,’ but an ‘involution, in which form is constantly being dissolved, freeing times and speeds.’ It is a fixed plane, but not in the sense of being static or immobile, instead it is a plane in the ‘absolute state of movement as well as of rest, from which all relative speeds and slownesses spring, and nothing but them.’ (*TP* 266)

On the plane of immanence, Deleuze believes, ‘we are always and already on the absolute horizon’ (*WP* 38). He does not mean a relative horizon (in phenomenological terms) ‘that functions as a limit, which changes with an observer and encloses observable states of affairs’ (*WP* 36). The nature of the plane of immanence is fractal. It has no spatial or temporal coordinates and movement on it is infinite; as such the plane of immanence is also ‘ceaselessly being woven’, the movements are relaunched by other movements being caught within and folded in the others. The movements are highly volatile; they ‘turn away but to confront, to lose one’s way, to move aside. Even the negative produces infinite movements: falling into error as much as avoiding the false, allowing oneself to be dominated by passions as much as overcoming them’ (*WP* 38).

According to Deleuze, Philosophy and Art have similar aims in composing concepts and works of art: both address chaos, ‘confronting’ and ‘crosscutting’ (*WP* 65) it. Although their tasks are different, that of the former being to pin down concepts on the constitutional level and that of the latter to compose a work of art of affects and percepts, to produce a block of sensations (‘Art thinks no less than philosophy, but it thinks through affects and percepts’ [*WP* 66]), the two modes of thinking, the two sections of the plane may also ‘pass into each other’ (*WP* 65). It seems, then, that the plane of consistency, or composition, that Deleuze also calls the plane of immanence, or, for instance, the body without organs, is where the composition of sensations, the essence of a work of art is produced.

⁶ Deleuze and Guattari consider immanence and univocity as a justification for calling the plane of consistency the plane of Nature, although the word does not have the customary meaning, for on the plane of consistency there is no distinction between the natural and the artificial (*TP* 266).

The nature of immanence renders possible Deleuze's idea of there being one single plane of aesthetics that is included in the production of art. This allows us to understand that although the technique and material are not what make a work of art, they are not independent of the aesthetic compound but rather

in fact the technical plane is necessarily covered up or absorbed by the aesthetic plane of composition. It is on this condition that matter becomes expressive: either the compound of sensation is realized in the material or the material passes into the compound, but always in such a way as to be situated on a specifically aesthetic plane of composition. [...] Everything (including technique) takes place between compounds of sensation and the aesthetic plane of composition. Now the latter does not come before, being neither intentional nor preconceived and having nothing to do with a program, but neither does it come afterward, although the awareness of it is formed progressively and often suddenly appears afterward [...] We have gone from the composite sensation to the plane of composition, but only so as to recognize their strict coexistence or complementarity, neither of them advancing except through the other. (*WP* 196-198)

The possibility of being aware of what happens on the plane of immanence resonates with / corresponds to Deleuze's notion of the author becoming what he writes and losing his subjectivity. An artist does not cease to exist as an individual, for immanent metaphysics does not allude to anything beyond or transcendental. Perhaps it could rather infer a shift of the consciousness. The reading of a literary work could be regarded in the same way. William James, when introducing his idea of pure experience, gives precisely the example of being absorbed in reading and becoming aware of the fact only when the reading stops (*Essays* 191). What then are these sensations in literature and art in general that draw the reader in? What, according to Deleuze, are the possibilities of the existence of affects and percepts? These questions will be addressed in the next subchapter.

1.2.3 Percept and Affect

Deleuze believes that '[t]he aesthetic compounds of the infinitely moving particles – compositions – , those of percepts and affects are works of sensation' (*WP* 192). To explain

further what exactly these affects and percepts are, they will, first, be treated separately in order to establish the possibilities for recognizing them. Then, their capacity as a block in a work of literature, or any art for that matter, is elaborated on.

Percepts, as Deleuze regards them, are distinct from perceptions, independent of those who experience them (*WP* 164). The same claim is made about affects, which, according to Deleuze, do not concur with feelings or affections: ‘they go beyond the strength of those who undergo them’ (*WP* 164). In both philosophy and psychology the words percept and perception (also affect and affection) have often been used interchangeably. The Oxford English Dictionary defines percept in philosophical and psychological terms as the mental product or result of perceiving something, and a way in which something is perceived mentally. The philosopher F. C. Bowen, in 1864, equated a percept with intuition, while in psychology T. C. Allbutt, in 1899, thought of word-images as ‘integral components of percepts and concepts,’ and in 1876, H. Maudsley saw percepts as the abstracts of sensations. The word perception generally seems to be understood similarly to ‘percept’, yet the word also acquires a more subjective quality of an interpretation, an opinion and a belief. (OED)

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, affect in philosophy and psychology is regarded as an emotional, unreflective response. While in psychology, affect is still seen as a subjective feeling or experience, being more an emotion or a mood ‘as manifested by facial expression, posture, gestures, tone of voice, etc.’, in philosophical terms the examples of the application of the word do not necessarily confirm the role of emotions. For example, G. Long, in 1885, interpreted affect as something ‘by which a man’s mind is struck by the first appearance of a thing which approaches.’ Affection, however, quite like in the case of percept and perception, means broadly the same as affect, differing insofar as it is an external – rather than internal – manifestation of feelings and emotions. Affection is more a disposition, or an attitude towards something, whether of affection or animosity – a biased or partial feeling. (OED)

Deleuze, also differentiates perceptions and affections from percepts and affects in that they are connected with attitude and opinion. However, (especially, when considering

Deleuze's examples from literature) it would not be adequate to say that affects are unreflective, because for bodies, whether material, mental, etc., the capacity to affect and be affected, is reciprocal. In fact, the apparent division of the percept as the attribute of the perceiver and the affect as that of an affecting object no longer seems to be valid. Deleuze seems to believe, rather like Burnside, that the affects and percepts of both participants – the reader and the work of literature – form an inter-bodily excess, which of course happens only when using the method of 'going' or 'delving into' what is being read. Deleuze says that

from all bodily struggles, there arises a sort of incorporeal vapour, which no longer consists in qualities, in actions or in passions, in causes acting upon one another, but in results of these actions and passions, in effects which result from all these causes together. They are pure impassive incorporeal events on the surface of things, pure infinitives of which it cannot even be said that they *are*, [but are] participating rather in an extra-being... (*Dialogues* 63)

In this way he distinguishes between things and events, between 'physical depth and metaphysical surface,' the inspiration for which he accredits to the Stoics (*Dialogues* 63). Thus, as can be seen from Deleuze's readings of different authors, percept seems to be something that is already present in a work of art ('As percepts, sensations are not perceptions referring to an object' [*WP* 166].); the same is true of affect, and both of them are activated in the event of observing or reading.

Deleuze addresses 'telescopic' or 'microscopic' (*WP* 171) and extensive or intensive planes, planes or vast areas as percepts. Such planes can, in a painting, be formed of a 'smooth,' single colour: e.g. blue, green or monochrome; in a musical composition, it is the melody or a motif. Or they may be 'striated' instead – the uniform colour may be covered with little bouquets of flowers and the musical composition may have a distinctive rhythm. While striated planes tend to be extensive, trigger organization, and react to 'the sky as measure and by the measurable visual qualities deriving from it' (*TP* 501); the smooth ones are intensive, extend to distances, and are 'occupied by intensities, wind and noise, forces, and sonorous and tactile qualities, as in the desert, steppe, or ice' (*TP* 501). The latter leads to the discussion of percepts in literature.

The percept is not mere background in the painting or music; it is, rather, a quantity of information, although it does not transmit information (*WP* 144). The frequent percepts that Deleuze uses as examples of those that the novel ‘has risen to’ (*WP* 168) are taken from the works of Thomas Hardy, Herman Melville and Virginia Woolf. In the work of the latter, he mentions the urban-percepts, in Hardy the moor, and in Melville oceanic-percepts. When reading Deleuze this might prompt an apprehension of the percept as being derived from the topology of a novel. Yet, as Deleuze mentions percepts of the mirror – in Virginia Woolf – that constitute an integral part, though still only a part, of the domestic landscape in her work, it becomes clear that percept is something other and more than the setting of the novel. Nevertheless, landscape is another term that helps to describe percepts. According to Deleuze, the landscape is what sees (*WP* 168). What he means by this is its ability to capture the general air preserved in ‘the hour of a day, a moment’s degree of warmth (Faulkner’s hills, Tolstoy’s or Chekhov’s steppes)’ (*WP* 169). In a compound of sensations, the percept and affect are dependent and influence each other, while the task of the former is to be the bearer of affects and to make them perceptible, which in turn brings the landscape to life, makes ‘the area of plain, uniform color vibrate[], clench[] or crack[] open’ (*WP* 181).

Affects are the forces that have the ability to interact with their bearer, resonating with the landscape and yet that are invisible without the landscape. In music and paintings, affects are harmonies: ‘consonance and dissonance, harmonies of tone or color’ (*WP* 185); in literature, they are becomings. Becoming is not a passage from man’s own lived state to another, but rather becoming Other, either a nonhuman other or a minor. For instance, affect in Melville is Ahab’s becoming the whale. It is not an imitation of Moby Dick nor a physical transformation into an animal: ‘It is a zone of indetermination, of indiscernibility, as if things, beasts, and persons [...] endlessly reach that point that immediately precedes their natural differentiation’ (*WP* 174). This suggests that another way in which to understand ‘becoming non-human’ is as becoming imperceptible. This is what, according to Deleuze, happens in Woolf. Mrs Dalloway, for instance, becomes imperceptible when passing through the town ‘like a knife’ (*WP* 169), whilst herself perceiving the town. This is what, once again, illustrates that what matters are not the opinions of a character, but her relations.

Another relevant factor contributing to imperceptibility is movement. Affects are constant movement, and the essential relation they have to the imperceptible is the impossibility of being pinpointed: ‘perception can grasp movement only as the displacement of a moving body or the development of a form. Movements, becomings, in other words, pure relations of speed and slowness, pure affects, are below and above the threshold of perception’ (*TP* 281). Deleuze, however, emphasizes the relativity of the named thresholds of imperceptibility. He suggests the existence of the possibility of perceiving the imperceptible: ‘there is always a threshold capable of grasping what eludes another: the eagle’s eye...’ (*TP* 281). The speeds and slownesses, the intensities vary; also, the constant movement does not indicate constant change:

One might be invariable and constant by speed. Speed is to be caught in a becoming that is not a development or an evolution. One would have to be like a taxi, a waiting line, a line of flight, a bottleneck, a traffic jam, green and red lights, slight paranoia, difficult relations with the police. Being an abstract and broken line, a zigzag that slips ‘between.’ (*Dialogues* 40-41)

Affects then are ‘energetic relationships’ (*WP* 144) that can only be glimpsed.

The writer’s material is words and syntax, and although the event/performance is not about who talks, what is talked about or what it means, Deleuze believes that the event still belongs to language (*LS* 182). The event, however, being a ‘pure surface effect, or the impassible incorporeal entity’ resulting from the mixtures, actions, and passions of the bodies, is not a physical quality. Instead, Deleuze calls it a ‘very special’ dialectical or noematic, incorporeal attribute that does not exist outside of the proposition which expresses it. He says that what is expressed ‘pre-inheres’ in the expression ‘giving it a foundation and a condition’ (*LS* 182), just as who is talking and what is talked about ‘presuppose the expression’ (*LS* 182). The expression, then, is founded on the event that renders language possible.

In Deleuze’s theory of language, an event is not expressed by a subject or a predicate, but by a verb which is ‘not an image of external action, but a process of reaction internal to language’ (*LS* 184). This means that a verb expresses not just a single movement, but a two-way movement as a linguistic action and a reaction. Nouns, in Deleuze’s view, are

‘like atoms or linguistic bodies, which are coordinated through their declension, and adjectives like the qualities of these composites’ (*LS* 183). Through the ability of the verb to appear in the infinitive, it acquires the capacity to turn into a ‘line of flight,’ a path of escape, whereas the noun along with the adjective, both of which are close to an assemblage, are more grounded in nature. In order to create a work of art, the writer needs to be able not to just use words, but by composing, he has to create a syntax that makes the words ‘pass into sensation’ (*WP* 176).

Affects and percepts, as was previously mentioned, are capable of interacting with and influencing each other. However, in their being ‘smooth’ or ‘striated;’ in their moving at infinite speed or slowing down almost to a standstill, they are also capable of triggering a change in neighbouring assemblages. According to Deleuze, what is produced on the plane of organization are territorial assemblages which might manifest variously as subjects, strata, territories, etc. (e.g. ‘the system of opinion that brought together dominant perceptions and affections within a natural, historical and social milieu’ [*WP* 197]). Sensations, affects and percepts have a capacity to deterritorialize, which might be understood as an escape, or, in Deleuzian terms, a line of flight. Deleuze names as one of the benefits of such freeing forces the rediscovering and restoring of the infinite ‘passing through the finite order’ (*WP* 196-198). Deterritorialization is, therefore, the movement against the static or the stagnation of a territory that produces an opening in ‘the settled territory of the subject that puts it back into process and transforms it into haecceity. It is not produced by concepts or signification, as these are elements of the order or orders that counter words disrupt or subvert’ (Clay 122).

The disruptive elements of order and organization, as either interlocked frames or surrounding sections, however, are also present in art. Thus, although art, in general, has the capacity to deterritorialize, to undo the ‘triple organization of perceptions, affections, and opinions in order to substitute a monument composed of percepts, affects, and blocks of sensations that take the place of language’ (Clay 69), sensation can also reterritorialize or be reterritorialized. Deleuze’s theory of the capacity of art to de- and reterritorialized, alongside the application of this theory to John Burnside’s poetry will be discussed more thoroughly in the subchapter 2.2.

2. THE READING OF SENSATION IN JOHN BURNSIDE'S POETRY

This chapter explores the possibility of extracting percepts and affects from John Burnside's poetry, and elucidates the kind of force the compounds of sensations exert. Although some poems will be examined more exhaustively than others, the aim is not to discuss the poems in their entirety but rather to review the general effect that the work in three collections, namely *The Light Trap* (2002), *The Good Neighbour* (2005) and *Black Cat Bone* (2011), could have. To this end, a number of recurring images and ideas will be considered in the light of Deleuze's view of literature and the relatively scant secondary material available on Deleuzian analysis of poetry.

There are generally no hierarchies in Deleuze's philosophy – no level or plane is superior to any other – nor are there any in his compositions of sensation. Yet it seems logical to open the discussion with the percept, as if a plane from which affects spring and which, in turn, is modified by affects. In order to identify percepts in John Burnside's work, this paper will adopt two dimensions of the classification proposed by Clay, who sees three possible dimensions in percepts of poetry: first, the formal landscape; second, the temporal landscape; third, 'the imaginative landscape of the poem's images and non-image based sensations that are produced via signification' (64).

In Clay's analysis, it is the formal landscape of the poem's music that is analyzed. He considers the poem's music to be that which is generated by the asignifying formal elements of a poem, in particular the poetic stress that contributes to the rhythmic sensation. In this, Clay relies on Douglas Oliver's view of the stress in a line of poetry as a place of 'great intensity', an 'almost pure sensation' (53) and which does not necessarily 'correlate with the abstract metrical pattern' (55). Clay, thus, seems to regard the stressed words, according to the semantic load they carry, as producing the percept of poetry.

Whether a poem has a divisive or additive stress; a metrical, a measured or a free rhythm, it is rarely read according to its metrical form. It depends not only on a particular reader,

but also on a particular reading which words will be stressed, what the intonation will be and what kind of rhythms will be formed. The same is true when the poem is read by the writer, for he is no longer in the position of writing but that of reading. In English, as a stress-timed language, the stressed syllables tend to appear at a roughly constant rate, whilst non-stressed syllables are shortened to accommodate the former. In the case of prosodic stress, some words or syllables in certain positions can be stressed either to receive special emphasis or for different pragmatic functions (focus, contrast, etc.); this explains why the stress shifts from one reading to another.

This paper does not seek to explicate musical rhythm. Nevertheless, it does regard stress as contributing to the formation of the general landscape of percepts. Thus, the following close reading of some poetic images considers both the division of stressed words, which will be positioned mainly according to the particular reading, and the grammatical division of parts of speech, which plays an important role in the relations and functioning within blocks of sensations. The paper does, however, also deem important the grammatical function words (prepositions, pronouns, auxiliary verbs, conjunctions, articles). William James defends the position that sensations exist and that relations are present in sensation, opposing those who had ‘denied the existence of the mob of abstract entities, principles, and forces, in whose favour no other evidence than [an absence of a name] could be brought up’ (*Principles* 568). He claims that every ‘inflection of voice,’ every syntactic form expresses ‘some shading or other of relation which we at some moment actually feel’ (*Principles* 567). Such relations are, in his view, uncountable and in view of the inability of language to capture them all, we should also express them in such terms as ‘a feeling of *and*, a feeling of *if*, a feeling of *but*, and a feeling of *by* quite as readily as we say a feeling of *blue* and a feeling of *cold*’ (*Principles* 567). Hence, it will be taken into account that although function words are usually prosodically unstressed, they can either acquire stress when emphasized or otherwise participate in the production of sensation.

2.1 Percept and Affect in John Burnside's Poetry

2.1.1 Formal Landscape

The opening poem of the collection *The Light Trap*, 'KOI'⁷ (*TLT*⁸ 3) begins with the following two-line stanza: 'The trick is to create a world / from nothing' (1-2). The stress in this line falls on the words 'trick', 'create', and 'world.' 'Trick' produces a magician-percept. 'Create' is a verb, therefore an affect, as such it does not contribute to the production of a landscape and will be dealt with below. The word 'world' produces a cosmos-percept, yet the indefinite article hints at there being a multiplicity of worlds, introducing a more personal tone and retaining a certain entirety-percept and continues the easiness/playful-percept put forward by the 'trick.'

The only stressed word in the second line is 'nothing.' One cannot approach the word by way of conceptual meaning, for on its own, without a contrasting entity, it means nothing and represents or presents an image of the lack of everything. The idea of nothingness is elusive and imperceptible. 'Nothing' is overwhelming. A sonorous, unimaginable, all-whelming absence-percept. If the reader is familiar with Japanese culture and the meaning of the word 'koi'⁹, a glimpse at the first phrase might set the mind in motion towards the eastern philosophical ideas where 'mu' – the negativity of nothingness turns into positivity – contradictorily, simultaneously marking transcendence and immanence, an eternal present in a diachronic past-present-future (Kitagawa 308). If they are not, the unfamiliar word still offers a hint that the poem might concern something non-traditional. As Clay duly notes, in the analysis of sensations one should resist the temptation to read the percept as representations of something other than themselves (108).

⁷ All poems examined more exhaustively are in the appendix.

⁸ To save space in the parenthetical references, the following abbreviations are employed for John Burnside's poetry collections: *TLT* (*The Light Trap*), *TGN* (*The Good Neighbour*), and *BCB* (*Black Cat Bone*).

⁹ In Japanese, *koi* means 'affection' or 'love' and the ornamental fish kept in outdoor pools which are symbols of love and friendship in Japan.

Elaborating further on the ‘nothing’, though without enforcing the imperceptibility/absence-percept retrospectively, the poem advances by eliminating visual, auditory, tactile, and olfactory mental imagery:

– not the sound a blackbird makes
in drifted leaves

not dogwood
or the unexpected scent
of jasmine by the west gate

not the clouds
reflected in these puddles all around
the bowling green

deserted after rain
and darker than an early polaroid. (3-12)

The first part of the poem or the sentence ends with the phrase ‘but nothing / which is present in the flesh / as ripeness is: a lifelong urgency’ (13-15). The task of the phrase would seem to be the explaining of how the initially confronted nothingness could be perceived by the stating of what it is, as opposed to what it is not. The ‘nothing’ here seems to continue the playful/easiness-percept established in the first line of the poem, by promising to solve the imperceptibility of the ‘nothing’ in the second line. First, through the conjunction ‘but,’ which via its contrasting quality holds the promise of comparison, and, second, through the non-restrictive ‘which,’ that instead of narrowing the choice to that specific ‘nothing’ (and alluding to there being more ‘nothings’) and gaining a notional indefinite article (like ‘world’ in the first line), allows the ‘nothing’ in this phrase to become a multiplicity/heterogeneity. The idea of many possible nothings by not suggesting anything beyond, seems an easier idea to grasp.

The playfulness-percept is pushed into the background, reduced by the imperceptible/absence-percept which is evoked again by ‘nothing’ and enforced, first, through the similes of ‘ripeness’ and ‘lifelong urgency’ – both of which as abstract words are already pure percepts. Ripeness is conventionally a quality of fruit. Therefore the flesh could evoke the sensation one associates with perhaps eating the pulpy part of a fruit or vegetable. Flesh,

however, can also refer to the muscular part of the body of a human or an animal or just the skin with reference to its sensory properties. As in the three collections by Burnside, the combination of flesh and bones, or old flesh is often mentioned, it is the latter, the bodily-percept, that the current reading proceeds with, while also acknowledging the quality of fruit. Therefore, by blending these two sensations, 'ripeness' evokes a maturity-percept together with a preparedness/willingness-percept, both of which are enforced by the continuity-percept of 'lifelong' and the insistency and imperativeness-percept of 'urgency'. Second, by using the preposition 'in', locating this 'nothing' 'in' the flesh, the list of negative similes in the first part, which initially seemed to be there just to stress one great absence of everything, has now become a list of examples/instances of what the first 'nothing' could, if not mean, then at least where it could be located.

Considering the ability to be located somewhere and yet nowhere, to be negative, an absence, and yet actively charged and positive, the absence-percept converts into a presence-in-absence-percept, whereas willingness and insistency located in the flesh infers a force of life, or perhaps yearning. Thus, it can be suggested that even without the background knowledge of the meaning of the title of the poem, through the simultaneously ambiguous and precise imagery, sensation conveys what the title could refer to.

The second 'stanza' of the poem begins with the repetition of the same three words as the first: 'The trick is in the making / not the made' (16-17), followed by a description of a possible way in which that could happen. While in the first instance the words effected as a simple statement, this repetition of 'the trick is' adds to and counterpoints the playful/magician-percept that was produced in the first line – a percept of initiation or of being ordained, not so much to a secret as to something that has always been there, but for some reason has remained unnoticed, something self-evident, as if a reminder.

The magician-percepts and the cosmos or entirety-percept were shown to be produced mainly by nouns and adjectives. At this point, it is relevant to look at the affects of 'KOI' (*TLT* 3). An affect on the syntactic level is a verb, the function of which is to eliminate or rather shift the focus from the 'is,' the verb 'to be' – a verb that, according to Deleuze, is responsible for, or perhaps an accomplice of the Empiricists in stifling life to a

standstill, ‘in seeking and positing an abstract first principle’ (*Dialogues* 54). ‘Is’ is indicative of certain qualities that are related to the subject. Deleuze sees the verb ‘to be’ as a ‘possible I’, as if ‘in the first person of the indicative’ (*Dialogues* 64). A verb, however, is what ‘emerges from a state of things and skims over it’ (Deleuze, *Dialogues* 64). Even more so, verbs in the infinitive form are what Deleuze calls ‘limitless becomings’ (*Dialogues* 64): having no subject they indicate an “it” of the event’ (*Dialogues* 64) and even in their singularity are ‘compounds or collectives’ (*Dialogues* 64). The reason(ing) behind such an application of grammar to philosophy is clear: the infinitive is a non-finite verb, the name of which is derived from the Latin *infinitus* meaning ‘infinite.’ The infinite becomings, as was mentioned above, are affects.

The first verb encountered in ‘KOI’ (*TLT* 3) is ‘create.’ While the word ‘create’ in itself produces the affect of a godlike capacity, all the more so in the context of the concept of the ‘limitless becoming,’ for in this line the verb is presented in the infinitive – ‘to create.’

While the series of negative similes that follows the first ‘nothing’ contains no affects, another infinitive can be seen in ‘the trick is in the making / not the made’(16-17). ‘Making,’ as a gerund, is also a non-finite verb form. The contradiction inherent in a gerund is that in English grammar it can also function as a noun. Therefore, according to Deleuze’s division of nouns as percepts and verbs as affects, this single word could be both. If it were to be read as the trick is ‘to make,’ it would produce an affect of a limitless becoming of creating – possibly evoking a slightly more banal artisan-affect than the word ‘create.’ Were it read as a noun, it would be a state of making which, unlike that of the noun ‘to be,’ holds a certain force of the continuation of activity, of a process. In the current reading it is perceived as a noun which contributes to the magician-percept. Yet, as the playful-magician-percept was strengthened by the repetition of the phrase ‘the trick is,’ then in passing from the affect to the percept, the godlike capacity now resonates as an echo giving way to the following sequence of nature imagery.

What also contributes to the sensations of this phrase is the line break after the line being discussed. This affects the perception of what is being said more than merely the difference between the gerund as a noun and as a verb. It enlivens the playful-magician-percept with

the continuity-percept, giving the impression that it is ‘the trick’ that is ‘in the making.’ This also serves to draw attention to the other formal properties of poetry that, it is the claim of this paper, are used as affects. In ‘KOI’ (*TLT* 3), affect is also produced by graphic placement and enjambment. A line break is not necessarily a finite marker, as is not always even the end of a stanza and in this poem a concrete metrical and (at least a visual) pattern for stanzas is absent altogether. The lines are graphically of different lengths, aligned seemingly randomly, and a random number of lines are separated by a skipped line. Whilst not all of the lines are aligned to the right, some do begin with a double or triple indentation or even seem to be aligned to the left.

In ‘KOI’ (*TLT* 3), the first line ends having already achieved grammatical and semantic unity, therefore there is no anticipation that the sense might be carried on to the next line without a pause. Usually, in the case of enjambment, the tension is created by the delay in sense-making, which is released when the word or phrase that completes the syntax is encountered. There is no unfinished meaning at the end of the line ‘The trick is to create a world’ (1). Also, the following line is visually significantly shorter, thus reinforcing the sense of the finiteness of the phrase. When reading the next line, it comes as a surprise that it was not the end of the phrase at all. Furthermore, instead of resolving the ambiguous meaning, an incomplete meaning is created.

The repetition of the same effect created by the enjambment in the first line and the long visual break enforces the finiteness of the following two-word-line – ‘from nothing’ (2), too. The surprise of the continuation and the shortness of the enjambed line, along with the fact that the stanza seems to end due to the blank line that follows and the third line beginning with a double indentation and a dash combine to centre an immense intensity on the noun.

Considering the word ‘nothing,’ it could, of course, be argued that it is in vain to try and gain entrance to a work of literature through the method of sensation. It is common for hidden meaning(s) to be inserted into poetry or prose through a range of rhetorical devices, most commonly metaphor. Deleuze, however, estimates the importance that has been attributed to metaphor as ‘disastrous for the study of language,’ deeming them ‘merely

effects' (*TP* 77). It has been claimed in a representational analysis of 'KOI' (*TLT* 3) that it is the act of 'writing' that is being described: it 'appears to be the creative imagination itself: "a lifelong urgency" for the poet, which leads to the creation of worlds' (Roberts). While not entirely siding with Deleuze's fear of the results of the use of metaphor, I agree with his view that the literal approach could prove useful as well (Cochran xxii-xxviii). Mary Bryden¹⁰ finds considerable overlap in her comparison of Deleuze's own readings of literary works with more conventional literary analyses (105).

In an analysis of Allison Funk's poetry, John Burnside confesses to an appreciation of accidentally stumbling at opportunities, places and moments, whether in nature or everyday life, that provide the 'nowhere,' 'the here and now, the divine quotidian, the subtler beauty of the unremarkable' ('Travelling' 59). It is the sensation gathered at such moments, 'lasting a few seconds at a time, to an hour, to a whole afternoon or night' (Burnside, 'Travelling' 61), to which he 'returns'; memories that cannot be shared, or even 'fully pin[ned] down for [him]self' (Burnside, 'Travelling' 61). Such experiences 'heal the imagination' (Burnside, 'Travelling' 61) and help to build one's own 'world' free of the imposed hecticness and unattentiveness. Besides such real-life situations, it is precisely the reading of a lyric poem that allows for entry to 'the otherworld behind the taken-for-granted' (Burnside, 'Travelling' 61). Similar healing happens on the poet's part. According to Burnside, 'the lyric offers the same radical illumination that chance affords us when we wander off the map' ('Travelling' 61). Thus Burnside seems to connect the two results, that of the representational reading, and that of the more literal and/or sensational. Since this paper engages with the workings of sensation, the initial view on 'nothingness' will be returned to. The same notion can be encountered in a number of poems other than 'KOI' (*TLT* 3). 'ONE HAND CLAPPING' (*TGN* 11) confirms the possibility of creating a world

if left to our own devices
a purer space

where someone wakes and whispers in the dark

¹⁰ Mary Bryden is a British scholar who is specialized in twentieth-century French literature, philosophy, and culture and who has, amongst other authors, worked intensively upon Gilles Deleuze, particularly his engagement with literary texts.

it constitutes the a priori Other. The a priori, or the *structure* Other is not the *concrete* other, but a multiplicity of past and yet-to-come encounters with the conglomerate of others, ‘condition[ing] the entire perceptual field’ (*LS* 318): while the self is a compound of past encounters – ‘a past world’, the Other is the ‘possible world’ (*LS* 310).

While explaining the concept of the stream of thought, James delves into the possibilities of the English language, arguing that to state that ‘it thinks’ would be just as logical as to state that ‘it rains’ (*Principles* 523). If the word ‘it’ in ‘TAXONOMY, 1 FLORA’ (*TLT* 6), were not stressed, it would almost seem to be used as an expletive subject without implied reference to an agent. This may account for how the lines ‘Because it can only be shared / like a waltz, / or trust’ (1-3) almost seem to demand the possibility of saying ‘it shares.’ In the case, of course, that the rules of grammar could be defied.

Nevertheless, more light is shed on the ‘it’ in the following lines:

and though we mostly look
for what we know,
there is something we love in ourselves

that a meadow answers:
the blue of an upland flower
or a tideline of grass;

the heart-shaped
or spatulate leaf
or toadflax, or fern.

The colour
is nothing like baize
or polished jade;

the gap between coltsfoot and mint
no more or less
specific than a kale field after rain, (10-24)

Thus, ‘it’, besides evoking harmony, sensitivity of reciprocal coordination and consideration, simultaneity, closeness and velocity/movement, is something that reacts to a certain shade of blue. As the colour is independent of the shape that is evoked, it forms the *aplat*¹¹, the uniformity. What the word blue effects is, in philosophical terms, regarded as qualia. The tone of the colour here is approximated with the imagery of plants in a certain habitat.

The affect that these last quoted lines effect could be analyzed, as exemplified above, through close reading: The ‘something’ that ‘we love in ourselves,’ with its elusive-percept and the first person plural, evoking a multiplicity-percept, while the preposition ‘in,’ similarly to the poem ‘KOI’ (*TLT* 3), posits the love affect as a presence within. The personification of the meadow widens the block of sensations effected in the first part of the poem from humans to the non-human world. However, the effect of colour and the sequence of images of flora seem both to demand and to offer a different approach. Therefore I propose to proceed not only with a close reading, but adding a method based on the motif that Deleuze uses when talking about both literature and different forms of art.

2.1.2 Imaginative Landscape

In *What is Philosophy?* (1994), whenever Deleuze handles sensation in art, he adopts the appropriate and conventional terms for each particular form of art when introducing his approach. Yet, as the discussion proceeds, he seems to consider the forces in different forms of art as producing sensation according to, more or less, similar principles.

Whilst he first mentions that house, landscape, walls, colours, etc., are the terms for analyzing architecture or painting, the same terms will later be used in his analyses of other forms of art as well. According to him, in music, melodic air, motif and theme ‘construct the sonorous house and its territory’ (*WP* 189). In another case, in composing and

¹¹ *Aplat* is the French word meaning ‘solid’ or ‘flattened,’ used by Deleuze to talk about the vast plane of uniform colour.

juxtaposing other kinds of musical elements, it is colour that becomes the most important aspect. What is true, though, is that the first time Deleuze uses a term in an unconventional context, he places it in inverted commas: ‘Increasingly, it is the “color” of the sound that matters’ (*WP* 191). However, it soon becomes clear that the word colour does not merely designate the property of a particular paint, or a visual quality of an object. In Deleuze’s dialectics it has acquired vibrating or sonorous characteristics:

The work of the plane of composition develops in two directions that involve a disaggregation of the tonal frame: the immense uniform areas [aplats] of continuous variation that couple and combine the forces that have become sonorous in Wagner, or the broken tones [tons rompus] that separate and disperse the forces by harmonizing their reversible passages in Debussy-Wagner-universe, Debussy-universe. (*WP* 191)

Thus, the same terminology that is used in the description of the way in which sensation is produced specifically by paintings (*WP* 180) or specifically by music, etc., has now become general and interchangeable. An example of the usage of colour in the context of literature and painting alike, for instance, can be found in *A Thousand Plateaus* where a quality like colour is said to be regarded ‘from the standpoint of the becoming that grasps it,’ instead of being an

‘intrinsic qualit[y] having the value of archetypes or phylogenetic memories. For example, whiteness, color, is gripped in a becoming-animal that can be that of the painter or of Captain Ahab, and at the same time in a becoming-color, a becoming-whiteness, that can be that of the animal itself. Moby-Dick’s whiteness is the special index of his becoming-solitary. (*TP* 306)

In Deleuze’s analysis of Fernando Pessoa’s poetry, he finds that sensations occupy ‘a place on the plane [...] extending it, distending it over the entire earth’ (*WP* 197). Landscape, as colour, becomes a mental landscape, which as a plane is the basis of Deleuzian philosophy. According to Deleuze, it is the ‘task’ of art to ‘extract new harmonies, new plastic or melodic landscapes, and new rhythmic characters,’ ‘from colors and sounds, both music and painting similarly’ (*WP* 176), and he adds that literature is to be treated in the same way (*WP* 188, 195, 197).

Besides the formal landscapes of his classification, Clay perceives sensations as also being effected by the poem's images and non-image based sensations which are produced via signification, calling this the imaginative landscape (64). In poetry, imagery and images are produced in the mind by words; their content and the impact they have on the reader is moulded and enhanced by formal elements. It is through words that physical experiences or sensual expressions are perceived. The usage of images, or figuration, can help make abstract ideas more comprehensible. In psychology, seven categories of mental imagery have been established: visual; auditory; tactile; olfactory; gustatory – referring to the five senses; kinaesthetic – marking movement; and organic – triggering the sensation accompanying a general bodily activity like tugging, the beating of the heart, or breathing (Llorens 3).

It might be more difficult to trigger or imagine a synaesthetic experience (in the case that it does not evoke a sensation automatically) – for example, to see a colour in the case of a musical tone or an onomatopoeic word – than to experience colour as a property of a flower. As mentioned above, landscape can be produced by a (recurring) motif. I, therefore, propose that colour – and, for that matter, other motifs, whether as abstract words (as 'nothing') or epithets in the imagery which pervade a literary work – can be transferred to poetic analysis like the oceanic-percept in Melville, the moor in Hardy and the urban-or the mirror-percepts in Virginia Woolf (*WP* 168).

Similarly to the way in which the percept of a certain colour of blue on the verge of green is produced in 'TAXONOMY, I FLORA' (*TLT* 6) – through the description of the tones of plants – there is 'that locked sense of robin's egg blue / at the back of a life' (22-23) in 'BY HERODSFOOT' (*TGN* 22). This blue is a continuum, safe in the '... room at the end of the mind / where what we love goes on, uninterrupted' (30-31). The adjectives 'locked' and 'safe' produce a secure-percept, the prepositional phrases positing the sense of the blue 'at the back of a life' (23) and '... at the end of the mind' (30), thus producing a presence and inextricable/intrinsic-percept. The quality attributed to the colour 'blue' is 'something that we love in ourselves' in 'TAXONOMY, I FLORA' (*TLT* 6) and 'what we love' in 'BY HERODSFOOT' (*TGN* 22). That this love is not merely a narcissistic admiration is ascertained by the widening of this same affect from humans to the non-human world by

the personification of the meadow (mentioned on page 31), which is why both repeat or extend the ‘harmony, sensitivity of reciprocal coordination and consideration, simultaneity, closeness and velocity/movement/continuum’-percept.

What starts to emerge from this is a certain sense of connectedness between the human and the non-human world, which resonates with Deleuze’s idea that ‘blue in particular takes on the infinite and turns the percept into a “cosmic sensibility” or into that which is most conceptual or “propositional” in nature – color in the absence of man; man who has passed into color’ (*WP* 181).

In several instances the percept of uniform colour in Burnside’s poetry is produced by way of the whiteness of snow. In the poem ‘ANIMISM’ (*TLT* 16),

...every small erasure
in the snow
was dreamed to life
as something you could hear:
a thin song in the walls; a narrow purl
of infant longing
built into the stair. (15-21)

Likewise, the poem ‘BEING AND TIME’ (*TLT* 17) repeats this whiteness-percept:

There are times when I think
of the knowledge we had as children:
.....
how something was always present in the snow
that fell between our parish and the next,

a perfect thing, not what was always there,
but something we knew without knowing, as we knew

that everything was finite and alive. (1-2, 11-15)

And again, in ‘AMNESIA’ (*BCB* 54), the ‘precise / and random’ (9-10) falling snow is also ‘whiting,’ ‘erasing,’ and ‘blanking out’

till everything
is one
wide
incognito; (21-24)

or in ‘TAXONOMY, II FAUNA’ (*TLT* 9),

...that cursive space

where one form is abandoned for the next:
the old flesh invested with snow
and the taste of currants.’ (33-36)

In ‘ANIMISM’ (*TLT* 16) the colour ‘white’ effects the nothingness-percept once again – evoked by ‘erasure.’ Erasure as a place where something has been erased, a spot or mark left after the erasing, is rendered vaster by the quality of the snow that covers the world, manifesting as it does the uniformity of the colour ‘white.’ The affect springing from the white landscape is effected by the word ‘dreaming,’ which repeats the creation-affect, and what is created again is the world; this time it is the world of a child: an animated house/home. As in ‘KOI’ (*TLT* 3), the whiteness of snow, both in ‘ANIMISM’ (*TLT* 16) and ‘BEING AND TIME’ (*TLT* 17), is not merely a nothingness as an absence, but a nothingness as a presence, the material of creation. In ‘AMNESIA’ (*BCB* 54), white is not yet the uniform colour. It is the backyard, or whatever else the kitchen door opens onto. The ‘white’ here is the snowfall, holding the affect of possibility of becoming whiteness, the erasure turning everything into ‘... one / wide / incognito’ (22-24). In ‘TAXONOMY, II FAUNA’ (*TLT* 9), the affect of possibility is evoked through ‘investing’ ‘the old flesh’ with ‘snow’ in the course of renewal – which in Deleuzian dialectics can be regarded as becoming other, a constant ongoing process.

The lines of flight, or the ‘loopholes’ for escaping ‘all the given versions of the self’, in Burnside’s poetry seem especially intensely to be those moments that hold possibility. In ‘ANNUNCIATION WITH A GARLAND OF SELF-HEAL’ (*TGN* 33), it is ‘the first

snow' (2) or in fact 'anything single or clean / anything white' (4-5) that facilitates escape 'to find [one's] elsewhere' (22). The singleness, cleanness and whiteness attributed to snow, are equally qualities attributed to 'the flight of a bird', '... the sound of rain / on a flat tin roof' (6-7), 'crossing a lawn and slipping away through a hedge / gathering windfalls / or bringing the laundry in' (16-18), 'surrendered to a gust of summer wind / crossing an empty street...' (27-28) and escaping 'in every phantom stealing through the dark' (21). This confirms what was proposed above – that the whiteness or any uniform colour (*aplat*) and recurring motif that forms a landscape of sensation, becomes abstracted.

Before concluding the topic of uniform colour as percept, it should be mentioned that besides snow it is also fog, haar¹², that produces the uniform white that effects similar erasure-percepts, the-escapings-from-the-given-affects: it '...whites out the main streets, one by one: / ... / one step ahead all the time, as I make my way home, // tracing the path of erasure back to the house' (*TGN* 20, 58-61), or

... let the mist come down, let there be haar,
 long afternoons of drizzle, months of fog,
 that we might know ourselves
 – such as we are – (*TLT* 34, 13-16)

Burnside perceives the sense extracted from such whiteness as that 'what is not' –

an evidence
 of grace
 that makes

 each living
 creature
 moving in the world

 so much itself
 though
 interchangeable. (*TGN* 55, 41-49)

¹² A word applied to a wet mist or cold sea-fog off the North Sea on the east coast of England and Scotland.

2.1.3 Childhood, Memory and Becoming

Three aspects of the percepts that resonate strongly and are intertwined with each other and that manifest themselves often enough to contribute to the uniform colour percept in Burnside's poems are childhood memories, knowledge and becoming.

In the poems 'ANIMISM' (*TLT* 16) and 'BEING AND TIME' (*TLT* 17), where the monochrome whiteness-percept is produced, memory originates from childhood. Yet it does not seem to consist only of remembrance, but a re-experienced encounter as well: the sensations of the encounter conjoined with analytical reflection on past matters. Art, including literature, according to Deleuze, is a 'bloc of present sensations,' (*WP* 169), he is therefore certain that the role of memory in literature has been overestimated. Memory's task is merely to provide the event; the action of a work of literature is not memory but fabulation: 'We write not with childhood memories but through blocs of childhood that are the becoming-child of the present. We attain to the percept and the affect only as to autonomous and sufficient beings that no longer owe anything to those who experience or have experienced them...' (*WP* 168). The image from childhood in a poem no longer acts as a memory, but as a block of childhood sensations, 'displacing it in time, [...] proliferating its connections, linking it to other intensities' (Deleuze, *Kafka* 4). In Kafka's work, Deleuze hears the percept of sound – the ringing of the bell – which makes the character's heart 'palpitate for its tone was menacing, too, as if it threatened him with the fulfillment of his vague desire' (*Kafka* 4). Deleuze sees this as 'the intrusion of sound' which makes the character raise or 'straighten'¹³ her head (*Kafka* 4-6) and triggers Kafka's character into becoming. But whereas in Kafka it is the 'sonorous block that opposes the visual memory' (Deleuze, *Kafka* 5), in Burnside's poetry, it is the monochrome or blue *aplat*.

The images in 'ANIMISM' (*TLT* 16) and 'BEING AND TIME' (*TLT* 17), then, are encounters from childhood relived. Deleuze insists that just as literature is not written with emotions or opinions, nor is it written with memories. Becoming other is an 'antimemory' (*TP* 294). The latter leads to his idea of becomings as lines that do not

¹³ A figure in Kafka's work that Deleuze reads as becoming, a line of flight.

originate in points and do not connect points, since they have ‘neither beginning nor end, departure nor arrival, origin nor destination’ (*TP* 293), but only a middle being in motion and movement. As becoming is always the middle, it can only be grasped by the middle. As becoming is not the event or happening, nor the relation of two happenings, it is the in-between which, as a line of flight, ‘constitutes a zone of proximity and indiscernibility, a no-man’s-land, a nonlocalizable relation sweeping up the two distant or contiguous points, carrying one into the proximity of the other — and the border-proximity is indifferent to both contiguity and to distance’ (*TP* 293). This collides with an aspect of the conventional notion of liminality in the human sciences, according to which liminality is always a transitional state between two stationary states. While Deleuze’s theory of becoming evokes a sensation of movement and duration, liminality as a transitional state (Turner 93-5) evokes a sensation of a static position between two static states – a position with a beginning and an end and which acts as a relation between two points (Turner *Forest* 97). What, on the contrary, is quite similar in his theory is the reciprocity of the movement of information and, for example, cultural influences in the case of a liminal position between two cultural spheres:

[The plane of immanence] is a composition of speeds and affects involving entirely different individuals, a symbiosis; it makes the rat become a thought, a feverish thought in the man, at the same time as the man becomes a rat [...] The rat and the man are in no way the same thing, but Being expresses them both in a single meaning in a language that is no longer that of words, in a matter that is no longer that of forms, in an affectability that is no longer that of subjects. Unnatural participation. But the plane of composition, the plane of Nature, is precisely for participations of this kind, and continually makes and unmakes their assemblages, employing every artifice. This is not an analogy, or a product of the imagination, but a composition of speeds and affects on the plane of consistency: a plan(e), a program, or rather a diagram, a problem, a question-machine. (*TP* 258)

Why such becoming is important for these poems is on account of the children’s ability to become other, as well as their ability to understand the becomings of others. In this context, Deleuze notes that children are Spinozists, on account of their ability to see, as Spinoza did in his *Ethics*, that a workhorse, when defined by its affects, resembles an ox more than a racehorse; that an organ ‘is exactly what its elements make it according to their relation of movement or rest, and the way in which this relation combines with or splits off from that

of neighbouring elements' (*TP* 256), instead of what genus they are. Children can grasp the 'universal abstract machinism' (*TP* 256). Therefore, unlike psychoanalysts who believe an animal to represent, for instance, a drive or a parent, Deleuze suggests that children become animals; he believes that becoming as an affect, in itself, is the only drive that exists.

While Deleuze mentions that becoming is a sensation of the present, James thinks that '[t]he instant field of the present is at all times' and that it is an experience in its 'pure state' that cannot be separated into thing and thought, being 'only virtually or potentially either object or subject as yet' (*Essays* 47). Thus, and in simpler terms, I propose that what Deleuze means by becoming is not a passion for something, nor the desire, not becoming one with the other, but losing oneself in the other through concentration: the way a tennis player immerses into the hitting of the ball, the reader delves into the story, the child becomes a character in a computer game.

As becoming is not so much a matter of understanding as a matter of graspability, the Bergsonian notion of intuition helps to clarify. According to Bergson, it is intuition that is able to grasp the constant movement, the constant being in the present, while analytical thinking tries to pin it down with 'stoppages or points' (12). All that is accomplished by the latter, however, is the illusion that 'movement is composed of points', forgetting that 'it comprises, in addition, the obscure and mysterious passage from one position to the next' (Bergson 12). Bergson sees the points as capturing the qualitative change of an object which he considers useful 'so long as we are concerned only with a practical knowledge of reality' (13) that helps 'enumerate' reciprocal attitudes between the subject and the object. Bergson calls this 'the ordinary function of ready-made concepts, those stations with which we mark out the path of becoming' (13). According to his view, what can be accomplished in this way, considering duration 'under the simple aspect of a movement accomplishing itself in space' (13) and reducing 'to concepts movement considered as representative of time,' (13) is a myriad of points held together by an abstract unity. Such combination, however, loses the heterogeneity of reality; it will 'no more admit of shades than does the addition of given numbers in arithmetic' (Bergson 14). That is why he proposes the method of intuition: placing oneself in the duration 'by an effort of intuition,' being, thus,

able to feel ‘a certain very determinate tension, in which the determination itself appears as a choice between an infinity of possible durations’ (Bergson 14).

The godlike-capacity-affect in ‘ANIMISM’ (*TLT* 16) related to the idea of creating one’s own world, of a place for healing, and the instinctual-affect in ‘BEING AND TIME’ (*TLT* 17) evoked by the knowing ‘without knowing’ both convey the capacity for intuitive knowledge of children. An example of such becoming can be sensed in the poem ‘SHAPESHIFTERS’ (*TGN* 17), where the entire poem effects as a thought of childhood in the sense that it is not a memory of an adult, but a thought of a child. Whether it is encountered and relived by an adult or a child, or the reader of the poem, for that matter, is not important. The thrill-affect (springing from the monochrome percept of ‘... outside in the dark, / ... December night’ [1-2] and the fetched ‘coal’) is effected by the images ‘Stepping outside in the dark / ... // stop in a river of wind / on the cellar steps’ (1-4) or

coming in,
I turn to face the cold

with nothing in my veins
but haemoglobin. (14-17)

What effects as a relived childhood in this particular poem is the possibility affect produced by the formal landscape: the graphic placement and the line break. However, in this case it is achieved without an enjambment or uneven length of lines. Instead, a thought of men, who ‘at will’ transform themselves to animals

– misshapen lives
suspended in the blood,

slithering loose
and loping away through the snow

half-flesh,
half-dream; (8-13)

is positioned almost regularly in couplets of irregular meter – one phrase extends over half a page. Because of the distance from the first action of the poetic *I*, ‘[s]tepping outside in

the dark' (1), and the proximity of the word 'slithering' that expresses what the shapeshifters do, the next phrase starting with the line 'or, coming in' (14), relates rather to the latter. Thus, in spite of the semicolon after 'half-dream' (13), the formal structure effects the continuation of the description of what the shapeshifters would do, – even though the next line already begins with an 'I.' The sensation is extended and reinforced by the word 'haemoglobin', the function of which in human blood is to transport oxygen to the stem cells. Breathing cold, fresh air on a December night certainly ensures a sufficient level of oxygen. Yet, metaphorically in light of attributing the 'coming in' also to a(the) shapshifter(s), James's notion of oxygen as possibility and Deleuze's possibility as the a priori Other evoke the affect of the becoming-shapshifter of the poetic *I*. This brings the analysis to the becoming-other; in the case of this particular poem – becoming a shapshifter.

Before concluding the topic of becoming, it should be mentioned that the formal means for creating intensity here, in 'SHAPESHIFTERS' (*TGN* 17), is an unusual backwards technique. When evoking tension by formal means, as explicated in 'KOI' (*TLT* 3), Burnside uses a kind of backward enjambment and fragmented graphic placement. The sense of the stanza is often organized by the visual and the aural effects, with enjambment across the stanza breaks, reducing or adding the number of lines in the stanza to create a certain dynamics. In early modern English, the function of verse was to 'reassert firmness and order' (Dubrow 174), and the length of a line could be used to play with the possible stability of the column 'built' by the poem. Thus, an indented line in a couplet could hint at ethical and even emotional instability (Dubrow 174). The case of a column of couplets in free verse, indented to the left, yet not very stable on the right, does not evoke anything in a first reading. It is difficult to imagine a culmination in the middle merely on the visual basis. Yet, after establishing the affect of becoming in the middle of the poem, a noticeable '<' shape can be seen, which perhaps has the unconscious effect of concentrating attention precisely in the middle.

To give one more example of how sensation is produced, I will turn to the poet Helen Mort, who in her argument on the insufficiency of the liminal reading of John Burnside's work by some critics, highlights his use of synesthesia, referring to his 'strange sensory

pairings' ('A Crack') and 'ghost-couplings' ('A Crack'). Reading such synaesthetic images as 'the moss and curvature / of nightfall,' 'musk and terror,' 'blood-warmth and pollen,' 'gunsmoke and cyan,' 'blood and narrative,' 'hymns / and ghost towns,' she senses 'an easy profundity' in some of them, as if 'a sense of mystery-achieved-too-easily,' yet in the case of others she feels their ability to shock 'with a near-physical force.' (Mort)

Synesthesia can be both a neurological phenomenon, where the stimulation of a sensory or cognitive pathway leads to an involuntary experience in other sensory or cognitive pathways, and, a relatively common rhetorical device by which the same happens in a metaphorical process. The synesthesia that Mort discusses is, however, slightly different from that explicated in the analysis of the next poem.

The poem 'ONE HAND CLAPPING' (*TGN* 11) begins as a story of a blind person. It is a common metaphor to speak of the blind as if they could see with other, functioning senses. Burnside characterizes his blind man as

a swaddled mind suspended in its own
momentum
 fruit falls
 mornings at the beach

the scent of oil or rain
 the perfect sound
of running water
 – what a blind man sees
by inference

and how it fails
 one sunless afternoon (2-12)

When read in one go as a phrase, not as several lines of poetry, it is just a part of a sentence, merely lacking appropriate punctuation. When the same text is graphically laid out, however, it is not only the missing commas that the line breaks substitute. The first three consecutive nouns and noun phrases – momentum, fruit falls, mornings at the beach – in which the blind man's mind is swaddled all take the adjective 'own' (its own momentum, its own fruit falls, its own mornings at the beach) and thus create an expectation for the following lines that are graphically laid out in a visually similar pattern.

The latter example reasserts Burnside's idea of everyone's capacity to heal him or herself by creating a 'purer space,' not only as a poet, but by a slow mode of life, by recognizing the everyday – sometimes rather old-fashioned or far-fetched activities for urban dwellers, yet easy to relate to for anyone with rural or suburban garden state experience.

Within the study of affects and percepts in this chapter it was proposed that the landscapes of uniform colour in Burnside's poetry can be recognized as or associated with the nothingness as a felt presence. The *aplat*, whether white, blue, or black, erases the everyday world known to us and yet contains another that can only be known intuitively, especially by children. The *aplat* is also present within the flesh and in the back of the mind, being what we love in ourselves. It is what triggers our becoming other, a substance of nothingness from which new worlds can be created. It was also established that the notion of nothingness, from the perspective of the opposition of what is conventional or unconventional, and what from the perspective of significance can be recognized and what cannot, is not subject to recognition in rational representational terms.

When uniform colour, whether blue, black or white, produces the same effect within a work of art, or from one work to another, Deleuze claims that the author becomes that colour. This, then, rather than constituting a non-human landscape, is 'in accordance with a pure affect that topples the universe into the void' (*WP* 20), leaving the writer 'above all with nothing to do' (*WP* 20).

This idea could be explained through the two-way movement between what Deleuze calls the plane of organization and the plane of consistency or composition, as was introduced in Chapter 1. The plane of organization is ceaselessly interrupting the movements of the lines of flight by 'plugging' them and 'working away' the plane of consistency, and the plane of consistency, acts in the same way upon the plane of organization 'causing particles to spin off the strata, scrambling forms by dint of speed or slowness, breaking down functions by means of assemblages or microassemblages' (*TP* 270). Simultaneously, the plane of organization is what the plane of consistency is constantly extricating itself from. Deleuze, thus, attributes certain forces or capacities to sensation, but also sees a danger in this kind of mutual activity: if the plane of organization succumbs, the plane of consistency could

become ‘a pure plane of abolition or death’ (*TP* 270). Therefore he considers it necessary ‘to retain a minimum of strata, a minimum of forms and functions, a minimal subject from which to extract materials, affects, and assemblages’ (*TP* 270).

Regardless of the obvious recurrence of the white-percept – the sensation of healing one’s existence by creating a world, a ‘home’ – Burnside does not ‘topple’ his world into the void. His lines of flight are not always infinite, for they are merely moments, or perhaps hours. Burnside’s poetry seems to allude to that solitude, although offering an escape, a paradise, a dwelling place ‘where we can haughtily maintain our integrity by ignoring a vicious and corrupt social world’ (Burnside, ‘Visitor’) – can become a spiritual dead end, an act of self-indulgence or escapism’ (Burnside, ‘Visitor’). What the plugs are, what kind of forces disturb the paths of escape in Burnside’s poetry, will be discussed in the next section of the thesis.

2.2 Frames in John Burnside’s Poetry

Deleuze names architecture ‘the first of the arts’ (*WP* 179). He even goes as far as to claim that ‘art begins [...] with the house’ (*WP* 179). However, the house, here, does not only stand for a house as a building, it is a part of a tripartite compound that Deleuze uses to exemplify how the forces of sensation are formed and, yet again, how the sensations can be extracted from the work of art. The compound is flesh-house-universe/cosmos. While the flesh is the body that encounters a work of art and cosmic are the forces of becomings that are extracted inside the block of sensations, it is the house that provides the flesh with something to hold on to so that the becomings would become a freeing and creative force not a hindrance or a chaos. What exactly Deleuze means when he claims that the latter could happen might be a result of letting down one’s defences at the moment of opening oneself up to enjoy the work of art, its vulnerability. Thus, the ‘[f]lesh is only the thermometer of a becoming. The flesh is too tender’ (*WP* 179).

The framework that the house provides for the flesh can be assimilated into another of Deleuze's concepts, that of (de)territorialization. The forces of becoming are lines of flight, they deterritorialize from anything that is stagnant, banal, clichéd or imposed. Deterritorialization, however, is what leads to pure immanence. Deleuze's ethics, though, as mentioned above, regards exaggeration in anything, even lines of flight/pure immanence, as lethal and possibly leading to chaos and/or destruction. What then prevents the sensation in a work of art from leading into destruction?

From the perspective of the work of art, the task of the house is to provide a frame that would support the sensation, so that it can stand on its own. For example, the 'walls but also floors, doors, windows, French windows, and mirrors, give sensation the power to stand on its own within autonomous frames. They are the sides of the bloc of sensation' (*WP* 179). The house takes part in the becomings and the way in which their elements are joined or left open; it regulates the cosmic forces of sensation. The artist is responsible for how the frames (the walls, the curves, the floors, etc.) are positioned so that the forces are conjoined, broken open or cut off in order to exert 'the type of depth' (*WP* 179) needed.

It is life, the "nonorganic life of things." In every way possible, the house-sensation is defined by the joining of planes in accordance with a thousand orientations. The house itself (or its equivalent) is the finite junction of colored planes. [...] The flesh, or rather the figure, is no longer the inhabitant of the place, of the house, but of the universe that supports the house (becoming). It is like a passage from the finite to the infinite, but also from territory to deterritorialization. (*WP* 179)

The universe/cosmos that Deleuze mentions manifest in a work of art as the area of plain, uniform colour, 'the single great plane, the colored void, the monochrome infinite' (*WP* 180). This resonates with what was examined in part 2.2 above when the uniform colours in Burnside's poems were discussed. However, there may be other phenomena not yet mentioned that constitute the pure forces of the infinite, the universe, for instance, animal and plant motifs. What conjoins the sensations in the poems discussed and the kind of effect they can have on the reader will be examined as follows. As was pointed out in part 2.1.1 above, in Deleuze's view sensation in different forms of art seems to be produced

according to the same principles, which explains why he often uses the terminology interchangeably. Therefore, examples of what Deleuze regards as frames in different forms of art sheds light on what he means.

Curbing the infinite cosmic force – the uniform black in Matisse – is the French window (*WP* 180). In Seurat's paintings Deleuze sees the stippled technique as a frame; in Mondrian's work, it is the squares that by being gathered in one corner of the abstract paintings open up the external lines. Nevertheless, in both Seurat (the stippling) and Mondrian (positioning the squares in one corner of the painting), it is their techniques that give the picture the greatest capacity to affect: 'give the picture the power to leave the canvas' (*WP* 188). The framing lines and the sections they form do not take the place of coordinates but are part of compounds of sensations (*WP* 187).

The external, outermost frames conjoin and counterpoint with others within the block of sensation, and this – the relations of counterpoint into which, for instance, the characters enter – is what Deleuze sees as characteristic of literature, particularly the novel. He negates the countering of the opinions of the characters, but emphasizes the importance of their experiences, 'felt in their becomings and their visions' (*WP* 188). Especially welcome are the situations that 'bring out the madness of dialogue' (*WP* 188). He cites counterpoints that novelists such as Dos Passos exemplifies 'in the compounds he forms with characters, current events, biographies, and camera eyes, at the same time as a plane of composition is expanded to infinity, so, as to sweep everything up into Life, into Death, the town cosmos' (*WP* 188).

In the case of music, the simplest instance of a composition consists of the monophonic air, which is a 'vibration'; the polyphonic motif, which is a 'clinch,' a coupling, entering into the development of and creating a counterpoint with another; and the theme, which is harmonic modifications and which does not close when 'plugged,' without also 'unclenching,' 'splitting,' and 'opening.' These three forms, according to Deleuze, are elementary in order to construct the 'sonorous house and its territory.' It is, however, possible to compose more complex closures and shuttings-off and accomplish the opening of the work of art onto a 'limitless plane of composition.' (*WP* 186-190)

As was already ascertained in the Chapter 1, both in the case of the planes of organization and composition, and in the case of a block of sensations and its material or technique, neither of them is prior to or superior to the other. Likewise, the house does not come after the cosmos nor the cosmos after the territory, the cosmos does not come after the figure/flesh, and vice versa. There is a ‘strict coexistence or complementarity’ (*WP* 7) without any of them being the first.

The composite sensation, made up of percepts and affects, deterritorializes the system of opinion that brought together dominant perceptions and affections within a natural, historical, and social milieu. But the composite sensation is reterritorialized on the plane of composition, because it erects its houses there, because it appears there within interlocked frames or joined sections that surround its components; landscapes that have become pure percepts, and characters that become pure affects. At the same time the plane of composition involves sensation in a higher deterritorialization, making it pass through a sort of deframing which opens it up and breaks it open onto an infinite cosmos. (*WP*196-7)

The task of art, then, is restoring and rediscovering the sense of the infinite. But as with the plugging and closing-off, the opening out to infinity is also regulated by sections and frames. According to Deleuze, the frames that territorialize and reterritorialize occur in many ways. In painting, ‘The frame or the picture’s edge is, in the first place, the external envelope of a series of frames or sections that join up by carrying out counterpoints of lines and colors, by determining compounds of sensations’ (*WP* 187). Yet, ‘in the search for the sensation as being’ (*WP* 167), every artist uses his own method: ‘we need only compare Proust and Pessoa, who invent different procedures. In this respect the writer’s position is no different from that of the painter, musician, or architect’ (*WP* 167). So it is, then, that what constitutes frames is different in every author and in every work of art, regardless their medium of expression, precisely as was the case with percepts and affects. Thus, according to the above view of frames as part of the becomings, I infer that they must be examined according to the sensation that they produce as exemplified in the first two parts of Chapter 2. The sensations, however, should do the opposite to what deterritorialization does.

From the perspective of Clay's research, which concentrates on innovative poetry, with its break from poetic conventions of form, syntax, etc., conventionality in form is regarded as reterritorializing (40). Also, while the failure to represent or signify (which forces one to approach innovative poetry with sensation) deterritorializes, the same attributes (signification and representation) reterritorialize (Clay 50). Regarding the social milieu, Clay infers that the revolutionary is, according to Deleuze, what produces absolute deterritorialization; it is the 'historically inevitable forces of subjectivization' which in turn reterritorialize (Clay 168). This is confirmed by Deleuze himself, when, in the light of Kafka's work, he regards as reterritorializing all the acts that subjectify: being a 'bureaucrat, inspector, judge, or judged' (*Kafka* 12), which he believes trigger the animal becoming both in Kafka's work and also in general in all children who 'build or feel these sorts of escapes' (*Kafka* 12). Deleuze also sees the character of the father in Kafka as, on the one hand, caught in the process of deterritorialization, because of leaving for the city (from the countryside), yet remaining to reterritorialize by subjectifying in his family and business, submitting to the authorities (*Kafka* 12). Therefore, submitting to imposed norms is what reterritorializes, as well.

What is it, then, that contributes to a certain air in John Burnside's poetry which with its framing forms secures a closing-off and ascertains reterritorializing? Considering both the approach adopted by Clay, as described in the previous paragraph, and the examples by Deleuze, the frames in Burnside's poetry between which the relations form will be elucidated below. Reterritorialization is still part of becoming, but the movement is finite: 'An incorporeal transformation is still attributed to bodies, but it is now a passage to the limit' (*TP* 108). Thus, the method used will remain the same as when elucidating percepts and affects.

What can be seen as producing a reterritorializing air in the poem 'KOI' (*TLT* 3) is the sequence of imagery, the task of which is to convey what the 'nothing' discussed is not:

wall' (*WP* 183) as a frame. The way in which the body disappears into the percept is exemplified in the poem 'TAXONOMY, 1 FLORA' (*TLT* 6): the plain colour, which is simultaneously that 'something we love in ourselves' and the answer of the meadow, is what is evoked by the plant imagery. In 'KOI' (*TLT* 3), however, the nature and plant imagery becomes a reterritorializing force.

A certain reterritorializing effect is also produced by the dynamics of the poems. As Burnside himself has mentioned, his poems start from one idea and like a stream of thoughts might end up going in an unexpected direction, or jumping from several topics to several others. For the most part, these fragments vary between those effecting the flight and those that the flight, or the escape, is triggered by. In 'KOI' (*TLT* 3), what reterritorializes the flight of creation-affect and the nothingness-percept is the change of topic from a philosophical musing to a fabulation of the lived, a walk in a botanical garden. But besides that, special force is exerted with certain effective words. In the lines: 'the koi hang in a realm of their invention // with nothing that feels like home / – a concrete pool' (56-58) where the fish move

as if they understood
in principle
but couldn't wholly grasp

the vividness of loss(68-71)

the phrases 'nothing that feels like home', 'the vividness of loss', 'concrete pool' extract the percept of limitedness of space, freedom and security. The end of the poem strikes with an ambiguous 'this' (5 lines below) which is difficult to pin down: 'we will ask // ... / ... whether this // is an illusion' (74-78). 'This' could refer to how the world outside of the concrete pool seems to the fish and whether they are even aware of their loss. However, because of its graphic placement, 'this' – being visually far from the previous line and the following line – receives a special emphasis. Thus it disengages from the comparison of the world in- and outside of the pool and shifts the focus to the world in general, calling its existence into question. In the subsequent comparison of the 'this' to the blackbird who '... withdraws / one moment at a time // remembering its myth of origin' (83-85), the verb 'withdraws' prolongs the sensation of loss that was evoked in the context of the decorative

fish bred in captivity, reterritorializing the creation-affect being the opposite of what was evoked by making a world.

In ‘TAXONOMY, 1 FLORA’ (*TLT* 6) the reterritorializing forces are at work already at the beginning of the poem, when first the affects evoked by waltz and trust are limited by the word ‘only’ (‘... it can only be shared / like a waltz, / or trust’ [1-3]). Although the sensation of harmony, sensitivity of reciprocal coordination and consideration, simultaneity, closeness and velocity/movement is that of flight and escape, a deterritorializing force, the restriction applied to it by the word ‘only,’ indicates, this time, the limit of rational thinking required in taxonomy, and not the limit of bodily senses. The phrase ‘this commonplace affection’ evokes the banality-percept which is extended to the word taxonomy. Taxonomy, as the systematic scientific classification of living organisms, also falls under the effect of the unnecessary (‘... singles out / a hairstreak’ [*TLT* 6, 4-5]), lack and withholdment (‘leaving the rest untold; / the world / unspoken;’ [*TLT* 6, 7-9]). While the named reterritorializations are mutually at work with the sensation of harmony, sensitivity of reciprocal coordination and consideration, simultaneity, closeness and velocity/movement sensations, there is an obstructive closing by a limit – the return from the blue-percept back to the bodily senses: ‘but looking always worked towards a word: / trading the limits of speech / for the unsaid presence’ (25-27). Although the end of the poem produces simultaneous re- and deterritorializing effects again, the restricting percept evoked by ‘limit’, which is opened up by the commercial/business-affect produced by ‘trading,’ bears strong reterritorializing qualities, which not only limits the blue *aplat*, but almost overshadows it.

The poem ‘BEING AND TIME’ (*TLT* 17) is reterritorialized by a temporal aspect. It is proposed on page 17 that childhood in Burnside’s poems is connected with the Bergsonian notion of intuition: the method or ability to grasp movement, as it occurs, in the constant present. The whole poem, therefore, is otherwise deterritorializing, mostly through the whiteness and the recollection of a childhood sensation. However, what hinders the almost becoming child, is the use of the past tense in the poem. The temporal limitedness of the moments in the zone of indiscernibility (as discussed on page 8) – the moments that

provide the ‘nowhere,’ ‘the divine quotidian,’ – is another aspect of the reterritorialization. In the poem ‘AMNESIA’ (*BCB* 54),

It never lasts;
but for a while,
at least,
I forget
what I wanted to see
from my kitchen door
and watch the new snow (1-7)

Thus, these instances of possibility and creation are not always easily accessible, we can ‘... go for weeks and never catch ourselves / like this, the trace of magic we possess / locked in the work of appearing’ (*Gift Songs* 25, 14-16). As the Bergsonian view on movement was explored in connection with intuition, becoming, and childhood, the very same theory is closely connected to his idea of duration. In Burnside’s poems, linear/chronological, homogenous time, which is composed of a homogenous line of successive conscious moments that are identical and follow one another as separate units, without penetrating each other (Bergson, *Time* 109), is what reterritorializes. The time of becomings, the zone of indiscernibility is what seems to be the heterogenous time: ‘a real duration, the heterogenous moments of which permeate one another; each moment, however, can be brought into relation with a state of the external world which is contemporaneous with it, and can be separated from the other moments in consequence of this very process’ (Bergson, *Time* 110). This is also what determines the difference between a childhood memory and a becoming child: the former identifies with the child as a child in the light of one becoming an adult, while the latter is the present of the child, the experiencing individual: ‘“a” child [that] coexists with us, in a zone of proximity or a block of becoming, on a line of deterritorialization that carries us both off’ (*TP* 294). While some poems are almost entirely of deterritorializing force, others only reterritorialize. The poem ‘HISTORY’ (*TLT* 20), fabulating an ecocritical version of the history of mankind in fourteen lines, does not, however, gain pure staticity nor does it hit ‘the wall’, but gives a glimmer of hope of finding an ‘unvoiced presence,’ being ‘... untouched by god, / and homesick for the other animals’ (13-14).

latter poem also alludes to the biblical event of Adam naming God's creation and presents history thereafter from the perspective of naming: 'Then Adam forgot the names and one by one / the creatures died' (1-2). According to Walter Benjamin's theory of language¹⁴, Adam translated the 'divine and creative word of God' (Gilloch 75), which therefore pinpointed their true essence. This, however, was before the fall and the building of the tower of Babel; subsequently, languages, 'arbitrary in terms of the relation between word and thing and, in their plethora of terms for the same phenomenon, overname nature' (Gilloch 75) which is, perhaps, more the sign of poverty, than richness. The line 'He seemed heroic then, a breed apart,' indicates Adam's belief that he is superior to those he names, forgetting that he too is one of the creatures. The same motif occurs repeatedly, for instance, in 'ANIMALS' (*TLT* 18): animals on moonlit nights '... cross our path, unnameable and bright / as any in the sudden heat of Eden' (7-8); and in another poem, also named 'HISTORY' (*TLT* 40): 'what makes us who we are / is [...] something lost between the world we own / and what we dream about behind the names' (23-26).

A strong reterritorializing aspect in Burnside's work is that of the 'wrong' world view. The belief of one's superiority to the non-human, e.g. flora and fauna, is undoubtedly part of this, as is being born into imposed norms and relations, whether social, religious, or other. For instance, in 'THE GOOD NEIGHBOUR' (*TGN* 3), it is said that the good neighbour is the one who 'rises in the small hours, finds a book / and settles at a window or a desk' (3-4), or '... see[s] the morning in, alone for once' (5) watching and tasting 'on winter nights, the snow; in summer, sky' (13) (the latter contributing to the general *aplat*). What produces the sensation of smooth space and the figure of the poetic *I* passing into the landscape is the liberating/relieving-affect of the lines 'unnamed, unburdened, happy in himself' (6) and the ambiguous/elusive '... he's not quite there, / but not quite inexistent, nonetheless' (17-18). The reterritorialization that cuts off the line of flight, the escape, sets in with the last stanza of the poem when the good neighbour '... lays his book down, checks the hour / and fills the kettle, ...' (19-20). The checking of the time brings the 'neighbour' from the nonlinear/non-chronological, timeless space, the zone of

¹⁴ Benjamin is known for his theory of pure language, the perfect language of God. The function of philosophy, for instance, is to recover this perfect language by calling things by their proper names (Gilloch 75).

indiscernibility, back to temporality and with the filling of the kettle, he subjects himself to the everyday, the banal, which hinders the true self:

my one good neighbour sets himself aside,
and alters into someone I have known:
a passing stranger on the road to grief,
husband and father; rich man; poor man; thief. (22-25)

The poem also hints at the blurring of the line between the subjective ‘self’ and what Deleuze calls the concrete other (*LS* 318) within this zone of indiscernibility. Another formal aspect that participates in the enforcing of the sensation of reterritorializing is the rhyme in the last two lines of what is otherwise a blank verse poem. It is rather common for English poetry in blank verse to end with a rhyming couplet; in ‘THE GOOD NEIGHBOUR’ (*TGN* 3), however, the sudden appearance of rhyme is what reinforces the sense of subjectifying to certain rules.

What can, according to Deleuze, be regarded as reterritorializing aspects are those that ‘impl[y] a desperate attempt at symbolic reterritorialization, based in archetypes’ (*Kafka* 19). A possible archetypal figure in Burnside’s poetry, for instance, is Orpheus – as a charmer with music and a border-crosser to the otherworld. What Deleuze has in mind, perhaps, is that archetypes are static, refer to certain objects or events, fail to evoke sensation, reverting it to rational analysis instead. The motif of the border-crosser is encountered repeatedly. The crossers are usually animals stealing through the hedges, though there are also humans who shapeshift into animals. The blackbird is known as a border-crosser between this and the otherworld, an omen of death, yet also a harbinger of good fortune in folklore and Christian symbolism; in a Druid legend, blackbirds sit and sing in the World Tree, lulling the listener to sleep and inducing a trance so that they can travel to the otherworld. The blackbird appears in many of Burnside’s poems, for example, ‘remembering its myth of origin’ (*TLT* 3, 85), ‘risen from the pull / of gravity, // the blackbird makes / a territory of light’ (*TLT* 37, 11-14). In some cases, it evokes a sense of connection, as waltz and trust do in the poem ‘TAXONOMY, 1 FLORA’ (*TLT* 6). For example, in ‘A THEORY OF EVERYTHING’ (*TLT* 83):

– a history of light
and gravity – no more –

for this is how the world
occurs: not piecemeal
 but entire
and instantaneous

the way we happen:

woman blackbird man. (10-17)

The graphic placement of the last three words insinuates that blackbird is literally between a woman and a man, not in the sense of the verb ‘to be’ but as a zone of proximity and indiscernibility, and this is strongly effected by the line ‘the way we happen.’ Clearly, the blackbird stands for something other than itself.

The significance of the blackbird is already emphasized at the beginning of the collection *The Light Trap*, where a stanza of a poem by Wallace Stevens, ‘Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird,’ is used as an epigraph: ‘A man and a woman / Are one. / A man and a woman and a blackbird / Are one’ (9-12) Stevens’ poem, consisting of 13 short-line free-verse stanzas, each of which portrays blackbirds in different contexts with a shifting point of view, ‘plays both at representation and misrepresentation’ (Muñoz). The misrepresentation is caused by the ‘lack of determination which stems from the debunking of Western logic and rhetoric’ (Muñoz), while there is an attempt to undo the representation through symbols from religion and folklore: the blackbird is regarded from the aspect of both the negative connotations of symbols and also the positive, which might ‘manage to transfer some restorative union with nature in the acceptance of things’ (Muñoz). While it has been suggested that ‘Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird’ can be viewed and symbolized in an ‘infinite number of ways’ (Muñoz) and Stevens himself has urged us to regard the poem as ‘a collection not of epigrams or ideas, but of sensations’ (qtd. in Muñoz), it is Jonathan Bate who, in his review of the collection *The Light Trap*, believes that the blackbird in both Burnside’s and Stevens’ poems does represent something concrete, namely, ‘the sense of connection between the human and the non-human.’ He proposes that this sense in which we can – and cannot – be one with the

non-human world is the ‘principal concern’ of the poetry of both authors. Comparing Burnside to Stevens, he argues that the works of both authors activate the

paradox that we are both a part of and apart from nature. We are linked to our environment, and to the species with which we share the earth, in a complex and delicate web. At the same time, we live in culture as much as nature and we mediate our world through language and imagination. Stevens’s great gift was to meditate upon this mediation while always grounding himself in what cognitive scientists call qualia – the specific textures of our experience of the world (the sound of an owl, the auroras of autumn, the green of a cockatoo’s wing, the smell of an orange, the taste of lobster Bombay with mango chutney). (Bate)

Although qualia are universals, they are also subjective and it could be asked whether one individual’s sense of an abstract connectedness is another’s sense of it as well. A glance at both the reviews and the academic research on Burnside’s works, poetry and prose, testifies to the fact that they seem to impress readers as liminal, numinous, and conveying a sense of mysteries that are just beyond our reach.

Jonathan Bate, regarding Burnside’s work as ecocritical, observes it from the perspective of Deep Ecology, which amongst other movements and philosophies is rooted in the Romantic movement (Dosa). Romanticism is a term which, according to Jane Kneller, for most of the philosophers of the Anglophone world carries a negative connotation due its allegedly implicit irrationalist, mystical, idealist and utopian ideas (295). A similar approach to Romantic philosophy is reflected in Bate’s review, as well. Bate mentions that for Wallace Stevens, Wordsworth and the Romantic tradition were grounding: ‘The task he set himself was simultaneously to resist the Romantic fallacy of ascribing feelings to inanimate nature and to embrace the Romantic faith in the solidity and sanctity of earthly things’ (Bate).

The concept of unity with nature was the essence of the *Früromantik* movement. Fichte, who in his attempt at unifying Kant’s divided self¹⁵ used the word ‘hovering’ to refer to the

¹⁵ Kant’s transcendental philosophy holds that there is the phenomenal world – a world the way we experience it – and the noumenal world – the world of things in themselves – a transcendental world which we have no access to with our senses. Therefore there is a ‘great gulf’ between the world as we experience it and the world of Nature.

‘oscillating of consciousness between the sense of its own limitation and its ability to transcend its limitation,’ was a great influence on the movement. This idea of ‘hovering’ was, for instance, adapted by Schlegel, who regards Romantic poetry as something that

...can also – more than any other form – hover at the midpoint between the portrayed and the portrayer, free of all real and ideal selfinterest [...] Other kinds of poetry are finished and are now capable of being fully analyzed. The romantic kind of poetry is still in the state of becoming; that in fact, is its real essence: that it should forever be becoming and never be perfected. (qtd. in Kneller 304)

Fichte’s idea is in quite close accord with the notion of the intermediary zone of proximity that has been applied in this paper. It is Deleuze who sees even greater resemblance to his own immanent metaphysics in Fichte’s last work, where he, by ‘go[ing] beyond the aporias of the subject and the object [...] presents the transcendental field as *a life*, no longer dependent on a Being or submitted to an Act’ (*Immanence* 26). Like his own philosophy of immanence as a life, he regards Fichte’s as presenting a field, ‘an absolute immediate consciousness whose very activity no longer refers to a being, but is ceaselessly posed in a life’ (Deleuze, *Immanence* 26). Fichte’s idea of philosophizing can be detected in Novalis’ definition of romanticism as a creative activity that both takes subject matter to new and transcendent heights and at the same time reduces it to a common, everyday activity. The latter is connected to Spinoza’s philosophy of contemplative living and his suggested ‘walking the “dusty path” of this world’, which the Romantics admired. They did not, however, adopt this idea, because ‘for these artistic souls, the colour and even the dust of everyday living were the ultimate subject matter of a poeticized philosophy.’ Instead of subscribing to the ‘otherworldly-resignation’ that Spinoza’s suggestion involved, their approach was communicative and passionate (Kneller 306). Although Spinoza’s unified account of spirit and nature resolved the Kantian problem of a divided human nature, it also evoked ambivalent feelings: could his ‘surfeit of divinity’ be regarded as the mark of religiousness or atheism? While his metaphysics was rejected by the early Romantic movement, the aspect of unity was embraced and therefore it could be said that Spinoza’s philosophy was possibly as influential as Fichte’s (Kneller 303). Novalis also rejects Fichte’s view that an ‘absolute, metaphysical or even epistemological ground can be

arrived at, or fully discovered,' stating that the 'only possible absolute that can be given us is the free renunciation of the absolute' (Kneller 304).

To regard John Burnside's work as romantic is not a novel idea. After the publication of his first collections of poetry he was often referred to as a 'nature poet' on account of the abundant use of nature imagery. Also, on the basis of a casual encounter with his work, he might even seem to be inclined to this 'Romantic fallacy' of animating the inanimate. Nevertheless, what unfolds from this analysis is that the sensation effected by Burnside's poetry succeeds in delivering a richer and deeper idea of what is the 'principal concern' of his work, rather than merely assuming that 'the sense of connection between the human and the non-human' is symbolized by blackbirds. The same has been pointed out about Deleuze's readings of several literary works, that despite the lack of close reading and dense textual evidence, '[t]o read his analyses alongside a selected literary text is almost invariably to discover that a more detailed reading confirms rather than subverts the flows or tendencies which [he] has already observed' (Bryden 105).

It could be argued, then, that at times when a blackbird clearly stands for something other than itself, it has a reterritorializing power, effecting a hidden signifying system, especially to readers who are unfamiliar with symbology in folklore and the mythology of different cultures. Deterritorialization may be obstructed by anything: the 'lost territory' (*TP* 508) may be represented by 'a being, an object, a book, an apparatus or system ...' (*TP* 508). Deleuze says that nothing can really be ultimately territorial. Giving an example of a state apparatus, he believes that its initial task is actually to deterritorialize, yet, it is instantly reterritorialized by 'property, work, and money' (*TP* 508). Likewise, the 'signifying regime,' Deleuze believes, is that of a high level of deterritorialization, yet, there is simultaneously a 'system of reterritorializations on the signified, and on the signifier itself, that blocks the line of flight, allowing only a negative deterritorialization to persist, set up by the signifying' (*TP* 508). The negative deterritorialization is precisely the one that has been obstructed, and the positive is the one that 'prevails over the reterritorializations' (*TP* 508). However, because the line of flight in the case of a positive deterritorialization is 'segmented, is divided into successive "proceedings," it might end in catastrophe. This is what happens with 'the passionate and consciousness-related' 'subjective signs' (*TP* 508).

As has been established, the blackbird is clearly signifying, yet the something that it stands for is an abstract sensation/notion. Therefore it can be said that it has a reterritorializing capacity, not, however, strong enough to obstruct the sensation evoked by affects and percepts discussed in the previous two subchapters. Thus, according to Deleuze's theory, the relation between the blackbird and the positive, substantial nothingness can be regarded as a positive deterritorialization.

In order to attempt to describe or name the sensation of reterritorialization evoked by the aspects introduced above, it might be helpful to adopt the term 'critical nostalgia,' which Burnside himself has used in one of his essays ('The Hyena'). He talks about aspects of contemporary everyday life that range from the societal conventions that we inherit to 'muzak or traffic noise or celebrity gossip' (Burnside, 'The Hyena') which distract and interrupt, preventing us from 'experienc[ing] the moments of the day' (Burnside, 'The Hyena'), never allowing these to 'entirely unfold or cohere' and forcing them to 'slide quietly from anticipation to memory, without ever being properly savoured' (Burnside, 'The Hyena'). Burnside's lament for the 'loss of the here and now' ('The Hyena') resonates with what Epp Annus calls the manifest of the slow theory ('Afekt, kunst,' 74). Although what Annus talks about concerns methodology in critical theory, the recommendation to slow down the constant search for meaning and concentrate more on the affective world seems to be precisely what Burnside has in mind. 'Critical nostalgia' is the 'nostalgia for the present' ('The Hyena'). It seems to be his quest, as a person and a poet, to re-establish as often as possible the connection with the 'hidden self, for the unsocialised not-person whose dreamlife – both sleeping and waking – forms the lyrical ground of [our] being' (Burnside, 'The Hyena'). He seems to be aware of precisely what Deleuze says about subjecting oneself to the imposed social norms (*Kafka* 12), sensing that the 'perform[ing of] the prescribed rites of personhood' and 'societal convention dismiss[] that [dream]life' and are 'a source of frustration, and even pain.' Finding these moments in the relations between humans and between the human and the non-human world is what helps to heal us (Burnside, 'Travelling' 61) from the damage incurred from 'simultaneously betraying that dreamlife, and so collaborating with those powers and principalities whose job it is to keep [us] more or less tame' (Burnside, 'The Hyena').

Regarding the conventional, subjectifying/subjecting reterritorializing notions, however, it is from this ground that moments of escape with their deterritorializations spring, carrying a revolutionary vibration, evoking a change in the mindset. Yet, this seems to be the call for another reterritorialization – the call to recognize, notice and collect these moments and perhaps take the sensation to the next level of composition – the composition of a new territory, a new world. This thought is confirmed by Deleuze, who sees the negative and the positive combined and conjugated in the absolute deterritorialization, which by connecting lines of flight ‘raises them to the power of an abstract vital line, or draws a plane of consistency’ ‘bring[ing] about the creation of a new earth’ (TP 510). The creation of a new level of composition, in other words, the ability of art to change the world, can, according to Deleuze, only happen through negative deterritorialization, for it is not transcendent:

Now, reterritorialization as an original operation does not express a return to the territory, but rather these differential relations internal to [deterritorialization] itself, this multiplicity internal to the line of flight. Finally, the earth is not at all the opposite of [deterritorialization] [...] We could say that the earth, as deterritorialized, is itself the strict correlate of [deterritorialization]. To the point that [deterritorialization] can be called the creator of the earth – of a new land, a universe, not just a reterritorialization. This is the meaning of “absolute.” The absolute expresses nothing transcendent or undifferentiated. It does not even express a quantity that would exceed all given (relative) quantities. It expresses only a type of movement qualitatively different from relative movement. (TP 509)

What Deleuze sees as relative is movement that relates a subject, ‘a body considered as One,’ to a striated space, while absolute is movement that relates a body considered as multiple relates to a smooth space. In view of the fact that the nature of the impersonal method proposed by Deleuze when regarding literature and art in general implies a zone of proximity between the reader and the poem, it resembles the intuitive method of Bergson, according to which the reader places himself in the duration when, for an instant, the consciousness of personality is lost (Bergson, *Time* 40). Burnside’s poems certainly provide such a smooth space, approaching the status of absolute deterritorialization, through which the reader moves and which the reader has the possibility to become.

CONCLUSION

The current research is a reading of John Burnside's poetry with a focus on the prevalent sensation exerted in the three collections, *The Light Trap* (2002), *The Good Neighbour* (2005), and *Black Cat Bone* (2011). It is underpinned by a methodology which combines the immanent philosophy of Gilles Deleuze, the readings of different authors by Deleuze and the readings of innovative poetry by Jon Clay.

The first part of the reading engages in an examination of sensation as evoked by the formal and linguistic/grammatical aspects of the poems. It establishes that the percepts produced by nouns and adjectives form smooth landscapes of nothingness; these do not, however, effect as negative, but rather as a substantial, positive, yet, mostly imperceptible/indiscernible nothingness. With the help of some verbs as affects, but mostly through percepts, the 'nothing' is deemed vast and overwhelming, yet situated in an individual, in the flesh. It affects as cosmic/worldly, but also intimate. It is explicated that the use of certain lexical items and repetition elicits the sense of possibility to perceive and access that zone of nothingness and induces its creative potentiality. The nothingness seems to be attributed to children and playing, yet hints at a ripeness like a constant willingness or even necessity, and a preparedness or a certain maturity. Despite the imperceptibility of the nothingness, its presence is alluded to as continuous, not as an inactive field, but as velocity and movement – a zone of mutual coordination and harmony between individuals, between assemblages.

The second part of the reading considers the poem's images and non-image based sensations which are produced via signification. Regarding the capacity attributed to a literary motif to produce a landscape of uniformity, it is proposed that recurring motifs – including colour, sound, temperature, etc., whether as abstract words (such as 'trust' and 'nothing'), or epithets in the imagery which pervade a literary work – can be transferred to poetic devices. This is not, however, from the symbolizing/signifying perspective, but in view of the sensation elicited by the motif.

Such a motif, viewed in Burnside's poetry, is uniform colour: first, blue; then, white. The colour blue is mostly evoked by the word 'blue,' accompanied by nature imagery: plants, robin's eggs, sky. Similarly to the features attributed to 'nothing,' 'blue' is also a continuum, simultaneously external and internal. It is effected as inextricable or immanent, and like the nothingness, it evokes the sensation of harmony and even love, which is no longer effected through human relations, such as 'trust' and 'waltz,' but through the connection between a human and a non-human, natural world.

The landscape of white is produced by the repeated occurrence of snow or fog that erases the names and the world, reducing it into nothingness, yet exuding the potential of renewal or transformation, the possibility to conjure another world from/of the whiteness. Snowfall holds the possibility of erasure. In Burnside's poems 'white' becomes abstracted not only as snow and fog, but as anything clean and white that facilitates the shift of consciousness that predisposes the perception of the otherwise imperceptible substantial and positive presence of nothingness.

The third part of the second chapter considers why, in Burnside's poems, the capacity to perceive the imperceptible is often attributed to children, and how an experienced event or encounter from childhood is not always a memory, but, rather, becoming a child. In order to do so, childhood, memory and becoming are viewed in the light of Henri Bergson's method of intuition, proposing that his notion of placing oneself in the duration through determined concentration resonates with the function of abstract whiteness and cleanness.

Finally, the powers of sensation are introduced. The findings in the first part of Chapter 2 are deemed as the deterritorializing and the findings in the second part as the reterritorializing aspects of sensations. The former, as the forces that generate movement and change are framed by the latter, which organize and systemize the world. It is established that both of these forces are necessary, in regard to each other and in creating a world. The frames that reterritorialize in Burnside's poems are all the conditions that hinder the above named sensation effected by 'nothing,' 'blue' and 'white.' In other words, everything that prevents the perception of the sensation that can happen either between humans or between the human and the non-human world, and through that obstruct the

healing of one's world, the creating of a new world and the ability to function according to the imposed social or religious norms and conditions.

The aim of the thesis has been to employ an affective reading of poetry, which through the use of Gilles Deleuze's immanent theory of literature endeavours to provide an understanding of John Burnside's poetry that does not rely on meaning-centered, representational approaches. In order to determine whether the method of reading sensation can be regarded as an independent approach or if it is limited to being viewed only in conjunction with meaning-based analysis, an example is provided that demonstrates how an alleged symbolic meaning of the blackbird – the sense of connectedness between the human and the non-human world – is in accord with what emerges from a reading of sensation in Burnside's poetry. There is, indeed, a distinct overlap between the two understandings, yet the sensation effected is more vibrant, deep and diverse. It could be even argued that the symbolic value attributed to 'blackbird' originates in the affect created by the formal and imaginative landscapes.

Hence, it can be said that depending on the objective of the research, the reading of sensation can be regarded as a self-sufficient approach, but but one which could usefully be integrated into a meaning-centred analysis of poetry. As regards further research, this method could contribute to the elaboration of the slow theory as presented by Epp Annus, in so far as it advocates not reducing a reading to a meaning-centred process. In advocating greater attention to the affective sphere, and thus restoring the importance of the inexpressible, it goes some way to alleviating the loss of the intuitive and the creative in the realm of logocentric critical theory.

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APPENDIX

K O I

The trick is to create a world
from nothing

– not the sound a blackbird makes
in drifted leaves

not dogwood
or the unexpected scent
of jasmine by the west gate

not the clouds
reflected in these puddles all around
the bowling green

deserted after rain
and darker than an early polaroid –

but nothing
which is present in the flesh
as ripeness is: a lifelong urgency.

The trick is in the making
not the made

beginning where an idle mind spools out
to borderline and limit

half a mile
of shadows in the pinewoods
or a rim

of wetland – rush and willow
gathered close
like mourners in the dark –

a sudden
ambiguity of liverwort or birch

suggesting no man's land
or journey's end.

though it seems more ritual now
than lifelike fear
as if they understood
in principle
but couldn't wholly grasp

the vividness of loss

and every time we gaze into this pool
of bodies
we will ask

how much they know of us
and whether this

is all illusion

like the play of light
across a surface gilded with a drift
of pollen

or the sound a blackbird makes
as it withdraws
one moment at a time

remembering its myth of origin.

T A X O N O M Y

for Linda Gregerson

I FLORA

Because it can only be shared,
like waltz,
or trust,

this commonplace affection singles out
a hairstreak,
or the pattern on a leaf,

leaving the rest untold;
the world
unspoken;

and though we mostly look
for what we know,
there is something we love in ourselves

that a meadow answers:
the blue of an upland flower
or a tideline of grass;

the heart-shaped
or spatulate leaf
or toadflax, or fern.

The colour
is nothing like baize
or polished jade;

the gap between coltsfoot and mint
no more or less
specific than a kale field after rain,

but looking always worked towards a word:
trading the limits of speech
for the unsaid presence,

the way the bird
that vanished through the leaves
is true forever now, being unseen,

and the magic
that speech performs
is all

continuum: the given and the named
discovered and invented
one more time,

with each new bud or tendril that unfolds
upon the revelation
of the known.

SHAPESHIFTERS

Stepping outside in the dark,
if only to fetch the coal, this December night,

I stop in a river of wind
on the cellar steps

and think of men, no different from me,
transforming themselves at will

to animals
 – misshapen lives
suspended in the blood,

slithering loose
and loping away through the snow

half-flesh,
half-dream;

or, coming in,
I turn to face the cold

with nothing in my veins
but haemoglobin,

the thought of someone
not unlike myself

in borrowed senses
 – marten, dog-fox, wolf –

coming to some new scent, some bitter truth,
and gulping it down in the dark

while the hunters
listen.

ONE HAND CLAPPING
*Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
 Are sweeter*

John Keats

This is the tale of a man who is blind from birth:
 a swaddled mind suspended in its own
 momentum

fruit falls
 mornings at the beach

the scent of oil or rain
 the perfect sound
 of running water
 – what a blind man sees
 by inference

and how it fails
 one sunless afternoon
 late in the year
 the pear trees shedding their leaves
 a cranefly in the wash-house
 mapping a wall
 like an angel at the wrong annunciation.

This is the charm we possess
 in the small hours
 and the world we might create
 if left to our own devices
 a purer space

where someone wakes and whispers in the dark
 till nothing
 or the thought of nothing
 answers.

When I was nine years old
 a favourite aunt
 gave me a German village locked in glass
 that when I shook it
 wansihed into snow.

It had a church
 a footbridge in the distance

THE GOOD NEIGHBOUR

Somewhere along this street, unknown to me,
behind a maze of apple trees and stars,
he rises in the small hours, finds a book
and settles at a window or a desk
to see the morning in, alone for once
unnamed, unburdened, happy in himself.

I don't know who he is; I've never met him
walking to the fish-house, or the bank,
and yet I think of him, on nights like these,
waking alone in my own house, my other neighbours
quiet in their beds, like drowsing flies.

He watches what I watch, tastes what I taste:
on winter nights, the snow; in summer, sky.
He listens for the bird lines in the clouds
and, like that ghost companion in the old
explorers' tales, that phantom in the sleet,
fifth in a party of four, he is not quite there,
but not quite inexistent, nonetheless;

and when he lays his book down, checks the hour
and fills a kettle, something hooded stops,
as cell by cell, a heart beat at a time,
my one good neighbour sets himself aside,
and alters into someone I have known:
a passing stranger on the road to grief,
husband and father; rich man; poor man; thief.