1. 'soundAFFECTs': translation, writing, new media, affect¹

Hazel Smith

This chapter will focus on the translation or trans-coding of a work from its print form as 'AFFECTions: friendship, community, bodies' (Brewster and Smith 2003) into its multimedia form as 'soundAFFECTs' (Dean et al. 2004).² In particular, it will explore how this transition changes the affective experience the piece transmits. The print (words only) work 'AFFECTions' is an experimental and multi-genre collaboration by Anne Brewster and myself, which engages with the subject of affect, feeling and emotion (Brewster and Smith 2003). The multimedia work 'soundAFFECTs' employs the text of 'AFFECTions' as its base, but converts it into a piece that combines text as moving image and transforming sound. For the multimedia work, Roger Dean programmed a performing interface using the real-time image-processing program Jitter; he also programmed a performing interface in MAX/MSP to enable algorithmic generation of the sound. This multimedia work has been shown in performance on many occasions, projected on a large screen, with live music; the text and sound are processed in real time and each performance is different.³

These translations/trans-codings⁴ of the piece are all radically different creative enactments of it and the multimedia work—because it is processed in real time—is itself variable each time the work is encountered. The different versions are therefore not translations in the sense of original and copy, even though the print version was written first. In his essay 'The task of the translator', Walter Benjamin (1999) suggests that a translation is much more than the reproduction of meaning; rather, it is a creative reworking of it. For Benjamin (1999:81), the translator is in error 'if he preserves the state in which his own language happens to be instead of allowing his language to be powerfully affected by the foreign tongue'. Tim Woods (2002:200) argues, very suggestively, that in Benjamin's essay translation is seen as a kind of de-familiarisation, an 'eruption of the foreign' that foregrounds the idea that

a text is never an organic, unified whole...A translation is therefore not simply a departure from the original that is either violent or faithful, since the original is already divided, exiled from itself. Not only is no text ever written in a single language, but each language is itself fractured. (Woods 2002:201)

The idea of translation as transformative production can also be applied to the trans-coding of works into different media. In such trans-codings, mutation is more important than fidelity to an original, and one version is not better or truer than another. Comparison of the different versions produces difference as much as similarity, and such differences are likely to already be potential in the prior text.

I want to explore what happens when the verbal text 'AFFECTions' transmutes into the multimedia work 'soundAFFECTs'. In particular, I want to focus on the way in which the emotional/affective aspect of the print version changes in the multimedia translation as a result of technological intervention and the fusion of text, image and sound. In order to do this, I will need to distinguish my use of the terms 'emotion' and 'affect'. I will define emotion as subjectively based but culturally coded categories of feeling such as happiness and anger, and affect or affective intensities as sensations, or a flux of sensations, less tied to a particular point of view or subjectivity.⁵ My argument will be that there is a shift in the multimedia version so that it communicates much more strongly through affective intensities than the print version, and much less through the depiction and communication of subjectively based emotional states. The potential for this shift is, however, inherent in the print version, which oscillates between emotion and affect as I define it here and is therefore already marked by difference—'divided, exiled from itself' (Woods 2002:201). An important part of my discussion will be exploring theoretical frameworks from cultural theory and cognitive psychology—discourses that were themselves influential in the writing of the piece—as a means to consider the change in emotional/affective experience that takes place in the trans-coding from print to multimedia.

The print version: emotion and affect

In contemporary literary studies there has been a problem with regard to the discourse about emotion of which critics are becoming increasingly aware.⁶ In the 1970s or 1980s, literary studies—appropriately and very importantly—problematised the humanist assumptions underlying notions of writing as self-expression and foregrounded the mediating activity of language. As a consequence, it somewhat bracketed out emotion/affect. For literary studies to reincorporate emotion it needs to distinguish, as Rei Terada does, between emotion and self-expression. In order to do this, Terada (2001) argues, somewhat confusingly, that emotion is non-subjective. It is also necessary to discuss emotion in literature beyond narrowly equating it with certain kinds of realist or lyric writing in which codifiable emotions are readily recognisable, and which communicate through realist strategies of emotional involvement and identification. In some forms of experimental poetry, for example, in which realist representation and a cohesive subjectivity are problematised, emotion is

less subjectively based and is at least partly broken down into affective intensities. I want to show how 'AFFECTions', the print-based collaboration from which the multimedia work was made, oscillates between emotion and affect, so that the affective intensities accentuated in the trans-coded/translated multimedia version are already partly present within it. In order to do this, I need to retrospectively talk about the writing of 'AFFECTions' and its theoretical bases.

'AFFECTions' is a ficto-critical, mixed-genre work. Ficto-criticism is a form of writing that brings creative and theoretical writing into a resonant relationship with each other and creates symbiosis and friction between the two (Brewster 1996; Kerr and Nettelbeck 1998). The piece is therefore a mixture of fiction, poetry, theoretical exposition and quotation. It consists of about 30 short sections, or modules, with varying degrees of disjuncture and conjuncture between sections. 'AFFECTions' is a constellation of short narratives, poems and sections of theory, but there are no through narratives, consistent metaphors or overriding arguments. Rather the piece explores affect from a number of different perspectives without trying to resolve them. The critical and creative works are juxtaposed, but one does not explain or illustrate the other; rather they exist in a reflexive, porous and open relationship. The piece does not take a position on affect, but circles round the topic in ways that bring together diverse, even conflicting, perspectives. It includes interjections about affect in relation to the process of writing, performance, the media, the war in Iraq, cyberspace, music, dance, ethics, representation and so on.

In order to create the piece, we read widely within the literature about affect and emotion—though not systematically or comprehensively. In other words, our reading was exploratory, and we read to trigger creative responses, rather than to produce an overarching intellectual argument. Our reading was drawn from a number of different fields including literary and cultural theory, philosophy and cognitive psychology, but in retrospect two theoretical perspectives seem to hover over the piece. These two perspectives are, broadly speaking, from cognitive psychology and cultural studies. They also form the basis of my analysis, though this includes material I have read since we wrote the piece as well as before, and I will not attempt to distinguish between the various stages of that reading. Whereas the initial reading by both of us provided a trigger for the creation of the piece and the ideas in it, further perusal of the relevant theory has helped me to ponder retrospectively how the piece talks about affect and encodes its own affective experiences. It has enabled me to conceptualise how this emotional/affective experience is transmuted when the piece is trans-coded or 'translated' from print to multimedia.

The first of these perspectives stems from the work of cognitive psychologist Keith Oatley and is geared largely to emotion as I have defined it above. Oatley

argues that emotions are cognitive responses, accompanied by bodily sensations, to our tendency to make plans and goals. Drawing on his work with Johnson-Laird, Oatley (1992:46) proposes that 'an emotion occurs in relation to a person's several plans and goals when there is a significant change in assessment of the outcome of a goal or plan'. The matter is, however, complex because we have multiple goals that are in conflict with each other and emotions enable us to coordinate these goals. We experience positive emotions when this coordination is successful, negative emotions when it fails (Oatley 1992). For Oatley:

[E]motions derive from the cognitive processes for integrating multiple and sometimes vague goals and for managing plans that are enacted with limited resources in an uncertain environment, often in conjunction with other people. Happy emotions occur when coordination between plans is being achieved and unanticipated events are assimilated. Distressing emotions occur when coordination fails, or when some plan goes badly, when a problem emerges that cannot be solved from current resources or when an important background goal is violated. Emotions function to allow otherwise disparate aspects of a complex system to be co-ordinated. (Oatley 1992:43–4)

According to Oatley, therefore, emotions serve useful functions in helping us integrate our goals and plans, and can be important for quick decision making because we do not have to sift through all the arguments or possibilities in the way that might be necessary to make that decision by purely logical means. Oatley questions the idea that emotions are necessarily irrational while thought is rational—even if that is true in some cases—and views emotions as aids to thinking and behaving. Emotions can be aids to making decisions rapidly in cases where there is incomplete information: 'What they do is prompt us in a way that on average, during the course of evolution and assisted by our own development, has been better either than simply acting randomly or than becoming lost in thought trying to calculate the best possible action' (Oatley and Jenkins 1996:258). This, according to Oatley and Jenkins (1996), is an example of heuristics; a heuristic is 'a method of doing something that is usually useful when there is no guaranteed solution'.

Oatley is unusual in the way he draws many of his examples from literary texts, blurring the distinction between real life and fictional cases. These are, however, usually realist nineteenth-century texts such as *Anna Karenina* or *Middlemarch*, in which the emphasis is on character and situation. Oatley tends to analyse situations within the novels in terms of the emotions the characters experience and how these relate to the frustration or fulfilment of their plans. He does not attempt to look at affect in less realist fiction or poetry and he also does not consider the psychology of the reader and how this might be involved in the

means by which the work communicates. In particular, he does not attempt to investigate how the reading process itself might be characterised by emotional interruption or fulfilment.

On the other hand, our reading also encompassed cultural studies material that was influenced by the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1994). This material tends to interrogate the assumptions behind more humanist perspectives and consequently is less cognitively and subject/person based. Rather it stresses pre-personal and non-subjective 'intensities'. For Deleuze and Guattari, everything belongs to a flow of 'becoming', which constitutes one immanent plane of being. According to them, we have to perceptually and intellectually carve up the world to understand it, but fundamentally everything is interconnected. Deleuze and Guattari do not deny the presence of the subject, but see the subject as an artificial construction. For Deleuze and Guattari, emotions and perceptions become affects and percepts at least partially detached from a point of view centred in a specific subject. Here the distinction between subject and object central to cognitive theory collapses, as affects cross over, engage with and move between human and non-human bodies producing 'affective intensities'. Deleuze and Guattari also draw attention to different formations of sensations such as 'the embrace' or 'the clinch' (the coupling of sensations) and 'withdrawal, division and distension' (the uncoupling of sensations). Affect is closely linked in Deleuze and Guattari's work with transformation and even with creativity itself. They suggest that artists are 'presenters of affects, the inventors and creators of affect' and that 'a great novelist is above all an artist who invents unknown or unrecognized affects and brings them to light as the becoming of his characters' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994:174).

We also explored cultural studies material, particularly the work of Brian Massumi (2002), which focused on the relationship between affect and politics: the way in which responses to political events could be primarily affective and the means by which affect was manipulated through the media by politicians to draw the populace into line with a conservative view of current events.

Both these perspectives (the cognitive and the cultural) are incorporated into the collaboration in direct and subliminal ways. In some sections, the theoretical input is quite direct, such as in the following passage, which outlines Oatley's ideas and then moves outward with the idea of the plot—the fictional equivalent of Oatley's 'real-life' plan:

Keith Oatley argues that emotions are cognitive processes that arise from our tendency as human agents to make plans, rather like plots in a narrative. Positive emotions occur when goals are fulfilled, negative ones when they are thwarted. The situation is complex, because we usually

have multiple conflicting goals; our plans involve other people; and we often have to make decisions in an unpredictable environment.

Not just one plot, then, but plots within plots, competing plots, and plots without beginning or end. (Brewster and Smith 2003)

Another passage also draws on theoretical material from Derrida, and implicitly Massumi. It introduces the notion of the manipulation of feeling by politicians at the start of the Iraq war, partly through the promotion of stereotypical and negatively geared emotions towards the 'enemy'. The affective reaction of the speaker is one of bodily dysfunction:

It's 11.30 p.m., just before Bush is to address the US. I am almost incapacitated by a tired sick feeling. I guess we have all become drugged by the American imperative to feel—outrage, fear, pride (and our intense counter-feeling which John Howard named this morning in his address to the nation as 'rancour') which started with the attacks of September 11th. We watched with a growing frustration the incitement in the US of a powerful discourse of feelings, an instrumentalist military sublime. The American president drew a justification for war-mongering on the basis of his feelings of outrage. He once again arrogates to the American people the right to be human, to suffer; correspondingly the inhuman is returned to the third world, which has no claim to a collective subjectivity.

A journalist asked John Howard this morning whether he saw historical precedents (such as Viet Nam) in the current situation and he blithely dismissed 'history'. At times like this, he said, we can only think about the present. This is precisely where a discourse of feelings is so politically expeditious; it erases the history of antagonisms and an analysis of causes (such as a rapacious US foreign policy). And so we see the insidious effects of instrumentalist feeling in what Derrida calls the grotesque 'onto-theology of national humanism'.⁷ (Brewster and Smith 2003)

Different approaches to emotion and affect hover over the piece thematically, but formal aspects of the piece can also be construed in a similar light. On the one hand, there is more subject-based writing—that is, writing where we are aware of authors, characters, narrators or voices as focal points, even though they are highly constructed and tend to convey emotions that are conflicting, complex and destabilising. These passages tend more towards the depiction of emotional situations and the pressure towards emotional identification by the reader. On the other hand, the piece also includes types of writing that are less subject based and that convey affect in a way less tied to a particular point of view or focalisation. These passages move closer to the notion of affective intensities. Obviously, these two extremes (the more subject based and the less

subject based) form the end points of a continuum and most of the writing is along that continuum rather than at its extremes.

Similarly, the collaboration involves different ways of engaging with affect and emotion through linguistic and generic strategies aimed at representation or the breakdown of representation. On the one hand, it consists of more (though by no means entirely) narrative, realist and expository types of writing, which at least partially encourage the illusion of emotional identification by the reader with situations and characters within the text—as well as some passages that directly transmit theoretical ideas. At the same time, it also includes types of writing that break up semantic, narrative or descriptive continuities. These types of writing tend to disrupt emotional categories and dissolve them into a flow, or assemblage, of sensations/impressions or 'affective intensities'. Such writing has a strong connection with the long tradition of twentieth and twenty-first century experimental writing and, most recently, with American language writing and its various successors.

Two examples will serve to illustrate the way the different modes of writing are inscribed in the text:⁸

I wonder if I am still alive at UNSW
the dead are remembered
but those who remember them
die also

The light is on in my room and
someone else is opening
my filing cabinet
which probably has finally collapsed

That last day we took photos hoping to hold on to
that which must inevitably slip away
we grin into the camera
stiffening to a trace

Meanwhile my email address passes over into redirection

You're glad to have escaped
but you'd also still like to be imprisoned
because it's safe

Sometimes I'm sad
sometimes I claim to be sad
sometimes I say I'm not sad but I am
I don't recognise a feeling until I'm falling out of it

Everyone thinks that their experience is singular
but everything is at least double
and we all know
that memories have limited respect
for identity

The best workplace is a mobile home
and moving through means passing on
but every day your ghost kicks into me
UNSW
(Brewster and Smith 2003)

had until today
whether or
not as revealed last week a
grave decision until yesterday
declared the skies surround
his strongholds
dailytelegraph.com immediately
defiant talk coaxed
shock and awe
in an hour appointed
brandishing a
tens of thousands a
political pause flammable mist
stunned
into under cover
whether or not
or not or not or
(Brewster and Smith 2003)

In the first poem, the sense of subjectivity is fragile. The speaker wonders if she can still be alive if she is not remembered and expresses considerable doubts about what her feelings really are: whether they are joy at 'escaping' or regret at no longer being in the former workplace. Feelings are not characterised as being easily coordinated cognitively: 'I don't recognise a feeling until I'm falling out of it'. Despite the fragility of the subject, however, and her lack of emotional and cognitive coordination, there is a sense of a focal subjectivity and an identifiable situation: the removal from one work environment to another. In Oatley's terms, the emotional ambivalence is caused by the conflict between two goals: the desire for change and a new workplace, and nostalgia for the previous one.

In the second piece, however, an overall point of view, or single identifiable situation, is less present. This is hardly surprising because the piece is a collage composed of fragments taken from newspaper headlines during the (second) 2003 Iraq invasion by the US-led coalition. In this piece, there is less sense that the fragments project a unified point of view. The indecisiveness or hesitancy at the end is not that of a particular person and, while the fragments suggest a situation (for example, 'shock and awe' was the name given to the attacks in the Iraq war), that situation is conveyed in a way that is indeterminate and fractured. It does not relate the sensations it transmits—such as stunned—to a particular consciousness, or locate them in a personalised emotional state. Furthermore, different viewpoints—such as that of the propagandist government and of the reader of the newspaper—are collapsed into each other, so that an overriding viewpoint is splintered and multiple perspectives unfold, which include feelings of disarray and impotence. These are not firmly rooted in a consistent subjectivity and as a result seem close to the concept of affective intensities.⁹

Overall, then, the print version oscillates between emotional identification and affective intensities, taking up also various positions in between and transmitting ideas about emotion and affect through its content and its form.

From print to multimedia and from emotion to affect

I now want to explore how in the translation/trans-coding from print to multimedia the piece shifts more strongly from emotional identification to affective intensities. The multimedia form of the piece is called 'soundAFFECTs' (Dean et al. 2004) and it brings together text, image and sound. 'soundAFFECTs' uses 'AFFECTions' as its base though it does not employ the whole text. Sections of the text now take the form of modules, each created as still or moving frames of a digital video, which are rearranged in each digital version. Roger Dean processed the modules, with programs written by him within the real-time image-processing platform Jitter, treating the text as a series of visual objects. The most important difference between the multimedia version and the page-based version is its variability. In the multimedia version, there is no fixed text; the order of texts and the way any particular one is processed will be reconstituted each time. The soundtrack, or at least a significant portion of it, is generated by Dean from the same algorithms and is also variable. This means there will always be some shared features between the versions but also considerable differences. So this is a form of creative production that is dynamic, productive and generative, unlike the print text, which remains identical with itself on a material level even if it is composed of differences at the level of content and style.

A number of different processes occur in this multimedia version. The texts are treated as visual objects in blocks. They are superimposed on each other; they are also stretched or compressed. Texts disintegrate into, and overwrite, other

texts (though they do not necessarily overwrite them in the sense of replacing them). Texts are repeated; the screen divides into several sections, sometimes multiplying the same text, sometimes combining different ones, and so on. At times—particularly towards the end of the processing—the text becomes an intensively visual, dynamic and kinetic spectacle with the screen divided into several segments and a number of different processes operating at once with considerable rapidity. The multimedia version of the piece greatly accentuates certain characteristics already inherent in the print text towards interruption, fragmentation, circularity and non-linearity. It also speeds everything up enormously, creating a sense of extreme flux. The processing and the speed problematise the reading process: they are ‘flickering signifiers’ (Hayles 1999:47–8). Sometimes the words disappear before they can be fully digested; sometimes they appear in only partly readable forms or even in forms that can hardly be read at all. The multimedia version speeds reading up (we cannot read at our own pace and must scan the text much of the time rather than reading it); it also promotes movement and transformation of the text.

Most relevantly to my argument, the multimedia version breaks down the semantic, narrative, expositional aspects of the print version. In so doing it largely erodes a sense of the subject (distinct authors, narrators, characters or voices). The words point momentarily to authors or narrators who themselves flicker, transform and dissolve. Relevant here is Katherine Hayles’ idea that the binary opposition between presence and absence (so predominant in some post-structuralist thinking) has been replaced in the discourses of informational systems by the binary of pattern and randomness. Hayles (1999) also argues, however, that the need to theorise embodiment as part of the cyber experience means that pattern must go hand in hand with presence and randomness with absence. In ‘soundAFFECTs’, words become patterns not only because they transform into visual designs, but because they convey shifting patterns of meaning that are not continuous or sustained. At the same time, the ghostly sense of voices/bodies that put these patterns into motion, or arise out of them, continuously haunts the text. These voices/bodies are those of the authors who are writing the text, the narrators who transmit it and the characters who inhabit it.

This leads us to the multi-sensory aspect of the piece: text, image and word combine and this greatly increases the range and interaction of sensations. An important aspect of this is what I have elsewhere called semiotic exchange—that is, the way different media, when brought together, can modify, even take on, each other’s characteristics (Smith and Dean 1997). In ‘soundAFFECTs’, the text becomes image, while the sound intensifies the content of the words. This is a type of synaesthesia—that is, one sensory modality is ‘translated’ into another so that the meaning of the words is experienced in terms of sonic and visual stimuli (in poetry, synaesthesia usually alludes to the transference that occurs

in metaphor from one sensory realm to another). Synaesthesia is central to multimedia practice, but in 'soundAFFECTs' it also takes the form of what we have conceptualised as 'algorithmic synaesthesia' (Dean et al. 2006). In algorithmic synaesthesia, image and sound share, at least partly, the same data and algorithmic processes. In 'soundAFFECTs', for example, many of the sonic effects are 'translations' of the movements of the text as image, and in the web version of the piece it is noticeable that the greatest density of sound is where there is most movement in the image. In addition, some of the source sounds that can be implemented in renderings of the piece have been made using programs such as Metasynth, in which a static image is read kinetically by an algorithm that generates sound.¹⁰

The sound, in particular, is extremely important in the shift from emotion to affect because sound (in general) *is* a flux of sensations, even more than words. Words, in contrast, always bear the burden of a referentiality that partly interrupts and fixes the flux and point to concrete situations in which pure sensation is dampened, objectified and solidified. Discussion of emotion in music—for example, in the work of Meyer—has often centred on the way it evokes emotional states deriving from the fulfilment or frustration of expectations (see Meyer 1956). This is somewhat akin to Oatley's concept that emotions arise in response to the fulfilment or interruption of goals. The concept, however, of a flux of sensations—of 'affective intensities'—seems to address more directly music's abstract, less cognitive and less referential aspects. This is particularly significant with regard to computer music, in which audience expectations are likely to be less pronounced than in more traditional musical forms.

In '*soundAFFECTs*', the sound continually moves the words beyond the domain of the referential while also interacting with it. Lawrence Kramer's (2002) work on mixed media and musical meaning is relevant here. He argues that music is more 'semantically absorptive' than other media. When juxtaposed with the 'imagetext'—a term he has adopted from W. J. T. Mitchell to signify the fusion of image and text—music takes on the semantic meanings generated by that imagetext. At the same time, musical meaning exceeds the referentiality of the imagetext. In mixed media, Kramer (2002:153) suggests, meaning 'runs on a loop'. The music seems to emit a meaning that 'it actually returns, and what it returns, it enriches and transforms' (Kramer 2002). For Kramer:

From the standpoint of the imagetext, music has greater communicative immediacy, though less communicative power. Music, indeed, is one of the defining modes of an immediacy that the imagetext has to exclude in order to stabilise itself, to enable its generalising, abstracting, and speculative capacities, even at the cost of an ambivalent fascination with the excluded and excluding other. But as soon as meaning effectively runs from the imagetext to music along the semantic loop, the music

seems to convey that meaning to and through the imagetext in preconceptual, prerepresentational form. (Kramer 2002:153)

While Kramer does not refer specifically to affect here, the affective properties of music—and I mean affect here rather than emotion—seem to be implied in this idea of the capacity of music to return meaning to the imagetext in ‘pre-conceptual, pre-representational form’.

The sound in ‘soundAFFECTs’ is generated algorithmically and is different in each performance. Nevertheless, all renderings of it will involve the genre known as noise: this means that the sound changes, but the changes come from relative distribution of energy in the frequencies, rather than abrupt transitions of pitches and ‘notes’. There is, therefore, a continuous flow of sound with some variation, but it is not structured in a way that segments it or emphasises beginning, middle and end. It is rather like Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987:22) description of a plateau as ‘a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end’. In several sequences in the web version, for example, the sound consists of a band of frequencies that moves from low to high in a repeating cycle. The impression when listening to the opening of this version of the piece is of protracted ascents of rising pitches. These slow ascents then develop into simultaneous ascending cycles at different speeds but with increasing density and levelling out of the pitch as the piece progresses. In addition, the use of multi-channel spatialised sound when the work is performed live produces a high degree of immersion for the audience, which helps them to receive the work with immediacy and as a flux of sensations. This immersion is greatly accentuated by the darkened room, the large screen and the sharing of the experience with others. In this respect, the experience of the web version is different from that of the performance version(s).

All these factors result in a much stronger push and pull between continuity and discontinuity in the multimedia version than in the print version. On the one hand, the texts are more interruptive in the multimedia than the print version and rapidly displace each other; there are also interruptions when from time to time a black screen lingers between texts. In other respects, however, the multimedia version is much more continuous than the print version: there are no gaps between the texts, except for the occasional black spaces, there is considerable repetition of texts and the disparate texts are welded together with image and sound. The overall effect is that the multimedia version breaks up the emotional ups and downs and emotional identifications that characterise some sections of the print version into a flux of sensations. As a result, it produces an affective environment, which fluctuates more continuously than the print version.

The question remains, then, how we can theorise this change in affective experience in the trans-coding from print to multimedia. I suggest that in order

to do this we look at it through the lens of the cultural and cognitive theory I mentioned earlier. In terms of Deleuzian theory, the multimedia version is stronger, as I have already implied, at creating 'affective intensities'. Sensations couple and uncouple in the way Deleuze and Guattari describe, as the texts are superimposed on each other or disintegrate, and the words couple and uncouple with image and sound. The multimedia version increases, much more than the print version, the flow of becoming (that is, it speeds everything up). Deleuze talks about how we slow the flow of becoming, the vast and chaotic data we receive, in order to perceive and comprehend the world. Speeding it up again is perhaps to return, even if momentarily, to the state of flux and becoming. The multimedia version also puts what Deleuze and Guattari call 'planes of composition' together (in this case, the sequences in *Jitter*) only to disrupt them, making a non-linear text considerably less linear. Here non-linearity seems to be identified with increased intensity. Massumi (2002:26) suggests that 'intensity would seem to be associated with nonlinear processes: it creates resonance and feedback that momentarily suspend the linear progress of the narrative present from past to future'.

In addition, the multimedia version of the piece detaches emotions and perceptions from a sustained monolithic point of view, creating affects and percepts. This happens because the multimedia piece breaks down—much further than the print version—the sense of specific states of affect and perception rooted in particular subjects, though the process is already beginning in the print version. These affects and percepts are not distinct states, linked by causes and effects, but are multiple, simultaneous and superimposed. So the multimedia version puts the focus—even more than the print version—on the relationality between texts and the relation between text, image and sound. The ascending and overlapping cycles of sound, described above, also communicate a sense of changing and simultaneous intensities rather than evoking a particular emotional state.

We can also see here that this version produces its ethical and political content through affective intensities rather than sustained representation or exposition of political issues. The screener/reader catches glimpses of political and ethical meanings rather than detailed political insights and these meanings are extended, fractured and transmogrified by the addition of the sound and the transmutation of text into image. This is, of course, in keeping with objectives of avant-garde art, which has always conveyed political meanings in ways that are fragmented, anti-representational and inter-media. Relevant also here is the work of Tim Woods and Andrew Gibson, who theorise outwards from the theoretical stance of Emmanuel Levinas to argue that an ethical writing does not have to be determinate or representational. This is because ethics are not built on a foundational or fixed morality: for Gibson (1999:16), it is not based on 'categories, principles or codes' and does not presume 'an exteriority comprehensible in

terms of hypostasized essences, static identities or wholes'. For Woods, similarly, an ethical poetry does not involve totalities and totalising structures, but emerges in fragments, gaps and fissures typical of an alternative tradition of poetic writing from Gertrude Stein to American language poetry. An ethical poetry, according to Woods (2002:255), resides in a 'poetics of interruption'. This poetics of interruption is also a vehicle for affect: in 'soundAFFECTs', the political and ethical become affective through the increased intensity brought by the visual and sonic, despite the gaps in the meaning.

On the other hand, the work of Oatley, with some qualifications, can also shed light on this transition from print to multimedia. To adopt Oatley's theoretical stance is to view the work from a more cognitive and empirically based position and any extrapolation we make from his ideas could be tested only in an experimental/empirical context. In order to do this, we have to adapt Oatley's ideas to the reading/reception process, which he does not himself do. In so doing, we can speculate that the experience of viewing 'soundAFFECTs' is that of forming a plan made up of sub-plans, which need to be coordinated. Throughout the work, we can hypothesise that there is a push and pull for the reader/screener between the fulfilment of the overall plan (the absorption of the multi-sensory work) and the interruption of the plan by the sub-plans (the reading of the texts). This interruption gives rise to a state of rapidly fluctuating arousal.

The main problem with Oatley's approach, from a cultural theory perspective, is that it retreats into a more subject-based, humanist position and that it falls back into the idea of emotion. Oatley's theoretical framework, however, has the advantage of being very concrete and precise. It could be used as the basis for empirical research to explore matters of reception and how reactions of the audience differ when reading the text, viewing the multimedia work or experiencing a combination of the two.

To conclude, the translation of the print version 'AFFECTions: friendship, community, bodies' into 'soundAFFECTs', the multimedia version, provides a changed affective experience characterised by a rapid flux of sensations rather than sustained emotional build-ups and identifications. To account for this transition, and the impact of the multimedia work, we require a theoretical framework that engages with the idea of affective intensities put forward by Deleuze and Guattari. It is also useful, however, to take on board Oatley's concept of emotional interruption and its possible applications. Ideally, an appreciation of the piece would involve reading 'AFFECTions' and viewing 'soundAFFECTs', since both versions evoke different types of meaning and affective response, which can be seen to be mutually enriching; here translation becomes a two-way, symbiotic process. Reading texts, listening to sound or looking at images is increasingly part of a multi-modal experience that requires negotiation between different media, technological environments and affective experiences. Such a

multi-modality points to a huge diversity of textual possibilities, an increased range of aesthetic and cultural modes of production and to translation as a continuing and continuously evolving process.

References

- Benjamin, W. 1999, *Illuminations*, Pimlico, London.
- Brewster, A. 1996, 'Fictocriticism: undisciplined writing', *First Conference of the Association of University Writing Programs*, pp. 29–32.
- Brewster, A. and Smith, H. 2003, 'AFFECTions: friendship, community, bodies', *Text*, vol. 7, p. 2,
<<http://www.gu.edu.au/school/art/text/oct03/brewstersmith.htm>>
- Dean, R., Whitelaw, M., Smith, H. and Worrall, D. 2006, 'The mirage of real-time algorithmic synaesthesia: some compositional mechanisms and research agendas in computer music and sonification', *Contemporary Music Review*, vol. 25, p. 4.
- Dean, R. T., Brewster, A. and Smith, H. 2004, 'soundAFFECTs', *Text*, vol. 8, p. 2, <<http://www.gu.edu.au/school/art/text/oct04/content.htm>> or <<http://www.gu.edu.au/school/art/text/oct04/smith2.htm>>
- Dean, R. T., Brewster, A. and Smith, H. 2008, *The Erotics of Geography: Poetry performance texts, new media works*, Tinfish Press, Hawai'i.
- Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. 1987, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.
- Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. 1994, 'Percept, affect, and concept', *What is Philosophy?*, Verso, London and New York, pp. 163–200.
- Gibson, A. 1999, *Postmodernity, Ethics and the Novel: From Leavis to Levinas*, Routledge, London and New York.
- Hayles, N. K. 1999, *How We Became Posthuman*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Kerr, H. and Nettelbeck, A. (eds) 1998, *The Space Between: Australian women writing fictocriticism*, University of Western Australia Press, Perth.
- Kramer, L. 2002, *Musical Meaning: Toward a critical history*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles.
- Manovitch, L. 2001, *The Language of New Media*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.
- Massumi, B. 2002, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, affect, sensation*, Duke University Press, Durham and London.
- Meyer, L. B. 1956, *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, Chicago University Press, Chicago.

- Oatley, K. 1992, *Best Laid Schemes: The psychology of emotions*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Oatley, K. and Jenkins, Jennifer M. 1996, *Understanding Emotions*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- Smith, H. and Dean, R. T. 1997, *Improvisation, Hypermedia and the Arts Since 1945*, Harwood Academic, London.
- Terada, R. 2001, *Feeling in Theory: Emotion after the 'death of the subject'*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., and London.
- Woods, T. 2002, *The Poetics of the Limit: Ethics and politics in modern and contemporary American poetry*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, Hampshire.

Endnotes

- ¹ A version of this chapter was previously published in *Scan: Journal of Media Arts Culture*, vol. 4, no.1, 2007.
- ² See CD-ROM accompanying Dean et al. (2008) for a full-screen version of 'soundAFFECTS'.
- ³ There is, however, also a web version of the piece available at <http://www.textjournal.com.au/oct04/smith2.mov> (Dean et al. 2004). This is a Quicktime movie that 'captures' one rendering of the piece.
- ⁴ As Lev Manovitch (2001:47) says, 'In new media lingo, to "transcode" something is to translate it into another format.'
- ⁵ Massumi also draws a distinction between emotion and affect. For him, emotion is conventionally and culturally constructed and affect is intensity, which is 'unassimilable' (Massumi 2002:27–8).
- ⁶ The relationship between new media writing and affect has also not yet been adequately theorised. This is partly because of a paucity of theorising about new media writing in general and partly because of an understandable tendency in early theorising to focus on technical features such as hyperlinking and interactivity rather than their psychological and political effects.
- ⁷ John Howard was Australian Prime Minister from 1996 to 2008.
- ⁸ UNSW here stands for University of New South Wales.
- ⁹ Another section of the collaboration, 'Frrustration', is also a good example of affective intensities, in a slightly different way, because it is composed almost entirely of bodily sensations conveyed in a build-up of short phrases: 'the body takes over like a crazed mechanical wind-up toy, rehearsing the pretext of metaphor. its elegiac pulse thumping like a jackhammer, its discursive fluids leaking, bones grinding, muscles clenched in this Olympian task of speaking.'
- ¹⁰ Technical details of the programming and performance of the image and sound were provided for me by Roger Dean.