Stories from the Breakdown Lane

Ordinary Affects on the Road to Detroit

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From the perspective of ordinary affects, things like narrative and identity become tentative though forceful compositions of disparate and moving elements: the watching and waiting for an event to unfold, the details of scenes, the strange or predictable progression in which one thing leads to another, the still life that gives pause, the resonance that lingers, the lines along which signs rush and form relays, the layering of immanent experience, the dreams of rest or redemption or revenge.
—Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*[1]

[N]othing repeats itself, nothing ever comes back, except coming itself, which is never the same—but, rather, the indefinitely altered return of the same. That which has been fragmented will not be either reconstituted or reengendered—except by those [who] would [insist upon] aping an absent cosmos out of contempt for the event of the world.

But, of course, that which has been fragmented [. . .] has not simply disappeared in the process of being broken down. One must know first of all what remains in the fragments: where is the beautiful in the fragments of the beautiful? How does it come to be fragmented?
—Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Sense of the World*[2]

I. LINGERING IN THE PERIPHERAL

When the Compass group of the Midwest Radical Culture Corridor met to plan our trip to the U. S. Social Forum (USSF), we decided to focus on the peripheries; we were interested in the "road to Detroit," on what would be

passed by on the way. We were most curious about how forums of this kind intersect with the multitude of local, small-scale, but long-term, modes of resistance to globalization in the twenty-first century American Midwest. In Kathleen Stewart's phrase, we wished to think about the forum as "a tangle of potential connections." So we organized *around* the forum, investigating the disruption and establishment of possible futures as they developed, personally and collectively, between global activists from across the world, Detroit activists, and partisans of all stripes from the Great Lakes region.[3] This essay extends the peripheries of the event into the realm of the ordinary life of citizens traveling by bus to and through Detroit during the days of the forum. In this narrative, the Social Forum is a destination only for myself alone; for all my fellow travelers, Detroit is just a connection, a relay station. Ultimately, it's a story about breakdown; a travel narrative about delays and detours on the Greyhound bus between Chicago and Detroit. Nothing of note occurred as a result of these delays; nothing was done or said that would make it into the papers. But these ordinary moments matter because they shape our capacity to develop sustainable future selves. As Stewart writes, ordinary life is "a kind of contact zone where the overdeterminations of circulations, events, conditions, technologies, and flow of power literally take place." In the case of the delayed bus, an "us" composed of citizens-in-transit, ordinary people pushed together in the disruption of a regularly scheduled service, dis/orient each other. We weave a fabric of personal and mutual concern, a complex minimum of social relations that is temporary but not fragile. This account tracks disconnections and delays in order to ask, "what moves when nothing moves?"

The affect I track clusters around three kinds of modern bodies—laborers, citizens, and consumers—but what I wish to track are the intensities that flare along the orbits of decay these bodies undergo when habitual patterns crumble. For some period of time, we go along as we were before, sustaining inherited forms, helping each other to ignore the world in ruins. But eventually a moment comes when feeling, awake to new realities, generates new possibilities, both awful and thrilling. This narrative attempts to linger in the thrilling, painful inexactness of perceptions and responses as they pass, fleeting phantoms on the twilit borderlands between then and now, the mucky edges separating is from could be.

Detroit has come to symbolize the disintegration of modernism's material and affective circuits.[4] What is this Detroit, and how does its specter, the glittering green of a million shattered window-panes, haunt ordinary life?

II. KALAMAZOO NOT TIMBUKTU

Summer teaching required me to travel between Detroit and Chicago several times during the week of the forum. I chose Greyhound because it was cheap.

This, it appeared, motivated the other passengers' choice as well The bags we stowed as we climbed aboard at 6:30 a.m. on a Saturday in June were well worn, improvised, and inadequate. For the majority of passengers, Detroit was a transfer site between Chicago and various Eastern and Southern states. For many, Chicago was also a transit center. Not sharing a common origin or destination on this voyage, it is our choice of transportation that unites us. We are citizens-in-transit, bodies allowing themselves to be carted in mass. "Going from Kalamazoo to Timbuktu," an elderly man half sings, half groans, shoving a nylon travel case onto the overhead rack. He's quoting a song my mother grew up singing on a sugar beet farm in central Michigan. The 1951 recording (by Mitch Miller) goes:

There's a train by the stationIn KalamazooAnd it soon will be leavingOn track number twoI heard the conductor sayIt's going a long, long wayIt's going all the wayFrom Kalamazoo to Timbuktu[5]

Sung softly, half-ironically, with a sigh, "Timbuktu" indicates only that we're going on a minor excursion in peripheral space, from somewhere to somewhere else. Still, there's always a faint glimmer of excitement to be going—the approach of a general somewhere. If not a going toward, then a leaving, a coming unstuck, and the relief of discovering we are indeed free to piece together some other thing. Faded memories of fresh beginnings. But, as passengers, our destination is a goal, rather than a destiny, and we are simply glad to be underway. The trip is "down time," a period of non-productivity. Glad to be able to turn over responsibility for our going, we shift and settle, hunkering down and cuddling up. We drift. Some read. Several listen to music or mess with cell phones. Most switch into sleep mode, conserving batteries.

The architecture of the bus cushions us and establishes a sense of insular commonality. As citizen-customers, we are each parceled out in neat containers. Our high-backed seats cocoon and constrain. In part, this is because the sight lines are incredibly reduced, so that each seat becomes a kind of padded cell dominated by the one window. You are with others, but only in a very general way. In this way, the Greyhound's interior sustains the civic life of customer service. It produces a perceptual atmosphere of regularized and regulating care that compels us to keep to ourselves and the children quiet, to allow the hum of the bus to lull us into drowsiness. Gazing out my bus window, I watch city turn into freeway, suburbs into farmland. I cherish this privacy.

Our bus is neither a local nor an express. Our first stop is Benton Harbor, Michigan, where we take twenty-minutes to load passengers. It's a chance for smokers to appease their cravings, and for caffeine and sugar addicts to stock up at the bus station store. I enjoy the allegorical significance of Benton

Harbor being on "the road to Detroit," for it is here that some of the more pronounced shifts in power, following the logics of neo-liberal restructuring, have occurred.

Little Benton Harbor is now as important a site of restructuring as is once-mighty Detroit. For many years, the town's majority black population worked in, and in proximity to, that most modern of industrial enterprises, the Whirlpool factory. The Whirlpool corporation, "the world's leading manufacturer of household appliances," is now celebrating its centennial anniversary. Throughout the century, its factories produced the "fixtures" (the sinks and toilets, refrigerators and stoves, washers and dryers) that secured each home to the great industrial projects of the modern age, the water and sewage systems, the electric grid, and gas pipelines. More recently, the company has followed the familiar transition from factory to corporation. It still maintains corporate headquarters in the neighboring, majority white, town of St. Joseph. But it sent the last of its manufacturing plants overseas in the 1990s. Since then, Benton Harbor has become impoverished; the median annual income is $10,000. It has also been the site of a new kind of thievery from above as public utilities—schools, parks, and even government offices—are increasingly privatized. Of course, these were the fundamental building blocks by which the forces of modernism manufactured the subjects of quotidian life and formed a commonwealth normally taken for granted by U. S. citizens. But this infrastructure is no longer public in Benton Harbor. The school bus service was sold to a private company; the Michigan Department of Natural Resources approved the transformation of the waterfront, a public park since 1917, into a private golf course; and, using new powers granted by the state legislature, control of the city government was seized by an Emergency Financial Manager—an unelected official who now controls the town's city board and elected representatives. In this patchwork landscape of the new world order, the "commons" is disorganized, interrupting the established boundary lines of the modern era (such as those between worker and manager, labor and leisure, first-world and third-world).

Jesse Jackson recently described Benton Harbor as having the potential to "become to economic justice what the small town of Selma was to civil rights."[6] But this potential depends upon the construction of a culture of resistance at least as powerful as that of the Civil Rights Movement. Certainly, the citizens of Benton Harbor have responded to the erosion of their commons. In 2003, the town was shaken by three days of rioting in response to the death of a motorcyclist during a police chase. The more recent privatization efforts, which have received fairly extensive publicity in the left and liberal press, have occasioned some protests. But the case of Benton Harbor raises the question of how we, as quotidian subjects of this America, come to feel responsible to each other's investments in these institutions that we take

for granted? How could, or should, we respond when they are stolen away, but only after they have been, like so many of the nation's public schools, corrupted beyond any sense of ordinary repair?

The coffee drinkers return, Styrofoam cups in hand; the sugar addicts with donuts and pop; the smokers have crushed out their cigarettes. A few more passengers have joined us and the bus is nearly full. As the driver takes his seat, there is a commotion near the front. A man is standing in the aisle, gesturing without words. He points across the parking lot and thumps an empty seat. On the far end of the lot, an elderly woman is standing next to a service wall between the bus depot and a gas station on which are growing a vibrant mass of grape leaves. She picks the leaves and collects them in the lap of her skirt. The driver tells the gesturing man to sit, but he continues to agitate until he is dispatched to call the woman. When she hears him, she turns, and, skirt full of leaves, shuffles toward us.

It's a long moment; she walks slowly, carefully. One by one and in pairs, many of the rest of us begin to fume a little bit, filling the bus with an aura of im/patience. Whispered conversations begin as people explain the delay. A male voice from the seat behind me says, "Get a move on," just loud enough for those in nearby seats to hear—back of the bus talk. A woman next to him across the aisle, a new passenger, deflects the complaint by asking, "What's she going to do with those leaves?" "Eat them, I guess."

When she boards, the driver voices our anxiety, barking red-faced: "Hurry up, lady! You're holding us up!" Perhaps it's the relief of hearing my own frustration stated, or perhaps it's my greater antipathy to authority than to delay: either way, I like how she ignores the driver completely, neither looking up at him, nor down the aisle at the rest of us, as she takes her seat. Her companion is equally impassive. In their non-commitment to the collective of passengers, I find the exoticism heralded by the man's song. Timbuktu *is* on the way to Kalamazoo. In their passivity, their slowness, their lack of understanding or concern for how we do things here, they suggest another world. Our normal is lightly punctuated by her gleaning. Her approach to the environment makes immanent a shift in our commonsense, as we confront our own habits of consumption which lead us to perceive food as in the bus station shop, rather than on the wall outside. Now, as we head toward the highway, her lap is full of grape leaves, which she begins to roll, one at a time, into pencil-like scrolls that she carefully tucks into a plastic shopping bag.

An hour later we arrive in Kalamazoo, as far as this bus goes. Everyone exits, and most of us wander over to the next terminal, seeking the bus for Detroit. We stand at first one terminal and then another, and gradually it becomes clear that the Detroit-bound bus has already left. It pulled out of Kalamazoo twenty minutes earlier, without us. We had arrived thirty minutes behind schedule. The grape-picker's walk across the parking lot accounted

for a small part of the delay. Most of the extra time was spent in a traffic jam which most of us had slept through. With growing frustration, those of us bound for Detroit and beyond file into Kalamazoo to find out what's going on.

III. SHELL AND SHELTER

The "intermodal transportation center" of Kalamazoo nestles parasitically inside a minor masterpiece of modern architecture. The original train depot was built for the Michigan Central Railroad in 1887 from designs by Cyrus Eidlitz, an architect best known for One Times Square (the building from which a ball is dropped on New Year's Eve), Dearborn Station in Chicago, and the Bell Laboratories Building in Manhattan. The Romanesque revival design features numerous rows of simple arches which extend down the front and back sides of the building and perpendicularly in a row which runs along the outside of the building to form a semi-detached sequence of parking spaces for the buses.

The interior is a dark, lofty space, cool and echoing. Long wooden benches, pew-like and softened by generations of wear, are arranged at regular intervals. But inside the red stone walls a second, very different structure has been erected. Here cubicles with Plexiglas windows separate passengers from the solitary customer service agent. A poster on the wall of the cubical states that "All persons, their belongings and packages, are subject to being searched at any time." A second poster repeat's the first one's message in small print, explaining in legalistic detail that Greyhound has the authority to conduct searches of any passenger's body and possessions whenever one of its agents chooses to do so.

One-by-one and in small groups, the stranded passengers assemble. At first, we wander around, stunned by the change in plans as well as by the somber and dignified expanse of space in which we now find ourselves. There is no one to greet us, no ticket counter, or obvious information booth. Eventually, the sole attendant is discovered behind the window of her cubicle. She explains, apologetically but firmly, that the transit center is a "public-private partnership." She works for the town's tourist board, part time. Her job is to hand out brochures for local attractions and accommodations. She does not work for the bus line and she has no information for us regarding the missing connection. The Greyhound Corporation has its own customer service representatives, who work in the neighboring booth from nine-to-five, Monday through Friday. She can't help it that it's Saturday. She suggests we call Greyhound. Several passengers have already done so, and the rest of us listen as one of them recites the findings out loud: Greyhound ticket agents are available to sell us seats on the next available bus, but for a missed connection we need to speak with a customer service representative. Customer service representatives are available during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, nine-to-five . . .

We are stuck in low value time. We've fallen into a peripheral zone on the margins of the information highway, stuck in a temporal eddy. The cool brick and the echo hold us with the patience of a deep pool, but its stillness only makes our frustration more naked. Surprise fades into disappointment, which inflates into dismay. Incredulity gives way to anger, which surges outward, pulling us together and pushing us apart at once.

I begin to recognize faces. We are the left behinds. The grape-leaf picker and her companion have disappeared. Apparently, they are not waiting for this bus. Or perhaps they are waiting elsewhere, oblivious to the situation. Distinguishing details emerge and proliferate as we unfurl into each other's narratives. A tall, dark-skinned woman is wearing a White Sox jersey and skinny jeans. A middle-aged, overweight, white couple sit together, the man looking sullen, the woman pink-cheeked, talking into her cell phone. An elderly gentleman sits primly on one of the benches, reading a novel. A young woman with crimson hair is texting furiously. We vent in various ways. "Wait a minute," a woman in a red t-shirt keeps saying, "wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute." "I just called my Uncle," a twenty-something with bleached hair and a leather jacket says, "and my Grandmother is now crying. I do not need this!" A guy in a t-shirt and jeans narrates his efforts to work his way up the Greyhound chain of command. "Back on hold," he tells two or three others, who are sitting on the benches across from him.

Sharing our complaints, we help each other to come unglued. We shake off our anonymity and begin to cohabitate a time-space. Drawing a little nearer to each other in physical space, we linger uncertainly on the cusp of our immanence. Our voices find new ways to reach each other's ears. Some listen overtly, nodding and openly sympathizing. Others listen more covertly, remaining within earshot, attuned but aloof, cautious, not wishing to intrude or to be sucked in. Here in the church-like depot, we've found a loose fitting, expansive "us," a baggy body that fluctuates with impotence and sympathy. When the young man in the t-shirt announces that he's "gotten through to a manager," we draw nearer and listen more closely. There will be another bus for Detroit in three hours. Everyone who missed the connection will be able to board that bus. We now have nothing to do but wait. Somewhat reluctantly, perhaps, we drift apart. We are back on our journey, however precariously. We are on the road to becoming passengers again. Adjusting to diminished expectations, we settle in.

I sit near a woman in her mid- to late-twenties, with dark hair dyed crimson and a gold nose ring. She is sitting next to another waiting passenger and, while we kill another hour, she relates to us the source of her anxiety. She explains that she must make it to Detroit by 6 p.m. in order to catch a connecting bus to Pittsburgh. She tells us with considerable pride that she is going to an important job. She is a mascot for hire. "What do you mean?"

I ask. She dresses up in a furry suit and dances around, gesturing and waving signs in order to generate enthusiasm at corporate events. She absolutely has to get to Pittsburgh by 8 a.m. the next morning or she'll lose the best gig she's gotten so far. "It pays forty-dollars an hour," she explains.

No job better exemplifies the new economy than that of a mascot-for-hire.[7] These new "careers"—perhaps better described as sites of "careening," as dividualized entrepreneurs bounce from one kind of employment to the next, like dice gambling on their own futures—substitute short-term contracts for modernism's "life-long" occupations. This new economy requires affective and reproductive labor—work that manages feelings and information, rather than producing concrete objects. In the process, more stable and durable Modernist forms of life are appropriated and transformed through the production of these new kinds of employment.

"I used to be a truck driver," the red-haired woman tells me. But getting into the mascot business was simple for someone with her creativity. The easy part was making a mascot suit. The more difficult part is advertising her services. She uses Craigslist and an internet Yellow Pages service. "Wait a minute," I ask, "you made your own suit?" "Absolutely," she explains. Sports teams and colleges may own their own mascot suits, but these days it's more likely that the suit is made by the mascot herself. She shows me photos on her cell phone. Her suit is a sort of red Cookie-Monster-type- creature, the same color as her hair. It looks quite professionally done, with a large, wide snout, floppy ears, a stubby tail, and big claw feet. "It's a multi-purpose design," she explains, "good for most occasions. Sometimes they request a specific animal, like a bird or an elephant," she explains, "but mostly they don't care exactly what the mascot looks like." She also works as a clown, though. She shows us several photos of herself in a red Afro wig, white face paint, and rainbow suspenders. The mascot outfit is carefully packed into an extra-large duffel bag at her feet. "I don't want to open it right now, because it's a bitch to close again. Like packing a tent," she explains.

She goes on to tell us that her creativity comes from her American Indian heritage. "Becoming a mascot was easy," she explains, "because I knew how to sew, knew how to dance, and don't mind making a fool of myself in public." Her father was an Apache, her mother a Huron. She was raised by her mother, who insisted that she attend all the tribal dances held within driving distance of her home near the Huron / Potawatomi reservation in southern Michigan. She was taught to sew in order to make her own doeskin dress and feathered headdress, ceremonial costumes she used to carry in the same duffel bag that now holds her mascot uniform. "One day last winter," she explains, "my soon-to-be-ex-husband said he'd had enough and threw all my ceremonial regalia on the fire." The feathered headdress was devoured by the flames and the doeskin dress was damaged beyond repair. "I didn't mind,"

she says, "I was pissed at the time, of course, but I'd had enough of that life anyway. My hair was down to my ass, because that's how long I kept it for the dances. But after he destroyed my regalia, I cut it all off and dyed it red."

In her former life, driving trucks and dancing in ceremonial dress were oppositional activities, each with its own sphere of feeling. The collapse of these two spheres, in her case, occasions a new, optimistic attachment to the possibility of an integrated life. This, in turn, produces (new) feelings of creativity and empowerment. If the kind of resistance imagined by Jesse Jackson seems to be missing from this scene, one reason is that this perception of growth and of new opportunities within the shell of the old order is itself an after-effect of this transformation from "life-long" occupations to short-term contracts. The patchwork process of making do, of responding to bad situations, can be empowering. Some part of the past is severed, and this is freeing, while another part is re-purposed into a new, perhaps more profitable, guise. After all, forty dollars an hour is a big improvement over her former wages, and so far business has been "very good." "There is a high demand for mascots these days," she says. "Everyone's using them—soccer teams, restaurants, bars." The Pittsburgh gig is for a sales convention of home appliances. She expects to dance around the lobby, directing people toward the show.

We work with what we have, piecing together a world from fragments, binding the old to the new. What is sustained and what is lost in this process? Eidlitz's station shelters us. A mascot performs Huron ceremonial rhythms in a crowded convention hall. Perhaps to endure in this new economy is to survive the passage between the sacred and the useful, sometimes in one direction, sometimes in another.

IV. BREAKDOWN

The bus that picks us up around 1:00 in the afternoon, now more than six hours into the trip and a bit less than halfway between Chicago and Detroit, is half full. The driver has been informed of our misfortunes and anyone with a ticket for the previous bus to Detroit is allowed onto this one. I find a seat next to an unshaven, silent young man who spends his time staring out the window, listening to music on a cheap MP3 player. Having endured the delay, I'm optimistic. We'll be in Detroit by 4:00 p.m. at the latest. The red-haired woman, now seating behind me, will make her next connection. We have resumed.

About an hour later, the bus pulls to the side of the road. We crane our heads, trying to see. There is a moment of silence punctuated by many questions. The driver's voice comes over the intercom: we have experienced "a mechanical problem that will make it unsafe to continue," he says, as though reading from a script. He then rises from his seat and fits a plastic security

gate across the aisle. He opens the door, goes down the stairs, and closes the door behind him. Except for the baby, there is a moment of silence as we realize we're now locked onto a driver-less bus on the edge of the highway. The gate is made out of softly curved plastic, smooth and durable, like a child's toy.

Those of us who spent the better part of our morning in Kalamazoo are subjects of a double offense. We are shocked and outraged but not surprised. It has now become obvious that Greyhound is incapable of making the trip from Chicago to Detroit. They should go into another line of work. I am almost overwhelmed by indignation, and, at the same time, embarrassed to feel so angry. I have inherited feelings more appropriate to the Modernist consumer and I am galled by the lack of accountability. An empty pulse, a surge of bitter powerlessness bent on retaliation, overwhelms me. This is the emotional architecture of the future present. Somehow, someday, I'm going to make them pay. Exactly when, and by whom, was Greyhound granted permission to treat us with such contempt? It could have been different. The driver could have explained the situation. He could have treated us like adults, perhaps—here the fantasy is complete—inviting us to assist in fixing the bus and getting it back on the road.

Those with window seats report that we are on an exit ramp. It's not clear what exit it is. Several passengers would like to call people who may be able to pick them up. But no one paid attention when we took the exit. We do not know where we are. We would like to talk to the driver, but as of yet no one feels prepared to acknowledge the "safety gate."

People begin to swap stories about being on broken buses. Everyone has one or two. We compare our misfortunes. A man in the seat behind me says that the he was on a Greyhound bus last week that broke down. A woman tells us how the bus she was on yesterday had to proceed at thirty-miles-an-hour in the breakdown lane for more than an hour. A teenager with an infant narrates her journey so far. She is traveling north to Detroit from Texas with all of her possessions. Her trip was scheduled to take sixteen hours but, so far, has taken more than thirty-six. She was marooned in Jackson, Mississippi for a night. All of her luggage was lost by the bus company, including her clothes and her baby's clothes. They are somewhere between Jackson and Detroit.

The Greyhound schedule is a sham. It's a kind of cynically optimistic advertisement that hawks the amount of time it *might* take to travel between cities, but does not account for the actual time we surrender to make these journeys. Apparently, the cost of our tickets is not spent on keeping the buses in full repair. It seems that the difference between the quality of the services you pay for and the quality you receive, can be exploited for profit. But, for us, the stakes of being on time couldn't be higher. "I need to get my

connection," the red-haired mascot keeps insisting. "I need this job. I need to be in Pittsburgh by 8 a.m."

Finally the driver returns. He takes his seat and makes a brief announcement. A tow truck has been called. He doesn't know how long it will take for them to arrive. Greyhound apologies for the delay and asks for our patience. He won't say what's wrong with the bus. Meanwhile, it's getting very hot. We exited the freeway around 3 p.m., and have been sitting in the summer sun for an hour already. "Turn the air-conditioning on!" someone shouts. A chorus of agreement supports this. The passengers are getting restless.

We have begun to approach the border between the disparate states of being Jean-Luc Nancy identifies as "citizenship" and "subjectivity."[8] The politics of ordinary life erupts at the site of this overlap between modalities. At its core, the world of citizenship sorts us into our collective singularities, beings endowed with rights and above all the right to anonymity. The world of citizenship mandates equality between bodies, abstracting differences through a discourse of rights. Subjectivity, on the other hand, dwells in figures, invested with personalities and animated by particular motivations. Our passage into the world of subjectivity produces a sense of solidarity that overwhelms both our alienation and our inalienable right to anonymity, as a modern citizenry.[9] This is the coming into being of politics, the crossing from quietude into action, from disengagement to engagement.[10] We are getting ready to find a voice of our own.

An African American in his forties or early fifties, wearing a t-shirt and blue jeans and radiating competence, walks to the front of the bus and, leaning over the security gate, asks the driver what's happening. "Sit down, sir," the driver says, "take your seat." He goes back on the intercom. "Everyone should remain seated. There's no reason to come up here. There's nothing I can do for you." But the man does not sit down. "You need to give us some answers," he says. The bus is almost silent, everyone straining to hear and see what occurs at the front. "You need to make a decision," our self-appointed spokesman tells the driver, loudly enough for most of us to hear. "You need to get the air-conditioning on or you need to open this gate and let us off this bus." There are nods of agreement.

The driver, a squat, red-faced, and orange-haired white man in aviator glasses, adopts an aggressive tone. "Don't make trouble," he snaps. "I can kick you off this bus any time." It's an ironic threat, since off the bus is what we want. In the back, we've begun to agree that the driver is a total asshole. "What's his problem?" someone asks. "Who does he think he is?"

Our spokesman will not be deterred. He assumes the burden of responsibility for an elderly woman seated across the aisle from him. She is in her eighties, traveling with her daughter, who is in her late fifties. He explains that neither of them are doing very well in the heat. They need water. They

need to get off this bus. He speaks firmly. I can't hear all of the words, but whatever he says works. The driver rises, unlocks the security gate, opens the door and shouts down the aisle. "The air conditioning don't work unless we're in motion. You're supposed to stay on the bus, but I'm letting everyone off." He seems relieved to be getting out himself. Everyone follows him out.

It is hot outside, but sometimes there is a breeze and at least it's less claustrophobic. The gravel and grass slope that runs along the exit ramp rises almost too sharply to scramble up. But, along with a few others, I make the climb. Here our view consists of scrub pines and a hand-painted billboard that reads "LAUGH OFTEN" in faded red paint on weathered plywood. We ignore it, sitting in sumac shade. The long grass is full of crickets, spiders, and trash.

Forty minutes later, approximately eleven hours into my four-hour-journey, the tow truck arrives. The driver takes him around to the other side of the bus. The mechanic identifies "a ball-joint problem." There's nothing he can do. But he offers to take three passengers—the number he can fit into his cab—to a store a few miles away. The young man who got through to Greyhound administration while we were in Kalamazoo now jumps up and takes charge of ordering supplies. Finding a pen and an envelope, he collects money from each person and writes down their requests: cigarettes, water, potato chips, sandwiches, apples or oranges if they have them. With an envelope full of other people's cash, he and two other passengers jump into the tow truck, which disappears at the end of the exit ramp.

Forty minutes later, they're back, with supplies! Grinning, the kid jogs over and begins to distribute all that he has bought. He's purchased much more than anyone asked for, including plenty of bottles of water. There are sandwiches, bags of potato chips, Kools and Camels, Coke and candy bars, and oranges. "What about yourself?" a woman asks. "Don't worry about me," he says, "I'm great!" Then, with a box of water bottles still in his hands, he steps back lightly and says to a few of us, "I just got out. Just finished four days in County. So I'm great. I'm doing just great and I don't need anything at all." On the slope behind me, a slender white male in red shirt and doo rag brightens up. "I just go out, too!" He's just finished a six-month stint in an Indiana prison. The woman in a black tank top headed to New York was recently released as well, just last week. She did three months after being caught in a house raid (the weed was under the couch she was sleeping on at the time). While she was in prison, everyone in the house moved to New York. So, that's where she's going too.

We eat sitting on the steep slope, some of us swapping stories. The red-haired woman shows us more photos of her mascot suit. The kid in the red shirt quips, "Forty dollars an hour! Let me come with you." "Kid" says an older man, "if she's making that kind of money, she's already got herself a

man." The driver keeps his distance, sitting in his seat on the bus, with the door open. Suddenly, he comes to stand in front of us. He orders us all back on the bus. Another bus will be here soon and we can't be out here, he says. It's against his orders to let us off the bus. A few passengers begin to climb aboard, but it's bad in there. The toilet is overflowing and the bus has been in the sun without air circulation all afternoon. No way are we getting back on that bus. We'll wait out here. The driver becomes furious. He insists that we respect the authority with which Greyhound has invested him. He flashes a badge. "Greyhound says I have the right to remove people from this bus. I can take anyone off this bus I want to. I will leave you on the side of the road!" "You're not going to do anything like that" someone says. Several of us rise and begin to gather around the driver. "I'm having you arrested for disobedience!" he screams. He climbs back into his seat and calls the State Police.

We're in a kind of mild standoff for about twenty minutes, when two State Police officers pull up behind the bus. The kid in the doo rag says, "Oh Shit! I have a warrant out in the next county!" He tries to duck out of sight, moving to the margins of the group. Someone tosses him a hoodie, which he puts on, hiding his face. Others nod to the officers, who slowly walk up to our little scene. One officer is an enormous, grim-faced, confident horse-of-a-man who looks like a Marine drill sergeant in the movies. Trailing behind him is an officer-in-training. He is a slender twenty-something whose green trainee uniform makes him look like a park ranger. As they make their way toward us, the driver hurries toward them, jabbering. The officer silences him. "Did you call me to deal with this, sir?" he asks. "Yes, officer, I did. Several of these passengers . . ." "Then calm down and let me deal with it." We are cheered by his apparent impartiality. The driver and a few passengers gather around the officers and discuss the situation.

After several minutes of consultation, the state trooper calls us over. "Your bus broke down. Your ride to Detroit is taking a lot longer than expected. If I can be perfectly frank about it and just say it, this ride to Detroit didn't go exactly as planned." We nod in agreement. It's both relieving and infuriating to be recognized by the law in this way. Having ascertained our agreement that the day has not gone as planned, the trooper continues. "The driver was acting out of line. He's not kicking anyone off the bus." This statement is met with nods of agreement. Damn right he's not. That's more like it. "However," the trooper continues, "I know it's pretty bad on there, but you have to get back on the bus. That's a decision the bus company has made and I'm going to ask you to comply with it at this time." "Why can't we get a new bus?" someone asks. "That's not my call to make," the sheriff says. "Greyhound makes that call, and they decided to continue to use this bus."

Reluctantly, we accept our fate. As passengers, we are subject to the bus company's policies until the trip is over. At any rate, we are eager to be

passengers again. We slowly begin to climb back on the bus, but just then another bus arrives. We cheer and dismount. We are told to leave our luggage behind, on the broken-down bus; it will follow us onto Detroit. "No way," says the red-haired woman. "No way am I letting my mascot get lost." She has managed to contact a friend who lives an hour away and is now traveling toward us in a pickup truck. She will not make her afternoon bus connection, but there is another bus around midnight and, if all goes well, she'll still be in Philadelphia before 8 a.m. As our substitute bus pulls onto the highway, I see her sitting on her duffel bag, alone on the edge of the exit ramp, awaiting her ride.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Detroit has always been America's "city of the future." But do we continue to find hope in the broken-down Detroit that is our immediate destiny? As one of the nation's most visible examples of post-Fordist decay, Detroit beckons us toward a post-industrial future in which everyday life is spent inhabiting, or failing to inhabit, a world framed by corporate interests disarticulated from the state.

As modern forms of citizen-subjectivity decay, we are faced with a series of painful choices: what shall we fight for, what shall we leave behind?

I feel that our greatest concern should be to negotiate a return to the ordinary, but one that accounts for and acknowledges the inadequacy of aspects of post-war progressivism. We must not form melancholic attachments to modernist conceptions of "progress"—the Fordist dream of mass-producing a working middle class, whose members enjoyed a good ordinary life. Progress was something the moderns could afford. From about 1900 to about 1975, progress went along with various kinds of emancipatory optimism; new markets, new regimes of labor meant also new kinds of subjects, and beyond that a proliferation of subjectivity itself, a flowering of the endless "possible." In this sense, the everyday was perhaps Modernism's greatest achievement, one which was realized through both material and psychic architectures—from the circuits of transportation and communication to the disciplinary regimes that taught citizens how to be operators of this shared environment. But the middle class public, shaped by suburban housing, nightly news, and moment-by-moment advertising, elaborated a way of life that was unsustainable from the beginning. Its promise of a good life depended upon creating and sustaining labor hierarchies, established along racial and gendered lines. Importantly, though, all of the subjects involved shared to various degrees in a common sensibility established by modernity's "disciplinary society."[11] They portioned out this common world amongst each other by participating in a political regime in which values circulated between subjects bound to and proud of their racial heritages and gendered

capacities. In newspapers and sermons, on sidewalks and movie screens, in schools and at lunch counters, these citizen-subjects confronted each other as straight and queer, ethnic and white, masculine and feminine. For a time, these bodies and their images circulated in the relatively stable patterns generated by industrialized modalities.[12]

The processes of neo-liberal restructuring erode and replace the means of production that sustained this disciplinary society, hollowing out modern infrastructures while maintaining the facades.[13] Unlike the engines of the modern regime, which announced their coming with optimistic fervor, the new systems of control replaces (by infecting and replicating, refurbishing and recycling) modern life. The "society of control" maintains a facade of civic virtue while dissolving the architecture of civilization. Here progress wears optimism about future possibility like a cruel mask, the cynical smile of the customer service representative, the corporate logo. Partially aware of this crumbling, we suspend our own acts of signification, awaiting, with impatience and dread, an occasion when words and deeds will punctuate each other's worn-out habits. Meanwhile, we live in the same world, inevitably touched, and touching, brushed against, embraced, and released by each other's old selves, friendly and fearsome creatures from before.

We need to salvage from these ruins a new kind of conservatism; a conservation movement that patches together a different version of the "good life." This future does not emerge from among the technocratic elite; it will not be driven by new inventions in digital media. We should seek it instead in what is meager and humble, tentative and transitioning. Not rushing away from breakdown, but opening ourselves to its after effects. What "internal resistances" will develop, and fail to develop, in those moments of friction, when things don't go as planned? What sparks will threaten to propel us across the border that separates modern forms of citizenship from the emergent subjects of these hyperrealities?