

Never forget Sandy Hook Elementary: Haunting memorials to a school massacre

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Abstract

In this methodological inquiry, I attune to the materiality of erasure and haunting. With Deleuze's theories of difference/repetition as a theoretical tool, I examine the aftermath of the Sandy Hook school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut with the mantra, *Never Forget*. I structure this article around the concept of a pilgrimage, taking inspiration from Chaucer by selecting tales from my journey. Theories of re-membering and dis-membering are developed as embodied and affective responses to this troubled place. As such, I put forth this inquiry as response-able, a way to stay "with the trouble" and interrogate violence in settler colonial societies such as the United States.

Keywords: school shooting, gun violence, haunting, Deleuze, differentiation

Prologue: Death-April-Flowers-Pilgrimages

I. THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.
Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers...

T.S. Eliot, The Wasteland



Figure 1. Memorial to the Columbine High School massacre, which occurred on April 20, 1999¹

Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote
The droughte of March hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour
of which vertu engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breath
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
The tendre croppes, and the yonge soone
Hath in the Ram his half cours yronne,
And smale foweles maken melodie
that slepen all the nyght with open ye,
(so priketh hem natur in hir corages),
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages²
G. Chaucer, The Canterbury Tales

Part 1

The Tale of the Police Badge and the Newspaper: Never Forget

¹ Photo Credit: <https://www.brentpix.com/Colorado/Columbine-Memorial>

² When that April with its sweet fragrant showers, the dryness of March was pierced to the root, and every vein is bathed in such liquid by which power it engenders the flower; When the west wind, with its sweet breath, breathes life into every field and grove, the tender shoots and the young sun. The Ram has run halfway through its course, and small birds make melodies, sleeping all night with open eyes - (so much has nature inspired their spirits) - then people long to go on pilgrimages ~ *Author's translation from middle English.*



Figure 2. The *Never Forget* decal, left, is displayed on the door of the local newspaper. Its design is nearly identical to the badge sewn onto the sleeve of the police uniform, right.

As I walk up to the front door of the *Newtown Bee*, the local family-owned newspaper, to place a for-rent advertisement, I am faced with this oval sign, about fifteen centimeters tall, shown on the left of Figure 2. *Never Forget*, it instructs, indexing the Sandy Hook School. This decal references the Sandy Hook School Massacre in subtle but unmistakable ways. The American flag is flying at half-mast, a symbol of mourning. Twenty stars are twinkling in the darkened sky, and six apples adorn the border. It memorializes the events of December 14, 2012 (hereafter referred to as 12/14/12), when twenty first-graders—the stars—and six educators—the apples—were shot and killed in **Sandy** Hook Elementary School. This decal is modeled after the badge that has long adorned a sleeve of the local police force's uniform, shown on the right in Figure 2. However, all is well in the Newtown Connecticut represented on the police badge. The sky is blue, the flag is fully masted, and no stars or apples symbolize murdered women and children. The police are charged with keeping order and enforcing laws. When *Never Forget* replaces 'Police' on the same design, it works as a disciplining force, a moral law. As if the sky above me had darkened, I feel the pain of five years before—a feeling of immense grief that I will *never forget*.

Never Forget is public pedagogy, recalling with symbols and words the memory of our recent violent loss. Recognizing the irony in this memorial pricks my conscience, in a place so filled with grief and trauma, yet with a name that erases history. The concept of a **Newtown** depends on always forgetting the violence and genocide it was founded upon, quite the opposite of *Never Forget*. Its name epitomizes a “systemic denial and settler privilege that makes ignorance a highly advantageous epistemological position for the dominant group” (deFinney, 2015, p. 174). Connecticut, which means long tidal river,

was first colonized in 1632 by Europeans who moved from a different New Town, the one that later became Cambridge, Massachusetts. These colonists claimed the banks of this river for their own, and lacking imagination or bound by some tradition, again called their settlement Newtown³. Starting in the late 1660s, property was appropriated from within the Quanneapague territory, to Hartford's west, after the General Court gave six men "liberty to purchase Potatuke and the lands adjoyneing" (Madden, 1989, p. 15). The indigenous people who lived in this area, the lower Housatonic valley, were Paugusset, and the Pootatuck tribe's territory was in the place that is still called Newtown, Connecticut. This aspirational name discursively obscures the hypocrisy that undergirds American settler colonialism and capitalism.

Gilles Deleuze connects moral law, conscience, and repetition as follows:

Conscience, however, suffers from the following ambiguity: it can be conceived only by supposing the moral law to be external... the first way of overturning the law is ironic... Repetition belongs to humor and irony; it is by nature transgression or exception, always revealing a singularity opposed to the particulars subsumed under laws. (Deleuze, 1994, p. 4-5)

Thinking with Deleuze in this methodological inquiry, I explore how repetition of a public pedagogy that takes the shape of a disciplining moral law, *Never Forget*, reveals singularities that transgress dominant narratives of a shooting massacre in a school. 12/14/12 is a manifestation of the violence that *Newtown* erases and so I ask, in a place whose name obscures histories of violence: How can *Never Forget* be put to work in disrupting, rather than normalizing, responses to school violence and trauma in settler colonial contexts?

It is with this (in)tension (cf. Springgay & Truman, 2018) that I reimagine what can matter for education research by engaging with a public pedagogy – *Never Forget* – in a methodology of difference and repetition. In so doing, I trouble an explanation of school violence as attributable an individual bad actor and I trouble its production by legacies of colonization, capitalism, racism, and misogyny. Because my own positionality is entangled with these legacies, I remain complicit to the violence but also turn to theory to understand how repetition, the act of returning to sites scarred by violence, can produce a different, response-able, possible future.

The Tale of the Researcher: An Implication

When I moved to Newtown in the summer of 2006, the air smelled clean. I was about four months pregnant, off from my job as a teacher for school break and then maternity leave. To get acquainted

³ It became known as Hartford.

with our new community, I walked. Up and down the rolling hills, I looked at the well-kept colonial and Victorian houses. I smelled the flowers and the trees, listened to the birds, my body awash in the fresh breeze.

I had spent seven years in New Haven: got married, dropped out of my PhD in science, got a job teaching high school, had a baby. I was doing for real what I had practiced so much when I was a little girl: playing house and playing school. I appreciated the diversity of this small city, yet *Haven*, old or new, seemed poignant. New Haven had a reputation for being “urban”, the racialized inequity especially stark in light of Yale’s status as an elite, liberal university. What it meant in the everyday: I was careful to always set the alarm on my house because random crime seemed imminent, from burglaries of garages to occasional gunshots. While random crime seemed imminent, from burglaries of houses and garages to occasionally hearing gunshots, I never experienced it. When I drove to the suburbs to do my grocery shopping, because the store in the city had higher prices and awful produce, I gazed at the big houses sitting on wide acres of green grass. I mused that it might be better for my children to grow up in that sort of place, where it was probably “safer”. So, after I got pregnant for a second time, like accelerating objects gaining momentum, we looked westward, to the rolling hills of Newtown. Our white flight settled us into a colonial-style house, built in 1760.

Six years later, on 12/14/12, the Sandy Hook School massacre turned our cosseted world upside down. How ironic that my encounter with violent crime happened in the place that was presumed safe, where things like this were not “supposed” to happen. My appreciation of New Haven’s diversity was shallow, pushed away for some normative American dream that my positionality placed within reach through opportunity hoarding and social reproduction. My complicity haunts me, though, and it is through this inquiry that I trace how White, middle-class people wall ourselves off from the decay and despair that our positionality depends upon, how we are outraged when violence disrupts our privileged existence, and how we actively work to obscure violent histories in order to perpetuate symbolic and real violence to maintain power.

Recalling the days, months, and years that flowed from the rupture of 12/14/12, I feel an anesthetic, an involuntary physiological response, washing through my bloodstream as my eyes fill with tears. The streets filled with hearses and the gutters filled with flowers, teddy bears, candles. As winter melted into spring, bulldozers scooped it all up as granite gravestones were placed in the cemeteries. All over Newtown, thoughts and prayers turned into ashes and dust. The air smelled wrong and it was hard to breathe. I got through those days with a contradictory consciousness, compartmentalizing loss to be able to return to work as a high school teacher while engaging in political advocacy for gun control as a way to *Never Forget*. From a posthuman educational research perspective, Rosi Braidotti would suggest that disassociation from cohesiveness is a motivation for exploring “the positivity of difference as a theme of its own” (2006, p. 5).

Public pedagogies take on forms which operate on, by, and/or for the public- a combination of material and ideological forces that reproduce dominant structures, such as the interests of capitalist markets (Morris, 2012). Henry Giroux (2000) connects a public pedagogy of childhood innocence to the Columbine High School shooting: “childhood innocence is a natural rather than constructed state, adults can safely ignore the power imbalance between themselves and children” (p. 15). Because a politics of innocence is mediated along racial and class lines, and similar to the forces that led me to Newtown and so shocked us in the aftermath of the massacre, some residents of Littleton, Colorado, where Columbine is located, professed disbelief and claimed they thought such an event “couldn’t happen here” because it was not “the inner city” (p. 15). When this goes unchallenged by public pedagogies that simply ask individuals to *Never Forget* rather than to react and to act, a politics of innocence, along with a neoliberal logic that make it “all the easier for adult society to transform social problems into individual problems” (p. 14), leads to normalization of policies formerly considered extreme, such as arming school teachers. Kathleen Stewart (2007) writes that “we look for a lesson in Columbine and its offshoots... The intensity of erupting events draws attention to the more ordinary disturbances in everyday life. Or it distracts us from them. Or both” (p. 74). As Columbine is repeated at Virginia Tech and in Sandy Hook and Parkland and Santa Fe, in what amounts to a mass shooting almost every day in America (cf. www.gunviolencearchive.org), does this repetition cause us to examine our violent history or to look away from it at the immediate problem of too many guns in the hands of too many people?

Part 2

Intermezzo: Theory of Method

Difference and Repetition towards Attunement

Springgay and Truman (2018) suggest that “research begins in the middle [which] can’t be known in advance of research. You have to be in it, situated and responsive” (p. 206). This inquiry was a process of becoming through dynamic movement, and “the only way to get outside the dualisms is to be-between, to pass between, the intermezzo” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 277). Tracing a line of flight towards moments of becoming is a way to map “the ruptures and cracks and movement within this porous and malleable matrix... a level of movement that is often imperceptible” (Renold and Ringrose, 2008, p. 318). Such a tracing attends both to repetition and to difference. Deleuze asks two questions: “what is the concept of difference - one which is not reducible to simple conceptual difference but demands its own Idea, its own singularity at the level of Ideas?” and “what is the essence of repetition, one which is not reducible to difference without concept?” (1994, p. 27). Mapping these questions onto *Never Forgetting* in Newtown, I engage in this inquiry to “bear witness” (p. 27) by attending to “virtual objects [which are] shreds of pure past” (p. 102). A way to conceptualize this attention is atmospheric attunement, which Stewart describes as “writing and theorizing that tries to stick with something becoming atmospheric, to itself resonate or tweak the force of material-sensory somethings forming up” (2011, p. 452). A

material-semiotic way of being “in noise and light and space,” it is a way to align academic productions with the “sometimes endured, sometimes so sad, always commonplace” (p. 445) work of becoming sentient to the everyday. Attuning is “the densely felt textures of sensory worlding that fuel generativity” (p. 451), and I become-with methodologically by pilgrimaging in Newtown, visiting sites I have often been before but with a repetition *Never Forgetting* to unearth the virtual in the literal object, and in so doing become sentient to the how the past haunts the present and shapes the future.

A Response-able Pilgrimage

Walking is well-established as an ethnographic practice, yet walking in and of itself is not a method (Springgay & Truman, 2018). Rather, “embodiment and participation presuppose some kind of attunement” (Lee and Ingold, 2006, p. 67) through what Clifford Geertz describes as “creating a rhythm with other people [that] can lead to a very particular closeness and bond between the people involved” (1973, as quoted in Pink, 2009, p. 77). I extend this concept by creating a rhythm with the mantra *Never Forget*, attuning to Newtown through its physical geography, architecture, infrastructure, animals and plants. As such, I attend to Erin Manning’s (2016) warning that overinvestment in “new” methods is limiting and, rather, we should situate attunement as speculative eventing: “a research practice that provokes an ethics that is accountable to the material world... engaged with the speculative middle and (in)tensions must be brought to bear on them” (Springgay & Truman, 2018, p. 206). Middles are affective, because the “fragments of experience left hanging” (Stewart, 2007, p. 44) are those that most provocatively agitate. The public pedagogy *Never Forget* agitates, so I engage with this inquiry as “nothing in particular ‘to do’” (St. Pierre, 2018, p. 11) but rather as an attunement to my *response-ability* (cf. Haraway, 2016) in eventing.

Becoming-with theory that “compels us to rethink ourselves” (Butler, 1995, p. 131), I went back to Newtown in the summer of 2017, and I attuned. Through walking as a speculative practice, I repeated the mantra *Never Forget* as I pilgrimaged around a community filled with literal and virtual symbols of violence, death, and settler colonization, as a way to “engage with the world and create conditions for ongoing provocations” (Springgay & Truman, 2018, p. 209). When my feet were tired, I went to the public library and read through the weekly *Newtown Bee* from January 2013 - May 2017 on microfilm. Revisiting the affective “ruptures and cracks” (Renold and Ringrose, 2008, p. 318) with the repetition of *Never Forget*, I atmospherically attuned, and “select[ed] out of countless potentially describable... scenes” (Stewart, 2011, p. 445), those ordinary affects that “come into view as habit or shock, resonance or impact” (Stewart, 2007, p. 1). These scenes contain “present real objects [and] the virtual objects” that emerged from difference, the “virtual objects exist only as fragments of themselves: they are found only as lost; they exist only as recovered” (Deleuze, 1994, p. 102). This data is not “abstracted from experience into a system of understanding that is decipherable precisely because its operations are muted by their having been taken out of their operational context” (Manning, 2016, p. 205). Rather than collecting data and analyzing it with a method, I lived again with the things, sounds, landforms, and scents that existed and developed before, during, and after my life in Newtown.

This inquiry attends to the material-semiotics of living there over many years, affectively emerging from assemblages related to 12/14/14 and the Sandy Hook School massacre. Moreover, sensitive to risk of colonization that an ontological turn presents (Springgay & Truman, 2017), I treat the assemblages as agential intra-actions. Because my primary ontological units are not things, but dynamic phenomena, this ethico-onto-epistemological methodology is agentic (Barad, 2003, p. 818), attempting to transcend the limitations of normative, limited notions of walking, that fold (dis)ability into the spectrum of otherness (Chen, 2012) and center the ideal of a white, able-bodied, middle-class male flâneur (Springgay & Truman, 2017). What follows in Part 3 are tales of my encounters with three sites that resonated with the mantra *Never Forget* and moved me to think with repetition and difference.

Part 3

Tales from a Newtown Pilgrimage

The Tale of the School Building: Erasure Yields Haunting



Figure 3. A photo of the former Sandy Hook Elementary school, taken prior to 12/14/12.

Demolishing the old school, built in the 1950s, had a perceptible forward momentum,

“the labored viscosity of being in whatever’s happening renders choices and surfaces already weighty with the atmosphere one is literally attuning to. It produced hard-won attachments that can be hard to get out once you’re in” (Stewart, 2011, p. 451).

The children and teachers who survived 12/14/12 never re-entered their evacuated building. An unused middle school in the adjacent town was made ready for them over the winter break, and they returned in January to classrooms recreated as closely as possible to the ones they ran out of. Meanwhile, the brick Sandy Hook Elementary sat empty, a bloodied crime scene.

In Newtown, a 28-member task force was appointed. They convened in early 2013 and solicited input from the general public on how to proceed. The options that emerged were: building on a different site, building a new school on the same site, or renovating the building (Crevier, 2013). After the state of Connecticut offered fifty million dollars to build a new school, which was accepted through a referendum of Newtown's voters, this funding was the response that propelled: "ways of inhabiting things coagulate into mysterious partial inevitabilities" (Stewart, 2011, p. 449). Identifying a site went similarly. The location of Newtown's four elementary schools is based on geography and infrastructure. Sandy Hook is a village within Newtown, and only with a decidedly rural character. Only a small section of Sandy Hook is supplied with public water and sewer; most private dwellings have wells and septic tanks instead. Public land holdings in the section served by public water were limited to the school property and a town park. To change sites meant needing to buy private property, but people were not willing to sell. Despite the strong sentiment from the teachers to move to a different site, the task force concluded there was no option but to rebuild on the same site. To appease the teachers, the school district offered to move them to other schools in Newtown, essentially swapping positions with peers who had not been present the day of the massacre and thus, presumably, would be less sensitive about working in that place.



Figure 4. A photo of the reconstructed Sandy Hook Elementary school, taken in July 2017, from the same angle as the photo in Figure 3.

Shown in Figure 4, the new school took approximately two years to build, and its architecture is intended to be reminiscent of nature. Wood siding rests on a rock foundation and is adorned with leaf motifs. The entrance roof is wavy, invoking energy transfer through water, and the contrasting woods echo this undulation. Although it is not apparent in this picture, the school was designed as a prototype of security and as the potential object of research on school safety (Hallabeck, 2014). This is a “site that is simultaneously a ruin and a remake, is haunted and haunting” (Tuck & Ree, 2013, p.646). The letters that spelled out “Sandy Hook Elementary School” are now absent from this place, but they are echoed in a desire to create a school impervious to acts of violence. Yet, “erasure and defacement concoct ghosts” (p.643), and when I stood and looked at the new school, *Never Forget* repeating in my ears, my eyes saw the deleted capital letters superimposed on the completely different façade. The ghosts of the women and children that settler colonialism in Newtown have “made killable” emerge from the ruin that “always points to the scene of ghost-producing violence” (p. 642). The old school can never be entirely erased, despite its physical absence, because it remains a virtual object that creates a “physical imprint of the supernatural onto architecture... In these layered always-ruining places, our ghosts haunt” (p.654).

The Tale of the Sign: Re-Membered as a Primary Witness

When I walk down the driveway towards the main road in the opposite direction that the killer drove up on 12/14/12, my attunement to the “once and future ghosts” is almost overwhelming. It is a “relentless remembering that will not be appeased by settler society’s assurances of innocence and reconciliation” (Tuck & Ree, 2013, p. 642). It crescendos at the driveway’s end, because here stands the firehouse where the children and educators who escaped the massacre assembled on 12/14/12 and were collected by family and friends. On the afternoon of that day, hours after the shooting stopped, Connecticut’s governor told those still waiting that their loved one were not coming out; they were dead.⁴

⁴ No children among the twenty shot survived the shooting. One educator was injured and survived; six were killed.



Figure 5. The left photo, was taken in July 2017, shows the new sign that marks the driveway to the reconstructed Sandy Hook Elementary School. The right photo was taken in the aftermath of 12/14/12, as evidenced by the white balloons commemorating those who were killed. In the background is the firehouse, where the children who escaped the massacre evacuated on 12/14/12.

As shown in Figure 4, in front of the firehouse is the school's only written marker. This spot was a site of pilgrimage in the years following 12/14/12. With access to the crime scene blocked, the sign was the terminus for those who came to pay their respects. I would take my kids down there to light a candle and to say a prayer. We would try to recite all their names, our shared attempt to *Never Forget*: Grace, Caroline, Catherine, Jessica, Emilie, Olivia, Jesse... but we always faltered. Twenty-six names are so many to remember.

The new sign is slightly different from the old sign, shown in the left photo in Figure 5. While the old sign included '1956 VISITORS WELCOME', the new one says simply 'SANDY HOOK SCHOOL'. New Sandy Hook no longer welcomes visitors—only those of us who *Never Forget* pre-12/14/12 Newtown know that it once did. The absent presence of the date of the original, bloodied school and the invitation to visit, in an effort to erase and make new, invokes an affective re-remembering. Re-remembering is embodied, because through *Never Forgetting* I am re-membered into a constricted circle of those who were there, and we "labor with attentions that go into overdrive or ball up in a paralysis" (Stewart, 2011, p. 449-450). From 1956 until 2012 visitors were welcomed, but only a diminishing number of people can *Never Forget* it. When I see the new sign, I am re-membered into the old-Newtown, and excluded from the new school that uses the old name but does not welcome any visitors.

The Tale of the Permanent Memorial: Dis-Membered



Figure 6. A meadow on land once owned by the state, transferred to a victim’s foundation with plans to establish an animal sanctuary. The photo on the left was taken looking back from the entrance to the *Trail of Angels*.

There was once asphalt on this road, but it is crumbling and breaking. It is likely this land was farmed by the colonists as part of the project of New England, as evidenced by the barn in the distance. In the early 1930s, the state of Connecticut assumed ownership of these seven hundred acres and ran a psychiatric institution until the mid-1990s. Fairfield State Hospital housed as many as four thousand “criminally insane” persons, some of whom were subjected to “interventions which in hindsight were tragically misguided, e.g. hydrotherapy, insulin coma therapy, involuntary sterilization, and surgical lobotomies” (Dailey, Kirk, Cole, & Di Leo, 2007). While reminders of these past horrors exist in the brick buildings clustered on another side of this land, on this part are beautiful open meadows. I follow a path into the forest. As it winds away and deeper into the woods, it is marked as a *Trail of Angels*. My ears are filled

from all around: birds chirp and sing, the wind rustles the leaves, water rushes by in the brook, and, barely perceptible, cars drone and rumble on the interstate. As I walk, I encounter a historical plaque, which informs me that here, at Deep Brook, “the French under Rochambeau maintained their artillery park for four days in 1781, en route to join Washington’s army before the battle of Yorktown”, in one of the key fights of the American Revolution.

Then, I hear pop music in the direction I am heading, and soon it overpowers all the forest sounds. Radiant sun makes its way in through the clearing ahead, shown in Figure 6. There is a small crowd of people in matching blue t-shirts, raking inside what seems to be newly constructed paddocks next to a bright red barn. The music is coming from a speaker attached to the outside of a pickup truck, and there are cars with license plates from New York, New Jersey, and other neighboring states parked on the meadow grass. These volunteers are building enclosures for an animal sanctuary, a permanent memorial to *Never Forget*. The little girl memorialized here was my child’s friend; they played soccer together before 12/14/12. Once again, this land is cultivated and claimed back for humans’ purposes, and I feel loss as my quiet forest begins to look like the farm it was long ago. Affective, my sense of loss is dis-membering, experienced as a rhythm of “micro molecular movement” (Ringrose and Renold, 2008, p. 319). The permanent memorial colonizes the land, reterritorializes it, to welcome visitors and give them a place to mourn and to *Never Forget*. It is dis-membering to me because I can no longer attune to the place I knew just before and just after 12/14/12. My gestures toward decolonizing may read as insufficient, given both the severe gravity of its effects and the expanse of the imperialistic program of erasure. However, my experience with dis-membering, an erasure, shows me that *Never Forgetting* the white children who were killed by resettling colonized land is a part of the broad hypocrisy. It renders some lives more memorable than others, but ultimately no lives more precious than market capitalism/settler colonialism that produced iterations of violence in Connecticut.



Figure 6. The land, formerly wild, has been cleared of trees and a new barn and fence have been built. This is the beginning of an animal sanctuary, a permanent memorial to a child killed on 12/14/12.

Part 4

The Tales We Tell Ourselves: How to Live on in Newtown

Taking up this methodological inquiry in response to an instruction to *Never Forget*, I atmospherically attune to life and death in Newtown as an affective production of re-membering and dis-membering. Newtown is not singular. It is one of many American places that exists in a tension of never and always forgetting violence. Settler colonialism, marginalization of persons with mental differences disturbed a prescriptive social order, and a “right to bear arms” produced to enforce white supremacy are only some of the violences that haunt Newtown. Like Rochambeau’s artillery did almost three hundred years

before, these absent-presences came together like a bomb on 12/14/12. Adam Lanza, a young White upper-income man, shot his mother in her bed in their shared McMansion, put weapons that were designed for the military in battle, yet marketed for “sport,” into a commuter car, and drove over subdivided, colonized farmland to the school where he had once been a student. “Visitors (*now un-*) Welcome”.

In places like “Connecticut” - long tidal river - contending with Newtown’s latest massacre as a universal, a repetition with a difference, is painful: “it is not easy to name our pain, to theorize from that location” (hooks, 1994, p. 74). Re-mem-bering and dis-mem-bering are ways to “stay with the trouble” and engage in my “response-able” inquiry into the contradictions of *Never Forgetting* in Newtown (Haraway, 2016). The exercise of deterritorializing in material, rather than metaphorical, ways ruptures sedimented violences; the repetition of *Never Forget*, a “familiar trope” (Truman & Springgay, 2016, p. 260) opens a line of flight to see Newtown’s past and present as (in)tensions and away from a normalizing narrative of progress. Methodologically, I have explored how the imperative to *Never Forget* propels me to walk through Newtown attuned to the place over time, with “a set of theories and concepts that produce a knowing of a kind that transgresses the mind/body binary” (Lenz Taguchi, 2013, p. 1103). As I am re-membered, I become attuned to the place. As I am dis-membered, I leave my atmospherics behind.

This inquiry recalibrates method as an ecology of generative practices that were not predetermined or procedural, rather emergent and propositional (Springgay & Truman, 2018). Through this, I attend to “(in)tensions, which trouble and rouse ethical and political matterings” (p. 211), not seeking resolution but rather implicating myself as a perpetuator of these legacies and therefore complicit in the violence. Such a methodology of difference and repetition works to move us away from instrumental discourses of hardening schools/evacuation protocols/gun control to instead consider the ways that school violence is produced by colonization, capitalism, racism, and misogyny. Walking not with people, but with histories and memories, repeating *Never Forget*, is to build an affective solidarity with the colonized land through practicing response-able unlearning of patterns of settler colonialism that sediment in everyday routines. By showing how colonizing through erasure occurred in one specific place, Newtown, and thinking this alongside the school shooting, I detail how this erasure evokes ghosts, how the haunted remain in entangled, sedimented layers. In so doing, I attend to Stewart’s concept of worlding, which is “chronicling how incommensurate elements hang together in a scene that bodies labor to be in or to get through. In the expressivity of something coming into existence, bodies labor to literally fall into step with the pacing, the habits, the lines of attachment, the responsibilities shouldered, the sentience” (2011, p. 452). Thus, my methodology is not as much “walking” as it is “falling into step with”.

By re-assembling Newtown’s trauma with the ruins of American settler colonialism, this method is a mode of *differentiation*, difference in itself, and carries affirmative forces, because life and death are always-becoming. It offers different pedagogical possibilities about what we ought to remember. Braidotti (2013) insists that feminist posthuman ethics entangle with affirmative politics to generate

possible futures. Affirmation is not counter to critical and it is not comforting or smooth. Rather, it is anticipatory and creative, offering “new ways of experimenting in the complexity of what does not easily fold into a smooth surface [it] keeps things unsettled, a push that ungrounds, unmoors, even as it propels” (Manning, 2016, p. 202). Through a methodology of difference and repetition, of pilgrimaging, *Never Forgetting* is reconfigured and rematerialized. I “bear witness to singularity as a power” (Deleuze, 1994, p. 27) and I imagine a future in conversation with its ghosts.

Epilogue: Summertime in Newtown

As morning approaches, a bird or two begins to sing, then more join until the chorale of birdsong drowns out the *shushhhhh* of cars on a wet road. The nature, for an almost imperceptible moment, overpowers the highway. The moral code, *Never Forget*, struggles with this natural force. The dust of the living and the dying hangs in the atmosphere until eventually it flutters downstream to the Long Island Sound. The fresh air washes me clean as I walk for another day across Newtown, in Connecticut, in New England, in America.

The hardest part is knowing I'll survive
I've come to listen to the sound of the trucks as they move down out on 95
And pretend that it's the ocean
Coming down to wash me clean
I would rock my soul
In the bosom of Abraham
I would hold my life
In his saving grace
I would walk all the way
From Boulder to Birmingham
If I thought I could see your face

Emmylou Harris & Bill Danoff, Boulder to Birmingham

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