



STREAM

S18. Minor Theory Amid Transactional Forms (Other People Have Become Incoherent to Me)

STREAM ORGANIZER(S)

Megan J Gette

University of Oslo
meganjg@uio.no

Alecia Beymer

University of Cincinnati
beymeraa@ucmail.uc.edu

Harshavardhan Bhat

University of Cincinnati
bhathn@ucmail.uc.edu

DESCRIPTION

If my writing makes a mess of things, it's not to flee understanding, but to map (mis-)understanding as a verb

—Douglas Kearney, *Mess and Mess and*

What is it about small lapping waves that makes them so intimate?

—Lyn Hejinian, *The Fatalist*

The minor persists amid transactional forms of relation, modes of exchange negotiated through institutional exigencies and embodied precarities, and logistical slowdown (Moten and Harney 2021). The transactional forecloses the potential for relation in a stable yet incoherent system. It urges legibility and clarity as a strategy for movement. To move, you become legible yourself, or attempt it. Meanwhile you attune to its performances: you sense out where someone's lack or overabundance of words, an eyeroll, a pause or hesitation marks misunderstandings and their timely fallout, a failed exchange. Just as we critique this space, someone else learns how to materialize or profit from it, making confusion a personal problem. Yet simplifying the form does not always yield clarity or understanding. The diagnostics or naming processes of theory are also part of the transactional machine.

Are our payments unconditionally tethered to this practice-of theory-making? Do we even know what is happening anymore? What modes of sensemaking and exchange take shape around incoherence, the mis-understanding? And how do we feel into the intimacies of being, proximity, and the personal in a contingent space of transactions?

Amid the institutionalization and disciplining of thought from the noise of lived experience, the minor might lurk or lag behind a worlding—"an imperial promise of a form barely roughed out..." (Berlant and Stewart 2019:22). It is shaped through power dynamics and political excesses but asks, "why do we care whether or not the master notices?" (Katz 1996). It might settle in opacity, out of view of the profitability of ambience and the illusion of 'free' thought which, is, at worst, extracted from personal lives, histories and practices that provide a backdrop for theory and its material circulations. We turn here to poets because they might be considered theorists of the minor gesture (Manning 2016), or the everyday, or the incoherent. Poets live in the messiness of making that reanimates the relational and resists the disciplining of thought within the institution. Form becomes possibility and play instead of formulaic ethos. But poets also need groceries, and cash. "Poetry is not a luxury" (Lorde). As poet Journey Streams writes, "They've added a laugh track to our love lives and sold us our old feelings and fed us the crumbs in the corners of our shoes" (2026). What modes of sharing, reading, citing, exchange might be modeled against the terms of legibility and transaction that instead re-value the poem, and life, in its "uselessness" (Manning 2023)?

This stream is interested in micropolitics and minor theorizing that shows up in what could be described as incoherence. We are especially interested in works that play against academic forms and contemplate the ideas below:

- a "dissociative poetics" (Berlant) that describes tactics of withdrawal, or not taking things personally
- mishearing, misunderstanding, wtf moments / micro-expressions that index the inadequacy of community
- the implications of clarity, form, legibility or consensus / theft and authorship / opacity, fugitivity, poetics
- the management of history in the everyday / the history of management in the everyday
- the exhaustion of representational thinking as "confrontations with stupidity" (Deleuze)
- illegible forms of thought; how thoughts come out before they are disciplined
- race, affect, and the genealogy of minor theory
- creating reciprocity, care, support, different forms of giving/taking, sharing
- humanity as institutional performance