Hope: an e-modulating-motion of deterritorialization
Felicity J. Colman

A second hunger striker in Nauru has been rushed to hospital amid growing fears of fatalities among protesting asylum seekers, some of whom have sewn their lips together.

The Howard Government is continuing to ignore the protest, saying the strikers should return to Afghanistan and "get on with their lives".

The Age, October 2003

Bomb Sandwich

What keeps people going after an experience or encounter with an event that damages their sense of human vitality? The sense that is essential for a human organism to function properly: the will to live. The innate drive and joy of encounters and gleaning of skills which children own: the will to play. What causes the loss of one's possession of the will to joy; the curiosity inherent in the pursuit of the unfamiliar or the barely glimpsed; the production of fresh emotional responsiveness with which to claim an experiential event? What reduces the movement and modulations of emotion - e-modulating-motion - to an immobile point? An event that can cause the neural mapping of the traumatized body to return a message to the brain that says 'indifference' or 'despair', causing the body to undo its resident emotion of learned wonder. After a 'bomb sandwich', as Iranian director Mohsen Makhmalbaf referred to the United States' practice of alternately dropping bombs and food over Afghanistan, what forms of hope or revelation could possibly be conveyed to the body of the receiver?[1] The will to eat in the affective zone of probable pain, disability and death.

One's views of the conception of the conscious body and its reason for being will direct the response to these questions. Here I should declare to the reader my own position on this contentious subject - my answer to the above rhetorical question on what causes the will to eat/the will to live - follows a trajectory of thought that stems from Baruch Spinoza (1677) to Antonio Damasio (2004), where any infinity of thought or being is one that is created in the consciousness of the thinker.[2] In consideration of how the global processes of deterritorialization have affected the vernacular and civic endeavors of communities, the connections between deterritorialization and affect become evident in the anaesthetized realm of social emotions, individual consciousness, and in the political control of sensation and feeling.[3] One of the corporeal elements subject to a negative traffic through the effects of globalization is the collective disregard for the individual's emotive-sensate relationship within and of the world - their conscious and automatic collective social territories (historical and vernacular 'behaviors and investments'[4] ).

Deleuze and Guattari describe a range of forms of deterritorialization in
terms of their 'functions' in relation to a 'territory'.[5] Although their term deterritorialization is drawn from the American anthropological concept of 'territory', the deterritorialization process or 'territory' to which Deleuze and Guattari refer do not simply pertain to topographical perimeters.[6] Rather territory and deterritorialization are terms that direct us to any body or thing that may consciously or tacitly be perceived in terms of relational and/or transversal movements. In this essay I seek to comment on an outcome of one of the functions performed by the contemporary global economic, religious, and political deterritorialization processes of the redistribution and control of events - the obstruction to affective sensate relations of the human body, specifically the feeling of hope as an emotive-sensate relational response. What happens to hope, the will to hope, after the imposition of an absolute and infinite power of control over the emotional sentience of the body, particularly a body that has been gendered within the 'essences' of that regulatory power? An affect of the processes of deterritorialization is a redundancy of recoding, and control of the sensate territories of the individual - control of the relational movements of the sensory life-ensemble of a body; a compression of many sensate and emotive experiences and perceptual possibilities.

Affect is the concept of 'taking on' something, and as such it is a concept that describes the mutational, transversal movements, or immobility produced by the self-generating nature of the micropolitical organization of many gendered, and socially and culturally determined physical and virtual roles. To retreat from hope, to take on despair, is to affect the (would-be) movement of the body. The retreat from movement is a movement that is an affective response to deterritorialization. Entropy. Apathy. The role of affect is of enormous importance for thinking through the concepts of agency and its impact on the creation of gendered, controlled, and surveyed subjectivities. Affect and control-societies go hand in hand, although to a certain extent we can choose to step outside the surveillance range and either disengage or be creative with automatic technologies. Screen media (including film, television, computer, and mobile technologies) provide historical patterns for social behavior, and communication. They are tacit chronicles of a specific form of deterritorialization that control individual existential agency through organizational bodies, such as patriarchally governed institutions, censorship boards, and religious laws - 'signifying regimes'[7] whose functions affect the body[8]. These screen templates are images of the past, present, and future that work to control culture, in turn affecting the production of social emotion, as long as consciousness accepts the existence of the image proffered. Hope is an affective reverberation to events of all scales that poleaxe vitalism.

Further, following Guattari's comments on the 'collective existential mutation' of subjectivity and subjective factors, a subtextual question is posed: what types of subjectivities are produced through the framing of emotions such as hope by particular powers?[9] To speak to the feeling of hope, I am responding to two films by directors based in Iran - Mohsen Makhmalbaf's feature film Kandahar (2001), and a short film made by Mohsen's daughter, Samira Makhmalbaf, God, Construction and Destruction (2002). These films bookend the events of September 11, 2001 (made respectively before and after) and utilize the filmmakers' storytelling practice of the revision of an event through a poetic inflection of the relations between a situation, accumulated time, and memory. Both films highlight the consequences of absolute powers (fundamentalisms of religious, national, and capitalist orders) that control through the promise
of liberation, but in fact have the effect of eliminating the potential of new relational paradigms, and stilling the modulations of emotion. Hearts stop beating.

Both Kandahar and God, Construction and Destruction are made in the style of documentary-dramas; that is they draw upon real events and use non-trained actors to play out the story-time with an axiomatic temporal sense of the recreation of the reactions and responses to events that continue to have absolute deterritorializing affects. Kandahar was made before what the media network CNN coded America's 'New War'; that is the film was made before the United States of America declared war on Afghanistan, before the September 11 attacks on the United States of America. Kandahar’s story represents the deprivations suffered by Afghani people after years of war and famine; particularly focusing on the reterritorialization of Afghani women to adhere to brutal patriarchal oppression by the Taliban regime after the Soviet withdrawal of occupation in 1989. Kandahar charts the story of a real Afghani born, Canadian journalist Nelofer Pazira, given the name of Nafas in the film. Nafas has received a letter from her sister who says she will commit suicide because of the self-dispossession she has suffered under the Taliban. In a race against the named date of the suicide in the letter, Makhmalbaf's Kandahar utilises the epistolary form for the narration of events, a technique that Hamid Naficy has described as common to exilic stories of everyday accounts of absence, loss, separation, and distance. Nafas' voice speaks a letter out loud that she is writing addressed to the sister she risks her life for; the sister whom the viewer/listener of this personal letter realizes cannot be free and is most likely not alive. Chillingly, we are left with the realization that we, the audience, may have taken on the role of the dead. We ask: Can the dead react? Will we ever receive news of what has actually happened or is happening? How has our liberty been compromised? Will we ever be free to hope? Are we starving, have we been raped, tortured, humiliated, beaten, placed into another's servitude? Are we dead? The narrator's voice bears testament, bears witness to a theatrical spectacle of death and hope.

God, Construction and Destruction was made as a response to the events of September 11 (it is a component story of the eleven short films that comprise the film 11'09"01). As a narrative God, Construction and Destruction displays what Michel de Certeau described as, the art of making a coup: it is a detour by way of a past ("the other day", "in olden days") or by way of a quotation (a "saying," a proverb) made in order to take advantage of an occasion and to modify an equilibrium by taking it by surprise. The occasion that the story tells is of a female teacher trying to convey to a group of young pupils (around five to eight years old) the ramifications of the events of September 11. The children work making bricks out of clay, and are concerned with issues relating to the water in the wells, and the immediate deaths surrounding their tenuous existence comprised of Afghani refugees living in Iran. In Afghanistan at the time of filming, it was forbidden under Taliban rule for women or girls to go to school, or for women to work aside from in the medical profession. More than to those on-screen the teacher comments to the viewer: 'There are three million Afghan refugees living in Iran. Whatever happens to them will happen to you too.' Initially, using the classroom strategy of letting the pupils frame the discourse, the teacher asks the children if someone knows
what has happened in the world. One girl answers in the matter-of-fact tone of a child: 'They buried Auntie up to her neck in Afghanistan and then stoned her to death'. To which the teacher replies in an equally impervious tone: 'No, a more important global incident'. In trying to convey the uncertainty of the continuation of their life at that moment after the event, the teacher struggles with the limitations of her pedagogic practice and her students' knowledge and biographical consciousness. The only 'tower' in their lives is that of the narrow circular tower of the brick kiln's smokestack, an industrial territory of reference for the young brick-makers in the class. In a scene metaphoric for the display of social emotions following the immobilizing event of September 11 (televisual hypnotic affect notwithstanding), the teacher draws a circle on a blackboard and asks for a minute of silence to reflect upon the dead, her finger acting as a clock's minute hand. The children, by now provoked into thinking about the 'towers', display an awareness of the situation after all, and their discussion again delineates the perimeters of their conscious knowledge of emotions, agency, and social behavior,

Child: 'God only destroys humans, God hasn't got airplanes, he builds humans.'

Teacher: 'It's good that you are children, keep your innocence.'

Child: 'Does God kill? Does He kill? He hasn't got airplanes.'

e-motion

Emotion and affect are co-joined concepts. Neurologist Antonio Damasio has described the differences between what he terms 'primary emotions', 'social emotions', and 'background emotions', noting that the primary emotions which include happiness, sadness, anger, fear, disgust, and surprise are 'easily identifiable in human beings across several cultures'.[18] 'Background emotions' are the type that neurologists have not yet been able to definitively predict.[19] Background emotions, different from 'moods', are the aggregate expressions of and interactions with 'regulatory reactions' and 'regulatory processes' of the body (including behavior, appetite, and fundamental homeostatic functions).[20] The imposition of specific social, cultural, and familial affective rules might be considered as deterritorializing functions of signifying regimes in that such 'background' regulations can be viewed as both 'passional' and 'conscious' in their formation of the constituent background emotions of a body, and of subjectivity.[21]

What is a body enabled to do? In ancient terms, emotions were described as the passions, an affective lived experience of pathos - 'anything that befalls one'.[22] French artist Charles Le Brun in 1668 catalogued twenty-two passions including hope, jealousy, love, and horror, by drawing the facial expressions of each.[23] In this, le Brun followed René Descartes' identification of the six 'primitive' passions (love, wonder, joy, desire, sadness, hatred), and their secondary passions.[24] A deterritorialization of emotion. A contemporary of Descartes and LeBrun, Spinoza's The Ethics was published posthumously in the year of his death, 1677. Part II of The Ethics looks at 'Of the Nature and Origin of the Mind' and Part III is 'Concerning the Origin and Nature of the Emotions'. Spinoza lays out and discusses many propositions concerning the affective nature of the emotions on human bodies, including the proposition: 'The mind does not know itself except in so far as it perceives ideas of affections of the
body', and 'The human mind does not perceive any external body as actually existing except through ideas of affections of its own body'. In Spinoza, the movement between the modulations of affection and emotion is relational to the type of emotion resonating through the component senses of the body.

Screen media charts the passions of any cultural moment; the socially determined, relational 'e-motions' of an event, as philosopher Glen Mazis has described; emotion being a reciprocal movement between person and world. The relational movement between viewer/auditor and the screen image/sound is where the frame of micropolitically determined perception and subsequent recognition occurs; opening 'intrasubjective communication between your virtual register and a conscious line of reflection'. Between the viewer/auditor and the image, affective recognition produces a culturally determined communication, a conscious apprehension of e-motional 'mattering' with the world. [28] Sew up your lips in protest.

The precincts between the 'stages' in a human's biological development are bound by screen media, whose social control seems limited to a thin surface of global communication that is often myopic in its overtly staged reflexive 'inclusions'. Lateral thinking however, means an economically safe side-step rather than an unencumbered free-play. The communication of the boundaries of human imagination and history within the synthetic institutions that human groups have erected is the domain of those children, adolescents, individuals, thinkers and artists who attempt to engage with, modify, or interfere with even the most rigid, and predetermined, fixed organizations.

Both Samira Makhmalbaf and Mohsen Makhmalbaf's screenplays chart the distortions of human emotion due to the control of emotional response by organizational bodies of gendered roles and religious regulations. One of the key features of the burka that is worn in Afghanistan by women during this era (a garment that completely covers the body from head to toe, with only a grid woven across the eye region for sight), is its stifling of any responsive gesture: facial and corporeal. Reterritorializing information is provided: class and rank are indicated by the cloth of the burka, the texture, the design on the eye guard, and the color. As the doctor (who is an African-American man, disguised as an Afghani) in Kandahar comments: 'The beard is a man's burka... hope for a woman covered is that someone will see her some day'. Kandahar foregrounds the woman's point of view of the world from beneath her burka by positioning the opening and closing frames of the film from underneath the burka. In this way, the viewer/auditor of the film can assume the position of being beneath the veil rather than the customary western position of looking at it, and regarding the woman underneath it as merely an object. What is it that you hope for?

In both God, Construction and Destruction and Kandahar, the concept of hope appears alien, or ancient, as artist Le Brun's comments on the difficulty of drawing a facial register of hope noted: 'the movements of this passion are not so much external as internal'. The emotion that resonates with this viewer is that of loss, a loss of self, a loss of possibilities, a loss of the consciousness of the body as a somatosensory organism, a loss of responsiveness - the will to hope. Philosophers including Spinoza, Søren Kierkegaard, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Simone de Beauvoir, have commented on the loss of the self in relation to the cognition of the
lived body. Kierkegaard's comment in his novel *The Sickness Unto Death* voices this loss:

The biggest danger, that of losing oneself, can pass off in the world quietly as if it were nothing; every other loss, an arm, a leg, five dollars, a wife, etc. is bound to be noticed. [30]

Contemporary neuroscientists now confirm the relationships between the body and emotion, through the physical reaction to lived situations that give rise to emotions and feelings. [31] Damasio's contention is that 'mental process are grounded in the brain's mappings of the body, collections of neural patterns that portray responses to events that cause emotions and feelings'. [32] We experience hope as a form of a memory: the 'lived experience' of better times, the conscious and utopic hope for the possibility of the end of the regulation of sensate movements. However, as Damasio, following Spinoza, observes, in the recognition of the relational movements of the affected body, the 'build up of somatic markers requires that both brain and culture be normal. When either brain or culture is defective, at the outset, somatic markers are unlikely to be adaptive.' [33]

*e-motional prostheses*

Commodity culture provides emotional prosthetics for those non-'normative' environments that Damasio names, from 'Nazi Germany' to 'Western society'. [34] As humans hope for, and anticipate future scenarios in terms of their consciousness of the past and present, as Damasio describes, they operate under the influence of learned social emotions, stored as 'conceptual categories', and '[b]y virtue of those associations, when a situation that fits the profile of a certain category is revisited in our experience, we rapidly and automatically deploy the appropriate emotions'. [35]

In *Kandahar*, as in every media representation of the biological sexes, the body is a politically determined cultural medium. The screen can have the effect of fragmenting the body and causing a loss of those 'appropriate' emotional affective reactions. If one has gleaned knowledge purely through a non-haptic medium such as a screen, then emotionally, we are in the same position as these children in *God, Construction and Destruction*, speculating on whether or not God builds aeroplanes (and perhaps even playing a computer game along those lines). [36]

The 'bomb sandwich' provided the hieroglyphic inspiration for the surreal scene in Makhmalbaf's 2001 film *Kandahar* where the prosthetic limbs for the landmine victims fall from the sky, and a race for prostheses across the desert by the limbless ensues. [37] *The will to walk* makes each body in this film an event. *Kandahar* displays the prosthetic culture that is generated in the conception and visualization of the human body within any given contemporary society. Mark Wigley has usefully described a prosthesis as 'a foreign element that reconstructs that which cannot stand up on its own, at once propping up and extending to its host. The prosthesis is always structural, establishing the place it appears to add up to'. [38] In hoping for completion, hoping for comparative normative functioning, this constructed hope effectively neutralizes and deterritorializes' singularity', as Guattari describes, a subjectivity that is 'intoxicated with and anaesthetized by a collective feeling of pseudo-eternity'. [39]

Awareness of the prosthetic nature of our contemporary culture involves
perception of the autobiographical self; awareness of the continual movement of a self construction and reflection through one's own memory, as well as the utilization of historical and cultural memories and places as emotive triggers. Clearly important in the analysis of Kandahar, is the focus on a perceptual account of the self, given through the narrative construction of the main character - Nafas - and her continual reflexive and embodied consciousness of her female body as demarcated in Afghanistan. It is through this type of self acknowledgment of mental duress and physical risk, framed within the historical awareness of the predicament of the Afghani woman under the Taliban that the narrative resides - firstly in a sense of a determined and focussed hope that Nafas can reach her sister and save her. As the narrative progresses, the audience is just given glimpses of extreme duress and in fact the hopeless situation of the women. The audience wants to have faith that Nafas's desire has a chance, but we know that the possibilities for the successful meeting with her sister are slim. Even the possibility of repatriation is doubtful in a country where, under Taliban rule, it was illegal for women to travel alone. Further, any unknown or unrecognized women were to be immediately reported. How is it that these women are able to function with such a distance between despair and hope?

Feelings of hope can be induced chemically into the brain, through natural and artificial means, to provide a transitory amelioration. But what of hope experienced as an emotion drawn from bodily experiences? The feeling of hope may be the result of a range of multiple affective interactions with the world, but these interactions are mediated through the body, one that is subject to mediating forces. The body also is a mediator of forces, desires, as well as aesthetic perimeters of pleasure and fear that cultures impose by their judicial systems. The example given in the epigraph to this essay, that of the desperate actions of refugees attempting to draw attention to their plight, operates as a component of a corporeal aesthetics of hope, functioning in contemporary culture as an expectation of support for the politics of singularity. In Kandahar, the pragmatic device of individual resistance to social control is in the use of an ephemeral epistolary form, a slight recording of a voice of hope, a message that only survives for those that are listening: the sound of the impellent appetite for affective hope.

Samira Makhmalbaf and Mohsen Makhmalbaf's films create documentary-theatrical arenas akin to viewing the film- footage of the sodden death fields of Belgium of World War One. While contemporary life has been rebuilt in the contemporary fields across Belgium, no fields of edible greens are to be seen in the 2001 territories of Afghanistan. The territory is that of a dried out Somme; destroyed buildings and people where any possibility of becoming-other is enslaved and mummified by the multiple layers of gendered codes of relational behavior. At the opening of the film Nafas (protagonist/narrator) comments in response to the refugees situated on the Afghan border the following: 'I soon realized that these men didn't have an ideological problem with the Taliban. They left Afghanistan because they were starving, and because of the war. Some had been there since the communist period when the Russians carried out reprisals by destroying entire villages' (Kandahar 2001).

Mohsen Makhmalbaf's incorporation of the real event of the Afghani refugee camps on the Iranian border at this time re-territorializes the
capitalist residue of the refugee camp or compound. This strategy of a
dilative focus - a close-up - is one that many artists have utilized to give a
name and a face to a collectively experienced event of death or
disempowerment (see for example the French artist Christian Boltanski's
play with the scale of emotional mementos).[41]

The e-motional-body-as-territory

Is globalization the affective capture of hope? Globalization is about
survival. The living body as an organism depends upon its ability to adapt
and relate to its environment for its survival. This environment is a
complex network of social and familial relations, networks of corporeal
economies, and networks of corporeal exchange. But what of emotional
survival and how that relates to the global actuality and value of the
human body as a sensory organism and producer-consumer? Through the
global media, consumers of Western visual culture receive an impersonal
account of singular corporeal experiences, not knowledge of identity. One
of the effects of this global culture is the production of a circumscribed
knowledge of actual and imagined differences of identities; a constant
control of any deviating movement of what Guattari described as the realm
of 'existential Territories'.[42] The global disarray of the individual within
collective experiences is indicated in the ongoing declarations of war and
terror by humans against other humans; the maternal and healthy young
bodies of suicide bombers; the sewn-up mouths of refugee camp
detainees; the technological access to any kind of common corporeal
knowledge; the fragility of indigenous and eco/socio-regional cultures. The
quest for economically secure social territories has made us greedy in our
own backyards of consumption. Globalization's twenty-first century
produces feelings akin to indifference. Where is hope within a corporeal
experience of non-responsiveness?

In addition to the recording of phenomenological activities of corporeal
experience and expression the films of Makhmalbaf and Makhmalbaf's that
are discussed here are concerned with empirical investigations, and it is
this critical methodology that creates a credible docu-ecology of on-screen
cultures and communities. Watching these films makes one acutely aware
of the corporeal investment in those physical monuments and markers that
attest to the dramatic shifts in a geographical region and its boundaries
over a historical period of time. Because in Afghanistan, as in many
countries where long term occupation, or war, is experienced, those
markers are internal to the topographical bodies represented. In other
words the markers are maintained along the topological interactions of
bodies. Prosthetic economies make for a parsing and a passing of emotions
such as hope through forms that fall into the technologically obsolete, used
and discarded pile of commodity culture - an old tin of grandmother's
buttons, outmoded forms of communication, letter writing, home remedies
for health, prostheses that don't quite fit and generate pain; your culture is
killing my life.

The human emotions can be assembled and interpreted by the
viewer/auditor from any series of images and sounds. Feelings find form
through recognizable fields of emotional responses that formulate the
narrative for that viewer/auditor. The visual and audible field in question
can include the entire field of possibilities - from experimental, completely
abstracted sounds and images, to the most overtly proscribed and
pedagogical text. Inter-textual conventions and the narrative systems of
the given textual historical and cultural province unquestionably govern the
direction of the meaning of the final assemblage of the text in question. Yet
meanings are further made in what I would like to call the ecology of
spectatorial passions. In turn, this ecology has an emotive response to this
autopoetically construed narrative. That is to say, although the spectator
assembles a meaningful narrative, according to their cultural, aesthetic,
and historical partialities, this subjectively produced narrative has the
power/ability to exert further (and even different) emotive provocation to
act upon the viewer/auditor. To begin to describe this link between
narrative affect, narrative temporality and the e-motions, is to reclaim for
subjectivity what deterritorialization procedures have flattened.

[1] Dabashi, Hamid. 'Kandahar': a conversation with Mohsen Makhmalbaf',
Connect: Art, politics, theory, practice, no.4,
(Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett. [1677] 1982) 64, Ethics, II. P1 s; P3 s;
Damasio, Antonio. Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow and the Feeling Brain
[1] In using the term anaesthetized I am drawing from Allen Feldman's
essay 'From Desert Storm to Rodney King via ex-Yugoslavia: On Cultural
Anaesthesia' in C.Nadia Seremetakis (ed.), The Senses Still: Perception and
Memory as Material Culture in Modernity (Boulder, Colorado: Westview
[1] Guattari discusses the word deterritorialization in the interview, 'I am an
Idea-Thief', 'the term integrated into very different disciplines, where it
took on syntactic, rhetorical and even stylistic dimensions, which in turn
[1] Deleuze and Guattari note that Michel Foucault developed this concept
of the 'functions' of signs within a pre-established language in Deleuze and
Guattari, 1980, 140; Guattari discussed this concept as the 'a-signifying'
semiological dimension of subjectivity in 'On the Production of Subjectivity',
[1] Deleuze and Guattari discuss 'absolute D' as a form of
deterritorialization that 'turn[s] into lines of destruction or death', Deleuze
[1] For a discussion of the documentary genre see Nichols, Bill.
Representing Reality: issues and concepts in documentary (Bloomington:
[1] CNN.com/U.S., 'New war' to be fought with unprecedented secrecy',
September 18, 2001
'Makhmalbaf's Broken Mirror: The Socio-Political Significance of Modern
Iranian Cinema', Durham Middle East Paper (University of Durham, Centre
for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, no 64, March 2000).
film role gives her a chance to speak out about the tragedy in her
[1] Ibid.
[1] Deleuze and Guattari discuss consciousness and passion as 'the two figures' in the signifying regime of deterritorialization's process of subjective redundancy in Deleuze and Guattari, 1980, 132-133.
[1] Ibid., 178-179.
[1] Play, for example, the online 'game' New York Defender http://www.uzinagaz.com/index.php?entry_point=wtc and 'Escape from Woomera', http://www.escapefromwoomera.org/.
See also essays by Feldman, Allen and Buck-Morss, Susan, on the screen's alteration and manipulation of the senses in Seremetakis, 1994.
Author/s:  
Colman, Felicity J.

Title:  
Hope: an e-modulating motion of deterritorialization

Date:  
2004

Citation:  

Publication Status:  
Published

Persistent Link:  
http://hdl.handle.net/11343/34720

File Description:  
Hope: an e-modulating motion of deterritorialization