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# The Silence Between Words: Events of Becoming through Trauma in A.L. Kennedy's "What Becomes"

Laurie Ringer

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Hope is what I do not have in hell ... Loosen  
 All these knots and really listen.  
 I cannot plainly tell you this, but, if you care,  
 then—beyond all harm and hurt—  
 real hope is there  
 (Liz Lochhead, 7, 16-20)

- 1 A.L. Kennedy's short story collection *What Becomes* embodies the resonating achronological effects of trauma.<sup>1</sup> Ethically, trauma and traumatic loss are problematic for the literary, therapeutic, academic, and religious discourses that seek to offer some form of *post*-traumatic meaning, cure, analysis, or resurrection: first, because there is no unitary and narratable life *after* trauma. Traumatic events echo; the reflected waves insist and accrete complicating patterns and dysrhythmias. Second, the traumatic present suborns chronological futurity. However richly and productively one might live with trauma, lived trauma's interference waves neutralize the linearity of a *post*-trauma future: "real hope" does not negate real suffering, the "harm and hurt" (Lochhead) of the sonorous present of lived and living trauma. In their traumatic (re)experience, Kennedy's characters are lost in cultural and individual feedback loops of human suffering, persisting from the ancient Garden of Eden to the contemporary city of Edinburgh. Like Eden, Edinburgh is fallen, and the characters in these twelve stories are arguably in need of divine or therapeutic interventions. Traditionally, questions of intervention in, resurrection from, and hope for trauma have been deferred to psychoanalysis, and it is in the project to repair loss that psychoanalysis parallels medieval Christianity. Both enterprises imagine an original traumatic event/wound to which humans are tragic heirs; this event/wound is either morally or ethically problematic. Both systems conceive a post-lapsarian present in which the distant original sin/trauma compounds into individualized lived traumatic experience. Both methodologies seek moral/ethical healing through linguistic interventions, and both

views pursue a future return to a pre-lapsarian state that undoes original and accrued loss. Kennedy's lived trauma, however, confounds language and distorts time. The traumas of *What Becomes* resist the linear practices of linguistic mediation and chronological futurity essential to medieval Christian and contemporary psychoanalytic methods.

- 2 In their lived traumas, Kennedy's twenty-first century Edinburgh residents are poignantly similar to Dante Alighieri's thirteenth-century *Inferno* sufferers. Their traumas are silenced and animated in an all-encompassing traumatic present. For those in Kennedy's collection and in Dante's *Inferno*, the hellish and hopeless present of traumatic experience eclipses the pre-trauma past and occludes the post-trauma future. There is only an excruciating *now* of multi-event suffering. For example, Kennedy's unnamed narrator in "Story of My Life" (2443-674) wishes to reconfigure her mouth by growing a beak and losing her teeth which require repeated, bloody dental procedures.<sup>2</sup> She lives in an ongoing *now* of dental extractions as "a kid" (2465), at "twenty-four, twenty-five" (2504-2505), "thirty-five" (2542), and "forty-five" (2596), but her teeth regrow; she is "The Shark Tooth Girl: the more you pull, the more she grows: ivory from head to toes" (2489). The narrator seeks an anodyne for the cycle of tooth growth and extraction: "Numb is best—I always aim for numb, for numb of any type—but pain has found me anyway. Worse than imagination, here it is" (2519-2520). The pain, gore, and loss of her dental treatments re-echo with her unspoken emotional losses, and these patterns repeat and complicate in waves of dental anesthetic, swollen gums, tooth extractions, and oral stitches.
- 3 In "As God Made Us," the narrator Dan is a war amputee who is still learning to navigate daily life with a remade body: "right foot disarticulation and a right arm transhumeral" (2128-2129). He may also be closeted, traumatized by the queer element of his making (2114-2117). Dan has joined six regiment friends and fellow amputees for a day out at a public swimming pool where a school group is also visiting. The teacher tells Dan's group that their bodies scare her group of children and that the wounded men should leave. Instead, they "swim—show themselves thrashing, ugly, wild" (2253). To the soldiers, the teacher says: "I told them you were as God made you" (2225). The teacher's explanation silences trauma and telescopes time in a perverse (re)creation story: the pasts of their original makings converge into their battlefield re-makings and post-combat recoveries. Their futures blur into a (re)resonating traumatic present tense.
- 4 Time also telescopes into a (re)resonating present in "What Becomes." As Frank waits for a film to start in a small cinema, he reflects disjointedly upon his last evening at home. That night, Frank had cut his finger in a kitchen knife-slip. He did not attempt to staunch or bandage the wound; he splattered the kitchen and dining area surfaces with his blood (168-184). His unnamed wife found Frank, an expert in forensic pathology (299), engrossed in the spatter patterns of his manufactured crime scene. Frank's wife had shut herself in the bathroom upstairs (360). When Frank crept upstairs after two o'clock in the morning, his wife confronted him with violent tears (417, 436); he left that night (154). Frank's last night at home reverberates into his present night in the cinema, revealing the loss of his daughter, his marriage, his home, his job, and his identity, though the chronology and details are unclear. Some type of "accident" (362-363) has claimed their child who is almost invisible in the text. She is unnamed, a "hanging absence" (100), the "someone" his wife might have brought home with her

(208-211), the “no one” who comes home holding the wife’s hand (378-379). Like the child, the marital relationship is lost. Ordinary domestic intimacies like incidental awareness of his wife’s bathing habits were lost long before Frank’s last night at home: “He never had seen her bathing, the details” (333-334). Traumatic details are also part of Frank’s job. In the cinema, Frank seeks escape from reverberating traumas that comprise his present, and he wishes the film would loop continuously (433).

- 5 For Kennedy’s characters, it is lived and living trauma that repeats continuously, and this future-eclipsing present hell is ethically problematic for psychoanalytic analysis: life in present tense does not heal; wounds spread, mutate, and perpetuate. In their pathologies, Kennedy’s characters are not so very far removed from Dante’s traumatized victims in hell. Buoso degli Abati (Canto xxv 79-151) shares the Seventh Circle of hell with Cianfa Donati (Canto xxv 34-78), and their punishment as thieves is to eternally transmute from human into serpent form (Cioffi 82). Cianfa is the serpent who becomes human-like by drawing out Buoso’s human language and ambulation. Buoso slithers away from the exchange hissing; this process repeats perpetually. Buoso and Cianfa are condemned to a mutable subjectivity that flickers between the shape of the serpentine tempter in ancient Eden and the historical personalities of Dante’s day. Though these thirteenth-century figures are chronologically removed from the Christian Fall narrative, Buoso and Cianfa inherit the stain of Original Sin. Their thievery merits a deeper circle of intensified punishment; however, their births into a sin-ridden present mark them out for potential and perpetual torment *before* they sin. Dante’s thieves and Kennedy’s characters are born/lost into an *in medias res* of trauma, a broken Eden/Edinburgh. Choices, shortcomings, or accidents complicate or intensify lived trauma, but their births into a trauma-ridden present likewise mark them out for traumatic experience. The lost people of *What Becomes* find themselves in the animated spaces of torment continually carved out by lived and living trauma. In this way they are lost before they can be found.
- 6 Like Dante’s thieves, Kennedy’s characters are lost to the methods of psychoanalysis and trauma theory. Psychoanalysis interprets Frank’s responses to lived trauma as pathological, and the diagnostic criteria impose silence when recovery does not/cannot follow a narrative trajectory of positive mourning or introjection. According to Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok’s criteria, Frank suffers from “the fantasy of incorporation” (128) and the inability to engage in the process of introjection or positive mourning. With this fantasy comes “the refusal to introject and the denial of a gap” (128) in the shape of an absent love object. This “refusal to mourn is prohibited from being given a language [...] [W]e are debarred from providing any indication whatsoever that we are inconsolable. [...] There can be no thought of speaking to someone else about our grief” (130). In “What Becomes,” Frank could be read as silent on his grief, swallowing “the words that cannot be uttered, the scenes that cannot be recalled, the tears that cannot be shed [...] along with the trauma that led to the loss” and by sealing these in an internal crypt (130). The silent crypt also silences further analysis of Kennedy’s story. Joan Kirkby has recently revisited Jacques Derrida’s critique of Abraham and Torok’s crypt. Derrida prefers the pathology of incorporation to the ontological violence of killing the lost other twice: first in the original loss; second in the process of introjection. Derrida flings the crypt doors open to permit ongoing conversations with the dead, and his rejection of positive mourning allows survivors to reanimate the lost through active exteriorized memory (466-467). Whether the crypt doors are open or closed, Abraham and Torok and Derrida rely upon language

for the work of mourning. However, language-based strategies are subject to ontological and semantic gaps that frustrate the positive efforts to engage with trauma and traumatic loss.

- 7 Whereas psychoanalysis conceptualizes the gap of loss inside the victim, trauma theory locates this gap outside in the ontological space between traumatic experience and language-mediated understanding. Cathy Caruth explains Frank's inability to verbalize his traumas as a double-bind: "Speech [...] is not simply the vehicle of understanding, but also the locus of what cannot yet be understood" (155). At this "locus," speech becomes silence, and understanding becomes impossible. For Frank or other victims of trauma, understanding is impossible because of "the inability fully to witness the event as it occurs, or the ability to witness the event *fully* only at the cost of witnessing oneself" (7). Caruth distinguishes the ongoing event from subjective perception of the self *within* the event. In the action of lived experience subjectivity is lost; or, if one engages in subjective reflection on an event, full participation in the unfolding event is lost. Between the force of traumatic (re)experience and linguistic-based understanding, trauma survivors like Frank are lost. Although Caruth de-pathologizes loss, the traumatised may be said to haunt the space between experience and language, always seeking but never quite able to achieve understanding through language.
- 8 Susan Stewart explains the gap between (re)experience and understanding as the difference between the un-narrated openness of lived experience and the apparent closure afforded by narrative whose purpose is "to make present what can only be experienced abstractly and to textualize our experience and thereby make it available for interpretation and closure" (19). Closure, linguistic or therapeutic, is impossible because to mediate through language is to step outside lived experience. In addition to closure, narrative is assumed to "offer pattern and insight by virtue of its capacity for transcendence" (22-23). Transcendence, however, is problematic because of the nature of language itself. There will always be a nostalgic "longing for absolute presence in the face of the gap between the signifier and the signified" (24). Language silences itself in the gap between signifier and the signified where "absolute presence," "transcendence," and "closure" are lost. In this way, Frank and Kennedy's other survivors are already silenced before trauma. Living trauma compounds the impossibility of achieving understanding of an event. Like understanding, "talking cures" fall into these gaps and are lost. The understanding of any event *will always have been* impossible for anyone, including trauma survivors like Frank.
- 9 Frank displays pathologies indicative of trauma, and while diagnoses might vary, his continuing silences and losses are invariable. Linguistic-based interpretations will always lose survivors to the complicating patterns and dysrhythmias of lived and living trauma: trauma is not a wound to be healed but an experience to be (re)lived in an echoing present. The study of trauma requires non-linguistic interpretative strategies to move beyond traditional pathologies, cures, and analyses. Opening the study of trauma to include affect theory allows scholars and survivors to query how an individual can continue to seek connections and generate meaning, not as linguistically-constructed objects of knowledge but as affectively-charged ongoing experiences. Tethered to the anthropocentric power of language, the linguistic turn is unable to access the forces that comprise and cause traumatic experience. In its emphasis on bodies as sites of knowing and experience, the affective turn is open to transversal and non-scripted movements (*Thousand* 296) that impinge on both the peril

and promise of embodiment. In the flux of affective forces and encounters, the body's abilities to affect and to be affected generate a body-based futurity *lived* in the present alongside/through traumatic (re)experience.

- 10 Affect theory is notoriously challenging to articulate. Attempts to discuss affect bleed, sheer, and angle away from words because affect comprises multivalent movements—speeds and slownesses—operating outwith/within/through bodies. When gesturing toward the power of affect, language must behave differently. To accommodate the processual nature of affect, language flexes and bends, agglutinates and agglomerates to convey non-linguistic, achronological, and interconnected phenomena and forces. Compound prepositions *becoming with, through, alongside* are necessary to convey transversal movement and achronological yet ongoing events. Hyphenation accommodates the agglomeration needed for terms like *this-ness, not-yet-ness*. Similarly, abstract nouns like *ongoingness, unboundedness, positionings, and becomings*, the forward slash construction like *loss/lost*, and the parenthetically bracketed (*re*) prefix are essential to represent the potentiality and movement of affect in text.
- 11 Affect frustrates neat denotation, but includes the inscrutable non-human forces analogous to the raw powers of nature, fate, accident, or chance (Greg and Seigworth 1, 5-10). On the human level, affect theory moots bodies rather than linguistically constructed psyches or subjectivities because conscious knowing is enmeshed in the flux of biological, relational, and affective processes (1-3, 12-13). Affect encompasses the complex forces at work within bodies and operating through bodies, above and below conscious level (*Thousand* 281). More powerful and unnarratable than psychoanalytic drives, affect puts “the drive in bodily drives” (Gregg and Seigworth 6). Affect drives bodies in their ongoing encounters with objects, other bodies, and environments. Affects manifest in the body's autonomic reactions which can resonate into conscious knowing (Massumi 36-37). As affects reverberate with and within the body, they initiate further movement (15). For bodies, affect also powers becomings (*Thousand* 258-259). Affect can also educe the unmediated experience of emotion as an event (Ahmed 30).
- 12 With affect theory, subjectivity becomes an ongoing event that arises from the movements of the body rather than the machinations of language. Whereas psychoanalysis inscribes pathologies on trauma survivors like Frank, Steven D. Brown and Ian Tucker emphasize the problems of discursively constructed subjectivities because bodies have ways of knowing beyond language: “When subjectivities are understood as more or less clearly defined positions within a semiotic field, all flow and transformation is erased. The body is also viewed as a surface upon which discourse is inscribed rather than as something that is known ‘from within’” (234). While psychoanalytic methods inscribe Kennedy's characters with the discourses of pathology and cure, affect theory posits non-discursively inscribed bodies. Non-discursive bodies are double: both corporeal (human matter) and incorporeal (non-human movement). Brian Massumi likens the relationship of these two bodies to the relationship of matter and energy with each as a “fellow-travelling dimension of the same reality” (5). The matter and movement of the double-body echo against each other in an ongoing event of self-relation through which an incipient subjectivity (re)emerges and (re)resonates. Movements of self-relation reterritorialize or reclaim the body's molar identity.

- 13 Movements away from the body's molar identity deterritorialize the self and multiply it through dynamic experiences with the other bodies implicated in becomings. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari unleash a series of analogies that gesture toward and asynchronously complicate the phenomenon. Each analogy emphasizes the impartiality of becomings: for example, their writing partnership, the wasp and orchid, and the *faire un monde* or world making.<sup>3</sup> In becomings, subjectivity is not an anthropocentric label or narrative; it is an event entangling the human and non-human, and the material and immaterial, matter and energy. Subjectivities are temporarily lost in/through a dynamic and all-encompassing engagement that conflates time, weather, space, and setting in a paradoxical *event* of self-emptying and self-multiplying. Becomings are not bound to 'realistic' narratives and combinations of elements: distinctions like fact/fiction, fantasy/reality, animal/human, human/non-human, animate/inanimate, and self/other cease to matter. In the werewolf/vampire/horse/child analogy, Deleuze and Guattari spirit the reader into the assemblage with the second person pronoun "you":

You have the individuality of a day, a season, a year, a *life* [...] a climate, a wind, a fog, a swarm, a pack [...] A cloud of locusts carried in by the wind at 5 in the evening; a vampire who goes out at night, a werewolf at full moon [...]. It is the entire assemblage in its individuated aggregate that is a haecceity [...]. It is the wolf itself, and the horse, and the child that cease to be subjects to become events, in assemblages that are inseparable from an hour, a season, an atmosphere, an air, a life. (*Thousand* 262)

- 14 The life of the "you" implicated in the werewolf/vampire/horse/child analogy conflates the individual body's chronology (*life*) and its experience of time ("life") events. This time-torquing event critiques the linear practices of linguistic mediation and chronological futurity essential to medieval Christian and contemporary psychoanalytic methods. Into the flatly symbolic landscape of Freudian narratives, Deleuze and Guattari cheekily release traumatic agents: biblical locusts and the secular vampire and werewolf. The locusts/vampire/werewolf are no more/less credible than the wolf/ horse/child narratives normalized in Freudian approaches to traumatic experience and human subjectivity. Traditionally the purview of the anthropocentric powers of language, subjectivity in Deleuzian terms (re)emerges through the body's ongoing encounters. The werewolf/vampire/horse/child analogy emphasizes both the peculiar *this-ness*<sup>4</sup> of becomings and the impossibility of verbalizing their gravitational and atomizing forces. These forces both diffuse and concentrate the entities implicated in becomings.
- 15 Although the werewolf/vampire/horse/child analogy seems far-removed from "What Becomes," the vegetable soup, blood, film, daughter, and invisible rooms become events that temporarily reconstitute a world, conflating the achronological elements of Frank's life with Frank himself in an experience not dominated by lived and living trauma. Becomings turn the noun world into a verb "to make a world (*faire un monde*)" (*Thousand* 280), and through worlding, Frank can generate futurity and connectedness through continuous and non-tragic (re)makings of this world. Rosi Braidotti notes the positive outcomes of this temporary loss of subjectivity: "It is only at the point of utter destitution of one's 'self' that the activity of transformation of negativity can actually be undertaken" (164). Braidotti's "dstitution" is not a loss but a temporary letting go of "the centrality of ego-indexed notions of identity" (151). In these simultaneously emptying and multiplying moments, the self transitorily loses its molar identity and lived trauma by reaching "the point where it is no longer of any

importance whether one says I. [...] We have been aided, inspired, multiplied" (*Thousand* 3). These resonating experiences toward the self or away from the self are what the body knows "from within" and "ways of knowing beyond language" (Brown and Tucker 234). An immanently processual subjectivity emerges from the movements between self-relation and self-forgetting.

- 16 Affect theory looks at the moving flux of bodies and their incipencies: bodies are dynamic thresholds, event horizons for becomings. The focus is not getting over trauma, but on reconnecting with/beyond/through it in ways that continue to generate meaning, subjectivity, and even beauty. Futurity emerges not as a distant point on the horizon, but as an unfolding and enriching present that is radically open to becomings. Frank is neither silent nor lost; he continues to seek events of relation. His interfaces with blood, soup, and rooms reveal his becoming with/ through/alongside trauma.

### "This world": Our Bleeding Days

- 17 In becoming-blood, Frank summons a disturbing but beautiful world that communicates beyond pathological silences. Through the blood he can express his shame and connect with his lost daughter.
- 18 Trauma is part of Frank's job as an "expert" (299) in the forensic science of violent crime scenes. His daily work takes him to spaces of hell on earth, haecceities whose horror outstrips description. Even in his private thoughts, language itself turns away from inscribing the carnage and veers into synecdochic lists of violent action in "rooms with walls that were a dull red shine, streaking, hair and matter: floors dragged, pooled, thickened: footprints, hand prints, scrambling, meat and panic and spatter and clawing and smears and loss and fingernails and teeth and everything that a person is not, should not be, everything less than a whole and contented person" (304-306). His days at work bleed; his language dismembers itself in the force of events beyond understanding. There is no language for the gruesome machinations of loss, no spoken language for the lost. At home, Frank worlds a crime scene in blood.
- 19 While cooking, Frank sustains a cut to the "proximal phalanx, left ring finger, a gash that almost woke the bone. Blood" (168-169). Dispassionately he observes his body's reactions to blood loss: "his physiology performed as could be predicted, increased heart rate jerking out his loss, building up his body of evidence. Read the blood here and you'd see perhaps a blade that rose and fell, or the clash of victim and attacker: blows and fear and outrage, shock" (188-189).
- 20 Frank creates haecceities: "Invisible rooms—that's what he made—he'd think and think until everything disappeared beyond what he needed: signs of intention, direction, position" (307-308). In his becomings with the blood crime scenes Frank experiences "what exactly became" of his victims. At home Frank appropriates his workplace techniques to describe what has become of him as trauma survivor. As he has no personal, private words for trauma, Frank resorts to the movements of blood, hoping his wife will experience his feelings within the flow, shapes, and patterns of a carnage which defies words.
- 21 In Frank's worlding, the blood in the kitchen becomes less of a crime scene and more of an abstract expressionist painting after Jackson Pollock or work of installation art after Allan Kaprow. The use of Frank's own blood as paint traverses the "gap between *content*

and effect" within "the primacy of the affective in image reception" (Massumi 24). The content or qualities of an image find no correlation with the impact of the image (intensities), therefore Frank's crime scene can be oddly beautiful. "The level of intensity is characterized by a crossing of semantic wires: on it, sadness is pleasant. [...] It does not fix distinctions. Instead, it vaguely but insistently connects what is normally indexed as separate" (Massumi 24). Blood, indexed to loss or sadness, becomes an event of artistic expression; grief becomes a work of art. Like a Pollock painting, Frank's blood-painting depicts only movement, intensity, direction without an identifiable narrative or image. Just as installation artist Allan Kaprow extended "Pollock's legacy into three dimensions. By creating post painterly installations that one necessarily stepped into" (Kaizen 81), Frank extends his abstract expressionist statement into three dimensions, an interactive space blurring life and art. In the kitchen and dining areas, Frank invites his wife to step into a temporary world through his installation artwork. This should erase the molarity of their separate experiences as bodies and as survivors; however, his wife only sees pathology and half-asks: "What's wrong with you" (421-422). He cannot answer, but grief is like his blood-painted installation: "Our world is thick with it, clotted in patterns and patterns of grief. And, beyond this, I know you're sad. I know your days are bleeding, too" (373-374). Through his installation, thick and congealed with grief, Frank weeps blood. His blood may mirror the bloodshed in a violent crime that took their daughter; however, Frank's bleeding installation might be his own medium for expressing grief, his own world-making. Grief, like blood, has painted itself all over their world. Although Frank's attempts to share the experience of grief and trauma are unsuccessful, his Pollock/Kaprow installation evinces his becoming with, through, alongside the bleeding days of lived and living trauma.

- 22 Frank's interface of blood also creates an oblique confessional. The force of a cooking knife spills Frank's blood as truth: "The blade had slipped. With squash you've got to be careful because it's always tough and can deflect you, slide you into an accident" (165-166). "Accident" may refer to Frank's kitchen injury or to Frank's crime scene investigations; however, "accident" also imputes his involvement in the "one terrible thing which had been an accident, an oversight, a carelessness that lasted the space of a breath and meant he lost as much as her, just precisely as much" (362-363). Frank's current lapse mirrors a past occasion when his powers of observation failed him (295-296) and shed blood. In deterritorializing with the kitchen blood, Frank becomes the evidence under examination, and the blood becomes Frank's personal and professional shame, the red, external reminder of his failures of observation.
- 23 After the cooking accident, Frank studies his flowing blood: "He'd been in the kitchen and raised his hand, had made observations, considered his blood" (170). Frank's considerations elucidate the affective unboundedness of mind and body: "Thought itself is a body, embodied [...] pulled beyond its seeming surface-boundedness by way of its relation to, indeed its composition through, the forces of encounter" (Greg and Seigworth 3). His moving blood, dribbled and thrown, renders his physical and cognitive forces outside. On the reflective metal and glass surfaces Frank's blood is present, but its presence effaces his image which is rendered imperceptible with blood. Through deterritorialization, Frank experiences a "world of speeds and slownesses without form, without subject, without a face" (*Thousand* 283). Frank's becoming-blood interfaces with "what exactly became of" his daughter in the blood which he flings against the glass "over his ghost face and the night-time garden outside, the dim layers

of wind-rocked shrubs, the scatter of drizzle, thinner and less interesting than blood" (185-186). Frank's blood-painting is "interesting" to him because it becomes the dripping scarlet event, "what exactly became of them. Invisible" (309-310).

- 24 But also of "interest" is the connection to his daughter. Literally, Frank studies the incipience, the event of his own blood to the point that the world around him disappears in the force, direction, angles, and movements of the blood. The trickles of blood flowing from him are his becoming-loss: the droplets denote loss of kinship and the loss of his family line. There is another becoming-blood, however. In his blood Frank can find affects of his daughter, shared molecular components. His bleeding finger is the opportunity to encounter her in him: "He'd been in the kitchen, being with the blood," spending time with the part of him that also ran through her veins (175). Frank finds his daughter through his becoming-blood. Frank's blood-soaked worlding disconnects the "form/content" of semantically indexed grief from its "intensity/effect" (Massumi 25). This disconnect transposes a knife-cut to an artistic act, grief to an aesthetic event.

## Becoming-Soup, Becoming-Plant

- 25 Just as Frank's becoming-blood transforms loss into an artistic event, his multiplicities with the vegetable soup and thyme plant allow him to (re)constitute a human presence. His interfaces with the soup and plant (re)assert his fragile humanity threatened both by lived trauma and by violence at work and at home.
- 26 In his interface with vegetable soup, Frank avoids bringing home the carnage he encounters at work. The fleshly remnants of violent crime are "everything less than a whole and contented person" (306). For Frank, working a crime scene is like visiting an abattoir: "no return, a shape of meat, an injury" (368). Homicide eviscerates humanity from the victim, the victim's family, and to a lesser extent the investigators whose daily job requires witness of repeated brutality and horrific "meat"-making (305, 368). Frank's meat-free, vegetable soup (157) worlds non-violence and safety. Flavour derives from produce like beans, leaves, potatoes, celery, lentils, tomatoes, cabbage, butternut squash, "seasonal additions" and plant-based products like tamarind paste and pasta (158-159). While the ingredients varied from week to week, "the soup itself would be a steady feature. If he was at home that evening he would cook. It would be for her. It would be what he quietly thought of as an offering—here I am and this is from me and a proof of me and a sign of reliable love" (159-161). Through soup-making Frank materializes as "here," a warm, comforting, human presence. In the soup bowl, in the spelt (353-354), tamarind paste, and fresh ingredients, Frank offers himself for his wife's consumption. For Frank, cooking is relational and he hopes to precipitate a becoming: "He would smile at her, tuck his ingredients into the pan, all stripped and diced, and add good stock" (162-163). The verb "tucks" connotes parental care and gentle reverence, as if he is caring for the vegetables and, in their preparation, likewise caring for his wife. Through his weekly "offering," Frank seeks to world an untroubled haecceity where he and his wife can become pleasantly lost in the shared experience of a warm supper. What he receives that last night is an event of depersonalizing violence from his wife.
- 27 On the last Friday evening, his hopes for bloodless vegetable soup becomings are initially derailed by his cut finger (168-169) and its transmutation into a blood-soaked

artistic event; however, this event also expresses the human cost of his wife's violence; she makes Frank bleed. Frank's wife directs her depersonalizing gaze at him: "She met his eyes, kept them in the way she used to when he'd just arrived back from a trip, a job —this was how she'd peered in at him then, seemed to be checking his mind, making sure he was still the man he'd been before" (222-223). The wife's scrutiny is a type of violence toward the person she blames (362-363) for her grief. "The man he'd been before" is an aesthetic standard that Frank does not maintain. She, Frank knows, "didn't like his soup, or his bread, or his hat" (361-362). Like the soup, Frank's tweed hat confirms his presence and identity: "Frank's here" (146-149). Her disapproval of these objects that afford human warmth to Frank further erodes Frank's tenuous sense of self (256, 316), and the violence of her depersonalizing gaze is framed by physical violence. Initially, Frank's wife hurls a pot of thyme at him, hard enough to break the pot against the wall and shatter it on the floor (212-214). Then, "she'd slapped him. Fast. Both sides of his jaw. 'It's not all right.' Leaving and going upstairs" (224-225). The domestic violence follows Frank upstairs where "she hit him, punched out at his chest and then a blow against his eye causing this burst of greyish colour and more pains and he'd caught her wrists eventually, almost fought her, the crown of her head banging against his chin, jarring him" (432-434). Frank's perilous word associations between the master bedroom and (402-403, 406-407) "threat" and "defend" are doubly allusive to the accident that took their daughter and to a history of domestic violence. After the last violent encounter in the bedroom, Frank removes himself from his wife's depersonalizing violence (154), and in this removal is hope for his becoming-human after dissociation and depersonalization. The exposed roots of the thyme plant, like Frank's bleeding finger, signal the trauma of domestic violence. As he re-pots the plant, Frank observes: "Thyme was quite hardy, though, he thought it would weather the upset and come through fine in the end" (214-216). In the angles of the broken shards and tangled roots is hope for non-violent becomings beyond a shattered self and a fractured family.

## Becoming-Room

- 28 In Frank's becoming-room, he finds an incipient subjectivity and relation to other trauma survivors. Frank's becoming-blood and becoming-soup resonate within the active kitchen space. "What Becomes" repeatedly implicates the kitchen as co-participant with Frank in worlding grief and domesticity. The refrain "He'd been in the kitchen" interposes into Frank's soup preparation and blood-painting eight times. The ninth reference to the kitchen breaks the pattern when his wife refuses to deterritorialize with him in the worldings of grief and domesticity downstairs: "He'd waited for her in the kitchen with the soup and she'd never come down" (410-411). Rooms outside the house also resonate. Frank identifies his crime scenes as "rooms" where resonances of unspeakable horror echo: "the rooms he'd seen: rooms with walls that were a dull red shine" (304-305). In becoming-room Frank is the emptiness resonating with the movements of violent becomings: "signs of intention, direction, position: the nakedness of wrong: who stood where, did what, how often, how fast, how hard, how ultimately completely without hope—what exactly became of them. Invisible" (308-310). In Massumi's echo analogy, Frank's intensity or experience with the echoes of violence converts the distance of these events into immediacies or events (14). In these resonations, the unknown self of the perpetrator may be connected to the

violent act, the self of the victim rendered visible; in this reverberation between becoming and self-relation, Frank also finds an incipient subjectivity in the motion of work.

- 29 The walls of Frank's workspace resonate into the theatre. He observes "the dull red shine of the seats" (131). Frank's perception of the colour and texture of the seats in the public, entertainment space rebounds from the private, work spaces where—in "the dull red shine" of drying blood—Frank seeks "what becomes" of the victims. In the theatre space, Frank investigates "what becomes" of the survivors of violent crime as he deterritorializes with survivors 'killed' through lived and living trauma. Frank has witnessed the impact of traumatic loss: "I've watched this before, been near it—the way that a human being will drop and break inside, their eyes dying first and then their face, a last raising of light and then it goes from them, is fallen and won't come back" (364-366). As a victim himself, Frank feels that he may be irrevocably lost (256). This 'death' or loss of self in survivors evokes dissociation, depersonalization, PTSD, or depression which kills survivors' desire for living, worlding, and self-relation. As Frank deterritorializes with the theatre space, he becomes aware of himself as alive. The theatre walls take on the nothingness, the flexible void of loss, no entrances, no exits. Frank sees: "Walls that melted when you studied them, disappeared down into the black carpet and left you adrift with nothing but the dull red shine of the seats and a sense of your skin, your movement, fidgets of life" (130-131). Within the melting theatre walls, life stirs. Frank's personal loss is deterritorialized to human loss through second person pronouns. "You"/"your" confirm his presence as human in the public space of the theatre, in the human condition of loss. Flickers of life also materialize in the coldness of the theatre: "He was still human and still here" (138). The coldness of the theatre space reminds Frank of his human warmth, diminished by, but not lost to, lived and living trauma.
- 30 The sepulchral theatre space is like the "special room" at work where the bereaved are taken, "the echoing room" where "they see nothing, no one, no return, a shape of meat, an injury" (367-368). As "you," Frank deterritorializes both with the bereaved family led into the room and with the victim lying in it. As "you," Frank is a "no one," "a shape of meat," "an injury" (370-371). Frank has lost a "no one," a silent body in an echoing room. The "echoing room" transmits the sounds of loss down the corridor: "Some I can hear, even in my office. They rage for their lovers, their loves, for their dead love, their dead selves" (370-371). The undulations of lived and living trauma rebound between a list of love-related vocabulary and the experiences they elide. In the noun "lover" is the act of loving. "Their loves" emerge in ongoing events of relation and self-relation. Their "dead love" is the operation of loss on the bodies of victims and survivors; both are "dead selves" after traumatic loss. In becoming-room, Frank experiences the reverberations of his losses against other survivors' losses in an event of human relation. Although Frank is alone in the theatre, he is not alone in the perpetual event of loss. In this relation with the echoes of loss, Frank finds an incipient subjectivity and he again finds his daughter.
- 31 Just as the blood in the kitchen makes molecular elements of his daughter visible, the film likewise makes a moving likeness of her visible. In the kitchen space Frank describes himself as "being with the blood" (175). Similarly, in the theatre space Frank interfaces with the moving representations of his blood as a young girl in an artistic film (251, 255). The on-screen action depicts "the older man's face as it spoke to the

small girl's, as he spoke to his daughter" (442-443). Just as he does with the blood, Frank transposes grief into an event of artistic expression; he worlds himself and his daughter into the rolling cinematic space in an event of relation.

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- 32 Like Dante's sinners, Frank appears hopelessly lost: "All hope abandon, ye who enter in!" (*Inferno* Canto iii 9). The collateral damage of loss engenders a type of walking/waking death for survivors (371): "hope is what I do not have in hell" (Lochhead). As a noun, hope is an un-possessable inanimate concept. As a verb denoting a happening, hope resonates with becomings and events of self-relation: "Real hope is here" (Lochhead). Here is the dynamic threshold of Burnside's "resurrection waiting to begin/in flesh and bone, in touch and self-forgetting" (134-135). Frank's becomings gesture toward an "emergent futurity" (Greg and Seigworth 4) beyond/ through/ alongside traumatic (re)experience. A processual approach to lived and living trauma listens/reads/experiences/feels/cultivates/leaps into dynamic thresholds and, beyond the silences between words/bodies/worlds, continually conjures hope and becomings for Kennedy's lost.

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## NOTES

1. I am grateful to Linda Tym for kindly reading this article in draft form. At the time this article was completed there were no published studies on "What Becomes" (the main subject of this article and eponymous story of the collection also considered here) and few published studies on Kennedy's work. For Kennedy's work through 2007, see Mitchell.
2. The stories in *What Becomes* are cited by Kindle location throughout.
3. Analogous terms include assemblages, haecceities, multiplicities, bodies without organs, and worldings (*Thousand* 3-25, 26-38, and 232-309).
4. OED: "The quality that makes a person or thing describable as 'this'; the property of being a unique and individual thing; particular character, individuality." As with people or things, becomings are unique.

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## ABSTRACTS

Au premier abord, ce qui attire l'attention dans « What Becomes », nouvelle d'A.L. Kennedy, ce sont les multiples traumas, ainsi que les silences pathologiques qui caractérisent ce récit presque sans dialogue. Cependant, une lecture plus approfondie, avec en tête la pensée deleuzienne et les théories de l'affect, laisse entrevoir un futur naissant pour Frank, le protagoniste. En effet, derrière tous les silences presque maladifs, on peut apercevoir les étapes d'un tournant affectif, celui promis par la théorie de Deleuze. Avec les traumas passés et présents, ce qui ressort des épisodes de la soupe, du sang et des pièces invisibles, ce sont un futur (re)naissant et une connexité à travers la capacité du corps de Frank à toucher et à être touché émotionnellement. Bien que communiquer avec d'autres personnes soit toujours difficile pour lui, il cherche à entrer en relation, avec son environnement et lui-même, grâce aux corps, objets et espaces autour de lui. L'évolution de Frank dans « What Becomes » est certes perturbante, mais aussi dynamique ; son rapport aux relations montre que cette évolution s'est faite avec/à travers/au côté de ses traumas passés. (*Résumé traduit par Emilie Piarou*)

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