2

RELUCTANT SUBJECTS:
SUBJECTION AND BECOMING

How, then, is subjection to be thought and how can it become a site of alteration? A power exerted on a subject, subjection is nevertheless a power assumed by the subject, an assumption that constitutes the instrument of that subject’s becoming.


In this chapter we engage differently with what we are up against—not as we did in the Introduction and chapter 1, by posing challenges to thought and affect, calling forth strategies and energies for thinking and feeling in new ways. Here we are more interested in dwelling on what “pushes back” at us in our political projects. The energy in the chapter is (almost all) on the other side—in the institution, stabilization, and naturalization of a regional economy, the production of its economic subjects, and the obduracy of both in the face of change.

The hope of this chapter is not so different, however, from that of the preceding ones. Undoubtedly we are foregrounding the subjection produced in place through processes of economic and spatial government, attempting to render the embedded, energetic materiality of that subjection. But what ultimately motivates us is the by now perhaps familiar quest for openings and possibilities. While trying to convey the strengths and staying powers of a hegemonic formation, we are doing so in order to contemplate its destabilization. Our preeminent question is “How might the potentiality for becoming arise out of the experience of subjection?”

The concept of subjection allows us to see subjects as “made” and as “making themselves” in and through discourse and practices of governmentality. As Foucault has argued, governmental power is productive and enabling, as well as oppressive and limiting. Subjection does not only entail what “unilaterally acts on a given individual as a form of domination, but also [what] activates or forms
the subject” (Butler 1997, 84). Following Foucault, Butler notes in the epigraph to this chapter that power is “assumed by the subject, an assumption that constitutes the instrument of that subject’s becoming” (1997, 11, emphasis added). Exactly how subjects “become,” and more specifically how they may shift and create new identities for themselves despite the seemingly hegemonic power of dominant discourses and governmental practices, is what interests us here. And this is why Butler’s work is so pertinent. She has been particularly concerned with how new gender identities have emerged out of a dominant heterosexual or heteronormative order (1990, 1993). For Butler, insights into the productive tension between being and becoming have arisen from a consideration of subjectification as an active process that is always ongoing and never completely successful. In her engagement with Althusser, she shows how the exercise of power is temporalized, made up of a continuous repetition and reiteration of ritualized practices that necessarily involve interruptions and productive intervals of discontinuity (1997, chapter 4). It is during these moments in the constitution of being, she claims, that opportunities for new becomings emerge.

For William Connolly, there is something productive about “the profound ambiguity within Being” because it allows him to set up “a tension between being and becoming in the political domain” (1999, 196). He is reluctant to see the subject as residing simply in the symbolic realm (192) and develops the notion of different “registers of being” to think through “points of intersection between the symbolic and tactics or disciplines not entirely reducible to the symbolic” (193). He proposes a role for the “visceral register”—a pre-representational site where “thought-imbedded intensities below the reach of feeling” (148) give rise to affective responses, gut reactions, and embodied actions that cannot help but influence other registers of being. For Connolly it seems that the visceral register might contribute “fugitive currents of energy [that] possibly exceed the fund of identities and differences through which [the individual subject] is organized” (143). In these fugitive energies, then, he recognizes a potential ground on which a politics of becoming might be practiced. So while Butler suggests continual pauses in the performativity of discourse and subjectification that can offer openings for new becomings, Connolly offers a speculative glimpse of the way that new identities (and subjections) might arise to occupy these discursive spatiotemporalities.

Connolly’s intervention is interesting to us for its political content. He emphasizes the role of an active politics of becoming that works on fugitive energies to release subjects from “preset judgements that sanctify the universality or naturalness of what [they] already are,” thus allowing them to participate in new and surprising movements (146). He argues that macro-political proposals will not get far until “micropolitical receptivity to [them] has been nurtured across several registers and constituencies” (149). Connolly’s work speaks to us as we reflect on the patent lack of desire we encountered, in the early days of our action research project, for new economic identities that could energize different enactments of a regional economy. In this chapter we attempt to understand that lack of desire through a detailed examination of the ways that a specific economy and its subjects have been produced and normalized in place. At the same time, however, we attempt to glimpse potential openings for a process of becoming.

This exploration of subjectification is undertaken in the context of one of our action research interventions, the Community Partnering Project in the Latrobe Valley of southeastern Australia. The Latrobe Valley is an area with abundant brown coal resources some two hours east of Melbourne by car, where the bulk of the state of Victoria’s electricity has been generated since the early 1920s (see Figure 6). As a result of massive restructurings in the electricity and mining industries and the privatization of the State Electricity Commission of Victoria (SEC) during the 1990s, the valley has undergone a prolonged period of high unemployment. In the face of this dislocating experience, the Community Partnering Project has attempted to develop new identities and enterprises based on an expanded conception of economy and an expanded range of economic subjectivities.

At the outset of the Community Partnering Project we encountered a widespread belief in the naturalness of “what the valley economy was” that seemed to stand in the way of any micropolitical receptivity to new becomings. The “natural” and the “real” seemed to offer both obstructions to movement and a continued subjectification that was problematic, but nevertheless embraced. This prompted us to examine governmental practices and technologies that had constituted the Economy as the central anchor of identity in the region, naturalizing it as singular and definitely “non-diverse.”

In what follows, we offer a detailed analysis of three “devices of ‘meaning production’” that rendered the Economy thinkable and manipulable in the valley, constituting it as a reality that had naturally emerged (N. Rose 1996, 130). Each device was enmeshed in complex debates about economic understandings and futures that belie any easy history of hegemonic thinking, reflecting the ways that the exercise of rule is always contested and highly contingent (O’Malley, Weir, and Shearing 1997, 505).

In many governmentality studies, the voice of the subject is absent and the opportunity is thereby lost: to explore the ways that the project of governing and subjecting is never complete (O’Malley et al. 1997, 503). We are particularly interested in the experience of subjectification as the very context in which becoming is engendered (Connolly 1999, chapter 2). Throughout this chapter, therefore, we intersperse discussion of techniques of governmentality with the voices of current valley residents who participated in our preliminary focus groups, in an effort to listen to their experiences of subjectification and, therefore, to critique the energies and intensities that might be harnessed by a politics of becoming. We treat the advent of privatization and re estructuring as a moment of interruption in ritualized practices of regional economic subjection, and thus as a moment in which a micropolitics of cultivating receptivity might be activated and a politics of becoming embanked on to produce potentially lasting effects.
SYSTEMS OF JUDGMENT: "THE NUMBERS"

Meet Harry, a contemporary resident of the Latrobe Valley—a migrant from a coalfield in the United Kingdom who was enlisted from halfway around the world to become an electricity worker in this region, which supplies most of the state of Victoria’s electrical power:

The problem with the valley, it’s a place that’s been artificially manufactured and that’s the problem, that’s how I see the problem. The valley was built by the government and the government wiped their hands of it when they had the responsibility to take it on to look after it. You’ll never get over what happened because the valley is definitely an orchestrated built area. It was built to supply a need and the valley took on the people, and the governments encouraged the people to come here, but when the hard word went on, they wiped their hands of the place. And OK . . . we fought the hard fight in relation to it, but we knew the numbers were too much. There is no way that I could honestly sit here and say that for what was happening in the valley . . . the numbers is correct, but that’s not the argument. The argument is the destruction that they left in the end when they finished. (June 1997)

Harry identifies his subjection in the region with government and with the numbers its economic accounting practices draw upon. A region is an area constituted by rule, as he points out. But how this rule is enacted and why a subject like Harry accepts the ruling in such an unproblematic way are the issues that concern us.

Harry sets up a crucial distinction between the artificiality of the region, the governed entity ("manufactured" by government), and the reality of the "numbers," the accounting units representing the Economy whose forces gave birth to the region and ultimately devastated its community. Harry accepts the numbers as truths that could not be challenged because they were accurate indicators of an unmediated economic reality: "the numbers is correct," "we knew the numbers were too much." This attachment to the truthfulness of numbers and submission to the Economy’s right to govern action (retrenchments) indicates an identification with rationality as an activating aspect of subjectivity. From the nineteenth century onward, numbers have grown in importance to projects of governmentality, according to Theodore Porter (1995), who argues that their objectivity and "inoensive impersonality" (51) imply the "rule of law, not of men," and "the subordination of personal interests and prejudices to public standards" (74). Taking a shorter historical view, we can perhaps trace Harry’s acceptance that numbers are entitled to define his future to a form of regional economic subjection that originated in a series of tables and graphs devised in the early part of the twentieth century.
THE MERZ TABLES: ENROLLING POINTS/PLACES IN RATIONAL ECONOMIC CALCULATION

[Such tables became the fashion afterwards but up to then I do not think anything had ever been more completely or clearly stated and shown. (Charles Merz, quoted in Hughes 1983, 251)

In 1908, just seven years after federation of the six colonies into the Commonwealth of Australia, the premier of the state of Victoria commissioned Charles Merz, a consulting engineer based in London, to investigate "the power resources of Victoria and their possible development for the supply of Melbourne and District" (Merz 1908, 5). At this time, Melbourne's power supply was being provided by two small city-based power stations burning black coal imported from the New South Wales coalfields, and regional centers in Victoria all had their own power-generation facilities. Melbourne had developed as a key manufacturing and financial center in the aftermath of the gold rushes that had brought thousands of immigrants to the colony in the 1850s and 1860s and it was now the temporary host of the new federal government.

In commissioning Merz to write his report, the Victorian government entered into a complex web of international associations that were to connect British, German, and Australian engineering expertise and internationally accepted principles of economic calculation for many years to come. Charles Merz was the son of the founder and chairman of Britain's largest regional power utility, the Newcastle-upon-Tyne Electric Supply Company (NESCO) (Hughes 1983, 249). His firm, Merz and McLellan, pioneered the development of large-scale, regional, power-supply systems in Argentina, South Africa, India, and the United States, as well as in the United Kingdom and Australia. Hughes comments that he

became an agent of technology transfer on a grand scale, taking with him the experience he gained in building the NESCO system on the northeast coast of England and bringing back state-of-the-art ideas from the rest of the world. . . . He was believed by many to be the most effective expert witness in the engineering world. In presenting his cases he used highly imaginative statistical tables, graphs, and charts prepared by his firm. (1983, 453)

A series of these statistical tables prepared by Merz for the Victorian state government first enlisted the Latrobe Valley, or at least a point within it, into an explicitly economic frame of reference and constituted it as a potential site of governmentality.

Merz's commitment to electricity as the most modern, adaptable, economical, clean, and safe form of power generation was strengthened by a belief in its role in economic development. In the introduction to his report, Merz placed

the issues facing Victoria within the big picture of historical and contemporary industrial development on an international scale:

Just as in former years the mills and factories of England were built by streams where water power was available and are to-day most thickly congregated near coal-fields, so the establishment of great centers of cheap electric power in various countries is beginning to exercise an increasingly important influence upon the distribution of factories. (Merz 1908, 6)

Merz was keen to link these progressive visions to the economics of least-cost calculation. He aimed to convince heavy industry to give up generating their own power in return for the lower costs of accessing power from a centralized system of mass-produced electricity.

The 1908 report to the state of Victoria relies on quantitative measurement, meticulous statistical detail, and the "explicitly mathematical reasoning" that was becoming normalized as a scientific tool of the new marginalist economics (Buck-Morss 1995, 462, quoting Mark Blaug). The report included a table drawn from the Statistics of Manufactories, Works &c. (Metropolitan Area), for the Year 1906, which showed the numbers and industrial sectors of factories operating in Melbourne, their degree of mechanization, type of power supply, employment, and value of plant and machinery. To add to his picture of the "existing conditions" Merz surveyed the size and type of plant currently supplying electric power and produced a ten-year forecast of the electrical requirements of Melbourne. This information, all marshaled and projected, along with the commitment to electricity as "good," set the stage for his "rational" recommendations about possible future courses of action.

The problem, as Merz saw it, was where best to locate a large new power station to service the growth in demand for electricity in Melbourne—in Melbourne itself or in situ on the vast brown coalfields of the Latrobe Valley. Merz produced a relative cost accounting to prove that, when demand was sufficiently high (as indicated by the "load factor," or the average demand for electricity as a percentage of peak demand), the cost of transporting coal to Melbourne would far exceed the cost of transmitting electricity by overhead wires from the Latrobe Valley to the city. His calculations (shown in Figure 7) showed that as the base demand for electricity grew, it would become more economical to undertake the long-term investment of building generating capacity in the Latrobe Valley. Merz argued that "it would pay best to run the Latrobe Valley Power Station and the transmission line at as high a load factor as possible" (1908, 19) and the resulting "efficiency" would create the imperative for more users, particularly industrial ones, to convert from steam to electricity.

This kind of table provided the conduit by which an emerging language of economic calculation was incorporated into the practice of governmentality.
TABLE V.
COST OF ELECTRICAL TRANSMISSION FROM LATROBE VALLEY COMPARED WITH THE COST OF FREIGHT ON BROWN COAL TO MELBOURNE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOAD FACTOR</th>
<th>10%</th>
<th>20%</th>
<th>40%</th>
<th>60%</th>
<th>80%</th>
<th>100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cost of electrical transmission</td>
<td>Cost of freight on coal</td>
<td>Cost of electrical transmission</td>
<td>Cost of freight on coal</td>
<td>Cost of electrical transmission</td>
<td>Cost of freight on coal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum R.P. delivered at 12,000 vol. hours over load factor half</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>35,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum R.P.  rect. of generating station</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>35,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital cost of generating plant</td>
<td>£144,000</td>
<td>£144,000</td>
<td>£144,000</td>
<td>£144,000</td>
<td>£144,000</td>
<td>£144,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital cost of transmission lines and transforming stations</td>
<td>£36,000</td>
<td>£36,000</td>
<td>£36,000</td>
<td>£36,000</td>
<td>£36,000</td>
<td>£36,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional capital expenditure in case of electrical transmission</td>
<td>£28,000</td>
<td>£28,000</td>
<td>£28,000</td>
<td>£28,000</td>
<td>£28,000</td>
<td>£28,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed charges on additional capital, including interest, depreciation, maintenance, etc.</td>
<td>£23,000</td>
<td>£23,000</td>
<td>£23,000</td>
<td>£23,000</td>
<td>£23,000</td>
<td>£23,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Units per annum generated in millions</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tons of Product coal required per annum</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equivalent tons of brown coal required per annum</td>
<td>77,000</td>
<td>77,000</td>
<td>77,000</td>
<td>77,000</td>
<td>77,000</td>
<td>77,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of carriage per ton from mines to Framlingham Station takes</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of carriage per ton</td>
<td>£15,000</td>
<td>£15,000</td>
<td>£15,000</td>
<td>£15,000</td>
<td>£15,000</td>
<td>£15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of extra coal at 1a. 6d. per ton</td>
<td>£2,500</td>
<td>£2,500</td>
<td>£2,500</td>
<td>£2,500</td>
<td>£2,500</td>
<td>£2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total variable charges</td>
<td>£19,500</td>
<td>£19,500</td>
<td>£19,500</td>
<td>£19,500</td>
<td>£19,500</td>
<td>£19,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total fixed and variable charges</td>
<td>£21,500</td>
<td>£21,500</td>
<td>£21,500</td>
<td>£21,500</td>
<td>£21,500</td>
<td>£21,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance against electrical transmission</td>
<td>£20,000</td>
<td>£20,000</td>
<td>£20,000</td>
<td>£20,000</td>
<td>£20,000</td>
<td>£20,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIGURE 7. Charles Merz's relative cost accounting in 1908: Table V in Report upon the Production and Use of Electric Power.

In last-cost economic calculations such as these, Buck-Morrise notes the social and economic significance of these transactions. In particular, the costs of land, labor, and materials were not divided among the different parties to the transaction, as was the case in earlier, marginal-cost calculations. Instead, all costs were attributed to the producer, who was seen as the direct beneficiary of the transaction. This approach had the effect of underestimating the costs of land, labor, and materials, and overestimating the costs of goods and services. As Hughes notes, this approach was more consistent with the economic theory of the time, which emphasized the role of the producer in determining the value of goods and services. However, it had the practical effect of shifting the costs of land, labor, and materials onto the producers, who were often small farmers and laborers, rather than onto the large landowners and employers who controlled the market. This approach also had the effect of exaggerating the costs of goods and services, which were often produced by large, capital-intensive enterprises, and downplaying the costs of land, labor, and materials, which were often produced by small, labor-intensive enterprises. Overall, this approach resulted in a distorted picture of the costs of production and distribution in Victoria, which was used to justify policies that favored large, capital-intensive enterprises, such as the construction of large hydroelectric power stations and the expansion of coal mining.
each station to rationalize and become “economical,” so that it might survive in a privatized landscape. As Harry, a supervisor at the time, recalls:

Just before we were being sold, we always demanded the figures of how efficient the plant was and how much profit was being made. . . . And so we were given this information for the first time and that information was the truth. When we were shown the truth we all got together and we started doing things that we would never do before. When it comes to having done things right . . . we have done things right to our own detriment. We’ve done the right thing and that’s what the people in the valley have got to be proud of. (June 1997)

Talk about the rest of it . . . I’ve still got a job. My mate hasn’t got a job. Some care should be taken of him. [Break in which Harry is unable to proceed.] That’s how I feel about the place. I was fundamental in the process of actually taking their jobs off them. There was nothing for them to be picked up [by] later and I felt really sorry for them. I’ve had a lot to do with those guys losing their jobs. But I knew it was the only way that the station I was in was going to survive in the long term. (June 1997, emphasis added)

These statements were uttered with increasing emotion and distress. A passionate and forceful voice trained in union oratory informed the first set of reflections. This was the voice that was able to accept the “truth,” face the facts, and carry out the sackings demanded by the real and unchallengable Economy to increase efficiency and maintain large-scale, least-cost operations. But in what followed, Harry’s voice faltered, tears came to his eyes, and for a brief moment he was so overcome that he was unable to speak. His body seemed to temporarily escape the discipline of subjection to the numbers, refusing to “take it (or assume it) like a man.” Following Connolly’s lead, we could see Harry’s tears as expressing a gut recognition that the “health” of the body economic—the paring down of the labor force, the closing of inefficient plants, the facing up to “economic truth,” the selling off of public assets on the “free market”—does not equate with the health of the social body, and that his actions had produced injury to others. In this emotional moment, one could also feel a shift in the intersubjective relations of the focus group. The long embodied antagonisms between Harry as a worker and union man and the likes of the businessman who sat next to him drained away, as an empathetic atmosphere of care was established and past ideological enemies found themselves respecting each other in their honesty.

Drawing on Connolly’s and Butler’s work, we would like to see this instant in which Harry’s intense and emotional response disrupts his speech as a potential interruption in the ritualized practice or assumption of subjection, a momentary opening for the expression of a different economic subjectivity based on an ethic of care for the other. It is from the embodied subject position of a “mate” (that potentially includes not only his union comrades, but also the businesspeople and bureaucrats in the focus group) that the numbers and their apparent rationality seem less legitimate, less “natural,” and less able to dominate. This kind of opening was what we hoped to find, and to cultivate and develop in our action research.

**Vocabularies: “Child,” “Consumer,” and “Citizen”**

Meet Mike, another contemporary resident of the Latrobe Valley—an artist who recently entered local politics in a newly amalgamated and democratically elected shire council that, for the first time, spans the entire valley:10

The valley has always been perceived as a petulant child. It’s a petulant child that you can’t ignore, that you don’t really want. It’s the safest Labor seat in the state of Victoria and it’s a seat of consequence that’s spent most of its life in opposition. . . . Every now and then you have to attend to it because it screams so hard. But it’s only when the ALP [Australian Labor Party] are the incumbent government that this region gets attended to. . . . It’s always referred to as the industrial heartland. (June 1997)

The SEC stood for slow, easy, and comfortable, but for all its shortcomings in that respect it’s what kept this community going. It’s what made the family, it’s what made the stores flourish. It kept the economy going and the money went round and it stayed here. And, moreover, those people that had a job at the SEC, and were seen to be SEC bludgers by some on the outside, had a sense of worth and a sense of value; they had a job to go to. It might have been making lead sinks for the SEC social club when there was no work out of recycled lead, but they had a job to go to and they felt worthwhile. (June 1997)

Perhaps you can hear the complex amalgam of emotions and identities introduced by these comments: the passionate attachment to the SEC (father/master); the complicity with its employment policies, which “valued” whoever was employed; the identification with “labor”; and the perversely proud attachment to an oppositional mode of us/them engagement where “we” are not only privileged and pampered compared to other workers, but also marginal and dependent. Mike’s statements serve to remind us that subjection can be experienced as affirming, valuable, and desired as well as dominating, oppressive, and resisted. It is, after all, what constitutes the subject and, as Butler points out, recognition of one’s subordination does not preclude its denial or its reenactment (1997, 9). The economic subjection expressed here involves a form of self-negation evidenced by the readiness of adults, as well as the valley as a place, to be interpellated as children—beings who are demanding, petulant, needy of care, and ultimately ignored.11
Discussing the desire for survival that drives us to “turn our back on ourselves,” Butler questions the conditions under which we are required to exist as a “self-negating being in order to attain and preserve a status as ‘being’ at all” (1997, 130). “Being,” in the Latrobe Valley, had been inextricably linked to the statutory authority of the SEC, which offered succor—stable employment, housing, community services—as well as a robust masculine identity for the region as the “powerhouse” of Victoria. The SEC placed people in the valley and recruited them within an economy that was growth-oriented, state-owned, and highly centralized, and to which they seemed to “belong” as valuable contributors. We can trace a dual address to the subject as both child and citizen/consumer within the vocabulary of cooperation and state development that was skillfully employed in the early days of the electricity authority by its authoritative head, Sir John Monash.

**THE MONASH AUTHORITY: EMPLACING AND INTERPELLATING PEOPLE**

A plentiful supply of cheap power and of cheap fuel is the foundation of a nation’s prosperity; upon that foundation rests also the well-being of its people as a whole, reducing, in all directions, physical toil and increasing the comfort and ease of every individual of every class of society. (Monash 1921, foreword)

The state of Victoria’s Advisory Committee on Brown Coal acted on the recommendations of the 1908 Merz report in 1917 as the Great War dragged on and Australian forces under the command of Lieutenant-General Sir John Monash continued to be slaughtered on the fields of France and Belgium. While Australia’s experience of patriotic bloodletting forged a kind of political “coming to adulthood,” it also heightened awareness of the economic dependence of the former colonies on their imperial parent. The 1917 report is imbued with a reactive isolationism and concern for economic independence, pointing to the “still ample scope for the development of industries to make Australia self-contained” (Victoria, State of, 1917, 9). It is also driven by a strongly competitive state developmental agenda that belies a commitment to “national” prosperity (N. Brown 1995, 90). Despite federation and the sense of nationhood gained through participation in a “World War,” the economic rivalry between the states appears at this time to be heightened rather than diminished.

One of the more immediate prompts for the Victorian government to act to develop its own brown coal resources was the frequent shortages of black coal imported from Newcastle, New South Wales (NSW), where disgruntled miners were causing industrial disruption (particularly during 1916 and 1917) (Gibson 1984; E. Ross 1970). The uncertainty of supply, as well as the rising costs of freight and coal, were strong incentives to become self-sufficient. The advisory committee’s report recommended that the more energy-efficient black coal imports from New South Wales be totally replaced by the local product from the state’s brown coalfields (in the Latrobe Valley) and that a new power station located at Morwell be used to generate electricity. It also recommended that “the State should control and direct the co-ordination of all State and statutory generating and distributing schemes in Victoria” (Victoria, State of, 1917, 8–9). The outcome of this government report was the Electricity Commissioners Act of 1918 and the formation of the SEC in 1919.

Informing these recommendations was a conception of an Economy composed of both private capitalist and state capitalist enterprise in symbiotic relation. In this vision, it was legitimate that problems caused by an inefficient capitalist black coal industry in New South Wales could be addressed by the formation of a state-run industry in Victoria, and that Melbourne capitalists could be assisted to access cheap and efficient power by means of a state-owned monopoly capitalist authority. A large-scale state enterprise was naturally seen as the only institution capable of translating the Latrobe Valley’s least-cost location into something that could generate the lifeblood of state prosperity.

Shadowsing the efficiency of the proposed monopoly state authority was the inefficiency of labor—those people who fought for higher wages and better conditions and withdrew their labor power, as on the coalfields of Newcastle. A language of class had dominated debates over conscription during the war and the International Workers of the World had won many supporters during industrial conflicts in the mines and ports of Australia, both during the war and in its aftermath. In the very moment of the SEC’s formation, this potential chink in the discourse of economic efficiency was identified and there is an appeal to the worker as a responsible citizen and participant in a project of communal (classless) progress. In his capacity as a military commander, Sir John Monash, who became the first appointed general manager and chairman of the commissioners of the SEC, was experienced in the rhetoric of social inclusion. He writes the following in his foreword to the public information booklet, *Power for Victorian Industries* (see Figures 8 and 9):

> The community can help greatly in this magnificent enterprise ... by developing a healthy public opinion which will act in restraint of industrial unrest and in favor of honest labour, and all the good that flows from whole-hearted endeavour. (Monash 1921, 4)

In contrast to the language employed by Merz to “sell” a regional power supply scheme, in the documents and reports of the SEC the economics of technical efficiency are overshadowed by the economics of state boosterism and individual consumerism (A. Prat 1921). The projections associated with this power scheme are not posed in terms of the growth of demand or the efficient management of load factors, but in terms of a population of economic individuals:

> [When the scheme is completed its effect will be to reduce the cost of living, to facilitate the payment of high wages to improve working...](

...
Published by
The Industrial Australians and Mining Standard, 17th March, 1921

POWER
FOR VICTORIAN INDUSTRIES

A concise account of the Great Electric Power and Fuel Supply Scheme authorized by the Premier (Sir H. S. Lawrence) and State Government of Victoria, and now being carried into effect by the Victorian Electricity Commission, including a full description, richly illustrated, of the resources at MORWELL, KIRWA and TRAUNDA.


Lieut-General Sir John Monash,
G.C.M.G., V.D., C.E.
who controls the work of the Victorian Electricity Commission

Foreword

By Lieut-General Sir John Monash
G.C.M.G., V.D., C.E.

Many of the men of Australia who answered the call upon them to devote, during the period of the Great War, the best years of their lives to the service of their country, have found themselves, at its conclusion, animated by the strong ambition to continue that service in the development of their country's prosperity which the peace, won by them in the field, has rendered possible. The realisation of such an ambition has, however, not come to many of them; and that is why I esteem myself fortunate that an opportunity to do so lies ready to my hand. The foresight and patriotism of the Victorian Government have launched a project whose possibilities are quite without limitation, and whose benefits to the community of this State no man can over-estimate. A plentiful supply of cheap power and of cheap fuel in the foundation of a nation's prosperity; upon that foundation rests also the well-being of its people as a whole, reducing, in all directions, physical toil and increasing the comfort and ease of every individual of every class of society.

While, however, the ultimate realisation of this great scheme is assured beyond all doubt, it is equally certain that because of the disorganisation of the world's industry, as the result of the war, the time which will be occupied in bringing it to fruition will be longer than in normal times. The community can help greatly in this magnificent enterprise, firstly by patience, so as to avoid, by a clamour for speedy fulfilment, the permanent burden of present highly inflated capital costs; and, secondly, by developing a healthy public opinion which will be in restraint of industrial unrest and in favour of honest labour, and all the good that flows from, whole-hearted endeavour. The work to be done deserves such honest efforts for when it is completed, it will become a monument to every man, however humble, who has shared in its creation.

and living conditions, to plant a much larger population on the soil, to increase the purchasing power of the individual, to mitigate industrial troubles and to add vastly and progressively to the prosperity and happiness of the State. These are ideals worth striving for, worthy indeed of great sacrifices. They are all capable of achievement by means of the scheme. The power scheme has the intrinsic power to realise them all.

(A. Pratt 1921, 5)

On the surface, this rhetoric hails the citizens of Victoria as consumers and as potential employees of the SEC. Through an appeal to individual desires for a higher standard of living, support is harnessed for a project of competitive state development that will subsidize private capitalist activities. But alongside this address to adult workers and consumers, subjects are effectively interpellated into a paternalist discourse, positioned as liable to be unruly, impatient, unreasonable, and unfair if (reading between the lines) they engage in class-based behavior:

"Every individual citizen is under an obligation to "get behind" the Government and the Commission for the prosecution of this undertaking to success . . . to be patient while the scheme is being carried out, and to refrain from jeopardising its success by unfair or mischievous criticism of the methods of those responsible for its enforcement and execution." (A. Pratt 1921, 5)

Central to the promotion of industrial harmony was the provision of housing for SEC workers (Freestone 1989, 124). The existing townsships were no more than small railway settlements servicing the surrounding farming and logging communities. In keeping with the latest developments in urban planning at the time, and in the spirit of paternalism engendered by the SEC, it was decided to build Yallourn, a garden village "laid out on approved modern lines, providing residential and factory areas, ample recreation grounds, and garden space, together with the necessary school and public building accommodation" (SECV 1921, 8).

To reside in Yallourn was to become the model economic citizen hailed by Monash. The new town was owned and managed by the SEC and subjection to its "authority" was almost total. One was housed, provisioned, schooled, employed, entertained, policed, and watched by the SEC in one form or another. One was protected and pampered as well as infantilized and controlled. The classic tale told by former Yallourn residents is that "if a tap or a light-globe went they would ring up the SEC and somebody would come and change it for them" (community member, Latrobe Valley, June 1997).

Permeating the quasi-socialist central planning that informed Monash's project was a vision of the Economy as something that could be "tinkered with in order to effect social outcomes at the macroeconomic level" (Buck-Morss 1995, 465). Monash's SEC animated the forces that had pointed toward centralization of power—both electrical and economic—a decade before, producing the institutional order capable of creating and controlling industrial efficiency. With the building of Yallourn, a part of the Latrobe Valley became a physical site of governmentality, where bodies labored, the environment was radically altered, and subjects were constituted by economic and political discourses of Victorian state development. Attached by electrical transmission lines, as well as other circuits of finance and power, into the center of calculation that was Melbourne—itself representing the entirety of the state of Victoria—the valley was not accorded an independent regional economic identity. Though non-SEC workers were being attracted to the valley, the comprehensive governmental gaze included only the inhabitants of Yallourn—well-cared-for people who were positioned primarily as citizens of Victoria and consumers in a strengthening state economy.

As growth continued, Monash's earlier appeal for restraint was ignored—workers embraced expanding consumption and exercised their monopoly control by agitating for wage increases. The valley became known through the identity of the SEC workers; it was increasingly seen as a labor enclave, separated by economic privilege and industrial muscle from the rest of the state. This militant identity relied on the maintenance of a very public us/them boundary, and the private knowledge that power and privilege were attained through dependence and compliance with state authority. The perception of valley workers as better off and more powerful than other members of the Victorian working class was mirrored at the local level as SEC workers and families became far more prosperous than other residents of the Latrobe Valley.

Infantilizing and paradoxical though it was, this discourse of identity sustained many through the decades of SEC growth. And it has been the loss of this strong personal and collective identity and the sense of inclusion in a project that has been most devastating in recent times:

"The changes and the subsequent decline in the power industry has . . . changed prosperity into misery . . . Does the responsibility lie with the power industry for bringing up a vast culture and a way of life in this community? People were employed, grandfathers and fathers and kids got jobs at the SEC and I think the SEC established the social conditions in which people lived for a long, long time . . . There were people I spoke to who were really quite traumatized that their culture or their way of life had just disappeared or at least was beginning to disappear. I think that was the beginning of what I saw to be a slow and miserable decline of many families and individuals. (Community-based financial counselor, June 1997)"

"There are people out there who are doing it very, very hard. There is a lot of pain in the community and to a certain extent people do feel powerless, they do feel disenfranchised and they do feel hopeless. (Manager, government agency, June 1997)"
One of the consequences of cooperating with the centralized power project of Victorian state development was that Mera's promised regional multiplier effects—the attration of manufacturing industries and the development of a more diversified industrial region—were never realized to the extent predicted. With the exception of a major pulp and paper processing plant, the valley largely remained a single industry region with no alternative employment generators of any importance. Now that the loyalty demanded by the SEC is no longer required, the actual costs of dependence on the state authority are being calculated. Residents in the valley are angry that they were forced to subsidize private capitalist industrial interests in metropolitan Melbourne, paying the same price as users throughout the state for the energy they produced and could have accessed more cheaply. The subsidy they granted others in the form of cheap power was never matched by standardized state gasoline pricing or telephone rates:

We weren't allowed to compete on an economic basis. If we'd have been able to compete on an economic basis for the price of power, the real price of power in the Latrobe Valley compared to Melbourne... we would have been in a very good position to compete for a lot of industrial business. (Local planner, June 1997)

What is particularly disturbing is that the cooperation many readily offered has now been shunned. Echoing the entitlement of the obedient child, one person who grew up in the valley said,

I can remember growing up in a very secure environment. There was a real sense of security and a great sense of belonging and I have seen that gradually eroded. We were good, we did the right thing, we went along with all the changes, but what did we get? Nothing. (Businesswoman, June 1997)

These statements were made with passion and a certain amount of anger and they evince a sense of injustice about the way the valley and its residents have been treated. It would be easy to see this anger as an expression of the resentment that accompanies subjectivation and victimization. But we are interested in a more nuanced reading and the suggestion that anger is also a productive expression of outrage in the face of unfair and irrational economic practices. Now that the social contract offering SEC workers escalating compensation in return for their "cooperation" has been broken, there is a willingness to face up to what lay behind this contract—the insecurity and unsustainability of a single-industry region run along state capitalist lines. While the heroic project of state development was paying out personal financial rewards, the community was blind to the regional underdevelopment to which they were a party. But when the rewards ceased, it was possible (and even inevitable) that people would see what had been created as deeply problematic and feel a mobilizing anger.

We sensed that the anger, overtly aimed at the SEC, was also directed at themselves. Animating their righteous blaming of the SEC was a certain self-hatred, some shame at their dependency, their going along, being bought off, slumbering through their economic lives, some uncomfortable sense that they had purchased their own well-being at the expense of the community. In such a moment of interruption in the way things are and should be, and in the angry feelings toward the world and self that the interruption provokes, demands may be forged to recreate what is lost, but a turning is also possible—one potentially based on economic diversity and more autonomous regional development, if such possibilities were to become imaginable.

GRIDS OF VISUALIZATION: THE "AREA AS A WHOLE"

Meet Tracy, a young businesswoman in the Latrobe Valley who grew up during the "good times" and remains committed to staying and contributing to a re-visioning of the region:

There is an absence of security, there is no sense of permanency, it's evidenced by the architecture, by everything that we do. Everything's a quick fix or a band-aid approach to whatever it is that it might be. There's a greater sense of competition now, there's less trust, even between individuals, and on a greater scale between people in business. They don't want to work together anymore. Between the towns there's no longer this real sense that we can do anything for the area as a whole. Each person is out there wheeling their own barrow and protecting themselves. They're quite vulnerable to every aspect of competition or whatever it may be heading toward them. (June 1997, emphasis added)

Tracy's statement introduces the vision of the "area as a whole," an area in which towns and inhabitants once appeared to act in unity with a sense of purpose and that is now crumbling into fragments under current pressures. Her comments refer to a somewhat mythical image of cohesion that belies the class divisions, public/private sector cleavages, gender politics, and ethnic, racial, and town identities that have always internally differentiated the area. But they also point to the slapdash, unplanned nature of the built environment in the valley, and the heightened sense of competition between people, towns, and businesses across the region. In the face of what she sees as a rising competitive individualism, Tracy's mourning for the loss of trust and absence of community is at the same time an appeal for their re-creation and a call to a different kind of being.

We could see the competitive individualism that Tracy recognizes as a form of subjectivation in the valley as having roots in the reluctance to extend comprehensive social planning beyond the early experiments with Yallourn, and the failure to enact new techniques of governmentality during the period of unregulated
growth that took place in the valley in the post–World War II period. Her appeal to the possibility of some kind of community resonates with the idealistic visions of the planners who first attempted to constitute the Latrobe Valley as a visible, governable, and naturalized "region."

THE HEATH AND GOWER SURVEY: MAPPING THE REGIONAL "PROBLEM"

This work is offered as a contribution to the moulding of our corner of a molten world. (Barnett, Burt, and Heath 1944, 3)

A plan that is soundly based and comprehensively inter-related to all services does not need to be assessed financially—it is essentially an economy. (Victorian Town and Country Planning Board 1949, foreword, emphasis added)

In 1947 the private architect and town planner Frank Heath, in collaboration with W. E. Gower, the chief architect for the SEC, presented the first regional survey and report on the Latrobe Valley. Commissioned by the SEC to review the "regional" impact of further development of the brown coal and briquette industry and to come up with a regional plan, this document brought the entirety of the Latrobe Valley region into formal policy focus. Until this time, the policies of development of the SEC had highlighted one point/place, Yallourn, and had ignored the preexisting dispersed spatiality of the area. Now the "region" appeared to have arrived, somewhat deformed and full of growth problems.

The maps of the Heath and Gower report for the first time showed people in situ in the towns of Moe, Newborough, Yallourn, Morwell, and Traralgon as part of the Latrobe Valley. Prior to this report, there appears to have been little or no use made of this visual technology, but from the late 1940s, countless maps and panoramic drawings brought the region into focus as an object of surveillance (see Figure 10). No longer could the valley be represented as a people-free point in a calculative frame centered on Melbourne, or as the extractive arm of a state authority manned by cooperative citizens focused on potentiating power (electrical and political) and generating Victorian state development. Now the valley was a thing in its own right, peopled with a range of subjects under the gaze of government.

The timing of this interest in the valley as a region in need of "planning" comes as no surprise, as it was during the immediate post–World War II period that "regions," as spatial entities that could be or needed to be managed, had become an object of direct policy interest. After the Japanese bombing of Darwin, Australia had become acutely aware of its "vulnerability" to attack; in the postwar years, the issue of decentralization was placed firmly on the agenda by the federal Labor government, which had successfully overseen the mobilization of national resources, industry, and manpower during the war effort. Many public figures were concerned with the detrimental effects of population concentra-


tion, resource agglomeration, and political centralization in a few capital cities, and the need for spatial and social planning was hotly debated (see, for example, Santamaria [1945] and Harris et al. [1948]). Writing at this time, the academic economist H. L. Harris notes:

Decentralization and regionalism offer us a vision of a rationally ordered nation in which natural regions balanced amongst themselves maintain internal balance and variety.... [D]ecentralization is not planning under another name if by planning is meant the centralized direction of a total economy or complete submission to a blueprint. It stands for a principle to be applied co-operatively, continuously and flexibly, that the search must be made for a rational organization of our social life. (1948, 19–22)

Harris recognizes that the unchecked "invisible hand" has created one sort of order—now named a regional "problem"—but he is wary of being seen to advocate anything that could be construed as "socialist planning" ("submission to a blueprint"). His ambivalence toward the Keynesian vision of the economy as a machine to be tinkered with, as something that "might get 'sick,' 'derailed,' or need 'repairs'" (Buck-Morss 1995, 465), is countered by a reluctance to relinquish all agency in relation to economic growth and a desire to promote a more "rational organization of our social life."
The emphasis at this time on mapping and surveying indicates the importance placed on these key technologies as a means of communicating both the need for and the possibility of a logical and rational approach to spatial and economic planning (Mumford 1922). It was in this context of political debate about decentralization that Frank Heath and W. E. Gower produced their comprehensive survey of the Latrobe Valley and a plan for its future regional development (Heath and Gower 1947). In it they discuss the importance of diversifying the industrial base of the valley by attracting ancillary industries and others that will employ young female labor, the need to allocate land in separate industrial districts for that purpose, and the importance that should be placed on the viability of the neighborhood, the basic cell of human society. They outline the conflicts between urban settlement and coal mining that have already become embedded in the landscape and strongly recommend careful zoning of land use, specifically proposing the relocation of Morwell to a new site east of the planned mining developments and major reroutings of the railway line and highway to the north of the valley, away from prime coal resources and in a more amenable relation to the existing townships (see Figure 11).

Two years after the SEC's commissioning of the independent Heath and Gower report, the Victorian government's newly constituted Town and Country Planning Board gazetted a subregional plan entitled "Future Development of the Latrobe Valley Sub-Region: A Report and Planning Scheme." This plan bore strikingly little resemblance to the one drawn up by Heath and Gower. Its much more limited gaze and purchase belies the tensions associated with a change in the vision of Economy that had begun to inform policy. With the national ascendance of the Liberal Party and their more laissez-faire approach to economic matters (a precursor to the late twentieth-century neoliberal agenda), Heath's attempts to render the region thinkable and improvable met with strong opposition and his will to translate managed spatial and economic development into a practice of comprehensive regional planning was decisively shunned. The voices of secticial interests, already well established in many valley townships, appear to have been heard and the traditionally extensive influence of the SEC was curbed. All reference to the proposed removal and relocation of Morwell was dropped, as was any mention of plans to rationalize transport routes through the valley. Indeed, the major townships (Moe, Morwell, and Traralgon) are excluded from the subregional planning area and allowed to go it alone under the guidance of their respective councils (see Figure 12).

Only a weak note of repressed anxiety about economic matters infiltrates the otherwise "hands off" ethos of the 1949 Latrobe Valley subregional plan. In the preamble to the planning scheme, the fears of an unchecked economy are laid out and named:

"This sub-regional plan has been prepared and adopted by the Board as an insurance against an uneconomic, haphazard and inefficient series..."
of unrelated changes. Fast development of the region is already evident, and signs are not lacking of the enthusiasm of the land trader. . . .

The vital difference between having a practical plan to guide development of the area and having no plan is that the district grows harmoniously, smoothly and cheaply instead of awkwardly, badly and wastefully. It must cost less to adhere to a plan than to have no plan at all (Victorian Town and Country Planning Board 1949, foreword, emphasis added).

Ultimately, however, the plan made no strong suggestions for control or management of business, land speculation, or service provision. Outside the gates of Yallourn, the SEC’s model village where such control was maintained, topsy-turvy growth flourished virtually unchecked.

In casting a spatial frame across the different settlements, activities, and landscapes that constituted “the valley,” maps and panoramic drawings served to situate points and places within a “unifying vision.” The first regional plan continued to reinforce a centering of the regional economy on brown coal resource extraction and electricity generation, and the subjectification of a singular economic identity was once again reinscribed. Despite attempts by Heath and Gower to decenter and dehumanize the Economy by inserting the human values of community, neighborhood, economic diversity, and social justice into the development calculus, the eventual plan betrayed a deep reluctance to constrain market forces and to fetter the drive for growth in energy-generating capacity. Subjection to a singular economic identity was readily embraced. If the Economy was real, it was “real good” from the perspective of the expanding male workforce—more power stations were built in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, wage packages rose, and the growth potential of the single-sector resource economy seemed unbounded.

As with many struggles to create unity, disunity was the result—the plan had the effect of unleashing the sectional individualist interests it had identified, initiating the parochial competition for resources between the existing townships of “the valley” that has continued to the present. Each locality’s hostile commitment to individual survival has produced an extremely inefficient duplication of facilities, a deep-seated suspicion of council amalgamation, and town loyalties and antagonisms that are manifest in everything from sporting rivalries to town stereotyping, most recently surfacing in the battle over the siting of the amalgamated shire’s council chambers in Morwell. The failure of technologies of governmentality to effectively create a regional commons that could be “ruled” as a single community allowed a discourse of individualism to reign. When major rationalization and then privatization of the electricity generation and mining industries took place in the early 1990s, they were met by an individualistic response, despite the high union membership in the valley:

I was talking to a union leader about two years ago and he suggested that one of the mistakes the unions made was to individualize the
problem. That is, the focus was on the size of the packages and ensuring access of their members to the best deal possible for those people individually. Looking back, his feeling was perhaps we should have looked at the wider community, perhaps we should have been looking at the social rather than the individual, and perhaps in the future the region needs to socialize issues or look at issues from a social community perspective rather than at how it will affect individuals. And I think that's one of the problems. Issues seem to be defined individually, how they will affect me, how they affect you. And I think that contributes in turn to a sense of disempowerment. You are not part of a group and nobody else really understands. (Councillor, Latrobe Valley, June 1997, emphasis added)

In contrast to its collective form of address to the valley workforce during its establishment and growth, the SEC in dissolution interpellated subjects individually. The union movement, organized around slogans like "united we stand, divided we fall," was unable to mobilize a collective community response to rationalization, widespread retrenchment, and privatization.

As Tracy notes:

I think the valley was seen, and is seen now, as being a huge experiment, both socially and economically. The valley's been a bit of a hot potato—no one really wants to touch it. It's been thrown from one spo to the next and this whole "what's in it for us." ... You know we've been good, we've gone the way, we've put up with the changes, now what are we going to get? What is the trade-off? And there really is nothing forthcoming, there is no compensation and there is no effort to try and mend the things that have torn things apart here. I suppose there is no real accountability. (June 1997)

The clarity of these visions of "what went wrong" indicates a psychic readjustment to the withdrawal of the paternalistic SEC. Abandonment and disempowerment here become the preconditions for a more "realistic" understanding of the deficits of valley life, potentially opening the way for a renegotiation of social and spatial collectivity beyond the individualism, town competition, us/themism and restrictive, solitary masculinist culture of "the valley." Later in the focus group Tracy reframed her earlier reference to diminished trust and community, evoking their positive presence in the valley and the group:

I think one of the best contributions that we have made, probably as individuals, is that we've stayed. We've taken it all on board. We've taken all the ugliness and everything with it and said, "We are going to see this through." There are even individuals here today who have actually said that it's been painful, it's been hard, let's help someone else, let's make the blow a little less painful for them. This is a strong

community, it comes forward today, everyone's here prepared to work together, but we need to sell that to a wider group. (June 1997)

Tracy can be heard expressing a desire for being "elsewhere or otherwise" (Deleuze 1986, 104; Butler 1997, 130) in the valley, despite its pain and ugliness. We see her both recognizing her subjection and putting forward the potentiality for a different kind of subjectivity based on the experience of still being here together. Her identification of an ethic of care among the focus group participants and her call to perform community in a different way was echoed by other community spokespeople. In an exhortative mode Mike added:

The potential is still here. One wonders why some people haven't bothered to move, why we haven't all left, why we are all still here, why do we still call this home? Because the potential is still here. And the points that Bill raised about the spiritual life of people in the Latrobe Valley and the points I have raised about the cultural life in the Latrobe Valley... considerations that have never really been worked on through all of this, and they are still here. (June 1997)

The comments of Tracy and Mike suggest that we can indeed "reread 'being' as precisely the potentiality that remains unexhausted by any particular interpellation" (Butler 1997, 131). In these moments Tracy and Mike are open to and indeed they are performing other possible subjectivities. They and the others are ready to inhabit the sense of unavoidable collectivity, of just being together in place, that arose in the focus group, extending its life beyond this point in time and to a wider community.

A POLITICS OF BECOMING

We have explored the enactment of governmental power through an examination of its localizing effects—the emplacement of an economy and economic subjects in the Latrobe Valley of southeastern Australia. One of the avowed strengths of a spatial genealogical method is its ability to reveal the constitutive contingencies of history and geography, dispelling any sense of necessary unfolding. We can see easily that "it could have been otherwise," that other economies could have been installed, that economic development is not a lawful natural process but one in which (in this case) economic "laws" were invoked politically—to justify, for example, the project of undermining the working-class communists in the older coal-producing region of Australia by establishing the brown coalfields, or to discredit an aggressive approach to social and economic planning and thereby dissociate from the long shadow of international communism. Complexly overdetermined rather than simply determined, the course of economic eventuation in the Latrobe Valley was unpredictable and full of (foreclosed because not taken up) possibility.

But while possibility exists, it is shadowy and negative, whereas the foreclosures enacted have shape and stability. What a genealogy conveys, in addition
to possibility, is the performativity of discourse, the materiality of subjection, the sedimenting practices that leave relatively indelible marks on the landscape and its inhabitants, and resist change even if they cannot avoid it. Through a genealogical tracing of the uneven application of three governmental technologies, we have provided one way of understanding the enduring subjection of contemporary residents in the Latrobe Valley; we have also revealed the ways that these contingent technologies brought into being a naturalized and abstracted Economy. Merz’s numbers contributed to the successful performance in the valley of a calculable and lawful Economy singularly based on resource extraction and energy production, and dominated by large-scale enterprise. A lasting effect of Merz’s initial enrollment of a particular space into the governmental calculus was the creation of subjects who could be manipulated by “the Economy” as a matter of rational course. Monash’s rhetoric, in contrast, produced a more historically limited naturalization of the Economy as a sphere that could be managed and directed toward developmentalist goals, in which private and state capitalist enterprises could productively coexist. The creation of cooperative and dependent subjects whose collective masculinist identification with Victorian industrial growth and resource development in the valley was assured has been one effect that lives on, despite the disappearance of the institution through which this form of governmentality was largely practiced. Heath and Gower once again encountered the self-regulating vision of Economy, reinvigorated in post–World War II Australia, that had partially informed Merz’s much earlier work; this had the effect of undermining the power of their maps and plans to naturalize a notion of the “Region” as an interdependent entity where nature, community, and alternative rationalities could tame and socialize economic forces. One possible legacy of this “failure” of governmentality to constitute a regional community is the amplified sense of competitive individualism that characterizes the valley today.

What we are describing here could be seen as a hegemonic formation of subjects, relationships, institutions, practices, and meanings that endures over time. And certainly the Latrobe Valley has its obdurate side. But a hegemonic entity such as a regional economy can be seen as continually performed in and through technical, material, and discursive devices. What if there is a break in the relations and practices constituting this performance, as undoubtedly occurred in the valley with the withdrawal of the SEC? What might this mean for the durability of economic subjection and the potential for new becoming?

Many of the technologies and practices of performing a regional economy based on mining and energy production have now been abandoned. Coal is still extracted and kilowatts generated, that is true, but most of the networks that once linked inanimate and animate materiality in the production system are now redundant. A discourse of economic rationalism that draws heavily on the self-evident logic of certain forms of numerical calculation and accounting remains dominant in Australian society (Hindess 1998), and in the val-

ley “the numbers” blatantly show that the Economy no longer requires people like Harry and his workmates. Their initial invisibility in Merz’s tables is now a reality—the labor factor of production in coal winning and electricity generation is minimal. The view that the regional economy is defined purely or primarily by its energy resources prevails, but it is exclusion from this instrumental vision that is today’s subjection. What might this mean for the subject now deprived of economic citizenship? Perhaps this interruption caused by exclusion from a dominant economic calculus liberate new subjectivities and alternative forms of economic being?

Perhaps the only lasting connection between the performance of the resource-based economy and the majority of the population in the valley is the air people are forced to breathe, still laden with ash and chemical emissions from the power stations. But the break in the performance of established regional economic relations has not destroyed the legacy of a collective experience and the constitutive desire for a new kind of regional “being.” By listening for expressions of “fugitive energies” and emotions that exceed the fund of subjectivities institutionally provided and “assumed” in the valley, we have identified care for the other, concerns for justice and equity in and for the region, and calls for new practices of community as potentialities that have arisen out of subjection.

Connolly warns us that without an active politics of becoming, such potentialities can easily become reimagined into old discourses and “old piles of argument,” rather than directed toward new ways of being (1999, 146). Momentary eruptions that break familiar patterns of feeling and behavior offer glimmers of possibility; but before we can actively cultivate these glimmers, we require a new discursive framing. At the very least we need a discourse of economy to supplant the one that has still has purchase in the valley, yet excludes its subjects from active economic citizenship.

In this chapter we have begun the task of denaturalizing the Economy and its capitalist forms of subjection; this provides a breathing space for fugitive energies of caring, social concern, and collectivity to be directed toward new performances of economy. But the very possibility of other economies has been suppressed both here in the Latrobe Valley and arguably elsewhere. A political project of economic becoming will require an imaginary in which economic possibility is plural and diverse. By speaking a language of economic diversity, we may be able to provide a context in which fleeting energies can be organized and amplified within alternative enactments of economy. It is to the task of language development that we turn in the next chapter.