Finding Spirit: A Non-Representational Ethnography of the Affective Geographies of Religion at Bethel Church

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Abstract

In the West, Christianity is transitioning away from institutionalised religion towards more personal forms of belief where material and embodied experiences of the divine – or spirit – are valorised. Despite this representing both a generational and cultural shift in Christian practices, little is known about how spirit forms and informs everyday life – generating experiential knowledges through which people sense and make sense of the world around them. *Finding Spirit* therefore sits within this gap, engaging with the seemingly immaterial but nevertheless deeply consequential dimensions of religious experience that the social sciences struggle to adequately relate to, such as spirit. Underpinned by theories of affect, *Finding Spirit* is an ethnography of ordinary life at Bethel; an independent Californian mega-church that teaches believers how to live naturally, supernatural lifestyles. As it explores the affective geographies of how spirit is sensed, experienced and encountered in everyday, ordinary Bethel life this thesis moves beyond the notion of spirit as a distant, otherworldly entity or a paranormal experience that occurs outside of religious belief. Essentially, *Finding Spirit* argues that paying attention to more-than-human relations with spirit creates opportunities to further explore affective and emotional lived experience. Drawing upon non-representational theories, *Finding Spirit* embraces a sense of creativity as it aims to develop methodologies that are better attuned to find spirit in the lived, sensed and in motion more-than-human worlds of Bethel. For instance, it employs a non-linear, snapshot writing style that fluctuates between the empirical and the theoretical throughout as well as experimenting with a critical disposition or mood of 'friendliness' as an alternative to critique. *Finding Spirit* therefore enriches Geography's understandings of affective life by highlighting reality as heterogenous as well as adding to knowledges on how researchers might relate to the affectivity of becoming submerged in these alternative worldings in the field.

Finding Spirit

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List of Abbreviations

AG – Assemblies of God

BSSM - Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry

NRT – Non-representational Theories

List of Illustrations

Declaration

The material contained in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree in this or any other institution. It is the sole work of the author who takes full responsibility for any errors contained.

Statement of Copyright

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Preface

To my relief, the wheels of the unnervingly small plane I was on touched down safely in Redding. This Northern Californian city was home to Bethel - the Charismatic Christian mega church at the centre of my research trip. As I removed my headphones and joined the line of passengers who were beginning to disembark I was able to pick up on the discussions they were having. The topic at hand seemed to revolve around *Open Heavens* - a Bethel conference that was due to start that night.

> "Have you gone to one before?" a voice behind me asked.
> "Oh yeah!" responded another passenger.
> "No this is my first time!" a chorus of others further back replied.

I, like most on the plane, had also bought a ticket for the conference. I listened carefully as we shuffled down the aisle as people began introducing themselves to one another, talking excitedly about the range of seminars, musicians, prophets and speakers that were due on stage over the coming few days.

Due to the plane's small size there was no overhead storage onboard so once we had disembarked we had to wait on the runway for our cabin bags to be removed from the hold before we could then head to the terminal. Looking around, the runway felt like little more than a makeshift strip of tarmac in the middle of a field. I watched as people took selfies and groups of friends huddled in front of their cameras trying to get the right angle in front of the mountainous back drop of Shasta County. As we milled around on the runway, the conversations continued. People chatted excitedly about their experiences of Bethel, informing those of us who had never been before of the wonders we were going to experience. For, Bethel is well known for regular miraculous occurrences as well as its controversial teachings that the supernatural is a normal part of everyday Christian life.

This odd community that seemed to emerge on the journey from our seats to the tarmac generated a strange yet tangible entanglement of nervous excitement within me. It was as if the 40 of us who had boarded the plane as strangers with unknown motivations had disembarked united in our plan to attend the same Bethel conference. The usual sense of purpose and busyness that occurs at airports seemed absent in this moment. Slowed down by the waiting around. Stilled and captured in snapshots on many a camera roll. For the scene consisted of only one plane, one small terminal building and a group of people, friends and strangers who had seemingly reached our destination...

The Map

Map I. Introduction

The sense of unfamiliarity that occurs when you arrive in a new city for the first time is perhaps not too dissimilar from opening an unfamiliar thesis as a reader. You wonder what it will be like? What will you discover, learn, experience or feel? In a new city there is a sense of strangeness as the abundance of new faces and places blur around you and you grapple with your ability to remember them. Your senses heighten as you try and get your bearings, trying to look for ways to pull all the pieces together. You encounter new people and begin to imagine who they are and what they are about. You hear different accents and languages speaking to diverse life-worlds and ways of being. You try to adjust to the new rhythms and atmospheres that emerge within the introduction of the curious abundance of knowledges, signposts, bodies, practices and affects. Some of it seems pretty familiar and well-known. Other things, less so. You look for ways to navigate from your location, searching for a sense of direction in order to reach some sort of destination.

More often than not, that handy map that lives on your phone, or in your satnav, acts as the reassuring tool allowing you to orient yourself and find your way. In a similar way, I have written this Map section to offer some initial guidance for reading my thesis. In Map, I provide the reader with a sense of direction as I explain where this thesis is located and how it has been approached and written. The Map will introduce the theoretical aim at the core of the project as well as some of the key concepts and concerns within my research. I will also provide the academic context through placing my research within broader geographical discussions as well as offering the outline for the structure of the thesis as a whole. Map therefore acts as a sort of entryway for my thesis. A place from which I can begin to orientate myself and my research to the reader as well as being a point of reference for the reader as to the aims, objectives and pathways going forward.

Map II. The Aim

The aim of my project is to ethnographically explore the affective geographies of the embodied experience of spirit at Bethel Church in Redding, California. To do this, I focus upon the various ways through which spirit is sensed, experienced and encountered at Bethel. My thesis explores how the affective experiences of spirit occur in the everyday rhythms, routines and atmospheres that emerge in relation with Bethel. I pay attention to the ways through which spirit attaches itself in ordinary life: within and between spaces, bodies, materialities, relations and practices. My thesis looks towards the role of spirit as it actively co-produces these embodied experiences and encounters - forming an experiential knowledge through which people at Bethel sense and make sense of the world around them.

Map III. The Key Concepts

A central theme that flows throughout this thesis is the experience of spirit at Bethel. The term spirit is therefore very important within my research. Yet, the language of spirit tends to be quite associated with discarnate entities that evoke the spectral and haunting qualities of space (Bartolini et al., 2019). Or, ghostly absent-presences (Meyer and Woodthorpe, 2008) that perhaps conjure up imaginings of lives past whilst being profoundly connected to wider society in the present (Lamont, 2013). However, within the context of my thesis the concept of 'spirit' acts as an open reference to the presence and 'presencing' of the divine. I push the concept beyond the idea that spirit is a distant, otherworldly entity. Rather, spirit (that can be either 'Father, Son and Holy Ghost' or the simultaneous Trinity) is conceptualised as productive, has active agency, can speak and 'speak back' as well as having the capacity to affect and be affected (Bartolini et al., 2019; Heng, 2020; Pile et al., 2019).

References to spirit in my thesis point to the ways through which the divine is sensed and experienced at Bethel. This idea of spirit takes into account Bethel's prominent emphasis upon spiritual presences (often referred to as 'the presence' or 'His presence') as the tangible, experienced sense of the sacred. The use of the term spirit - as opposed to Jesus or God - also reflects how Christianity in the West is evolving in ways that increasingly favour personal spirituality over institutionalised religion (Finke and Stark, 2005; Taylor, 2016). This is especially notable in the rise of non-denominational churches (like Bethel) where experiencing

and encountering spirit "is a normal part of evangelism and church growth" (Wilkinson, 2009: 376) - generating what Olson (2008) refers to as a Christian 'folk religion' rather than what could be considered historic, classical Christianity. So whilst institutional Christianity is declining in the West, the emerging influence of spirituality that can be seen at non-denominational churches like Bethel is changing and challenging the nature of 'doing' church and experiencing spirit (Sherwood, 2016). The influence of spirit is changing the Christian landscape with non-denominational churches especially becoming a growing social phenomenon (Christerson and Flory, 2017). Despite there being both a generational and cultural shift in Christian practices (Trinitapoli, 2007) little is known about the relations between these 'other worldly' experiences and senses of spirit and how the affective experience of spirit is experienced in ordinary life as understood to be teeming with extraordinary experiences (Pile et al., 2019). So I explore how peoples' lives at Bethel are entangled with and within notions of spirit in ways that are unfolding and transforming the broader Christian landscape in everyday ways.

Looking to the key concept of spirit, Part I: Beginnings of my thesis provides a greater understanding of my use of the term. For instance, in Theoretical Beginnings I unpick nonrepresentational theories and affect theories with regards to researching spirit as I look towards – not trying to explain what these experiences or encounters with spirit *are* - but what they can *do* and how they become presenced in ordinary life. In Contextual Beginnings I discuss the term spirit in the most depth as well as looking to the importance of spiritual experiences in the specific context of the growth and transformation of Bethel over the past twenty years. In the final section of Beginnings, Methodological Beginnings, I focus on the challenges and opportunities that arise when researching spirit.

In Part II, III and IV, I explore spirit further - circling away from the introductions given in Part I through a closer look at my ethnography. By paying attention to how spirit is entangled within and emerges as part of everyday Bethel life these three parts consist of a collection or series of small snapshots of life with spirit at Bethel. Many of these snapshots are woven through the conversations that I had during my time at Bethel. However, some of these snapshots pay attention to my own experiences, referencing my own memories and encounters with spirit or spirit affects. For example, in Part II: Atmospheres of Allure, I introduce many of the people that I got to know, talked to and interviewed. I use this part to allow the reader to

follow their stories pre-Bethel, exploring the reasons and motivations for their moves to Redding to join Bethel. In Part III: Spirit Affects I explore the everyday ways that spirit was presenced at Bethel again combining the testimonies of the people I met with my own experiences and the ones that we shared. In Part IV: Sensing Spirit I pay attention to the tangible and visceral ways that spirit can be sensed and encountered with particular attention to the role of practices.

Finally, in Part V: Endings, I explore how my research has tried to move beyond spirit as a distant, otherworldly entity or a paranormal experience that occurs outside of the realms of religious belief and towards an exploration of how spirit is experienced in believer's ordinary lives at Bethel. This shift in approach to spirit represents a somewhat distinctive move in the literature and is one that therefore enables my research to contribute to a plethora of theoretical and methodological conversations within Geography.

Map IV. Geographies of Lived Religion

My research sits within the subdiscipline of geographies of religion and addresses several major gaps within the specific field of 'lived religion' - the "social, material, imaginative and emotional experiences associated with the religious experience" (Saunders, 2013: 786); highlighting bodies, im/materialities, places, encounters and experiences and acknowledging that religion and spirituality are sensed across many registers of emotion and affect (Holloway, 2003; 2013). Whilst I discuss this in more detail in Part I: Beginnings the key gaps in research and literature that this project responds to are:

1) The sensuous 'poetics' of sacred embodied experiences (Finlayson, 2012; Holloway 2006; Kong, 2001; 2010). These experiences, whilst "often seriously underplayed" (Dewsbury and Cloke, 2009: 695) offer a worthwhile avenue to further "illuminate the notion of being in the world" (p.696).
2) The spaces where modern spiritualities are created and the boundaries between the spiritual and the secular are fuzzy (Bartolini, Chris, MacKian and Pile, 2017), echoing a wider marginalisation of non-denominational Christianity in Geography (Williams, 2016). In this sense, and importantly, whether or not 'spirit' exists is less significant than the belief and feeling that it does and, therefore, the specific ways that the

experience of spirit cuts across "the everyday with the extraordinary, the enchanted and the incarnational" (Dwyer, 2016: 760).

3) The reality of being 'touched' by the spirit: "something which has been absent in most academic discussions to date, yet seemed central" (MacKian, 2012: 51). Spirit as an active agent in the coproduction of the material, bodily, sensational and sensory worlds of religion (particularly Christianity) is lacking within geographical discussions (Williams, 2016). Whilst Holloway (2003) and Pile and colleagues (2019) do more than most, in Holloway's discussion of the occult he does not give spirit agency to manoeuvre outside of the human organization of ritual objects. Whilst Pile et al (2019) *do* attend to spirit as an agent they do so in the context of Spiritualism rather than Christianity.

By paying attention to these gaps in the field of geographies of religion, my research contributes to and furthers work on Lived Religion within Geography as it focuses upon the specificity of religiosity in terms of sensed, embodied experiences relating to the entanglement or tension between the earthly and the spiritual or the material and immaterial. The engagement with the notion of spirit also presents an opportunity to investigate the felt, but seemingly 'other-worldly' aspects of affective life that the social sciences struggle to adequately relate to or encounter (see Harrison, 2007). As such, the thesis points to how the emerging religious expressions and practices at Bethel can offer something 'more-than' to academic scholarship on embodied experience. The 'more-than' is - spirit (Bartolini, MacKian and Pile, 2017). This is important within my work as I soon discovered during my ethnographic fieldwork just how central spirit is to life at Bethel. Both in terms of embodied religious beliefs and practices but also in how people moved around, responded to, mediated and encountered everyday life at Bethel. By opening up the research to the importance of spirit-within (see "Contextual Beginnings" for further discussion), where spirit infuses all aspects of life at Bethel, the research allows for the more-than-human experience of spirit to be at the forefront of my PhD project.

Map V. Bethel Church

My research is based at Bethel: a non-denominational Christian megachurch in Northern California that over the past twenty years has transformed from an ordinary, inconspicuous church into what *Christianity Today* called the "hub of a global revival movement" (Jones, 2016: n.p.).

Based in Redding, a city with a population of approximately 90,000, Bethel welcomes over 11,000 people through its doors each week (Brannon, 2019). The extensive range of different ministries, services, classes and conferences that Bethel offers are held across four main venues in Redding: College View, Twin View, the Cascade Theatre and the Civic Auditorium (see: Map 1). The consistent number of visitors and guest speakers that come from far and wide to visit Bethel meant that the church was able to convince United Airlines to start offering a daily nonstop flight from Los Angeles in addition to the daily flight from San Francisco (Matthews, 2019). With increasingly large attendances and venue capacity at bursting point, in 2019 Bethel began work on a new $96 million, 171,708 square-foot campus with enough parking for almost 2000 cars (Benda, 2019). Indeed, what has been termed the 'Bethel Effect' has impacted Redding in ways that are "big and broad, touching almost every aspect of civic life" with "no institution in California [being] better than Bethel at engaging its hometown" (Matthews, 2019: n.p.).

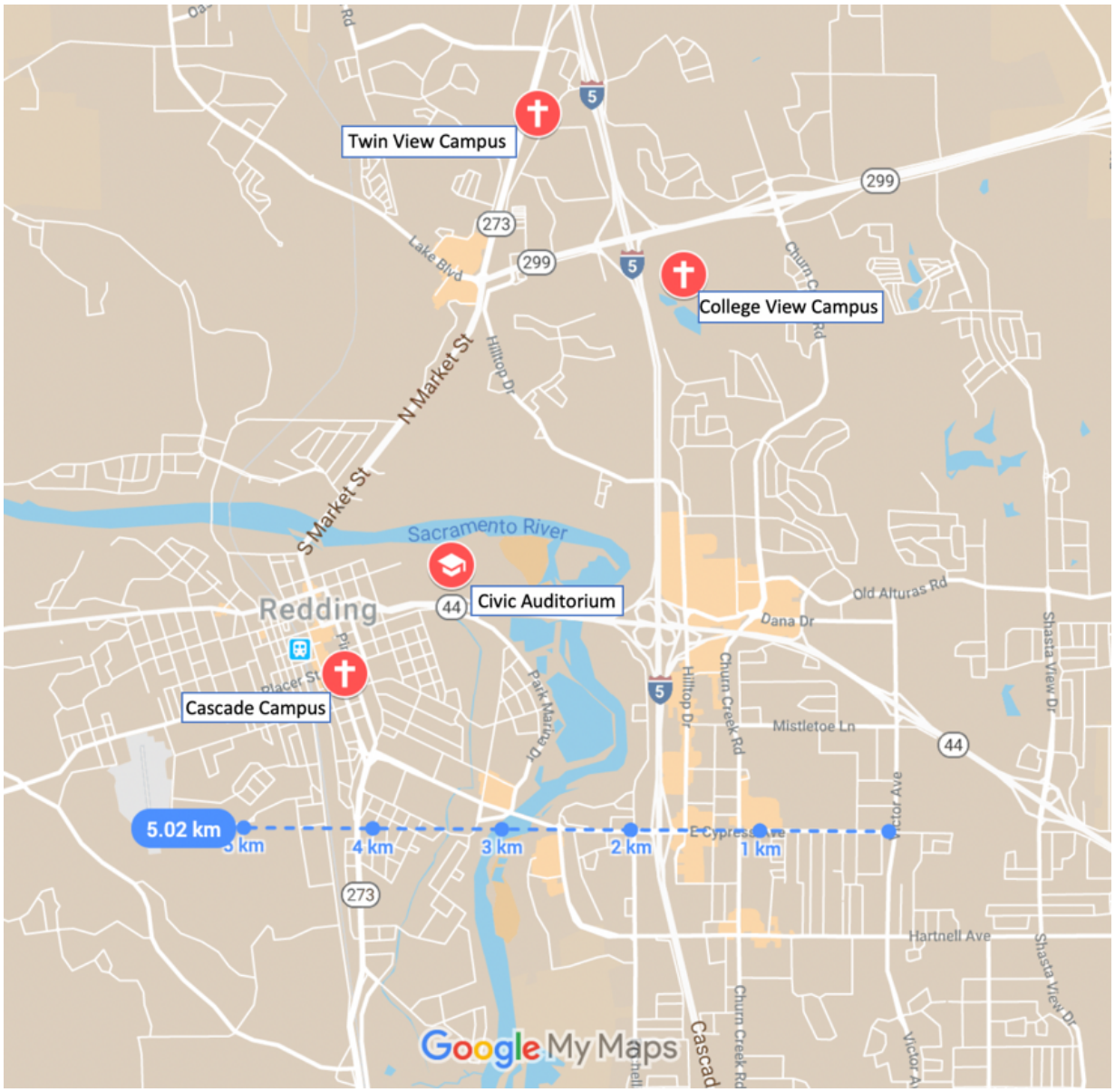
Bethel's influence also surpasses the boundaries of Redding. In addition to the large numbers of visitors and members visiting Bethel in Redding, the church also hosts up to 500,000 people across their digital live streaming platforms (Brannon, 2019). With such an extensive online audience, reports of supernatural occurrences or signs, wonders and miracles such as healings and manifestations regularly emerge and are circulated – including the infamous appearance of 'glory clouds' of divine gold dust as shared on YouTube.[1] Playing a key role within this is the Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry (BSSM), a 3-year supernatural training course also referred to as the 'Christian Hogwarts' (Hensley-Clancy, 2017). BSSM teaches students how to live a supernatural lifestyle by healing the sick, prophesying, casting out demons and much more. When it was launched in 1998, BSSM only taught 37 students. However, now BSSM trains around 2500 students and has over 8000 graduates from all around the world (Verbi and

[1] Footage of the Glory Cloud can be seen here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvJMPccZR2Y

Winkley, 2016). This makes BSSM America's largest importer of foreign nondegree students; in 2017 BSSM hosted 1792 active visas, double the number of the next largest school (Hensley-Clancy, 2017; Rancano, 2019).

Aside from BSSM, perhaps Bethel's most notable global influence is their GRAMMY nominated music label, Bethel Music (Longs, 2018). As one of the top Christian music producers, Bethel Music brings many musicians and songwriters from around the world to Redding (Mangas and Bansagi, 2020). Bethel's distinct style of Christian music with strong hooks and uplifting, distinctive melodies has without a doubt influenced the ways through which contemporary worship music has become so infused with emotion and passion (Grenholm, 2017) - sweeping up the top three awards at the 2018 GMA Dove Awards (Cluver, 2018). Yet, Bethel has also found success outside of the Christian music genre with two number 1 albums and 4 top four in Billboards Independent Album category (Billboard, 2020). In April 2016, Bethel was number 1 on iTunes above Adele and Coldplay (Jones, 2016) - their song 'No Longer Slaves' was also recently performed and posted on Instagram by Justin Bieber (Guyjoco, 2016). As such, Bethel has turned the small, former logging city of Redding into what the San Francisco *Mercury News* described as the "unlikely centre of modern Christian culture" (Rancano, 2019: n.p.).

I build upon this short introduction to Bethel in Part I: Contextual Beginnings where I highlight two significant and interlinked events that have played into the transformation at Bethel: the 1994 appointment of senior pastor Bill Johnson and severing denominational ties with the Assemblies of God (AG) in 2006. Situating Bethel within the geographies of religion literature more broadly, I explore how these changes enabled Bethel to begin practicing the globalised sense of a church universal (Brown, 2011). This means that rather than identifying themselves as any particular denomination (e.g. Pentecostals / Charismatics) they identify simply as 'Christians' albeit Christians who are striving to live naturally supernatural, revival lifestyles.



Map 1: Bethel Campuses in Redding. Copyright Google My Maps (annotation by author), Accessed 13th April 2020.

Map VI. The Ethnography

The preface of this thesis illustrated my arrival in Redding where I spent almost 3 months immersing myself in life at Bethel. This is not an ethnography of 'being there' (Watson, 2012) but an ethnography of 'being with' and 'becoming-with-others' (Gheradi, 2019) as I attempted to pay attention to the small moments of everydayness. This is not an ethnography *of* affect but it is written with and through affect - acknowledging that all elements are already entangled in complex ways. As I explain in more depth in Methodological Beginnings my ethnography is approached as in motion - as lived and sensed (Gheradi, 2019).

During the time I spent at Bethel, my daily routines reflected those whom I met as I attended main meetings on Sundays as well as smaller more intimate gatherings through the week. Trying to get as involved as much as I could meant that I also went to two large conferences and several small seminars. I joined a healing course and went to training days at Bethel's School of Supernatural Ministry (BSSM). This approach did not mean sitting at the back of the room scribbling into a notebook. It was singing along at services, responding to calls for prayer and contributing to informal theological discussions. It was reading Bethel literature in the prayer gardens. It was being with and in amongst Bethel's community: the visitors from around the world, the congregants, the BSSM students. It was striking up conversations, socialising, spending time, hanging out. It was informally interviewing the people I got to know as I developed networks and relationships with people. It was conversing around dinner tables, sharing meals, anecdotes and jokes. It was having deep conversations on long walks. It was browsing Bethel's bookshop shelves, listening to Bethel podcasts and watching Bethel TV. It was going to the Alabaster Prayer house and visiting the Healing Rooms. It was listening to Bethel music whilst I was drinking coffee from the church's onsite café. It was about paying attention to moments that I could not help but be affected by. When Bethel's spiritual intensities swept me into their affective grasps, enveloping me within multiple tangible and flowing atmospheres. Taking me along a disturbing-captivating journey imbrued with wonder, shock, disbelief, intrigue, joy, boredom, worry, anger and memory.

Map VII. The writing

Writing a thesis presents a particular form of reality, a specific lens through which to explore a phenomenon. So in writing my thesis I have had to spend some time actually thinking about how to presence rather than present experiences of spirit at Bethel through my words on the page. How can I best approach and bring to life the tangible, sensed and embodied yet ethereal, mysterious and unexplainable experiences of spirit within ordinary life at Bethel? How can I stir up other intensities of thinking (Steyaert, 2015)? Ones that recognise the unsettling ethnographic process of becoming-with Bethel in ways that dissolve the concept of the all-knowing I (Lambert, 2012)?

The approach that I decided to experiment with follows an idea in *Thousand Plateau* where Deleuze and Guattari (1987) propose that a book (or in my case - a thesis!) can be inspired by the rhizome. As I explain in more detail in the Introduction section of Part I Beginnings, the rhizome is a type of sub-terranean plant with multiple, semi-independent nodes that spread out and grow horizontally. The rhizome does not have a single root from which the rest of the plant grows but has multiple pathways and root systems. Applying this metaphor to my thesis allows for a non-linear way of writing that is less interested in a fixed order that follows the formula of introduction, literature review and methodology before turning to empirical results, discussions and conclusions. Instead, this approach is interested in how connections are made in chains with multiple directions, crossings and off-shoots. In playing around with the orthodox format of thesis writing, instead of using 'chapters' I've decided to separate my writing into five parts. By writing in parts rather than chapters, I feel like I can presence a more ambiguous process; a series of partial attempts to explore Bethel rather than a succession of chapters that follow on from each other to form a 'whole'. In taking this approach I write in – rather than out – the emotional dimensions of my ethnography as they emerged (Weatherall, 2019) and maintain a personal tone to acknowledge the embeddedness of affect within the very writing itself.

Taking this approach to writing my thesis also serves to acknowledge the ways through which I conducted my ethnography with affect rather than on affect. The difference I illustrate here is that my ethnography is not simply writing about affect. It is not a text through which spirit affects become more knowable or more understandable with regards to the spiritual at Bethel. Rather, my thesis is written through affect. I acknowledge the affectivity of my research, the ways through which I was taken up by Bethel's affective grasps. How in writing up my ethnographic journal and recording video diaries the emotions of lived experiences of spirit recorded the moments that affected me. In re-watching or rereading those texts, those moments that glowed like embers were stoked as their intensities returned at ease. It was not just rereading a transcript but it was being transported back to that point in time, back to that conversation, that relationship, that atmosphere. It was remembering once more the powerful intensities that Bethel cultivates and stepping back into that world. It was listening to Bethel Music whilst writing; filling my ears with the sonic affects of Bethel as the words flowed from my fingertips on a keyboard. The chords on the piano and strings on the guitar coming together in Bethel Music creating a harmony of vibrations that continued to determine the very

atmospheres of my research far beyond the boundaries of Redding. Indeed, sat writing in my office I would follow the pull of affect. Writing from my emotional self, writing through memory and through imaginings. Writing through affect is paying attention to those things and how they sway us both in the field and out of it. Essentially, for me, writing with affect has culminated in a thesis that pulls together the moments that made me feel – both during my time at Bethel but also when I returned home.

So in Part I, I introduce the theoretical, contextual and methodological beginnings - the starting points that situate and ground my thesis. But these are not the 'root' from which the rest of the parts grow out of to form a coherent thesis. Whilst Part I introduces a lot of the theory, it is not the part that simply contains the theory but also includes empirical examples and encounters. Similarly, in Part V: Endings, I do not neatly summarise and conclude my work but I open up parallel empirical happenings in order to reflect upon the realities of the field. In doing so Endings is also a starting point as it introduces new ideas, reflections and questions. In writing this way, I oscillate between the empirical and the theoretical in all five parts as I weave in and out of the snapshots or vignettes of life in motion at Bethel. This bucks against the convention of writing ethnography where the 'data' is sandwiched in the body of the work whilst the theory is relegated to only the beginning and the end (Kondo, 1990). In this sense, there is no particular or correct order through which to read the parts of this thesis – and so to read my thesis in a different order from the one presented in the contents list would not be ill-advised and could open up possibilities of thinking differently about experiences of spirit.

Each part of the thesis is written as to offer a different set of glimpses into the world at Bethel along a similar theme. For instance, Part II: Atmospheres of Allure looks to how the people I met at Bethel imagined Bethel to be. It explores their expectations and motivations for joining the church. It looks to the technologies of allure that Bethel employs and in doing so points to the diverse ways that Bethel presences imaginings of ordinary life with spirit in attractive and alluring ways. In Part III: Spirit Affects, I follow the everyday scenes and examples of spirit in the alternate spirit infused reality that Bethel creates. I pay attention to materialities and bodies as I open up the thesis to the little moments where spirit emerged and the importance of these moments in how people form and create attachments and attunements within everyday life at Bethel. In Part IV: Sensing Spirit I investigate how people become-with spirit through various sensory, sonic and embodied means and how this then builds into the ways that spirit forges

alternative senses of reality. This opens up Geography's understanding of sensations such as heat and laughter, opening up them up beyond themselves. Part V: Endings offers a series of reflections and contributions that my thesis has brought to the discipline and broader social sciences. It also reflects on the difficulties of calls for researchers to be open to events and sensitive to affect through our work. The thesis also contains a series of interludes, a small story of everydayness at Bethel. These interludes try to presence the increasing intensities of the disturbing-captivating affectivity of researching Bethel.

By writing my thesis in this way I try to demonstrate an appreciation for the everyday through a series of scenes and discontinuous moments and stories that are always in motion but are never quite finished. I explore ways of thinking and writing differently, trying to create a thesis whose parts act like cogs in a machine that connect together but do not ever re-establish sense (Johnson, 2019: 61). I do not attempt to present a whole picture of life at Bethel but rather throughout my work I experiment with writing as I presence the small instants, memories, encounters and experiences of spirit through different scenes.

Part I

Beginnings

As explained in the 'Map' section, this thesis kicks off with a first part dedicated to the 'Beginnings'. Whilst beginnings "are always arbitrary, always imagined" (Anderson, 2010: 3) and can always be extended back further or move off sideways (as the thesis will do to some extent), Part I: Beginnings will walk through some of the initial thoughts or nodes from which this research emerged. In this way, the rhizomic – rather than linear – structure of the thesis means that Beginnings is not the root from which the remainder of the thesis follows on directly. Rather, new lines of thought are introduced throughout the rest of the thesis that branch away from the starting points that are found here (Weatherall, 2019).

In *Thousand Plateaus,* Deleuze and Guattari (1987) propose how a book, or a thesis in my case, can be inspired by the rhizome – a type of subterranean plant that has multiple, semi-independent nodes that follow the same line but grow and spread out horizontally in their own way rather than having a singular root. For instance, a tree root "plots a point, fixes an order" whereas "any point of the rhizome can be connected to anything other" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 7). Through the metaphor of the rhizome, a non-linear way of structuring concepts and writing can be deciphered. Writing this way means that there is no singular 'root' from which all the ideas, chapters and sections – the metaphorical branches, leaves and flowers - subsequently sprout and develop but there are connections formed in chains, with multiple entryways and pathways, overlapping lines that are followed rather than fixed.

My thesis does not radically apply the concept of rhizomic writing but I do take inspiration from the metaphor. For instance, I experiment with the ways that rhizomes conjure up notions

of embeddedness (Hess, 2004) – using the metaphor to point to how my research was a messy, unsettling and emotional journey. In the ebbs and flows of merging lines or trails of thought, as my understandings and experiences of spirituality at Bethel joined with and became entangled within the spaces at Bethel as I experienced spirituality alongside the participants. Through conversations with others my own views, approaches and thought processes were challenged and changed. So this thesis writes in, rather than out, the emotional dimensions of my embeddedness in the field as they emerged (Weatherall, 2019). In writing rhizomatically, acknowledging the embeddedness of emotion and affect within the very writing itself this thesis aims to unsettle the reader; as I too was unsettled. The aim of my writing is therefore to "arouse another intensity of thinking" (Steyaert, 2015: 167) as the words generate a tone or a haze of becoming-with the world at Bethel (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994). Writing in this way also serves the function to dissolve the all-knowing I (Lambert, 2012) – reducing the ability of anyone to use my thesis in reconstructing any 'whole' ideas about spiritual experiences at Bethel. It appreciates how everyday experiences of spirit at Bethel (and beyond) consist of a series of scenes and discontinuous processes, flows and affects – always in motion and never finished: "a proliferation of pieces that work like the cogs in a machine, without re-establishing sense" (Johnson, 2019: 61).

As touched on in Map, the Beginnings are not the root of my thesis. Instead, I think of this part as a series of starting points. From these theoretical, contextual and methodological starting points, overlapping lines of thought have spread out and grown – off-shooting in new directions throughout the course of my research (Weatherall, 2019). For, when I began work on this project, I started thinking about how best to approach the tangible, sensed and embodied yet ethereal, mysterious and unexplainable experiences of spirit within ordinary life at Bethel. How do these experiences emerge – and how can we research these modes or ways of life that are so intrinsically connected with and within relationships with spirit? With these difficulties at the forefront of my mind, in Beginnings I evaluate my theoretical, contextual and methodological starting points. The literature within each of these broad beginning points maps out the thinking that informed my research design and understanding of the key concepts in the initial stages of my research.

In Theoretical Beginnings, I turn to the growing influence of non-representational theories as a way that geographers have come to explore the aspects and dimensions of life – like spiritual

experiences - that exceed language. For non-representational theories, as a multiplicity of interpretations and styles, are a growing and prominent research approach within Human Geography. Generally, they place importance upon the everyday experiences of life "beyond or before representation" (J Anderson, 2014: 28). The resonances, relations, practices, performances and atmospheres of and within affective life (Anderson and Harrison, 2010; Dewsbury, 2003; Lorimer, 2005; McCormack, 2010; Thrift, 2008). I offer a brief summary of current work in the discipline before turning to explore affect, as a particularly important concept within non-representational theories, more explicitly. By looking to the influence of Deleuzian thought in affect theory as well as highlighting the turn to atmosphere in recent years I set out the Theoretical Beginnings as the particular nodes of thought from which the rest of my thesis circles out and away from as it explores ordinary affective life at Bethel.

In Contextual Beginnings, I weave Bethel's particular transformation over the past 20 years within the larger evolution of modern Christianity away from institutional religion and towards personal spirituality and relate this evolution to work within Geography on embodiment in order to emphasise the embodied, lived aspects of religion at Bethel. I follow different trails of thought, expanding upon the key concept of spirit and the importance of spiritual experiences at Bethel. Drawing upon work from within geographies of religion and the broader social sciences throughout, Contextual Beginnings underlines the importance of personal spiritual experiences, not only with regards to the church's neoliberal strategy for growth but in the everyday lives of people across and within Bethel's 'glocal' network. I discuss the existing literature within Geography, particularly geographies of religion, highlighting how embodiment can be understood in terms of being, doing and sensing the sacred as well as pointing to the opportunities that are opened when a fourth mode – wonder – is employed as an approach towards embodiment. I, therefore, argue that a case is built for the openness of wonder and the potential of enchantment as transformative in exploring experiences of spirit at Bethel Church.

In Methodological Beginnings, my starting point reflects the initial thought processes that formed my method and my methodological approach. I reflect back upon Theoretical and Contextual Beginnings as I discuss how I built and undertook my immersive approach to ethnography. In this section I also introduce the reader to my own positionality as an ex-Charismatic Christian and reflect upon the difficulties that embodying this positionality at

Bethel brought forth. It is in this section of Beginnings that I discuss the critical mood that I employ throughout my thesis and how I approached the field and the writing up once I was back home. In this section of Beginnings in particular I find myself oscillating between the empirical and the theoretical, providing short examples to illustrate some of the difficulties as well as the reasoning behind my immersive ethnographic approach.

Theoretical Beginnings

The central theme that flows throughout my thesis is experiences of spirit in ordinary life at Bethel. Yet, as was clear during my time at Bethel, many spiritual experiences emerge in mysterious, ethereal ways - far beyond that which can be fully explained or represented. Whilst I discuss my use of the term 'spirit' in more depth in the next section (Contextual Beginnings), I recognise that *experiencing* spirit is not always something that can be expressed or known through language and comprehension. So in order to acknowledge that these aspects of life can occur beyond what is represented, my thesis follows a particular shift within the discipline. This shift is about broadening our explorations of space and acknowledging how life is experienced in ways that are more-than or beyond its human elements (Bennett and Layard, 2015). Generally this shift in thinking has been defined as Non-Representational Theories (NRT). Non-representational theories are important for this thesis as they put a greater emphasis upon the unknown or incomprehensible elements of experience. Given this emphasis, I look towards NRT as perhaps offering an interesting opportunity for my research. For spiritual experiences at Bethel are dimensions of life that problematise and exceed easy capture by, or recognition in, language.

In order to explore the opportunities that NRT present for my research, I highlight the importance of relations within NRT and follow some key aspects, such as affect and affective atmospheres, within them. This will not only create more clarity regarding where my thesis is situated theoretically but will also enable me to present the initial point from where I follow the non-representational rhizomic trails of thought in the other parts of my thesis. In this way, my explanation of NRT emerges as a starting point, a Beginning from which the remainder of my thesis takes inspiration and draws creativity from as well as being a tool through which I can notice and follow interesting pathways in other sections and scenes within my thesis.

Non-Representational Theories

Looking to the literature, we can see how NRT have emerged and become increasingly important within Human Geography and beyond in the last twenty years. So much so, that NRT have been referred to as this "contemporary moment's most influential theoretical perspectives" (Vannini, 2015a: 2). In Human Geography, the work of Nigel Thrift (1996; 1997; 1999; 2000) and his students (e.g. Dewsbury, 2000; Dewsbury et al., 2002; Harrison, 2007; McCormack, 2002; 2003; 2010; Wylie, 2002, 2005) have been particularly influential with regards to the development of NRT in the discipline. Indeed, NRT has been taken up across Geography, covering a wide plethora of topics and contexts - from sports (Andrews, 2017) and hiking (Vannini, 2016) to cities (Latham and McCormack, 2009) and the rural (Maclaren, 2019). However, despite there being a few geographers who engage with NRT in the context of religion and spirituality (e.g. Bartolini, MacKian and Pile, 2017; Dewsbury and Cloke, 2009; Holloway, 2006) as Kong (2010) expresses geographers need to dedicate more attention to the 'poetics' or affectivity of religious life.

The vast engagement with NRT across Geography means that it is difficult to summarise. NRT consist of a diverse and difficult body of scholarship with no one, singular 'Canonical' non-representational theory (Anderson and Harrison, 2010). It is perhaps therefore better to understand NRT as a breadth of viewpoints, perspectives and approaches that all generally move away from or beyond the analysis of representations towards more 'embodied' modes of meaning-making (Wetherell, 2012; Tolia-Kelly et al., 2017). In this way, NRT acknowledge experiential knowledges, movement, practices and performances as both something *to* research and a *way* of researching (Anderson, 2010; Popke, 2009). Yet as Maclaren (2019) points out, despite growing engagement with NRT across Geography, discussions surrounding *how* to actually engage with NRT through empirical examples remains scarce. My project therefore wrestles with this problem in its exploration of spirit within embodied life at Bethel. As such, I explore the empirical application of NRT as an important influence within this thesis both in terms of what I have set out to research (see 'Contextual Beginnings') as well as the way or style through which that research has been done (see 'Methodological Beginnings'). In both scenarios, NRT bring bodily and performative knowledges to the forefront – where rather than representing our social worlds the focus is upon how these worlds are enacted, felt, embodied and performed.

Before I go on, it is important to note that whilst NRT aim to look towards more embodied modes of meaning-making NRT are not 'anti-representation'. This is because representation should be understood as playing an important part in the embodied dimension of life. As Bondi (2005) argues, many things that are felt or experienced 'beyond' linguistic representation still require language and representations in order to communicate them. Perhaps the same can be understood for spiritual experiences that whilst remaining ethereal and elusive, were communicated, described and represented to me by the people I met at Bethel and subsequently to you, the reader, through my writing. It is therefore helpful to think of NRT as less 'anti-representation' and more a 'montage' of thoughts and actions (Doel and Clarke, 2007) that combine in the more-than-representational "vitality of the world as it unfolds" (Dewsbury, 2003: 1923). This creates the sense of a "dynamic, unfolding collaboration" (Hones, 2014: 32) between representation and non-representation rather than a distinct separation or dichotomy of opposing poles.

In my work, representations do not simply act to explain or interpret but they also highlight the liveliness of being in the world of Bethel and making sense of Bethel as a world in action. Thinking about representations in this way re-orients them away from being simply a referential system that operates within the "hermeneutics of suspicion" (Felski, 2015, see also 'Methodological Beginnings') to being more of a practised and lived mode of becoming-with in the midst of affective life (Anderson, 2019). By acknowledging the importance of representation within embodied knowledges, practices and relations at Bethel, I attempt to avoid slipping into the contradiction that Pile (2010: 17) describes as "fundamentally a representational practice that is, importantly, unable to recognise itself as such." So rather than being against representation, or unable to acknowledge the importance of representation in the vitality of how life takes shape I use NRT to point to how representation is processual, ongoing, and often elusive – highlighting how complex and unpredictable experience is (Anderson and Harrison, 2010; Dewsbury et al., 2002). NRT therefore enlivens the ways through which geographers can respond to life as it springs forth through a focus on practices, relations and – rather than focusing solely upon representations - asking what do representations do? (Anderson, 2019; Maclaren, 2019; Vannini, 2015a). In this way, my project acknowledges the ways through which representations can further experiences of spirit. As representations can send on, play with, deepen, obscure, multiply, and reduce, as much as they explain spiritual experiences. Having clarified that my work, as situated within the NRT umbrella, is not anti-

representation I will next go on to explain in more detail the usefulness of NRT within the Theoretical Beginnings of my project. Firstly, by exploring the NRT emphasis upon being-in and being-of relations and secondly introducing the NRT emphasis on movement and becoming.

Notably, NRT tends to revolve around thinking relationally. Thinking about how we encounter, practice and perform life alongside and with a whole host of other actors and forces. Thinking relationally is really important within the idea of embodied meaning-making as it pays particular attention to how our being-in and being-of relations happens. Importantly, these relations happen not only between us and other people but with the 'things' (the objects, spaces, landscapes, technologies, animals etc.) that populate everyday life with their presence. But also the people and 'things' that occupy life in their absence (Anderson, 2010). It is important to recognise how relations are formed not only with the things that are around us - what is present and there – but also those that are absent. In their absence they generate a presence of what is not there. In this way, absent-presence is also important in understanding the relational ways through which we experience and encounter the world in everyday ways (Moran and Disney, 2019). This is particularly significant given the topic of my thesis, where the world is understood through the physical absent-presence of spirit. Where spirit is an invisible perhaps physically 'absent' force yet one that is tangibly felt, experienced and presenced in everyday life at Bethel. In this way, NRT emphasis upon relations and embodied modes of meaning-making with other things and bodies (both present and absent, both material and immaterial, both human and spiritual) offers an interesting route towards exploring ordinary life at Bethel. For, this approach allows for me to pay particular attention to how being-in and being-of relations with spirit (amongst a whole host of other bodies and things) unfolds in ordinary ways within everyday life.

Thinking relationally (being-in and being-of relations) does not occur in some sort of fixed or ordered way. Rather, embodied meaning-making through relations points to movement - to the ever moving becoming-with the world. This is perhaps not really a separate point but rather highlights just how entangled and interrelated being-with and becoming-with relations in the world around us is. As Maclaren explains, our "lifeworlds are constantly in a state of becoming through our relations" (2019: 2). In other words, our embodied understanding of reality or the world around us is made through our entangled relations that are always changing and

changeable and are always in motion and move us. This idea of things always changing and in motion points to a sense of everydayness. How the everyday practices, performances and experiences that make up everyday life are important in shaping how we evolve and become-with others (Lorimer, 2005; Vannini, 2015a). In this way, my focus upon the everydayness or ordinariness of becoming-with spirit at Bethel is one way through which I engage with NRT throughout my thesis. For example, I explore how the people that I interviewed become-with their lives at Bethel and I become-with the research and the participants who so generously shared their lives with me. The concept of becoming-with is therefore important within this project and is something I discuss in more detail in the next section of 'Theoretical Beginnings' on Affect Theories.

Affect Theories

Within Human Geography, NRT pay significant attention to affect. So much so that affect has become somewhat of a buzzword within contemporary Human Geography. In a similar way to how there is no one theory of non-representation – just to make things complicated - affect also does not have one distinct definition. Looking to the literature we can see how "there is no such thing as affect 'itself'" (B Anderson, 2014: 13) – "Affects can be, and are, attached to things, people, ideas, sensations, relations, activities, ambitions, institutions, and any number of other things, including other affects" (Sedgwick 2003: 19). Affects are "a pull and a push, an intensity of feeling, a sensation, a passion, an atmosphere, an urge, a mood, a drive – all of the above and none of the above in particular" (Vannini, 2015a: 8-9). Taking from these examples in the literature it becomes clear that the concept of affect is specific yet ambiguous. Within the literature, there is not one, stable definition or explanation of affect and indeed the question 'what is affect' has created intense differences and sparked numerous discussions within the discipline (e.g. B Anderson, 2014; Hemmings, 2005; Thrift, 2004). Despite this, if we look specifically towards work within NRT we can see how scholars have a tendency to understand affect as how the body meets the world through encounter. For instance, how a body "walks, touches, senses, feels, and perceives" (Maclaren, 2019: 3) the world around them. Given the variety of understandings that surround affect, the term often finds itself confusingly paired with, against or distinct from emotion. The two terms acting in tandem, or interchangeably or with one simply denoting the other (Bille and Simonsen, 2019) – depending on how exactly you arrive at the term affect (see: Denning, 2018; also Thrift, 2004; 2014).

The main way that the term affect is arrived at within NRT tends to be through the work of Gilles Deleuze and his interpretation of Spinoza (e.g. Anderson and Harrison, 2010, Dewsbury, 2010; McCormack, 2007; 2015). For Deleuze, the capacity to affect *and* be affected is key to his philosophy of experience (O'Donnell, 2017). For Deleuze, this philosophy of experience theorises life as 'becoming' rather than 'being.' This emphasis pulls apart ideas of fixity and instead privileges movement and change as it looks to relations over 'essence' (Colebrook, 2002; O'Donnell, 2017). As introduced earlier, 'becoming' is situated within ideas of moving forward. It is understood as a continual and dynamic process that always relates to the future. For Deleuze, this process of becoming is made possible through encounters with others – we always become-with. Again, this highlights the importance of relations within NRT and this particular understanding of affect.

If we continue to follow the path of Deleuze, relations could be understood through the term: assemblage. Yet, explaining (and understanding!) what assemblage is, is difficult. For Deleuze's explanation of the term is pretty obscure. Basically, it could be said that assemblage is neither a part nor a whole - it is always a multiplicity. This means that assemblage is not like a jigsaw puzzle that comes together in a precise and predetermined manner to produce a whole picture (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994). Rather, assemblage is the multiplicity of relations that occurs between elements. Deleuze and Guattari (1994) liken it to a dry-stone wall that is held together only by its varying lines. No two dry-stone walls are identical. There is no concrete or fixity. All elements of the wall may be undone and redone differently creating new dry-stone walls. So we cannot assume that the wall that we see is the 'final product' or that the wall is somehow independent of the multiplicity of stones, rocks, soil, plants, bugs or other elements that connect to it – becoming wall with it. Whilst this metaphor is still rather vague, I think the important point to recognise is that assemblages do not have essence – they are not subjects or objects nor pieces that can come together to generate a knowable whole. Rather they are *events* that acknowledge a multiplicity of relations of histories, forces, contexts, things, qualities, relations, meanings and so on (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 406; 1986: 81). In this way, assemblage is useful in understanding how relations are inseparable from one another. Relations hold things together in a multitude of particular ways to serve particular functions (Nail, 2017). Whilst this may be a gross simplification of the term, essentially my argument is that assemblage is always a becoming-with.

Continuing on towards Deleuze's interpretation on affect, we could explore how bodies (not just human bodies – but objects, technologies, animals, spirits etc.) can also be understood not as a subject or an object but as assemblage. They are an event that acknowledges a multiplicity of relations that are highly responsive to their environment (Deleuze, 2003; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; 1994). Here, is where for Deleuze, affect really comes into play. For affect is what enables or disables the body (or any other assemblage) in its ability to become (Hickey-Moody, 2013). In his interpretation, Deleuze (1988: 49) uses Spinoza's understanding of *affectus* when he refers to *l'affect* as the "passage from one state to another, taking into account the correlative variation of the affecting bodies". In other words, the ways through which we become-with relations is dependent upon affect. This turn away from essence (what it is) and towards bodies as becoming-with a multiplicity of relations problematises the question 'what is it?' - because we can never actually know the whole 'product' so there is no logic to that question. Instead, in thinking about relations we could ask – *what can the body do?* What is it capable of in relation to other bodies? To what extent can bodies become? Reflecting back to the earlier metaphor, the dry-stone wall can do different things when it comes into relations with other stones, other builders, other elements.

Affect is, according to Deleuze, always an emergent, pre-personal intensity, a relation or relations of force within a given assemblage with the potential to affect bodies (Massumi, 2002). For example, what I could do at Bethel was extended when I came into encounter with bodies that brought me joy such as the Californian sunshine. Whilst the sun can be defined in terms of its kinetic relations (its distance, its position and motion, the energy and velocity of its molecules and elements, its waves of radiation, its nuclear fusion, its temperature gradients and magnetic forces etc.) it can also be defined more dynamically. The ways through which the sun has the ability to affect other bodies – altering their direction, their daily rhythm, their gravitational pull, their speed, their growth, their energy or their intensity. Joy, in this sense, is not an emotion but an increase of my power to act and extended what I could do (Cull, 2012). The sun on my skin enables me with the affective sense of a joyful 'get up and go' that I often find lacking on grey, rainy days. Whilst the affects of the warm Californian sunshine brought me an enabling joy, other more photosensitive bodies (not just human bodies) may not experience it in the same way. Essentially, different affects are encountered differently by different bodies.

Despite my example of encountering the joyful affects of the sun pointing towards a sense of emotion, affect and emotion are actually conceptualised as separate in Deleuzian interpretations. *L'affect* (or affect) is different from *l'affection* which is described as the "state of the affected body and implies the presence of the affecting body" (Deleuze, 1988: 49). In a similar way to how cause is separate from effect, or rather how potential is separate from actualisation, *l'affect* is detached from *l'affection* – the notion of feelings or emotions (Thrift, 2004). Whereas affect is a pre-personal field of intensity, the relations of force that increase or decrease our potential to act, extending or shrinking what we can do - feelings are those intensities registering or actualising within and upon our sensing bodies - and emotion is how we express those things we feel in a way that is socio-culturally recognisable (McCormack, 2008). In other words, emotions can be understood as the ways that we represent affect through our sensing bodies in ways that we as humans understand. So this idea of affect then links back to ideas of representation. Where emotions are predominantly represented in experience and affect is that which is more-than-representational (Lorimer, 2005).

Looking towards Deleuzian interpretations of affect is helpful for my research as they situate affect in relations and encounters between things. It highlights the idea that all things become-with relations to others. Spiritual experiences at Bethel develop, not in isolation, but alongside and with a whole host of other forces and flows. For instance, Bethel's socio-political location as a major Christian influence within the Republican 'Great Red North' of California wherein particular socio-political beliefs surrounding heterosexuality in turn affect not only *who* can have spiritual experiences but also enable and disable the *ways* or modes that such spirit is encountered. In this particular, and (rightly) cynical example, the affects of Bethel's socio-political location mean that for certain people encountering spirit occurs through often firstly becoming 'ex-gay' before they can then go on to have further spiritual encounters[2]. Another (much less controversial) example could be looking to music. To how the rhythms, instruments,

[2]Bethel have an ongoing and really rather troubling set of attitudes towards sexuality and LGBTQ+ Christians. During my time at Bethel I came across two particular ministry streams that aim to 'enable' or encourage people to 'leave behind their LGBTQ+ culture' and instead adopt a heterosexual orientation. Beliefs surrounding sexuality were very tied into notions of belief and movements of the spirit. (For example: Bethel's ministry 'Changed' here: https://changedmovement.com/ or Moral Revolution here: https://www.moralrevolution.com/ or 'Equipped to Love' here: https://www.equippedtolove.com/pastoring-homosexuality) The existence and promotion of these harmful ministries at Bethel was something that I struggled with and this is something I reflect on in Methodological Beginnings Critical Mood.

melodies and harmonies within music are created by different artists, technologies and instruments. With differing styles and sounds coming together creating an assemblage of sonic affects that can help (or hinder) particular experiences of the divine. Their particular arrangement creating different affects that are sensed differently by different bodies and so bring forth different reactions, emotional responses and experiences of spirit. In this way, musical affects can enable more intense or powerful experiences of spirit as well as disabling them as these experiences depend upon the whole constellation of bodies involved in the relations of affect - something I look into further in Part IV: Sensing Spirit.

Whilst I have made a case for the Deleuzian interpretation of affect in the 'Theoretical Beginnings' of my project it is important to point out that the distinction or boundary drawn between affect and emotion has gathered criticism. This distinction has been highlighted as arguably unproductive in the ways that it reifies both affect and emotion (Pile, 2010). In other words, it makes the 'abstractness' of how we encounter and experience affect and emotion too concrete by trying too hard to distinguish them from one another. As it does this, a binary dichotomy is created between the body and the mind where concepts of affect and emotion end up being reduced down to some kind of non-representational physical or biological process that is then followed by a cognitive representation (Bille and Simonsen, 2019). This approach seemingly severs the lived experience from the emotions that it contains rather than recognising how emotions are inseparable and intertwined with bodily impressions and expressions (e.g. Ahmed, 2004; 2010). In a similar way, my thesis recognises how the lived experience of Bethel - whether that be my own experience or that of the people I met there – is inseparable from the emotions, bodily experiences and encounters that flow within and make up what ordinary life is. One way to try and overcome the problem of emotion and affect is to forgo trying to create any type of concrete box or definition of the two. Indeed, several geographers argue for affect and emotion to just be allowed to retain an elusive sense where any distinctions between the two terms remain fluid and vague (e.g. Bille and Simonsen, 2019; Bondi and Davidson, 2011; Edensor, 2012) in their particular empirical contexts (Navaro, 2017).

To reiterate what I mentioned earlier, the broad application of affect within Human Geography has meant that intense differences regarding what affect is and is not frequently arise (see: Hemmings, 2005; also, B Anderson, 2014). This has included the debate on whether affect and emotion are separate, the same or entangled as well as bringing up questions surrounding how

(and to what extent) affect can be transferred or transmitted between and across different bodies (Bille and Simonsen, 2019). In addition to these types of questions and problems many geographers have also shifted to thinking about forms of collective affective life - beyond the point that affect is by definition collective as it emerges from relations (Anderson, 2009). These questions surrounding affect within the discipline also create complications for me when I am trying to write with affect in this thesis. In particular with regards to collective affect given that my experiences at Bethel were often shared even if they felt rather individual. For instance, worship was a reoccurring scene during my time at Bethel. It was one that felt intensely personal, reminding me of particular memories and stirring particular feelings within me. But it was a scene that I shared with many hundreds or even thousands of people. Our voices becoming-with each other as they entwined together in song alongside the band creating a powerful and tangible atmosphere of spirit. The notion of collective affect has meant that many geographers are increasingly turning towards the concept of atmospheres which has created a remarkable shift within the broader NRT literature on affect - changing affect as a noun towards its adjective form: affective (Bille and Simonsen, 2019).

This turn to atmosphere is helpful for my project too (as I will go on to explain further in the next section) in four different yet entangled ways: 1) atmosphere blurs and unsettles boundaries – for instance between affect and emotion; 2) atmosphere is relational and always become-with; 3) atmosphere is inherently spatial; 4) atmosphere is a way of attending to what is happening around us.

Affective Atmospheres

Atmosphere has been used to explore many things within Geography - from how homes are created (Pink and Mackley, 2016) to soundscapes (Paiva, 2019), the urban night (Shaw, 2014), health (Duff, 2016) football (Edensor, 2015), nationalism (Stephens, 2016) and conflict (Fregonese, 2017). Whilst little work within Human Geography is concerned with the affective atmospheres of religion (something that is discussed further in Contextual Beginnings), the work mentioned above does much to increasingly highlight the role of the material (Bille et al., 2015) and more-than-human (Lorimer et al., 2019) in affective encounters with our experiential worlds (Sumartojo and Pink, 2018). The turn to affective atmospheres therefore offers this

project opportunities as I explore the more-than-human, more-than-material, more-than-representational experiential worlds of Bethel.

The first of four specific yet interrelated opportunities that atmosphere presents for my project is how atmosphere blurs and unsettles boundaries, holding them in tension (Anderson, 2009). Not only the boundaries between affect, emotion and sensation (Edensor, 2015) but the boundaries between presence and absence, definite and indefinite, material and immaterial, spiritual and earthly. This allows for the lived experiences, the bodily impressions and expressions of spirit that I am seeking to explore at Bethel not to be severed from emotion. It allows for the embodied, emotive and sensed experiences of spirit to be taken seriously in their fullness. Allowing such experiences to come forward whilst refuting distinctions between what is here and what is absent. Or what is physical and what is spiritual. In this sense, this sits better with my earlier recognition that my use of NRT is not to be anti-representation but I acknowledge the ways through which representation furthers our experience – sending it on, playing with it, deepening, obscuring, multiplying, reducing it etc. Therefore, atmosphere allows for me to understand affect as lived, lively and living. In this sense, atmosphere should not be regarded as some sort of simple linear outcome of encounter (Sumartojo and Pink, 2018) but as a lived affect that different bodies encounter differently and - importantly - with varying degrees of intensity (Duncan et al., 2020).

Building upon this, secondly, atmospheres are relational. If we loop back briefly to my earlier comments on assemblage then we could understand atmosphere as an assemblage – where they do not have essence (as a subject or object) but rather they always become-with others. So atmospheres are always becoming-with relations with bodies, things and environments. They continually form, deform and reform – in relation with a multiplicity of things, bodies, technologies, discourses, feelings, emotions, affects and sensations. So atmosphere is not *in* things nor *of* things but becomes *with* things (Bille and Simonsen, 2019). Atmosphere as becoming-with highlights how atmosphere is dynamic, how it flows and fluxes. This notion reinforces how atmosphere is not a passive background but a 'force field' – a lived affect – with a capacity to affect and be affected (Stewart, 2011: 452). In other words, they are not simply things that just exist, abstractly floating around and enveloping us in particular feelings. But instead they point to an assemblage of specific conditions, relations and encounters that emerge with fleeting degrees of weight between bodies. Atmosphere is therefore useful for this

project in how it points to the multiplicity of the collective rather than the individual. Yet, whilst affective atmospheres may belong to collective situations they can be "felt as intensely personal" (Anderson, 2009: 80) affecting different bodies differently. This is an important point given that my research looks to how experiences in a mega church produce collective spiritual atmospheres, for instance during meetings or conferences, that also result in tangibly personal and individualised spiritual experiences and encounters.

Thirdly, and again building upon the first two opportunities, atmosphere is inherently spatial. Atmospheres are 'placed assemblages' (Shaw, 2014: 13) so they are always becoming-with relations with bodies, things and environments *in space*. This brings the idea of space and place to the forefront in the emergence of atmosphere. The multiplicity of relations that atmospheres become-with points to how fluid and emergent the dimensions of experiencing or sensing a place is (Adey, 2009). This is therefore important for my project given the specificity of the location of Bethel Church in Redding as a particular and significant series of spaces and places. But atmosphere also allows for spiritual and earthly spaces to be held in tension rather than viewed as separate, discrete environments. Given this, atmosphere can be used to explore the different ways through which spaces are affectively experienced, sensed and encountered through the interrelated dynamics of bodies and moments (Bissell, 2010). However, it is important to note that whilst atmospheres emerge through relations in space, they do not *reside* in place (Sumartojo and Pink, 2018). Rather, it is through our ongoing encounters with place that atmospheres both emerge and are made meaningful (Buser, 2013).

Fourthly, atmosphere can be understood as a specific form of attending to what's happening around us or as a particular critical mode of attunement of becoming-with the world in ways that are more-than-representational (B Anderson, 2014). Taking from the first three points, affect – or rather affective atmospheres – create a potential opportunity for my exploration of affective encounters with spirit at Bethel (see Gandy, 2017). For atmosphere allows for different ways of knowing, noticing, relating to and creating the world around us - noting the potential therein (Coleman, 2013; see also Stewart, 2007; Blackman and Venn, 2010). In this sense, atmosphere works within the broader NRT impetus of this project. Yet, it is probably worth quickly noting here, that despite the growing impetus of NRT in geographical explorations of how entangled and interrelated becoming-with the world around us is – discussions surrounding *how* to engage with NRT through empirical examples remains scarce

(Maclaren, 2019). Whilst this is something I go into more detail on in Methodological Beginnings, my thesis echoes the NRT emphasis on everyday practices (Lorimer, 2005; Vannini, 2015b) as well as the emphasis upon felt, affective and embodied knowledges that are made in relation with a whole host of other actors – some of whom are absent in their presence. To illustrate this further and explore how atmosphere (as one of my Theoretical Beginnings) has potential as a more-than-representational lens of engagement with the empirical, I want to briefly turn to Kathleen Stewart's (2007) *Ordinary Affects*.

In her collection of stories, scenes and snapshots, Stewart (2007) notices the affectivity of everyday life through shifting atmospheres or assemblages of 'things that happen'. These vignettes of ordinary happenings are experienced and encountered in ways that are "fractious, multiplicitous, and unpredictable" (p.3). They emerge out of a "tangle of potential connections" (p.4) with others, including Stewart herself. Her work does not ask 'what is the ordinary?' nor does it seek to explain the chains of cause and effect within the ordinary scenes she encounters. Rather, she articulates the way through which the ordinary is felt, encountered, lived, sensed, embodied and atmospheric. In this I find inspiration. For my research also does not ask what the spiritual is nor does it seek to explain it. Instead, it desires to feel, to experience, to encounter. In taking this approach, Stewart acknowledges how she is already embroiled and already positioned within her ordinary – and noticing what is happening, what is becoming and what is unfolding around her. It is a critical mode of attunement or noticing the world as it springs forth. Likewise, I too recognise that I am also embroiled within the atmospheres of my research, the interviews, the meetings and seminars I attended. Atmosphere points to the ways through which the spiritual can be engaged with in the ordinary; through "impulses, sensations, expectations, daydreams, encounters, and habits of relating" (p.2). In this way, using the lens of atmosphere is not about presenting life at Bethel as some sort of totalised system that can be examined from afar but rather allows us to glimpse a 'live surface' (p.4). It is about how life springs forth with spirit at Bethel. As mentioned earlier, this is not about essence, it's not a finished product, a whole knowledge or a completed jigsaw. Rather, it's a circulation of affective atmospheres that are moving and being moved, a flow of things that are happening and events that are becoming-with others. In this sense, atmosphere is useful both with regards to my Theoretical Beginnings as well as my Methodological ones as I discuss later.

Theoretical Beginnings – an overview

In Theoretical Beginnings I have set the scene from which the rest of my thesis emerges; mapping the trails of thought that influenced my thinking about how to theoretically begin positioning my research. So, to summarise: the influence of non-representational theories within Human Geography is big and broad and consisting of a variety of diverse scholarship. However, what brings them together is the general desire to move away from relying solely on representation and towards encompassing a more holistic understanding of how life is experienced with and beyond representations. Whilst critical of an over-reliance upon representation, NRT are not anti-representation. Rather, they ask what representations do, looking to how they unfold and become attached in the vitality of life as it springs forth and becomes-with. I then turned to look at affect as a key concept within NRT. After introducing the importance of Deleuzian interpretations of Spinoza in NRT's arrival at the term affect, I explored how this approach highlights relational thinking. Using the example of assemblage I looked to how affect, as distinct from emotion, enables as well as disables the body's ability to become-with. After discussing some of the critiques and concerns from within the discipline regarding this understanding of affect I then follow Geography's turn away from affect as a noun towards its adjective form - affective - by looking at atmosphere. In my discussion of atmosphere I highlighted four distinct yet interrelating points that make atmosphere a particularly interesting lens of analysis for my project: their blurring of boundaries; their relationality and multiplicity; and their attention to space. Utilising the work of Kathleen Stewart (2007) I then finished my Theoretical Beginnings section by providing a working example of NRT in action where atmosphere is fourthly a critical lens of attunement or a way of noticing things that happen.

It is from this Theoretical Beginning point, that the thesis follows different pathways, entryways and trails of exploring life at Bethel through the more-than-representational potential of atmosphere as a lived affect. For example, in Part II: Atmospheres of Allure I build upon what is here by looking to how atmosphere is relational and practiced. I therefore explore the ways that atmosphere as relations between bodies emerge enabling Bethel to become imagined as a space with particular supernatural potentials. In part III: Spirit Affects I look to the ways that affective everyday life is mediated – with spirit. This part of the thesis therefore attempts to presence the non-representational rhythms of the ordinary through paying attention to the interruptions and disruptions that populate everyday life. In Part IV: Sensing Spirit, I

turn to the ways that affect is thoroughly entangled within sensations as well as looking to the sonic affects of music and laughter. In Endings I also evaluate how researching Bethel meant engaging with the disturbing-captivating affectivity of spiritual atmospheres. My research therefore seeks to contribute to developing the "diverse work that seeks to better cope with our self-evidently more-than-human, more-than-textual, multi-sensual worlds" (Lorimer, 2005: 83) by looking towards how ordinary life at Bethel becomes-with spirit.

In Part I I have so far only really mentioned Bethel quickly and in passing so the next section of this part will remedy that by looking to the actual context wherein my project was based more closely. As I turn in Contextual Beginnings to introduce Bethel in more depth I follow some important lines of thought surrounding spirit and spiritual experiences. After discussing these trails of thought and weaving them in amongst the contemporary history of Bethel's transformation, Beginnings then moves towards the Methodological Beginnings, where I discuss how I actually went about researching Bethel Church.

Contextual Beginnings

Having explored the Theoretical Beginnings of NRT and Affect, I now want to build upon this through the empirical focus or substantive context of my project, which up until this point, I have mentioned only in passing. By this I mean the topic of ordinary spiritual experiences at Bethel Church in Redding California. Therefore, in this part of Beginnings I want to introduce Bethel Church and spirit within their contextual understanding in more detail. Whilst this section is written to provide the setting for introducing Bethel as the case study of my thesis, I also follow trails of thought discussing the topics of embodiment and spirit before continuing on with my introduction to Bethel. As I do, I discuss relevant literature regarding Lived Religion from within Human Geography and the broader social sciences. So as I introduce Bethel in more detail, I will also begin to weave in an understanding as to where this thesis sits within, contributes to and expands upon current work within the geographical subdiscipline of religion. I also introduce areas where this context is built upon throughout the empirical sections of the thesis.

As mentioned in Map, Bethel Church is a non-denominational Christian megachurch that over the past twenty years has transformed from an ordinary, inconspicuous church into the "hub of a global revival movement" (Jones, 2016: n.p.) - subsequently turning its small Northern Californian hometown of Redding into the "unlikely centre of modern Christian culture" (Rancano, 2019: n.p.). Yet, a far cry from the mega church and global revival movement that defines the Bethel of today – Bethel's origins are much simpler. In the early 1950s, Bethel was little more than a small group of families in the Redding area who met up informally with Assemblies of God (AG) pastor Robert Doherty. In 1954 Bethel officially affiliated itself with the AG - the world's largest Pentecostal Christian denomination (Cross and Livingstone, 2005) - and continued to slowly grow under various AG pastors over the next few decades (Lepinski, 2010). By 1984 the church was hosting around 2,000 members each week and so relocated to its present-day main site on College View Road (Peterson, 2017). However, it was not until

Bill Johnson was appointed as the new senior pastor in 1996 that Bethel began to rapidly transition into the global epicentre of modern Christian culture that it is today. So, in this section, I want to specifically look at particular aspects of the journey that Bethel has taken over the past 20 years starting with the appointment of senior pastor Bill Johnson. Then I will go on to discuss the importance of Bethel's decision to leave the AG and become independent. I finish this section by discussing how Bethel is increasingly globalising their beliefs and practices through written and digital media, music and international networks.

Bill Johnson

To understand the impact of Bill Johnson on Bethel, I firstly want to briefly look at before Johnson took the position - when he was a pastor in the nearby town of Weaverville. During his 17 years at Weaverville, Johnson became increasingly influenced by the famous evangelist John Wimber – particularly regarding his teachings on healings and miracles (Clark and Johnson, 2011). Yet it was not till 1994, when Johnson attended the infamous 'Toronto Blessing'[3], that he experienced an intensely personal encounter with or experience of God that he claimed irrevocably changed him (Shuttleworth, 2016). In the year that followed Johnson reported seeing an increase in the personal experiences of spirit, miraculous occurrences and supernatural outpourings within his Weaverville church (Clark and Johnson, 2012). So, when Johnson was offered the position at Bethel church he accepted on the condition that Bethel would only – and permanently – pursue radical supernatural Christianity. Unlike the short-term 'revival fever' that was occurring across the USA in the 1990s, for Johnson, developing a long-term culture of revival that was sustainable and permanent was much more important (Campbell, 1996). This meant creating a culture of sustainable encounters with God's presence – or spirit - where radical, supernatural Christianity becomes a long-term 'naturally supernatural' lifestyle rather than a short term 'revival fever' or hype.

[3] The Toronto Blessing was the name that British newspapers gave to the controversial Christian revival that began in January 1994 at the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship. This revival was characterized by a new wave of spiritual experiences, signs and wonders as well as intense physical and emotional responses. People were seen falling over, screaming, laughing, shaking, and even barking as they were touched by spirit. The revival attracted thousands of international visitors and much criticism from both religious and secular sources.

Johnson's ambitious vision and attitude when taking the position at Bethel in 1996 is widely regarded as pivotal in kick-starting the church's transformation (Johnson, 2006; Shuttleworth, 2016). So, he is important in not only changing the purpose of the church but in creating an environment that continually sought spirit through radical revival. As a result, similar personal transformations and supernatural miracles, signs and wonders started to be reported at Bethel. This created a shift in purpose and increased the emphasis upon spiritual presences and supernatural activity. The changing dynamic was received as highly controversial and caused almost half of the church's members to leave. As a result, Bethel's activities and services had to be significantly reduced (Peterson, 2017). However, even with only half of the congregation remaining, Bill Johnson remained undeterred in his relentless pursuit of radical Christianity through miracles, signs and wonders. Johnson was also important in reorienting Bethel, turning their gaze outwards and networking extensively with other revival-centric churches around the world (Peterson, 2017). This enabled Johnson's teachings surrounding living a naturally supernatural revival lifestyle to become more well-known. Critical within this strategy was the Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry (BSSM). The school was established in 1998 as a three-year ministry training programme designed to equip and train students to live naturally supernatural lifestyles. As mentioned in Map, despite BSSM's humble start the school soon began attracting students from across the world who were eager to experience spirit and learn to operate in the supernatural at Bethel. Indeed, Johnson's determination to pursue his radical, supernatural vision for the church wherein spirit and spiritual experiences were central was key in ultimately attracting more and more like-minded people and the church began to grow.

Spirit

I want to take a moment here to follow a particular pathway away from the story of Bethel's growth and transformation to return back to and conceptualise the term 'spirit'. Generally, spirit has a tendency to conjure up imaginings of ghostly absent-presences (Meyer and Woodthorpe, 2008) or of discarnate entities that allude to the spectral and haunting qualities of space (Bartolini et al., 2019). Yet, within the context of thesis writing, it is probably useful to elaborate further upon what I mean by spirit and spiritual experience rather than leave the term floating in the ethereal imagination. So I want to try and unpick the concept of 'spirit' in the direct context of Bethel as a particular contemporary non-denominational Christian expression. This not only builds upon my Key Concepts in the Map section as it looks further towards how

spirit can be understood in its particular context at Bethel Church but also with regards to the NRT leaning of my thesis. For spirit is often felt or experienced beyond language or in ways that are not easily represented. Yet, as mentioned in Theoretical Beginnings representations can further the experience of spirit. They can send on, play with, deepen, obscure, multiply and reduce as much as they can explain what spirit is. So as I use this section to try and explain and conceptualise what I mean by spirit I also allow for the sense that this remains a processual ongoing of thoughts that return and arise in different ways throughout the thesis more widely. In this way, the elusivity and ambiguity that surrounds spirit is not demystified nor explained away. Rather, this section serves to create a Beginning for later work both in this section on Embodiment where spirit weaves throughout and holds together all aspects of embodiment at Bethel and throughout the thesis more broadly.

I tend to use the term spirit as somewhat of an open to interpretation reference to the presence and 'presencing' of the divine. In this sense, spirit can be either 'Father, Son or Holy Ghost' or the simultaneous Trinity. In this understanding of spirit, spirit is productive, it has active agency, can speak and 'speak back' as well as having the capacity to affect and be affected (Bartolini et al., 2019; Heng, 2020; Pile et al., 2019) – something I will now go on to unpack further.

As I introduced in Map, the term 'spirit' is key within this thesis. Yet, defining spirit is a difficult task. It is challenging because of the ambiguity of its theologies as well as the diverse uses of the word 'spirit' at Bethel and beyond - as well as the elusiveness of spirit as a concept itself. So much so that I feel it is important to say that this is a topic that I have wrestled with writing. It is one that I have consulted with people at Bethel as well as good friends who are active in their faith and theology about – yet one that I have found myself going around in circles trying to make sense of. What do I actually mean when I refer to spirit? Well, I think what I keep coming back to is that I mean two things almost simultaneously. Firstly, Spirit is the Holy Spirit and secondly, spirit is the specific ways through which people can experience the presence of the divine. Spirit is a juxtaposition of both being these things instantaneously as well as retaining important conceptual differences. So how I am going to approach this complicated topic in this section is to firstly acknowledge spirit as a particular being or person known as the Holy Spirit or the Holy Ghost. Then I will conceptualise spirit as the specific experience of God as a divine presence. The section will then go on to explore how the use of

spirit or 'presence' often blurs the boundaries between spirit *as* God and spirit as *experiencing* God's spiritual presence. In this sense, my use of the term spirit reflects the broader context of the changing Christian landscape – as this section will expand on a little later.

So, firstly - looking at Spirit as the Holy Spirit evokes Christian theology surrounding the Trinity – Spirit is the third person within the Godhead of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In Biblical scriptures we can see how Spirit is described as God; He is Jehovah[4]. He is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent and eternal.[5] He sanctifies, regenerates, creates and transforms.[6] Spirit is the distinct person within the Trinity that holds the important role of helping,[7] guiding,[8] instructing,[9] speaking[10] and loving[11] Jesus and believers as well as being their advocate.[12] In this sense, the Holy Spirit does not bring people's attention to the Spirit Himself but to Jesus as the saviour of mankind.[13] The Holy Spirit dwells within and never leaves true believers[14] and so the absence of the Holy Spirit is a mark of unbelief.[15] This essentially means that it is not possible for people to experience God or for believers to be saved by Jesus except through the Holy Spirit. Aside from Spirit as God - Spirit is also described in the Bible as personal and personable – as a person whom believers can have a relationship with - rather than simply some sort of ethereal force. Spirit is therefore understood as the person whom Jesus was conceived by[16] and who Jesus had an ongoing, close relationship with during His life. Indeed, the Bible tells of how the Holy Spirit has emotions, will and intellect.[17] Spirit appeared in the form of a dove when the Father spoke during Jesus' baptism.[18] Spirit is the person that Jesus promised would come to be with the followers after He returns to heaven.[19] Spirit appeared as a fire of tongues on the day of Pentecost giving the followers spiritual gifts such as the ability to speak

[4] See: Acts 5:1–4 and Isaiah 6:8–9 with Acts 28:25; and Jeremiah 31:31–34 with Hebrews 10:15
[5] See: 1 Corinthians 2:10–11; Psalm 139:7; Zechariah 4:6; Hebrews 9:14
[6] Genesis 1:2; John 3:6; 2 Thessalonians 2:13
[7] See: Romans 8:26
[8] See: Luke 4: 1; Romans 8: 14; Acts 8: 29
[9] See: Matthew 10: 19-20; John 16: 13
[10] See: Acts 13:2
[11] See: Romans 15: 30
[12] See: John 14: 16-17
[13] See John16: 8-11
[14] See: 1 Corinthians 6:19- 20
[15] See: Romans 8:9; Jude 1:19
[16] See: Matthew 1: 20; and Luke 1: 35
[17] See: Ephesians 4:30; 1 Corinthians 2:10–14; and 1 Corinthians 12:11
[18] See: Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1: 9-11; and Luke 3: 21-22
[19] See: John 14: 26

unlearnt languages[20] - and it is here, at Pentecost, that we reach a sort of sticking point with regards to understandings of spirit.

I believe it is fairly safe to say that within most Christian expressions the Holy Spirit as a part of the Trinity who acts as the believer's helper, guide, instructor and advocate is accepted. Similarly, within most Christian traditions it is accepted that the Holy Spirit is pivotal in bringing unbelievers to salvation and beginning with Pentecost enabled supernatural abilities for Christ's followers on earth. However, what remains a particularly contentious topic is whether or not those supernatural abilities continued beyond the early church or not. Essentially – have the supernatural abilities and spiritual gifts such as healing, miracles and prophecies that are associated with spirit continued on from the 1st century into the 21st?

Without going too deeply into what has generated deep theological divisions beyond what I could ever fully explain, discuss or even understand (plus it is definitely not that relevant to my work) - the debate on spiritual gifts and supernatural abilities (signs and wonders) between Protestants could crudely be divided into cessationists and non-cessationists (Wallace, 2004). Generally speaking, cessationists believe that supernatural spiritual gifts such as miracles, speaking in tongues, healings and prophecies were examples of spirit being poured onto individuals in the early church in order to authenticate the work of God through the apostles after Jesus returned to Heaven. They served a particular purpose to substantiate and demonstrate God's power and so are no longer needed as Christianity is no longer a 'new' religion that needs 'proving'. For example, what could be considered classical Christianity (e.g. Church of England) tends to be cessationist - whilst they may believe that God can and occasionally may do a miracle, supernaturalism does not make up widely practiced parts of their beliefs. This can be compared to non-cessationist Christian expressions such as Charismatics and Pentecostals for whom signs and wonders *have* continued on and remain an important and necessary part of everyday Christian life and practice.

The radicalisation of the Protestant church, where supernaturalism has become normalised creating somewhat of a 'folk' version of Christianity therefore sits firmly within the non-cessationist camp. I argue that much of what makes this particular branch of Christianity appear to Olson (2017) as 'folk' is their attention to the outworking of spirit. Not necessarily the Holy

[20] See: Acts 2: 1-31

Spirit itself (because Spirit as a person within the Trinity is almost universally accepted by Christians) but rather the outworking and happenings of spirit – the ways through which people feel, sense and experience God's spiritual presence. My use of the term spirit therefore goes beyond a simple reference to the Holy Spirit as a person. Rather, spirit becomes a term that encompasses both *Spirit* (the Holy Spirit) and *spirit* (the particular outpourings - the gifts, signs and miracles – or 'work' of the Holy Spirit) that generate spiritual experiences of God because, as I mentioned earlier, this type of Christianity prioritises the idea of a personal relationship and is extremely experience and feeling-centred.

To try and simplify things, one thought that I had when I was writing this was to continue with the distinction of Spirit and spirit where the capitalised Spirit refers directly to the Holy Spirit as the specific person within the Trinity and spirit is the felt experience of the sacred. Yet, this boundary just felt too abrupt. It seemed to only create a binary division that I did not think would represent the beliefs of the people I met at Bethel nor their practices. For, it does not really resonate with how people spoke about spirit nor how spirit worked and was outworked in practice in their lives. The division was simply too unclear. So, more often than not during my thesis I find myself talking simply about *spirit*. The uncapitalized use of spirit that I utilise speaks to an emphasis upon both the specificity of the Holy Spirit and the more ambiguous outworking of a divine presence or the presencing of a sense of divinity more generally. It is neither wholly one nor the other. In this way, my use of the term spirit begins to move away from exclusively referring to or becoming a representation of the Holy Spirit as a specific member or person of Holy Spirit within the Trinity. Instead, it becomes understood as also incorporating the tangible, affective presence of God. Essentially, if Spirit is specifically the Holy Spirit then spirit incorporates presence – but it can be the presence of any singularity of the Godhead or as the Trinity united – but also the tangible outworking of that presence that is at once knowable and unknowable.

The shift and flow between Spirit and spirit may seem arbitrary but I think it is actually quite an important trail to follow. For, in using spirit to encompass both the Holy Spirit and the experience of the divine (can believers have a Godly experience if not through the Holy Spirit?) my use of the term points to how experiencing spirit at Bethel is about being in a particular yet ambiguous presence of the divine. Yet, this ambiguous presence is felt and encountered in a variety of tangible ways. Spirit connects and communicates particular experiences and feelings

within believer's relationships with God. It is a palpable sensation of something out there that is bigger and broader than what can ever be known or understood. In this sense, spirit speaks to mood, ambience and atmosphere. It is less about the particular person of the Holy Spirit and more about the ambiguous experience of God – and what that experience can do. In other words, my use of spirit does not just refer to the Holy Spirit Himself but to His indeterminate presence or presencing of God from which spiritual encounters and experiences emerge in everyday, ordinary ways. For if the role of the Holy Spirit is to lead people to God or Jesus then the spirit that is experienced by the folks at Bethel becomes an entanglement of Spirit and spirit in divine experience. They are at once the same yet different.

This paradoxical nature of spirit as same yet different is part of its quality. For, spirit cannot be easily or readily pinned down to a simple human definition, understanding, explanation or representation – and surely that is the point of a divine spirit anyway? So in looking back to the NRT question of what representations of spirit can do as they emerge in the vitality of life I argue that my representation of spirit remains open ended and ambiguous in order to align with the open ended and not quite knowable ways that spirit is experienced. For, trying to talk about Spirit and spirit as a theoretical concept is difficult. Explanations like this perhaps do not feel like they particularly enhance our cognitive understanding. They do not tie up the concept of spirit in a neat little bow of comprehension. Rather, this has been a more embodied form of meaning making. It has been a retelling of the sense of spirit as it has developed and evolved within me during my time at Bethel. So it has been somewhat of a glimpse into what spirit tends to mean in practice and in relations even if those meanings and practices are complex and unclear. For as I discussed in Theoretical Beginnings, thinking relationally through more embodied meaning-making points to movement and to the ever-moving sense of becoming-with. Indeed, this sense of movement is retained throughout my thesis as I discuss and represent notions of spirit through examples. As I write through affect, I pay attention to the ways through which spirit is noticed or made noticeable at Bethel. I argue that this is perhaps a better way of understanding spirit – as in motion and as in the motions of life at Bethel. So whilst this section has offered a Contextual Beginning for understanding my use of the term spirit, the subsequent parts of my thesis contradict and further complicate any fixed understanding. This serves as a reminder that my thesis is not a whole knowledge on spirit but rather a peculiar map of connections (Stewart, 2007) to draw attention to the ways that spirit emerges from and attaches itself within the continual motion of relations within life at Bethel.

So - having followed this particular pathway and explored what I mean (or perhaps what I do not mean) by the term spirit I want to now return back to continue along Bethel Church's journey of transformation…

Becoming Non-Denominational

By the mid 2000s, Bethel's pursuit of radical revival under Bill Johnson alongside their increasingly established international network meant that the church was becoming more and more distant from its AG roots. So much so that in 2006 they officially withdrew and established themselves as an independent or non-denominational church (Shuttleworth, 2016). Bill Johnson explained this move saying:

> We feel called to create a network that helps other networks thrive – to be one of many ongoing catalysts in this continuing revival. Our call feels unique enough theologically and practically from the call on the Assemblies of God that this change is appropriate. (Johnson, 2006, cited in: Poloma and Green, 2010: 202).

In their pursuit of independence, Bethel emerges as a space where modern spirituality is being created and so the church is a good case study for exploring that particular gap in the literature as I will go on to discuss. But Bethel's move away from the institutionalisation of the AG also follows a trend that is increasingly transforming the Christian landscape on a 'glocal' scale (Stetzer, 2015). This can be seen in how independent or non-denominational Christianity is gaining members in the US at almost the same rate as the movement away from all religion entirely (HIRR, n.d.). This growth has meant that non-denominational Christianity in the USA is one of the only Christian fractions to not be in decline and the sole fraction to be actively growing faster than the country's overall population growth rate (Christerson and Flory, 2017). This general trend away from institutionalised religion to more personal forms and expressions of spirituality have been documented in the geographical literature (Bartolini et al., 2018; Klingorová and Voitíšek, 2018; Olson et al., 2018). However, detailed work on emerging Christian spiritualities remains distinctly lacking (Williams, 2016) and the phenomena poorly understood – something that my research aims to address.

The increasing popularity of non-denominational churches reflects a wider, more neoliberal shift within Christianity in how they denote both a sense of increased personal freedom and a reduction in state or institutionalised influences. Essentially, this shift favours personal spirituality and spiritual experiences over institutionalised ideas of religion (Finke and Stark, 2005; Taylor, 2016). Non-denominational churches also tend to endorse more neoliberal economic virtues where their networks of believers and attendees also act as consumers. This can be seen predominantly through how non-denominational leaders, like Bethel's Bill Johnson, tend to be prolific writers of spiritual 'self-help' style books and learning materials[21]. Generally, the observation of a neoliberal shift with regards to belief tends to be made in reference to people who engage with spirituality or spiritual practices outside of or in isolation from religion, for instance New Age practices or other non-religious spiritual practices such as meditation or yoga. However, I argue that this shift also affects how people practice religion too.

Looking to Christianity the shift from institutionalised religion to personalised spirituality has been referred to as the radicalisation of the Protestant church as it incorporates modernity (Roeland et al., 2010, in Berkers, 2012). We can see this trend towards personal spirituality through how churches are becoming "geared towards each participant's spiritual experience" (Berkers, 2012: 19) as well as promoting "signs and wonders as a normal part of evangelism and church growth" (Wilkinson, 2009: 376). This type of Christianity with its overt focus upon experiences of the supernatural has generated what Olson (2017: n.p.) refers to as a Christian 'folk religion' rather than what could be considered historic, classical Christianity. This essentially creates new expressions and spaces of Christianity with an extreme feeling-centred focus upon the supernatural and where a believers' personal relationship with the divine is the main impetus for belief. In the particular context of Bethel Church in Redding both Johnson's personal revival at the Toronto Blessing and the miraculous events that followed have emerged within and reinforce Christianity's generational and cultural shift Trinitapoli, 2007)

[21] Bill Johnson has a long list of first and co-authored books. A quick search on Amazon reveals over 100 different books across seven different languages (English, Spanish, German, Arabic, Chinese Trad., Thai and Korean). Other prominent writers at Bethel include Bill Johnson's wife, Beni and their son Bethel's senior pastor Eric Johnson. Also, well represented on the Bethel bookshelves are senior associate leader Kris Vallotton, associate pastor and BSSM dean Dan Farrelly and senior leaders Paul Manwaring and Danny Silk.

Whilst Christianity has had significantly more attention from geographers than other religions (with the notable exception of Islam - for discussion on this see Jackson, 2008; and, Peach, 2002; 2006) more often than not work on Christianity tends to find itself situated within structures of Western nationalism and the ongoing narrative of secularisation in the West (Bartolini; Chris, MacKian and Pile, 2017; Beaumont and Baker, 2011; Taylor, 2016). In this framing, the notion of God being dead in modernity (e.g. Bruce, 2002) has become somewhat of a routine assumption within the social sciences (Wilford, 2009) and is frequently used to explain a decline of people identifying as religious (e.g. Bartolini, Chris, MacKian and Pile, 2017). Yet, this tendency neglects the many nuances of Christianity; a religion that makes up around one-third of the world's population (Hackett and McClendon, 2017) and is practised across a variety of diverse sociocultural contexts. This means that little is known about the growing social phenomenon of shifting Christian practices at places like Bethel and the relations between these 'other worldly' experiences – the sensing of 'signs and miracles' - and how the experience of spirit is transforming the Christian landscape (echoing a wider marginalisation of Charismatic Christianity in Geography, Williams, 2016). Therefore, my thesis sits within and responds to the gap in geographical knowledge as I go on to explore spaces where new spiritual expressions are created that blur the boundaries between the sacred and the secular. In essence, rather than assuming that modernity is erasing or reducing religion, this research follows Wilford's argument that religion offers modern life a "plausible and relevant enchantment" (2009: 335) because "religion can offer something that modernity cannot: that is, spirit" (Bartolini, Chris, MacKian and Pile, 2017: 7).

Contextual Beginnings has so far highlighted how Bill Johnson's drive towards revival created a culture of sustained spiritual experiences and encounters at Bethel and how this became so pivotal within the workings of the church that they left the AG. Yet, what is also key within this is how the focus on spiritual experiences throws bodies right into the centre of the framework. Given this, I want to just take a moment for another slight detour and look into this further by exploring embodiment.

Embodiment

Geographer's have long highlighted that the body plays an integral part in experience and experiential knowledge (Everett, 2008; Laws, 1997; Van Duppen and Spierings, 2013). However, this is especially important given Bethel's view of the entanglement of spirit and

body where people are transformed by and *literally* embody spirit in everyday ways (i.e. through the practicing of supernatural Christianity). Looking into this a little further therefore opens up an opportunity for me to utilise my thesis to explore embodiment beyond the body by engaging with the more-than-body notion of 'spirit within'. Whilst I will return to the core concept of 'spirit within' throughout the examples and stories that my thesis holds, this phrase essentially refers to the particular lived experience of spirit as permeating and diffusing within every aspect of day-to-day life. It is, for example, about spirit within believers, spirit within churches, spirit within circumstances, spirit within seasons, and spirit within space. It is less about living a religious life of rules and doctrine and more of a specific spirit-filled orientation to being in and being of the world around. Because of this orientation, everyday experiences at Bethel tend to emerge through the lens of spirit, and the spirit within.

Following this particular pathway away for a moment is important as it enables me to situate my thesis in the broader Contextual Beginning of the 'poetics' of embodied religious life (Kong, 2001; 2010) - also referred to as 'lived' religion (Maddrell and Scriven, 2016) – one of the core gaps in the literature on religion. To briefly expand, lived religion refers to the "social, material, imaginative and emotional experiences associated with the religious experience" (Saunders, 2013: 786) and highlights the bodies, im/materialities, places, encounters and experiences of religion (Ammerman, 2016) as well as acknowledging that religion is sensed across many registers of emotion and affect (Holloway, 2003; 2013). For as Dewsbury and Cloke (2009) argue, whilst the embodied poetics of the religious life are "often seriously underplayed" (p.695) this framework offers a worthwhile avenue to further "illuminate the notion of being in the world" (p.696). This is especially important for my thesis given the ways through which the embodied experiences or poetics of spirit worked into the ways through which the people I spoke to sensed and made sense of the world at Bethel and beyond. Given this, I think a brief detour to unpick some of the key aspects within Geography's understanding of religious embodiment is useful.

Looking to embodiment is also important given how it builds upon the notion that NRT is a move away from or beyond simply an analysis of representations of spirit and towards more embodied modes of meaning-making where experiential knowledges, movements, practices and performances of spirit at Bethel are important. Therefore, looking to embodiment not only offers the reader some further contextual support for the thesis as a whole but also links to my

Theoretical Beginnings as I explore atmospheres of embodied spiritual experience – as well as my Methodological Beginnings as I go on to discuss how these embodied experiences can be researched. In addition to this, my exploration of religious embodiment also highlights the specific gap within the geographies of religion literature within which my research addresses, works within and challenges.

In the literature there are 3 main routes that Geographers tend to take (either individually or in combination) when they talk about lived religious embodiment which I have crudely categorised as: Being, Doing, and Sensing. Within this generalisation, 'Being' emphasises identity politics and power relations; 'Doing' looks to performativity and embodied practices; and 'Sensing' is the more-than-representational, multi-sensuous aspects of lived religion. In the following few paragraphs I investigate each of these routes and discuss how by applying the later discussed concept of 'spirit within' we can think through NRT and stretch current understandings of affective life at Bethel. In doing this, I play with the idea of a new route or direction – Wonder. Where wonder emphasises the entangled role of spirit within in coproducing concepts surrounding the body and embodied experiences, practices and sensations.

Wonder, as the fourth - experimental but important - direction of embodiment is, as I go on to argue, actually less of an individual or independent direction or route to embodiment and much more like the shuttle of the weave – tying all forms of embodied experience together through relations with spirit. Looking to wonder as an experimental mode through which to explore embodied, affective life at Bethel is therefore important within the broader Theoretical Beginnings of my project. For, wonder explicitly highlights the relational thinking of NRT as it pays attention to how being-in, being-of and becoming-with relations with spirit occurs and unfolds in ordinary life at Bethel. The turn to wonder therefore allows me to look to how the body and embodied experiences of radical, supernatural Christianity at Bethel are stretched out of their habits and revealed by what exceeds them – the affective, more-than-representational, more-than-human potential of spirit. In other words, I include the mode of wonder for its specific ability to affectively open up the body and embodied experience to the realm of possibility. Wonder enables me to move away from asking what spirit is - to asking what can bodies at Bethel do through and in relation with spirit. And so wonder enables me to explore spirit further by looking to how people can become-with spirit at Bethel. Wonder therefore acts

as a means that is potentially well suited to explore the incomprehensibility of the non-representational aspects of supernatural religious life.

Before I look more specifically towards wonder I want to offer a brief overview of geographical work on embodiment that follows the general directions of being, doing and sensing. So, looking firstly to 'being' as how religious identities are re/produced (Lester, 2005) and negotiated (Bartkowski, 2005) has caused questions of identity, representation and otherness to be investigated by geographers in vast and diverse contexts. For instance, studies have ranged from national and ethnic identity (Brace et al., 2006; Jenkins, 2003; Palmer, 2002; Pope, 2001; Raivo, 2002) to segregation and belonging (Dunn, 2004; Naylor and Ryan, 2002; Peach, 2002). From representations of religious bodies (Aune, 2015) to the tensions between religious identity and sexuality (Valentine and Waite, 2012) and the particular meanings behind religious identities (Olson et al., 2013). Whilst feminist geographers have highlighted the importance of intersectionality in order to avoid homogenising configurations of religious people (e.g. Aune et al., 2008; Fahlar and Nagel, 2005; Olson et al., 2013; Pena, 2011), in much of the literature - especially on Islam - we continue to find religion being conflated with race and ethnicity (Hopkins, 2019; Jackson, 2008).

The explicit encouragement of the "yielding of self to God" (Wacholtz and Pearce, 2010: 209) within Christianity generates a sense of self that results "in the 'birth' of a reconstituted, sanctified self" (Elisha, 2008: 59). In other words, for many Christians being 'born again' is a declaration of a change in self that signifies a movement away from being a child of the world towards being a child of God who is saved, filled with spirit and in the process, reborn. This yielding of self to God, becoming filled with the spirit and becoming reborn, presents the idea that Christian identity is co-constituted within the dynamics between self and spirit. Essentially, in the pursuit of a personal spiritual relationship with the divine, a new self can emerge. Building upon this, I want to take a moment to acknowledge how Christian identities at Bethel are not something that one just has nor are they things that are just performed. Rather, identity is a response to spirit. Mitch Rose (2010: 508) explains how "identity is something primordially elicited, its origin residing in demands, problems and imperatives beckoning from outside the subject, calling us into diverse modalities of being." For the Christians I met at Bethel interactions with spirit guided, beckoned and shaped their identities, calling them into diverse

– yet unmistakably Bethel – ways of being. This is something I develop as I talk about the technologies of allure that Bethel utilises in Part II: Atmospheres of Allure.

Another way of thinking about this is if identity emerges out of an assemblage of affects, emotions, sensations, discourses and materialities then the Bethel Christian identity emerges as a response to that assemblage - in ways that also incorporate spirit. As I go on to explore in more depth in Parts II, III and IV, the ways through which spirit becomes entangled within such assemblages and atmospheres means that at Bethel, if identity emerges in response to an assemblage of actors, spirit is without a doubt in there too. So, throughout this thesis, the embodied sense of 'being' a Christian at Bethel cannot be thought of without acknowledging the important role of spirit in enabling one to be. Given this, my thesis sees the embodied 'being' at Bethel as more-than-representational (Anderson and Harrison, 2010) not only insofar as it takes into consideration the emotions, sensations and im/materialities that are encountered, negotiated, responded to and ultimately, embodied – but also in the specific modalities through which these relations are actualised. Considering embodied notions of 'being' through identity in this way, reinforces one of the key points of this thesis in that it takes spirit seriously in the collaboration of the more-than-human Christian experience at Bethel.

Doing is the second route that geographers of religion tend to take when talking about bodies. In a similar way to how many geographers have looked to identity politics and power relations within religious life in various different contexts so too have geographers looked to the role of the body within the practices and performances of religion. Much work on the body following this route has centred on religious dress and diet (e.g. Bartkowski and Read, 2003; Davidman, 2014; Gokariksel, 2009; Lamont and Molnar, 2002) or looked towards practices of rule following and ritual (e.g. Avishai, 2008; Bailey et al., 2007; Holloway, 2003). Attention has also been given to what the religious body does through movement practices such as pilgrimage (Maddrell and Scriven, 2016) as well as everyday journeys and commutes (Wigley, 2017).

For Holloway (2003), the body acts as both a key producer and a site of sacred space. Yet, he argues that locating the body within the realms of performativity can be limiting. This is mostly due to the historical influence of scholars such as Judith Butler (1990; 1993) that has somewhat cemented an understanding of performativity within a repetition of regulatory norms. We can see this in much of the literature on religious embodiment where the body is left to repeat or

imitate a lineage of motions, acts, rituals, movements and so on leaving little room for the creative becomings that emerge from encounters as I discussed above in the context of affect and potential. Following this line of argument, Dewsbury (2000) argues that it is important to recognise that performativity can be about changing rather than staying the same. So this means that it is about encounters with the not-yet-known within the earthiness of our daily activities in everyday life. For my thesis, performative encounters are important but those encounters are a creative entanglement that focus on movement and change rather than the repetition of regulatory norms. But, in a similar way to how 'being' is impacted by the notion of spirit within – so is doing. We can see this within the geographical potential of performativity as it can be stretched as people at Bethel encounter creative moments of becoming that are of this world but also contain a tangible sense of "vivid otherworldliness" (Finke and Stark, 2005: 1). My thesis is brimming with such moments - where spirit and earth meet and the human and non-human 'do' religion together as they become together. For example in Part III: Spirit Affects I offer several such moments.

Building upon the directions of being religious and doing religion comes the third general direction within the geographies of religion: sensing. Looking to how religion is sensed acknowledges, as Holloway (2013) highlights the ways through which religion and belief are enacted across many registers of emotion and affect. Published work in this area includes looking at spiritual retreats (Perriam, 2015), worship (Cooper, 2012, in Williams, 2016; Dewsbury and Cloke, 2009), spirit absent-presences (Williams, 2016) and veiling practices (Mansson McGinty, 2014). Despite, the growing emphasis of affect within Geography more broadly, the emotive and affective aspects of religion often remain overlooked by many geographers of religion (Finlayson, 2012) and so as I work from affect in my research I address a gap in the literature surrounding religious life. Yet what should definitely be noted here is that, as Anderson's (2006) work on hope demonstrates, feelings are generated by both affect and emotion but also through sensory experiences. For, "if we are emotional, affective beings then these forces are not generated in isolation but within a body which is always in place and sensing" (Jones and Fairclough, 2016: 103). The centrality of the body in work on affect is therefore abundantly clear. Geographers working on this route towards exploring religious life have looked to the importance of music (Lindenbaum, 2012), how sensing spirits evokes memory (Bartolini, Chris, MacKian and Pile., 2017), how churches utilise visual and auditory interludes (Connell, 2005) and the somatic experiences of worship (Williams, 2016). As Wynn

(2012) notes, belief is enfolded within sensory experiences. Indeed, MacKian (2012) argues that sensations are a fundamental part of making belief real. The importance of sensory experiences and sensations within lived religion is prominent in all of the parts of my thesis but is explored most explicitly in Part IV: Sensing Spirit.

As I explore the relations between spirit and believers at Bethel throughout my thesis I include the somatic ways that spirit is experienced and acknowledge how the sensing body becomes-with relations with other bodies and things. Materiality is therefore considered as an important theme in the route of 'sensing'. For example, in a similar way to how somatic experiences can be explored through materiality (Howes, 2006; Vannini et al., 2010) Meyer (2010) notes how materiality is really important in understanding spirituality. Building upon this, the often-assumed ontological rift where, "what lies below (the earth) belongs to the physical world whereas what arches above (the sky) is sublimated to thought" (Ingold, 2006: 17), can be overcome if the physical is understood as interface. Here, interface indicates the "instability of ontological categories because it points towards movement" (Whitehead, 2016: 530). In other words, rather than there being a divide between the earthly material and the otherworldly immaterial, there is actually an intimate and dynamic relationship between the two (MacKian, 2012). But this relationship is not static but as interface it moves, it changes, it becomes. For example, looking to Santo's (2013: 46) work on materiality, when things become infused with supernatural dynamism things are not simply mere matter but "technologies of ontological transformation." We can see this in the infamous gold dust phenomena at Bethel called the Glory Cloud[22] as well as in numerous other documented occurrences where materialities such as divine gold dust, gemstones and feathers have miraculously appeared or landed upon believers' bodies (Poloma, 2003). These material manifestations of spirit allow geographers to reconsider how spirit can be sensed through the sensing of materiality but where materiality is never simply or only matter. This is something I talk about in a little more detail in Part III: Spirit Affects.

As I have discussed work within the routes or pathways of religious embodiment within Geography I have identified ways through which the concept of spirit enables things, experiences, practices and identities to work in ways that are beyond the body or beyond

[22] There are lots of videos online of the Glory Cloud. For instance: <https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=glory+cloud+bethel

human. This allows the body to be understood as what Whitehead (2016: 531) calls a tool of devotion or what Elisha (2017: 81) describes as a technology of enchantment. In other words, the embodied experience of lived religion at Bethel emerges in response to an assemblage or atmosphere within which spirit is key. This therefore pushes the idea of embodiment beyond the human as bodies and embodied experiences and encounters are coproduced with spirit and spiritual interactions. Yet, the ways in which the physicality of the body or embodied experience go beyond the material due to an intimate relationship with spirit as interface remains virtually unexplored by geographers. So it is here that I begin to experiment with a fourth route towards embodiment: Wonder.

Wonder as an experimental route towards the specific modes of embodied Christian life at Bethel is interesting. For, wonder can be thought of as a particular feeling or set of emotions that are expressed and felt. But wonder can also mean to ponder, to think, to question or to reflect. Wonder can also mean to marvel, to be awed or filled with amazement or admiration. So wonder can convey passions and emotions as it can also express doubts, create questions and emerge through curiosity. In the context of Bethel, wonder can also refer to wonder in the noun form where wonder is a supernatural sign or wonder - a miraculous happening that Bethel is so well known for. Wonder is therefore both ambiguous and specific. It is both knowable and unknowable in its ability to move us, stir us or hold us transfixed. Wonder makes us feel, it makes us think and question. Wonder is sensed but it is also a way of making sense or embracing the nonsensical. In this thesis, wonder as a route towards embodiment is not necessarily just any singular one or particular combination of these fluid and dynamic understandings of wonder. Rather, within my thesis what is important is that wonder highlights embodied spirit relations. It is about the addition of spirit as an active agent within the embodied experience at Bethel. My use of wonder as an experimental fourth route to embodiment therefore follows Ahmed (2004) who notes how wonder opens up the world around us. So the route of wonder is about opening up potential embodied experiences at Bethel as I walk towards and engage with the notion of an infinite constellation of affective assemblages that emerge in relation with spirit.

As a route towards understanding the embodied experience at Bethel, wonder as an opening up of potentialities is an important tool in how it enables me to wonder what the body can do. Not only asking what the body can do when it is in and of itself but when the body comes into

contact and becomes-with spirit. This is something that I have already touched upon and alluded to as I have discussed being, doing and sensing in turn. It is that bit extra or that something more or something else that happens when the body becomes-with relations with spirit. In this context, wonder therefore allows me to reflect upon the Christian belief that spirit not only *literally* inhabits the body of the born-again believer (Elisha, 2008) but also allows the body to exude something special to anyone who may encounter it (Olson et al., 2013: 1427). So wonder, attends to the possibilities and potentialities of the being, doing and sensing body when it inhabits and exudes spirit. This is particularly important for Christians like those at Bethel given that, as Elisha (2017: 79) explains, believers are encouraged to be fully receptive to "the agency of the Holy Spirit working through their bodies." Essentially, wonder is what I have termed the route wherein this idea of spirit working within and through believers' bodies emerges. Wonder is therefore important in underlining the importance of spirit in experiencing everyday life at Bethel in ways that are recognisable or distinct albeit ambiguous and ethereal. So through the route wonder the specificity of the embodied Christian experience in relation with spirit is highlighted.

Williams (2016) calls for geographers to take this agency of spirit working through bodies and coproducing religious life seriously - yet few geographers have done so. Indeed, as MacKian (2012: 51) reflects, giving spirits agency is often absent in most academic discussions yet is central to understanding the lived experiences of belief. The recognition of spirit agency is not about whether I or the reader believes in spirits nor in the agency of those spirits. Rather, this is about the people I met at Bethel noticing, feeling or encountering spirit agency everywhere. Spirit agency, being touched by the spirit, developing connections and forging relationships with the spirit were very important in the everyday landscapes of being a Christian at Bethel. For instance, in Part III: Spirit Affects I highlight several examples where spirit agency is prominent in everyday, ordinary life from finding a parking space to hearing birdsong. This awareness of spirit acts as somewhat of an extrasensory perception, or perhaps a highly cultivated perception, where individuals understand the world in radically different ways. For, as Sara MacKian (2012) explains, when spirits erupt into the earthly world they collapse the established boundaries and require individuals to renegotiate their sense of reality. This can also be seen throughout my thesis where I build into this alternative ontology or way of making and making sense of the world where believers have experiences that leave tangible impressions of something infinitely intangible (Mason, 2010, in MacKian, 2012). In this sense,

the ability to wonder what this renegotiated and alternative reality feels like is key within the pages of this thesis. Indeed, in Part V: Endings, I reflect further on the alternative, spirit-infused sense of ordinary at Bethel.

Thinking about wonder in all its ambiguity and uncertainness, in its potential for alternatives and difference, shows how a life entangled with and coproduced by spirit is other, ambiguous and uncertain. Perhaps here, wonder should not be considered a fourth route paving its own way to embodiment but a trail that weaves in amongst the being, doing and sensing. In this way, wonder is a surplus. Wonder is the excess that spirit adds. As I mentioned earlier, it is that extra bit that opens up as we become-with relations with spirit. So, wonder is not an independent route pulling away from other perhaps more recognisable modes of embodiment. Rather, wondering is a trail that winds within, in-between and alongside. It pulls together and binds concepts of being, doing and sensing. Wonder is the thread that weaves together all forms of embodied experience through its relations with spirit. In doing so, wonder allows for us to both imagine and experience an alternative world of spirit. This idea of Bethel creating an alternative world filled with spirit is something I circle away from in different ways throughout my thesis.

Essentially what I am arguing is that I arrive at wonder as the particular way that being, doing and sensing bodies become-with spirit. How bodies act and what bodies can do in concert with spirit. It is therefore the opening up of the body, the pushing of the body beyond itself through its relationship with spirit. In practical terms, the people I spoke to at Bethel did not recognise themselves as just Christians following a series of particular church traditions but believers who had been saved by the spirit and radically changed and transformed through continued and sustained relations with Him. Through these relations with spirit at Bethel, the ways that they experienced everyday life changed. For many of the people I spoke to, relations with sprit opened up their abilities to do miraculous things like healing the sick or prophesying a future. It could be the cultivated perception that enables people to hear God's voice, to have supernatural visions and dreams, to communicate with spiritual beings and sense their presence. Spirit relations at Bethel alter not only people's perceptions but people's personalities, desires and motivations. Wonder is therefore a nod towards noticing how embodied experience at Bethel is specifically entangled within relations with spirit. Where spirit is a key player in creating and cocreating all the flowing moments and momentums of

life. Thus, wonder weaves together all aspects of embodiment – the ways that bodies be, do and sense – with spirit.

What I have tried to present here, is the addition of a fourth pathway towards embodiment with specific reference to Bethel. This not only serves to highlight the ways that the body is important within NRT but also builds upon Theoretical Beginnings where NRT should adapt to the particular case study, allowing space for case-specific creativity and experimentation. Thus in this thesis by following the pathway of wonder, the body and the embodied experience of radical, supernatural Christianity at Bethel is both pushed and pulled out of its habits, ungrounded by the experience of its inability to comprehend, and so revealed by what exceeds it; an affective, more-than-representational, more-than-human potential. In other words, spirit creates a worldview that colours the world in a particular light and enables particular experiences to be had, identities to emerge and enables the embodied experience at Bethel to be revealed. But having taken a slight detour away from the transformation of Bethel to engage with the geographies of religious embodiment I want to now turn back to continue following Bethel's transformation story…

Globalising Revival

After Bethel severed denominational ties with the AG and became independent they were able to have much more freedom with regards to church governance. This meant that Bethel were able to reinstate the so called 'lost roles' of prophets and apostles within the church's leadership (Shuttleworth, 2016). To understand the significance of this, we can again turn to the idea of Bethel as incorporating a non-cessationist belief surrounding the office or role of prophets and apostles in the church. In a similar way to how some Christians believe that supernatural spiritual gifts were designed for and so ended with the early church many Christians also believe that apostles and prophets held a particular role only required in the early church. So quite like how spiritual gifts and supernatural Christianity is a controversial topic within Christianity more broadly, so too is the question of whether or not apostles and prophets are limited to the history of the Biblical church. However, it must be noted that just because a denomination or church is non-cessationist regarding spiritual gifts it does not mean that they are with the offices of the church too. The AG, for example, does believe in supernatural ministry but when it comes to reinstating modern day prophets and apostles to the church office

they deem it as an "excessive or misplaced" theology that is of "grave concern" (AG, 2001: 11). However, Bill Johnson is amongst those who believe that "we are in an hour where God is restoring the apostle" (Johnson cited in Ahn, 2019: 3). So stepping away from the AG allowed Bethel a sense of freedom to change their structures of church governance. Practically speaking, this meant Bill Johnson's role at Bethel evolved from senior pastor of the local church in Redding (which he handed down to his son, Eric Johnson) to becoming an apostle working across the church's vast international network: *Global Legacy* (Shuttleworth, 2016).

Global Legacy consists of a network of like-minded churches, individuals and organisations that all unite around similar beliefs. Generally speaking, this often works around radical, supernatural Christianity and a desire for more revival. Bill Johnson as an apostle within this influential Christian network has been key within Bethel's transformation. For, unlike the AG, Global Legacy is designed to be a non-hierarchical, international horizontal network consisting of revival leaders, pastors and members who want alignment with Bill Johnson and Bethel (Christerson and Flory, 2017). Apostles, prophets, healers and other revival leaders across the network often travel to visit other congregations or speak at conferences within the network; building global ties based upon ideas of spreading revival rather than any particular church traditions. This can be seen in Johnson's relationships with Heidi Baker (Iris Ministries), Randy Clark (Global Awakening) and John and Carol Arnott (Catch the Fire, Toronto Blessing) amongst others often frequenting Bethel or inviting Johnson to speak at their ministry (Shuttleworth, 2016). Through networking with other prominent revival figures across the globe, the prominence and 'celebrity' of Bethel as an exceptional space of radical supernatural Christianity and miraculous spirit experiences have become more well known. Essentially leaving the AG in order to pursue these global connections was a pivotal move - allowing Bethel to continue to grow both in size and in worldwide influence.

In the last 15 years, Bethel have really developed their 'glocal' strategy; combining their local church base in Redding with their global network's reach. This two-fold approach has allowed Bethel to present a globalised sense of church universal (Brown, 2011). This means that rather than identifying themselves as any particular denomination (e.g. Pentecostals / Charismatics) they identify simply as 'Christians' albeit Christians who are striving to live naturally supernatural, revival lifestyles with spirit. In this sense, Bethel presents the kind of imaginary that different church traditions are unimportant (or perhaps too divisive) because at Bethel they

are more interested in being people who just love God and want to be in His presence – and that is all that matters. This particular style of Christianity is interesting because it not only speaks to spaces where modern spiritualities are created and to how denominations and church traditions are erased, created or become blended and hybridised but to how modern practices such as globalisation are being utilised. In this way, the boundaries between the secular and the spiritual become modernised as Bethel spreads their message. For Bethel is greatly concerned with globalising their local church's particular spiritual beliefs and supernatural practices – rather than just building up their congregation in Redding. So essentially, Bethel is less about proselytising to unbelievers and more about disrupting and transforming society (Christerson and Flory, 2019) through globalising the ways through which Christianity is practiced across the globe. This is mainly done through international networking – creating almost a super-mega church that stretches across nations and continents – but also through their other outlets. This includes BSSM as well as their written and digital media; Bethel leaders tend to be prolific authors and there is a wealth of online teaching and learning materials available for purchase in the Bethel Store. Their international presence is also greatly increased through the GRAMMY nominated influence of Bethel Music and the many international conferences that Bethel hosts that concomitantly serve believers as concerts for Bethel Music and platforms for the teachings of Bethel's celebrity leaders.

Bethel's aspiration for creating a globalised church universal united by belief rather than specific doctrine builds into Bethel's desire for revival. Revival ultimately is about challenging and transforming the status quo – or in Bethel's words "the personal, regional, and global expansion of God's Kingdom through His manifest presence" (Bethel, 2019: n.p.). In other words, revival is more than just radical supernatural Christianity. Rather, revival is a socio-spiritual movement with widespread consequences – where revivalists are akin to revival activists fighting for the Kingdom of God to become established upon earth through more and more people and institutions becoming 'awake' and responsive to the ultimate 'truth' of God. Therefore, we could understand the ultimate goal for Bethel being less about becoming a really famous church and much more about creating a network for large scale, sustainable revival or widespread, globalised change but – quite like the church itself - this change first begins on a localised individual level. In other words, before Christians can change the world, they must themselves first become changed. For believers at Bethel, this personal transformation or revival comes primarily through experiences of spirit.

Through exploring Bethel's transformation over the past twenty years, this section of Beginnings frames the contextual setting for the thesis as within the broader emerging influence of spirituality as a force that is changing and challenging the nature of 'doing' church and experiencing the divine on a glocal scale (Sherwood, 2016). Despite Bethel being a space where modern spiritualities are created and presenting as a growing social phenomenon (Christerson and Flory, 2017) that signifies both a generational and cultural shift in Christian practices (Trinitapoli, 2007) little is known about experiencing spirit in everyday, ordinary life at Bethel – especially in the non-denominational context. Aside from important events such as the appointment of Bill Johnson, leaving the AG and growing through their international apostolic network I argue that the biggest reason that Bethel has become so influential is because of the ways through which they facilitate ordinary people's lives to become entangled with personal notions and experiences of spirit across the glocal network. This is something I circle away from and build upon, following different pathways of thought in Parts II, III and IV before reflecting upon in Part V. For instance, in Part II: Atmospheres of Allure I discuss how the influence of Bethel as a globalised way of doing Christianity builds into the technologies of allure that Bethel utilises to further reinforce their network. Similarly, in Part III: Spirit Affects reflects how it was clear at Bethel that spending time in the presence and so having more encounters and experiences is key to making supernatural life more ordinary and every day at Bethel. In Part IV: Sensing Spirit I turn to some of the particular practices that Bethel employs in making the supernatural a natural part of life. Finally in Endings I reflect upon some of the repercussions of being in and becoming with the Bethel machine.

Contextual Beginnings: An Overview

In this section of Beginnings I have introduced Bethel Church in more detail and through telling the story of their transformation over the past few decades I have set the scene for the thesis, allowing the reader further insight into the phenomena that Bethel Church have grown into. So, to briefly summarise the Contextual Beginnings of my thesis: Bill Johnson has been so important in the transformation of Bethel. From his enthusiasm for the supernatural and his pursuit of outward looking strategies of growth, his role at Bethel has done much to increase not only the celebrity of Bethel but Johnson's own celebrity as a controversial Apostle. After introducing Bill Johnson's role I explored the importance of Bethel's move away from the AG

to become independent or non-denominational. Leaving the AG enabled the church much more freedom to change things in terms of belief and governance and ultimately enabled them to network more freely with other churches and Christian organisations along the basis of belief and revival rather than specific church tradition or affiliation. This move away from the AG and towards globalised networks, specifically through the expansion of Global Legacy built networks around Bethel making it into a sort of super megachurch that surpasses the boundaries of country and continent.

Contextual Beginnings also followed two important tangents: Spirit and Embodiment. In the first I looked again to the term spirit as I set out to try and position the usage of the term throughout the thesis. By offering an explanation for the difference between the uncapitalized spirit (as divine presence/experience of God) and the capitalised Spirit (as Holy Spirit the person) I argue that the juxtaposition of spirit as at once more than one thing, as both the experience of God and God Himself, is something that should be embraced. For spirit is a complex term and so holds complex and contradictory meanings for different people. Therefore, to reflect this embrace of the ambiguity and paradoxical nature of spirit – as something not easily or readily defined, explained or understood – I simply use *spirit* as a fluid representation that nods towards both the specificity of the Holy Spirit and the more ambiguous outworking of sensing a divine presence. Following this, in the second tangent, I looked through the lens of embodiment to explore how geographers have approached religious life through the body. Having identified the embodied modes of being, doing and sensing, I run through some of the important literature, setting my project within the broader geographical context of Lived Religion. In this section I also introduced wonder – not as an independent fourth mode or direction to embodiment but as the shuttle of the weave - that pulls being, doing and sensing together with spirit. I argue that this is an important way of thinking about embodiment at Bethel as it highlights the importance of being-in, being-of and becoming with relations with spirit in ordinary life and so enables me to move away from the question of what spirit is - to what can spirit do. By approaching questions of embodiment in this way, I allow for how wonder can affectively open up the body and embodied experience by stretching notions of possibility in such a way that aligns with Bethel's impetus towards the opening of potential supernatural lifestyles. Essentially, I have enabled an understanding of corporeality and bodily experiential knowledge that incorporates the importance of relations with spirit for people at Bethel.

The beginning that this section has offered as I have looked towards Bethel as the location for my immersive ethnographic exploration into the embodied experience of spirit is one that has acknowledged the history of Bethel church as well as the important concepts of spirit and spiritual experience. In the next section of Part I: Beginnings I turn to my Methodological Beginnings where I explore some of the questions that have risen in this section. For example, how can spirit as an ambiguous and ethereal force that is both knowable and unknowable yet imperative in the everyday experience at Bethel be researched?

Methodological Beginnings

Part I: Beginnings has so far provided an outline of my key concepts NRT and Affect in Theoretical Beginnings - as well as an overview of Bethel and understandings of spirit and embodiment within the geographies of lived religion in Contextual Beginnings. Yet, what I have yet to really cover is how I actually went about researching the everyday embodied experiences of spirit through the lens of affect and NRT at Bethel. Indeed, many questions that emerged throughout both my Theoretical and Contextual Beginnings will be addressed in this section - from practical and empirical applications of NRT and affect to how to even begin researching the ethereal topic of spirit.

In Methodological Beginnings, I discuss the conceptualisation and implementation of my ethnographic fieldwork as I threw myself into everyday Bethel life in Redding. I also look to how I immersed myself in Bethel's literature, digital resources and music both in the field and during my writing up process when I was back home. This part of Beginnings fluctuates between the theoretical paradigm within which my methodological strategy sits and how the strategy was employed practically - both within the field at Bethel and when I came back home. This section therefore builds upon what I introduced in Theoretical Beginnings, where I mention how despite there being a growing number of geographers engaged with NRT there is little discussion surrounding *how* to actually engage with them through empirical examples. Given this, in this section on my Methodological Beginnings I focus upon how NRT can be used as a tool of research that I build upon throughout this thesis. With an attention to affect as a critical mode through which I both approached the research in Redding as well as in writing this thesis, Methodological Beginnings also offers an introduction of sorts to my fieldwork approach. It looks to NRT in action as my ethnographic methodological tool as well as highlighting my own positionality as 'in-between' and exploring the particular critical mood that my thesis adopts. I also use this section to focus on what I did practically in the field with my ethnography as well as the analysis and writing up styles that I employed.

Non-Representational Theories in Action

As I have covered in earlier sections of Beginnings, my research is interested in exploring the lived experience of spirit at Bethel through the lens of NRT and affect. Yet, this brings up many questions surrounding how exactly to do this. How do I utilise NRT in order to research something that I'm not entirely sure I will even encounter during my fieldwork? Indeed, whilst this topic does raise certain difficulties, in my work I follow Sara MacKian's (2012) advice that when looking to explore spirit it is important to listen to the lived experiences of believers in addition to my own immersive ethnographic endeavours at Bethel. This advice is offered as an attempt to avoid the artificial divide created between academic definitions of spirituality and religion and real-life experiences. This as Corrywright (2001) reminds us, is about looking to how it is actually experienced rather than trying to generate theories about how it *should* be expressed. Taking this on board, means that as I place an overt emphasis throughout my thesis on how spirit is experienced at Bethel I must also make sure my methodological approach is complementary.

So in this section I will look again at NRT as a methodological approach with a focus on multiplicity, relations, practices and performances, affects and backgrounds (see Vannini, 2015a) in the 'doing' of life as it springs forth. It is important to mention here that attempting to utilise NRT as a methodological strategy does not necessarily mean that I have to denounce conventional methods to do so (Woodyer, 2008). Rather, taking this approach requires me to try and 'stretch' the methods that I use - embracing a spirit of "resolute experimentalism" (Dewsbury, 2010: 321). This means attending to the concerns of NRT through embracing methodological commitments to assemblage thinking. In other words, paying attention to multiplicity, relations, processes, becomings and uncertainties (Baker and McGuirk, 2017). In doing so, a multi-sensory methodology that takes into account atmosphere and capacities to affect and be affected can emerge (Dowling et al., 2018). Ultimately this approach allows me to embrace a sense of creativity in exploring spiritual experiences as I respond to the call for geographers to evoke the senses through their writing (Dowling et al., 2018).

Embracing a spirit of experimentalism and incorporating creativity means thinking about the particular *style* of research. For Vannini (2015c) this could be done through playing around with a conditional mood. This means "evoking, in the present moment, a future impression in

your reader" (Vannini, 2015a: 12) and so allowing the reader to imagine the 'would have', 'could have' and 'what ifs' in such a way that pushes the wondering of how else something could have been. In wondering what could be, Vannini argues that this allows for reflection on how things actually are. The conditional mood therefore brings attention to unfulfilled potentials, to allow us to imagine something that did not quite occur. In the context of my thesis, this approach is useful in how it allows for the failings of not experiencing spirit, or not experiencing it in the ways that were expected – whilst remaining receptive to the affective and sensuous intensities that accompany such experiences. In doing so, this type of approach allows for possibilities to be built up - that may or may not be fulfilled in the end – but nevertheless enliven and open up my writing. Possibilities that can elicit senses of dramatic tensions, suspense and wonder. In this sense, a non-representational approach could ask - 'how else can I do this?' and 'why not?' instead of asking if I am doing it right. Following this, my thesis plays with 'stretching' methods through the twisting of the conventional method of ethnography by experimenting with an impressionist, 'what if' style whilst at Bethel Church. Indeed, in differing ways and with various nuances, each section of my empirical writing offers a sense of what if as I am affected by the experiences of spirit at Bethel. As I follow, question and note the sense of wonder that spirit generates throughout everyday normal life at Bethel through this particular methodological approach I can put the focus upon the vitalities or energies – but also the not so vital or energetic - aspects of more-than-human spirit experiences.

Building upon my emphasis on the more-than-representational conditional mood that weaves throughout my thesis, another way that I could employ NRT in my fieldwork is through an attention to affect as a way of knowing and 'noticing' the geographies of what is happening (Thrift, 2008). In other words, this is less about the 'what if' and much more about the 'what is'. Examples of this can be seen in Kathleen Stewart's (2007) *Ordinary Affects* as she aims to slow the quick jump to representational thinking just long enough to approach uncertain things that are interesting "because they literally hit us or exert a pull on us" (p.4). She does this – not in an attempt to 'know' them – but to create a story about what is going on as she breathes life into the intensities and textures of what is. In a similar way, my aim is not to make spiritual experiences at Bethel more 'knowable' by presenting them to the reader. Instead, I want to 'presence' spiritual experiences in their varied and "surging capacities to affect and to be affected that give everyday life [at Bethel] the quality of a continual motion of relations" (Stewart, 2007: 2). Through giving space to spirit as a part of affective ordinary life at Bethel,

the research does not try and do the impossible (and pointless) in demystifying the supernatural but rather will curiously "provoke attention to the forces that come into view" (Stewart, 2007: 1) as spirit emerges from and attaches itself within life at Bethel.

My approach to researching spirit at Bethel therefore included a weaving of the impressionist 'what if' into the noticeable 'what is'. To explain what I mean by this in a practical way I want to turn here to a healing class that I enrolled in during my time at Bethel. In this class we were essentially being taught how to heal physical ailments and problems through prayer as well as trying it out ourselves by actually praying for the sick. Weaving together the 'what is' with the 'what if' meant making note of what was actually going on whilst remaining open to the possibilities that spirit could present in its power to move or affect in some mysterious kind of way. So in the class noticing the 'what is' was observing how around 30 of us would gather together in a small room on the second floor of Bethel's main campus College View whilst the 'what if' incorporated the nerves that I felt as I sat waiting with anticipation, not knowing what I was letting myself in for nor how the class was to go. It was sitting there waiting and wondering, would I see a healing? How will I react to that? How will that change my life? How will that affect my research? Weaving the what if with the what is meant sitting there in those initial moments of the class and letting those feelings and questions rest upon me as they influenced both my being in the field and my writing up of that particular class. Similarly, as the class got started and we began to take part in the healing practices, the initial what if feelings changed. It moved from an ambiguous 'what if I actually have a particular experience of spirit' to a scary more overwhelming feeling as I was immersed and involved in healing. As I put my hands on someone's shoulder and prayed for their healing, the impressionistic what if became much more intense as I worried about what if they do not get the results they need because it is me who is praying. But then – perhaps more worrying for me - what if they do? What if I actually see a miracle at my own hands, would that change my whole belief system? What if I manage to use the supernatural like the people around me do? We would be encouraged by the leader to pray our healing prayers out loud, increasing our volume until sometimes we were shouting or singing declarations of healing upon each other. The room would vibrate with loud, noisy bodies surrounding the silent one receiving the healing. Whilst I never was the one who was being prayed for I would notice the reactions to these prayers. Some would cry, some would shake, some would remain still. The impressionistic could have, would have, what if approach allows me to both imagine what could have happened if I was to step into the middle

of that circle, or to raise my hand for prayer as well as wondering what could have been happening for the person receiving. What are they experiencing, what could be happening to cause such a visceral bodily response? If it was me would I react like that? Would I have found myself healed? What would it have meant for my research if I had? I allowed these types of questions to run through my mind as I encountered different experiences and got involved in different classes and contexts during my time at Bethel. In doing so, these questions impacted both my time in the field as well as during my writing as I focused upon those things that hit or pulled me into their affective grasps.

This weaving of the what is and what if is an attempt to employ an NRT in action methodological style that responds to a greater emphasis upon affective states, things left unsaid, reflexivity, and the ways through which life is full of vitality in its incompleteness and openness. Indeed, it is this type of focus that tends to characterise a non-representational style of research and so creates a willingness for researchers to "experiment and to fail – indeed to try and continue to fail better" (Vannini, 2015b: 324). Practically my experimentation (and willingness for this to not work out as I hope) emphasises affective and impressionistic aspects and encounters within the juxtaposition of both what's happening and what could potentially happen. Yet, it is important to note here that this approach is not to say that the impressionistic what ifs are the only thing that animates my research on spirit nor that the impressionistic questions and feelings are what makes my approach non-representational. Rather, for the most part, my research actually focuses upon the what is. In this way I remain open to the events at hand. The small moments, the scenes and vignettes that tell of everyday encounters, stories and testimonies of life becoming-with spirit at Bethel. Yet, as I remain open to notice what is I also allow myself remain open to my own wonder and questions.

Allowing myself to wonder, to engage with the idea that spirit could be out there affecting me and my embodied experiences at Bethel, folds back into my experimental direction towards embodiment where wonder ties all forms of embodied experience together with spirit. Throughout my thesis I write in the moments where my body and my own embodied experiences of radical, supernatural Christianity at Bethel became stretched out of my own habits and revealed by that which exceeded me – the affective, potential of spirit. Or, in other words, I do not shy away from writing in the moments where wonder, with its specific ability to open up embodied experience to possibility, emerges within me. Where I engage with the

conditional mood, feeling the affects of wondering what if? For instance, in Part III: Spirit Affects I touch upon this as I talk about my own encounters with the apparent appearance of gold dust as a particular spiritual materiality upon my hands after being prayed for. I write about what is going on around me in that particular scene whilst also paying attention to what else could be happening in the spiritual realm – allowing myself to wonder - what if?

Taking a methodological approach that centres upon the what is yet still allows room for the what if to permeate through my words seemingly reflects many of the ways through which experiential knowledge of spirit is created at Bethel. For many people talked to me about the ways that spirit has moved in their life whilst retaining an air of potential for further movements, speculations surrounding meanings or impressions of what is yet to come. So, by paying attention to the ways through which affect moves life at Bethel in relation to not only the things that are happening and unfolding around but also to the what if and what could be of spirit. For example, prophetic words leave an impression of what could be whilst also creating tangible feelings of what spirit is. By trialling with this approach I am able to reflect upon how I became engaged with the spiritual and therefore became-with spirit at Bethel in ways that demanded me to pay attention to what was happening as well as causing me to wonder what else could be out there. This approach to my ethnography means that whilst I remain open to events and wonder I also remain grounded in the fleeting and mundane aspects of spiritual practices and experiences within them. In this sense, my thesis does not present an ethnography *of* affect but it presences ethnographic experiences through and with affect – acknowledging that all elements of life at Bethel are already entangled in complex ways.

Whilst I have explored what NRT in action could look like what remains challenging is the lack of accounts of NRT in practice (Lorimer, 2015; Maclaren, 2019). In part, Lorimer (2015) explains that the absence of such provisions is due to the essence of spontaneous inventiveness that NRT aim to generate. As such, a 'step-by-step' or 'how to' guide seems counterproductive to a non-representational approach. Thus, begging the question of how can a PhD project, that requires thoughtful planning and careful outlining in the form of documents such as this take a truly non-representational approach? Equally, the aim of non-representational theory to present impressions of a researcher "ensnared in the midst of life taking place, full of responsiveness and suggestiveness" (Lorimer, 2015:185) is an ability hard won. For surely the process of writing up a thesis is actually a detachment from the scene as experienced in the moment. Here

perhaps the method is not so much about acquiring data but living the research and viewing the method itself as a part of the research process as performative. It is about understanding my ethnography as in motion, as living and lived.

Before I go on to explore how my methodological approach was enacted in the field and beyond as I lived the research process both in Redding and back home through the performativity of ethnographic research, analysis and writing up I want to take a quick sidestep to explore two things. Firstly, I want to briefly take a detour away to position myself within the research. For, as Linda McDowell (1992: 409) writes, "we must recognise and take account of our own position, as well as that of our research participants, and write this into our research practice." Secondly, I want to explore the critical mood that I not only employed during my time at Bethel but that bled through to the ways I analysed and wrote my thesis when I was back home. After discussing these two important points in my Methodological Beginnings I will then turn to explore what I actually did in the field. Looking to my ethnography and discussing some of the difficulties that I encountered during my time researching spirit at Bethel.

Researcher Positionality

As many who have written about methodology have reiterated, the positioning of the researcher within research is a central concept. It not only provides a fuller understanding of the research context and the researched but also the researcher herself (Rose, 1997). Indeed, Donna Haraway (1991) argues, all knowledge is situated – objectivity is a God trick in its claim to see the world whilst remaining distanced from it. In other words, the claim to see everything from nowhere is oppressive as it subjugates other knowledges and producers of knowledge. Instead, as Haraway (1991) promotes, we should be much more interested in the idea of partial, limited and specific knowledges. Similarly, Gillian Rose argues that researchers should aim to generate non-generalising knowledges that can learn from other knowledges retaining a sense of uncertainty and all the while recognising that "the significance of this does not rest entirely in our own hands" (1997: 319). My argument - that this thesis is not a whole knowledge but rather retains a sense of uncertainty – is therefore very aligned with this way of thinking about knowledge production. So in the spirit of partial and situated knowledges let me introduce my own positionality within the thesis…

So I can not actually recall the first time I ever heard about Bethel, it just always seemed to be there in the background - as an almost mystical space in the Charismatic Christian imagination that held tangible aspects of the divine that one would aspire to visit and experience. See, I was 'born' into a Charismatic religious community in the inner-city of Liverpool that primarily comprised of a network of churches across the city and a small independent church school. So I grew up in a church community that also doubled up as my educator, formed my social, pastoral and friendship groups and provided extra-curricular classes in music, dance and theatre. My church community completely surrounded me and quite frankly I did not really know anything else. Growing up I remember experiencing different moments with God. I, like many of my peers, went along to youth conferences, responded to alter calls and prayer responses. I invited spirit into my own life, I accepted the plans I believed that He had for me. Essentially, my entire sense of self and purpose during my childhood and early teenage years was completely arranged around creating and cultivating a connection or relationship with spirit.

As I grew into my late teens, what had always been a comforting or reassuring extended church community of friends and family began to break down. It began firstly with my parents leaving the church after growing increasingly frustrated with the leadership politics and heavy community expectations. I remember distinctly at 16 feeling like all I knew was beginning to disperse and scatter. Despite my parents leaving the community, I remained for a further three years. In the immediate aftermath of my parents leaving I found myself clinging to and delving deeper into the community. I took up more roles and responsibilities and generally gave more and more of my time to the church. From volunteering in the youth ministries and running a children's club to spending my weekends waitressing in the church's cafe and my evenings providing English language tuition in the church's language school. Despite my dedication in my teens, being raised within a faith community does not always guarantee the adoption of that lifestyle long-term (Crockett and Voas, 2006; Voas and Crockett, 2005). I had started 2011 as an active church member but by the time I was celebrating my 20th birthday in the December of that year I had turned my back on church life altogether.

The series of events that sparked this almost complete turnaround encompass a time in my life that was tough but ultimately transformational - making me the person that I am today. Given this, leaving the church is important in understanding my particular positionality in relation to

my research at Bethel. So what changed in 2011? Well, I had found a part-time job in a high street shop and was in my final year of a 6th form that was not run by the church community whereas my primary and secondary schools had been. Given these changes of scene and broadening social circles and exposures I had begun to go to socialise, go to parties and date outside of the religion. It was during this time that I also began to get more and more disillusioned with the notion of God and more cynical towards the idea the only way to be a good person is to be a part of our type of church community. These changes ultimately cumulated in a once close friend of mine reporting to the church elders that my lifestyle was no longer in line with the church. I was subsequently stripped of my responsibilities and made to confess my 'poor choices' to my peers.

It was only a few weeks later when I left Liverpool to start university in another city. During the next few years I neglected the faith I had grown up with. For me, university really became "a point of 'make or break', where decisions about whether to continue with religious beliefs and practices were negotiated" (Sharma and Guest, 2013: 68). Indeed, I found university to be the space that cemented my transition out of church culture and towards a sense of personal, social and intellectual freedom that I had never experienced before. In this way, you could say that during my undergraduate study I became more and more 'dechurched' - a term that Sjogren (2002: 2) cynically defines as "those who have concluded that the entire notion of organised religion, including following Christ and attending church, is a complete waste of time." My changing faith identity during university is not an uncommon story. For as Sharma and Guest (2013) discuss, university encourages the emergence of new identities for those with faith upbringings. Yet, whilst I believe that my identity was affected by university I do not identify as dechurched. Rather, my identity has formed in response to a fuller and more messy life story of affective entangled relations with Christianity and life pre and post leaving church.

Whilst I had left some aspects of the community – no longer attending religious events or ascribing to the same ideologies - I did not leave the community relationally. Indeed, when I would return back to Liverpool I found myself having to negotiate my re-entering of the church world. This re-entering was not necessarily a physical thing but it was definitely a relational one. Predominately, it meant that I found myself unsure as to where I fitted in with the friendships I had had all my life. I remember how difficult it was having to explain the reasons why I had not joined the Christian Union or found a new church at university. I remember

awkwardly having to argue that not practicing Christianity did not mean that I was taking drugs. Given the difficult conversations I would have in those initial years, approaching the topic that I was not sure I even believed anymore was one that took a little longer to get around to. Could I still belong if I was not sure that I believed? What was initially a difficult negotiation between belonging and believing has significantly softened as the years have passed. In part, I think that a lot of this is down to things tending to get easier as you get used to them. But also, as I have grown more and more comfortable in my skin and confident in my own mind these types of conversations do not elicit the same sort of defensive reaction that they used to. However, much of what has made this easier is also down to the openness of my friendship group, who have also had to put in work to re-negotiate our relations. To this day they continue to embrace me and my non-belief as I too embrace them and their belief. As it turned out, I am lucky; I still belong even if I do not believe.

So fast forward several years and for the lack of a better topic I found myself doing my MA dissertation on the community that I grew up in. I interviewed the friends, family, pastors and teachers that formed my early life; the people who impacted, led and raised me. I also interviewed people who I did not know so well and people who were friends of friends or had joined the community after my departure. But during many of the interviews, Bethel Church kept coming up. It flowed in and out of the conversations, often just in passing. Sometimes it was noting a particular Bethel Music song or mentioning a Bethel conference or referencing something Bill Johnson had said. It became clear during my MA that Bethel was important but more than that – Bethel Church in California was influencing how a group in inner-city Liverpool were practicing their Christianity. There was something special about Bethel.

Now, here writing my thesis on my ethnographic exploration of Bethel, as a space that I am somewhat familiar with, I find myself more than ever required to evaluate my positionality. Whilst there are debates surrounding being either an 'insider' or 'outsider' when researching religious groups (see: Han, 2010; Henkel, 2011), the insider/outsider binary does not acknowledge the complexities of my positionality. Even though I grew up in a Christian environment I am not an insider in the world of Bethel. I'm not a Bethel member. I'm not an American or a religious Conservative. I'm not even a fully practising Christian anymore. Yet, I am not a complete outsider either. I'm very familiar with the Charismatic scene. I have friends who have been or who are at Bethel currently. I understand most of the Christian lingo and

turns of phrases and Bible references. I know most of the songs. I know how to behave and how to react in Charismatic groups. I know how to pray in ways that could make me sound super holy and spiritual. I know what an important role spirit plays in people's everyday lives. So I am neither near to Bethel nor am I far. Rather I am in the between.

Rose (1997) argues that our positionality always retains aspects of unknowability demonstrating the dynamism of self. Indeed, I found being neither an insider nor an outsider - maximising the advantages of each whilst minimising the potential for disadvantages and benefiting from both – to be valuable (Breen, 2007). In other words, I allow my ability to 'fit in' within the Bethel circles to enable me to get further insights whilst my acknowledgements of not being a Christian anymore meant that people often would afford me a certain amount of grace. For instance, the first time I went along to visit BSSM I was questioned by the staff manning the visitors' entrance. Whilst they allow visitors perhaps it was strange that someone unfamiliar was turning up alone. I had to fill out a form with my contact details and sign a declaration that I was not from the media. Telling the staff on the door that I was not a journalist but I *was* a PhD researcher was met with some hesitation and apprehension. It was as if they were unsure what to do with that information. Was being a PhD researcher worse than being a journalist? They asked some further questions in an attempt to suss out whether or not it was and whether they should grant me entry to their space. However, when I mentioned that I was from a church community in Liverpool there was a shift in the conversation. They asked if I knew a couple of their Bethel friends who were also from Liverpool. I told them that I did, that I had actually gone to school with them and knew them very well. In saying this, the whole tone of the conversation changed. Whilst this conversation at the door highlighted that I was still not an insider I was also no longer strictly an outsider either. I was no longer a strange researcher coming from afar to spy on their supernatural space with unknown motivations. Rather, I was a friend of a friend, an interested and invested visitor who could be safely invited and welcomed in.

My positionality as an ex-Christian who was researching spiritual experiences at Bethel meant that more often than not I was seen as an individual on a particular journey back towards the spiritual (whether or not I realised it!). Several times I found myself being compared to the documentary maker, Darren Wilson, who after filming Bill Johnson and Bethel ended up converting. My research was often interpreted as the mode through which I - as the proverbial

lost sheep - would end up coming back into the fold. This meant that many of the people that I encountered at Bethel were particularly happy to help me with my research almost as the opportunity to impact the imagined 'bigger picture' of me coming back to church. Whilst I could rather sceptically interpret this as them being helpful with a hidden motive of converting me back it did not feel that cynical. Rather, the people that I encountered were more often than not just really willing and eager to share about the things they were passionate about in a very similar way to how anyone with a passion is. In this way, it was through sharing this passion that they would encourage me in my own exploration of Bethel; openly and generously sharing their stories and experiences, letting me make up my own mind. Essentially, my 'insiderness' was useful whilst I was at Bethel in allowing me to access spaces and build relationships and contacts based upon mutual understandings, upbringings or friendships whilst my 'outsiderness' was generally equated to people seeing me as a visitor and encouraging me to just 'keep an open mind' to God's presence as I went about my research.

When I was at Bethel, being neither an insider nor an outsider was not a particularly new feeling. Indeed, as I have shared, since those early days when I left the church, I have been acutely aware of occupying an 'in-between' status. Mostly this was felt through my church friendships that became held in a tension of sort of remaining the same but being somewhat different. As I have touched on briefly already, occupying this 'in-between' identity was initially a source of internal conflict - it made me have to be really intentional about maintaining my integrity as someone who has left the church physically but not relationally. However, as the years have passed, this has gotten easier. So much so, that I felt like going back into the Charismatic world and immersing myself in my PhD ethnography was not going to be the traumatising ordeal it most likely would have been ten years earlier. Whilst it was not exactly easy going back (this is something I reflect more on both later in Methodological Beginnings and in in Part V: Endings) rather than focusing upon questions of proximity or distance or issues of sameness or difference, incorporating the language of 'in-betweenness' (Nast, 1994) seems appropriate regarding my ethnography. Han (2010) argues that in ethnographic research the tension in-between has the potential to reveal the most interesting insights about our social worlds. Given this, my 'in-betweeness' was quite a useful tool during my ethnographic research as I re-immersed myself in atmospheres that held both the strange and the familiar in a productive tension as I negotiated my time at Bethel. Paying attention to these tensions as I immersed myself into the familiar-strange space of Christianity that is so deeply entangled with

memories and my own past experiences does much to affirm the role of bodily experience within the research practice (Palmisano, 2016; Waldstein, 2016). This therefore draws attention to the ways through which my in-betweenness allows for new insights that centre the role of embodied, sensuous experiences – including my own. Essentially, my hope for my thesis is that as I start with myself and my own negotiations with others at Bethel Church my research will be able to access the embodied practices and experiences of Bethel Church – whilst remaining open to the affective intensities of the spiritual in impacting the everyday processes of embodied becoming-with-others – where others includes spiritual others.

So, having positioned myself as the researcher within the thesis, let's now turn to the second key Methodological Beginning: the critical mood.

Critical Mood

The immersive style of participation that I utilised within my ethnography cultivates, according to Halloy (2016), a greater sense of empathy towards the affective intensities of the phenomena being researched. During my research in the field, through both participating in everyday life at Bethel and getting to know people who I then interviewed I did find a growing sense of empathy and understanding building between myself and others at Bethel. However, as Santo (2016) notes participation in the field does not always result in increased empathy but it can raise other affectivities - such as suspicion. Indeed, I can also resonate with this. For, there was a distinct sensitivity, or sense of caution or suspicion that often flowed between me, the community at Bethel and even the wider academic community. For example, my background has enabled be to be more aware perhaps to the particular conversion tactics of Charismatic Christians and therefore I argue more sensitive or suspicious regarding people's seemingly good intentions in relation to this. Further to this, whilst I have found my topic of belief, spirit and supernaturalism to create a sense of suspicion and unease within the wider academy, my own non-belief and ex-church background caused a sense of suspicion and unease for some at Bethel – for instance that initial moment at the door when I was trying to enter BSSM. Essentially this caused people on all sides of my research (including myself) to be more sensitive to my topic and participation at Bethel than they perhaps would have been if I had a differing belief system. But aside from the sensitivities that my research develops, I want to point out that I ultimately agree with Williams (2016) who argues that exploring shared

spiritual experiences is ultimately beneficial to the research. This, however, is not to say that the particular affectivities of caution, suspicion and even paranoia have been important in their role in the development of my methodology as I will now go on to explore further.

As I have already briefly alluded to, I quickly found my topic of affective experiences of spirit to be met with a suspicious raise of the eyebrow. A questioning sign that curiously points to the perceived absurdity of a focus upon a supposedly 'make believe' topic. This has been especially true within my interactions in the wider academy. One moment that has always seemed to stay with me was during a presentation that I gave in my first year. After I had finished presenting the floor was opened for questions. A professor I did not recognise raised his hand and offered comment. His comment called into question how I could expect to take a critical approach in the face of what he termed 'hocus pocus'. His words pierced through the quiet of the room as I found myself feeling the certain decorum that is usually displayed during these sorts of things slipping away from me in my inexperienced, messy and confrontational response.

In the years that have followed, his comment remained in the forefront of my mind with regards to how exactly I am going to research this particular topic. Leaving me with questions surrounding how, or when, to engage with or through critique. For, it has become customary to tout critique as an achievement of secular culture and thought in its reasoned deliberation (Mahmood, 2009) - and to think beyond it assumes an uncritical approach (Anker and Felski, 2017). Yet, this leaves little room for the religious beliefs and supernatural experiences that often occur outside of the rationalist orientation of critique. Perhaps, we can ask what are we actually doing when we engage in critique? For, I find myself so conditioned within the phenomenon of critique, so quick to interrogate, subvert and unravel that which I am attempting to study. But what good does that actually do? What good does it do to my participants and their lives, beliefs and practices for me to critique their lives in suspicious ways designed to demystify or destabilise? And - what else could I do (Felski, 2015: 1)?

The past decade has seen various proposals to turn from the suspicious or paranoid critical hermeneutics and explore different modes of social inquiry (Barnwell, 2016). Following this, my affective ethnographical approach engages with and remains in the particular rather than the general. This is perhaps what Moi (2017: 88) calls 'thinking through examples' or what

Felski (2008: 133) refers to as 'micro-aesthetics' – approaches that rely upon the fullness of description as opposed to the comprehensiveness of disassembly. As Latour (2004; 2010) reasons, we should move from a spirit of debunking to one of assembling, from critique to composition. It is about paying attention to what is there, what is happening and pointing out connections and distinctions; generating descriptions that enable us to see things more clearly (Moi, 2017). My thesis therefore aims to "resonate rather than validate" (Vannini, 2015a: 15); leaving the reader "with an embodied sense of the world" (Stewart, 2007: 6) – and the 'otherworld' at Bethel.

Looking to the particular, my ethnography is written as a series of extracts, of moments, of interruptions and disruptions, of passing times and things that happened. A selection of vignettes that together build an "idiosyncratic map of connections between a series of singularities" (Stewart, 2007: 5). Scenes that do not try and do the impossible (and pointless) task of demystifying the supernatural but instead curiously "provoke attention to the forces that come into view" (Stewart, 2007: 1) as spirit emerges from and attaches itself within life at Bethel. To reiterate again, the intension of my thesis is to presence - not present - the entangled stories, testimonies, encounters and experiences of the participants and I at Bethel. To create vignettes that map out and demonstrate the varied and "surging capacities to affect and to be affected that give everyday life" at Bethel "the quality of a continual motion of relations" (Stewart, 2007: 2).

This style of affective ethnography offers a specific practice of critique that can sit alongside and compliment speculation and description as ways of relating to affective life (B Anderson, 2014: 19). For instance, whilst authors such as Kathleen Stewart are often portrayed as prime examples of 'creative experimentation' (Blackman and Venn, 2010: 13) with *Ordinary Affects* being marked as sensorial rather than critical in writing against the tradition of suspicious readings - it also highlights the ordinariness of the suspicious and wary citizens that populate its pages. In this way, *Ordinary Affects* speaks to how these "sleuthing methods seem to be so entrenched, so omnipresent, not just in academic methodologies but in popular culture, in our everyday dealings with people" (Barnwell, 2016: 15). This means that wariness and suspicion are living and dynamic forms of paying attention to and navigating everyday life (Barnwell, 2016: 12). For example, the people that I met at Bethel navigated their dynamic and lively suspicions in different ways. Whether that be through remaining alert to sudden demonic

attacks or struggling to stay financially afloat. Through expressing senses of hypervigilance and identifying forces that 'threaten,' or cultivating an unwillingness to be duped or misrepresented. Suspicion is therefore alive and dynamic in the everyday fabric of life at Bethel – acting as an affective way of making sense of the world. This is perhaps especially heightened given the polarising notoriety of Bethel within broader social commentary and media (for example: Merritt, 2019; Sabalow, 2020; Shen and Griffith, 2019). Indeed, the dynamics of suspicion, caution and paranoia became increasingly apparent within my ethnography, as I explore more in Part V: Endings.

My thesis does not attempt or try and pretend to banish suspicion but I do try to recognise *when* to employ it (Moi, 2017). For whilst the critical mood as a living form of attention was often employed by both the participants and I, there too remained a particular sense of 'friendliness' almost as the other side of the same coin. Indeed, I was often struck by this dynamic. For instance, in one conversation I had with Phil, he told me how he had received several prophecies from several different people about his future playing drums. Each of these prophecies had been given by a person who did not know that Phil had played drums in his home church back in the UK. Each of the prophecies were slightly different but each suggested that he was to play drums for God in various contexts or capacities from playing for Bethel Music to being in a rock band and other things in-between. As he told me how he "had like 5 prophetic words about drumming but they're all really different!" he laughed at the implausibility of him being able to do all of the things that were prophesied. In this way, he explained how you had to sift through the prophetic. You had to use a critical and suspicious eye to work out what God was really saying. Yet, whilst Phil had to sift through the prophetic words trying to make sense of which ones would happen and which would not there was never a sense that some were fake and given in a mean spirit to distract or trick him. There was an underlying understanding that some prophetic words might be given as a result of people misunderstanding or just making things up. However, this idea also tended to be accompanied by the notion that this was because the prophesier was either overly enthusiastic, immature in their faith or simply misunderstood or misheard God. In Phil's example, discerning the prophecies meant working out which ones resonated with him affectively. As we continued to talk about it some more, Phil shared how the variety of prophetic words offered him what felt like a choice of options that he had to affectively sense and work out which one felt like it fitted. In this way, he approached the various and contradictory prophetic words not with a

sense that people were deliberately deceiving or tricking him like a slight of hand magician or trying to manipulate or give him false hope – even if some of them were people being overexuberant in their prophecies. Rather, these contradictory messages from spirit were understood by Phil as spiritual options that he must then critically work out for himself. As Phil told me, "It's like He is getting you to decide. Like the ball's in your court. Like, here are all these options for drumming so what do you want to do?"

That conversation with Phil is a good example of the friendly style of approach to spirit many people I met navigated life at Bethel with. As such, it is this 'friendly' approach that I tried to incorporate into my research. Friendliness as the core critical lens that I adopt can be understood through the central notion that whilst we may never wholly know our friends neither do we approach them with the assumption that they are out to deceive or trick us (Dixon, 2018). In other words, whilst I can never really know spirit or the people that I met at Bethel, I do not assume that they are out to lie or deceive or manipulate or trick me. This lens of friendliness is not taking an all accepting stance to the spiritual where everything is neatly explained away as spirit or readily believed to be sacred because as I have already explored caution and suspicion are important, lively ways through which life at Bethel is negotiated. Yet, what is important is that - unlike with the unrecognised professor whose question plagued my earlier thinking on this topic – there was a willingness in the participants to cautiously embrace the unknown alongside and in conjunction with their sense of suspicion. In essence, the unknown was embraced in ways that also elicited suspicion and caution, friendliness towards the unknown whilst remaining alert to and wary of its 'unknowableness'. In other words, there was a very real understanding at Bethel that not everything can be explained by or as a result of the divine but that spiritual encounters are always only partially known and so are incomplete in comprehension and so ultimately produce questions that are unanswerable and experiences that are unexplainable. In this sense, the critical lens through which spiritual experiences and encounters are understood at Bethel holds both suspicion and friendliness in a dynamic and productive tension.

Examples of how Bethel holds both suspicion and friendliness in a dynamic tension were dotted throughout the conversations and interviews I had during my time at Bethel. Prophecy in particular like with Phil's drumming future was one way that this tension was most obvious. Yet, this dynamic can also be seen throughout the parts in this thesis. In particular Part III:

Spirit Affects but this is also something I reflect on more, particularly with reference to my own experiences in Part V: Endings.

Thinking of friendliness as the critical lens through which I approached life at Bethel could be a potential solution to Felski's (2015: 1) question on critique and the hermeneutics of suspicion that set out to demystify and destabilise: she asks - what else can we do? My response is to acknowledge where friendliness and suspicion work together in a living dynamic entangled with spirit. In practice this is about decentralising my own disbelief and allowing myself to welcome and be open to the event, to be open to wonder. Where my own embodied experience is pulled together by spirit – or at least pulled together by an openness to the potential of spirit. This meant allowing myself to approach the topic of spirituality without being quick to judge or quick to criticise and complain. Where friendliness and suspicion or caution work together I allow myself to question and to speculate whilst not being cynical or dismissive of others beliefs and experiences at Bethel. Yet, whilst this was my aim it would be false to say that all the encounters I had during my immersive ethnography held this tension between suspicion and friendliness! Rather, there were some moments in my fieldwork where friendliness went completely out of the window. Where my caution and suspicion were the core way through which I navigated moments at Bethel – and all notions of friendliness were abandoned!

One such moment where friendliness was abandoned came after I had spoken to some leaders from one of Bethel's ministries called *Moral Revolution*[23] and they had encouraged me to check out their online information and listen to their podcast series. Since I had been trying to listen to, read and watch as much Bethel material as I could when I was not spending time with people I spent one particularly emotionally charged afternoon going down the Moral Revolution rabbit hole. I listened as they described and talked about sexual purity. I read about how they could bring people out of their 'mistaken' transgender or homosexual identities. I watched the videos where they offered advice on being feminine. The authority and certainty that they conveyed on a range of topics surrounding sex, gender and love in church culture caused me to erupt. I

[23] See: https://www.moralrevolution.com/ their podcasts are also widely available for free on iTunes and Spotify. I found this side of Bethel to be really insidious, many of their affiliated ministries seemed almost slightly detached from Bethel, meaning that if you were just searching online you may miss the connection between them. Yet, when you are at Bethel these ministries are very present and their leaders have roles in both the church leadership and BSSM teaching roles. Perhaps a future route of study could look to this in more detail, unpacking the affectivity of these dangerous theologies in how they enforce and police particular relations between LGBTQ+ people and spirit.

angrily journaled, filling out my ethnographic diary with rage upon those in charge of such a ministry. Who did they think they were?! The fury that stormed within me was also coupled with a deep sadness for all the lives that are denied by these types of teachings as people are made to feel guilty, shamed and dirty. I thought about how these types of teachings led to people being abandoned by their families, disowned by their churches and expelled from their communities. That afternoon I became so caught up and confronted by my own memories of leaving church. The feelings that I had of being inadequate, being used, broken and unwanted all surfacing. Their affective hands gripping me in a whirlwind of repressed anger and upset that was finally being released. There was no friendliness anymore. No appreciation for the other side of the argument. I just could not and would not. I had not started to listen to those podcasts or read their blogs with anger. But anger developed. It flowed alongside memory, the more I listened, the more I remembered and the angrier I became.

There were several moments like this where I could not find an ounce of friendliness through which to approach my research into Bethel. Yet, in those moments, where I could not be friendly it is interesting to note that I was not necessarily completely suspicious either. I had not swapped my alternative approach to critique and switched right back to the tradition. Indeed, in the example as mentioned above, it was rage, it was anger and memory that became the principal critical lens I employed. In this sense, I did not listen to those podcasts or read those blogs trying to work out how they were trying to trick me or wondering what they were hiding beneath the surface. Rather, I was deeply angry at what they were saying and what the ramifications of those types of words are or what those kinds of teachings result in. In this sense, I continued to read with the grain. I continued to see what was there rather than trying to uncover some sort of hidden elements. When friendliness was not an option I found it was most likely anger that took its place.

Reading and researching in this way, means looking towards detail rather than depth and aligning with the NRT desire to produce more multiple and complex rather than 'whole' knowledges (Dewsbury, 2010) that are sensitive to the 'partial-ness' and 'moment-ness' of the phenomena being studied (Latham, 2003). In other words, rather than just critiquing or applying hermeneutics of suspicion across my whole thesis, I experiment with alternative dispositions. But as Vannini (2015a; 2015b) explains, becoming entangled within relations is what makes non-representational styles of research quintessentially non-representational.

Whilst for the most part, the relations that I became entangled within during my immersive ethnography were generous and friendly, sometimes they were not.

Throughout this section, I have argued that producing a critique of Bethel just does not feel right to me. That is not necessarily to say that I did not do it. I have pages and pages of my ethnographic journal where I critique and attempt to uncover parts of Bethel life that perhaps people are not aware of. Where I discuss how people pour thousands and thousands of their own money to learn how to operate in miracles. Where I spoke to people who were really struggling to pay their bills because all their income goes to the church whilst begging their families and friends for money to put food on their table. My journal documents the moments that I felt like Bethel was a seduction, an allure of false promises. One that hides its money grabbing and manipulations behind fancy logos, slick video production and their Instagram following. Whilst I have given a glimpse into that here, for the most part I do not discuss that throughout the other parts of my thesis. This is mainly because this type of investigative research does not feel fair within my 'ethics of generosity' (Thrift, 2014: 93) towards the people who are a part of it. Indeed, it's really easy to critique a religious structure when you do not share the same ideology. Rather, in this section I have argued that I can still be critical albeit in a more friendly way to reflect the way that the community at Bethel negotiate the dynamic between friendliness and caution or suspicion. Yet, this has also brought about further questions surrounding whether I can actually be true to my own affective relations with the research through such a lens? How can I write in rather than out my own emotions and experiences when what is there often cultivates an angry disposition rather than a friendly one? Generally speaking, much of the critique of critique has come from the notion that the practice is so negative that it is wearying. Yet there is an irony that when employing my approach and friendliness was not possible it was a negative anger or just a deep sadness that took its place.

Essentially, this section of Methodological Beginnings has argued that the critical lens that I take within my thesis allows me to appreciate that there are aspects of life that whilst we may investigate, explore and negotiate they simply remain only partially knowable, explainable and comprehendible even if they are thoroughly tangibly felt, sensed and affective. And, that in exploring and returning with perhaps more questions than answers, serves to answer NRT's promise to experiment and explore multiplicity and heterogeneity rather than attempting to tie everything up neatly into a little quantitative bow. The critical lens that my thesis arrives with

is therefore framed by the generous attitude (albeit to differing extents) of 'friendliness' all the while staying alert to the dynamic, living forms of critique through which everyday affective life at Bethel is often - but also at times is not - mediated through.

Having followed this trail and explored the critical mood that I use throughout my thesis I will now turn to look at the practical methodological approach I'm taking to unpack this a little more in depth by looking firstly at my approach in the field before how this translated to being back home.

In the Field: Immersive Ethnography & Semi-Structured Interviews

Ethnography has long been a staple methodological strategy within Geography (Cope, 2009) with participant observation acting as a potentially useful ethnographic tool in exploring spiritual practices (Jankowsky, 2007). However, the emphasis upon the embodied experiences of spirit within my project means that in my ethnography I flip participant observation to observant participation (Thrift, 2000). Observant participation differs in both intent and technique to participant observation - producing data on lived experience by prioritising the researcher's participation over their observation (Honer and Hitzler, 2015). In other words, this is less about sitting at the back of the room and observing what is going on and more about getting involved whilst paying attention and noticing things that happen as you are in amongst the happenings. This strategy therefore encourages the researcher to become immersed and caught up in the field; allowing them to become "infected by the effort, investment and craze of the particular practice or experience being investigated" (Dewsbury, 2010: 327). Yet, as Andrews (2014) explains, non-representational methodological research should produce case-specific hybrid approaches. So whilst I began this project unsure as to whether I would personally experience any supernatural encounters, by taking the methodological route of immersing myself in a community that wholeheartedly believes in the normative, everydayness of the supernatural I also opened myself up to 'notice' new ways of sensing and making sense of the world. This meant that the events, relations, practices and performances, affects and backgrounds that emerged from interesting conversations, spirit interactions and sensuous and emotive atmospheres during my case study at Bethel flow into and through my ethnography as lived and sensed (Gheradi, 2019).

As touched on in Map, during the months I spent at Bethel, I tried to reflect the daily routines of those whom I met. Practically speaking this meant that I attended main meetings on Sundays as well as smaller more intimate gatherings through the week. I also attended two large conferences and several smaller seminars. I joined a healing course and went to training days at BSSM. This approach did not mean sitting at the back of the room scribbling into a notebook. It was singing along at services, responding to calls for prayer and contributing to informal theological discussions. It was reading Bethel literature in the prayer gardens. It was living and being with and in amongst Bethel's community: the visitors from around the world, the congregants, the BSSM students. It was striking up conversations, socialising, spending time, hanging out. It was informally interviewing the people I got to know as I developed networks and relationships with people. It was conversing around dinner tables, sharing meals, anecdotes and jokes. It was discussing difficult and controversial moral topics on the porch late at night. It was having deep conversations on long walks. It was browsing Bethel's bookshop shelves, listening to Bethel podcasts and watching Bethel TV. It was going to prayer houses and Healing Rooms. It was listening to Bethel music whilst I was drinking coffee from the church's onsite café. It was about paying attention to moments that I could not help but be affected by. When Bethel's spiritual intensities swept me into their affective grasps, enveloping me within multiple tangible and flowing atmospheres. Taking me along a journey imbrued with wonder, shock, disbelief, intrigue, joy, boredom, worry, anger and memory…

My ethnographic immersion into Bethel life means that I was not only 'living with them' but 'living like them' (Palmisano, 2016). In this sense, my thesis is not an ethnography of simply 'being there' (Watson, 2012) or of 'going native' (Turner, 1993). Nor, is my work framed within the bias of 'academic atheism' that Katherine Ewing (1994) calls a scholarly refusal to believe. Rather, I approached my ethnography with a willingness to not know. For instance, my willingness to not know meant cultivating an openness to admit to myself that just because I had decided that I did not believe in it did not mean that there was nothing to believe in. This approach embraces the non-representational idea of diverse and multiple ways of knowing (Vannini, 2015a; Hinchcliffe, 2000). Essentially, the ethnographic approach that I took caused me to have to accept the disturbing process of "dislocating the certitude of one's own epistemological projections and remaining hesitant [and] open to responding to what is not

understood" (Gherardi, 2019: 753). In this way, my ethnography was living, lived and in continual motion. It was a becoming-with, something I reflect on further in Endings.

As I attempted to embrace the dislocation of my own certitude, my ethnographic approach built upon what Dewsbury (2010) calls a portfolio of first-hand experiences. For me, the first-hand experiences at Bethel came from the deliberate throwing of myself into the life and culture of Bethel - being in tune with it whilst being in the thick of it. In practical terms, my ethnographic portfolio of first-hand experiences was not limited simply to the hours that I spent on the Bethel campuses or interviewing Bethel members. Rather, my ethnography began as my thesis did in the Preface, with the flight. Indeed, from the very moment I landed in Redding, Bethel became entwined in my everyday experiences.

This approach to exploring life at Bethel was fairly conventional. As mentioned previously, Bethel is a very large church that attracts many visitors from around the world. It is therefore not uncommon for people to come and see what Bethel is about. Given this, my presence in meetings regularly went unnoticed. I was just one of many visitors who happened to be there that day to visit the church. I say this with confidence, because I got talking to many different visitors on a regular basis. I was also often asked if it was my first time visiting Bethel. Because of the ease of accessibility, when in a large meeting or service I didn't explicitly share my reasons or motivations for being there. This was especially appropriate given that the Bethel TV cameras were usually recording and broadcasting the service across the world anyway. If I wanted to take my own pictures or record videos, my behaviour didn't seem odd – there were often many visitors with smart phone in hand, taking photos and also recording the bands or speakers. I was just another person who was attending the church because I was interested and intrigued by Bethel.

When I was at smaller meetings or house groups, I would always let people know what I was doing, that I was observing and that I was really keen to understand how normal life operated at Bethel. This was often supplemented with sharing of my own story, my own history and the reasons why the church was so interesting to me. By offering an honest introduction and being transparent about my own beliefs (or lack of) and my motivations for attending I was able to navigate the ethical dilemmas of access and consent with respect and with a duty of care. This

was also often supplemented with my prior relations with people who either attended Bethel or had done so in previous years.

It is also worth noting, that there were parts of Bethel that I was unable (or unwilling) to access as a researcher/visitor. One such example was during my trip to BSSM. Whilst I was able to visit and enjoy the main part of the day (they have a special visitor section of the room set up where around 15-20 other day visitors could participate) I was unable to attend the smaller 'break out' rooms. So I didn't get to fully experience a day at BSSM but rather, us visitors were able to get just a flavour. Another example was during one meeting people were participating in communion. This holy practice of sharing bread and wine is one that was always held in high reverence at my home church. So even though I was throwing myself into life at Bethel, there were some practices such as communion that I didn't participate in out of respect for the community.

The issue of access and consent was also pertinent given that I spent my time at Bethel being hosted by Carol who was also a member of the church. In the preliminary emails that I sent Carol through the Airbnb site, I made her completely aware of my purpose at Bethel. I was not acting like an undercover agent as she knew that I was undertaking an in-depth ethnography in her home and beyond as I explored how people lived and navigated their everyday Bethel lives. We often had conversations about this and it was not uncommon for us to sit and chat over a shared pot of coffee or some sort of baked treat. Perhaps, because of this open line of communication, she wanted to increasingly impact my project and broaden my Bethel experience by introducing me to many different people. Indeed, during my time in her home, she took a great interest in my project and regularly went out of her way to invite me to social events, introducing me to her church friends and encouraging me to explore different Bethel media or join her at various Bethel meetings. In this sense, she knew that she was able to impact my project in varying ways.

The radical belief differences between Carol and I meant that writing in Carol (or rather, my encounters with Carol) present as somewhat of an ethical dilemma. For, she did make up a large part of my experience at Redding, yet oftentimes that experiences were not wholly positive. For instance, during much of the initial few weeks that I spent in her home it felt like Carol was trying to work me out. Knowing that I was no longer a Christian, it was as if she

was trying to gauge where she thought my personal moral and political alliances lay. In our conversations I would find myself almost transporting back to the days when I had just left the church. When my motivations and agendas were questioned. When I felt like I had to constantly negotiate and justify my very sense of self, my integrity and my belief systems. In these moments it was difficult not to lose my friendly approach and slip into anger and irritation or to become defensive or dismissive. I often found myself having to bite my tongue, resisting the urge to be argumentative when met with particular topics. Nowhere did I experience this more than those daily conversations with Carol. For, despite our radical ideological differences, and as I had to keep reminding myself, Carol was an important gatekeeper and introduced me to many people and spaces at Bethel.

During my immersive ethnography at Bethel, I'd often find myself having to walk in the tension of suspicion and friendliness as I balanced expressing my opinion in its fullest form with hesitating in order to not offend. However, there were some days when these conversations on the im/moralities of abortion or immigration with Carol were just too taxing a task. When friendliness seemed impossible, yet as she was my host and an important gatekeeper, anger or indifference were not really appropriate either. On those days I'd try and keep out of the house as much as possible. Sometimes I'd go to the prayer garden on the Bethel College View Campus and read for hours in amongst the trees or go and have a coffee in the Bethel coffee shop. I also spent a lot of time getting to know some of the BSSM students that I met whilst I was at Bethel. Through getting to know people I was invited to join them in everyday activities. For instance, we went hiking together, went on day trips around the state, cooked and ate together, spent evenings drinking wine and chatting for hours. These times were the happiest, most enjoyable moments of my ethnography. The times when exploring life springing forth meant you could just laugh and joke and have really interesting conversations about God and spirit and life at Bethel in general.

Whether I was struggling or enjoying myself, my ethnography at Bethel was essentially a methodological approach that began at my own body – positioned as a messily feeling participant rather than an objective witness (Vannini, 2015b). My ethnography is about 'being with' and 'becoming-with-others' (Gheradi, 2019) when life springing forth at Bethel was fun and upbeat but also when it was not. Indeed, I spent almost all of my time at Redding with people from Bethel in some capacity or another. This allowed me to pay attention to the small

moments of spirit within every day, ordinary life. From the way that a cup of coffee in the morning or a patch of flowers on the side of a mountain trail would be appreciated through the lens of God's beautiful creation to the ways that people remained alert to Biblical messages in the newspapers and attentive to hearing God's voice in their dreams. So through spending so much time either in Bethel spaces and with Bethel people in a variety of formal and informal settings I found my ethnographic exploration becoming enriched in the ordinariness of spirit as entangled within peoples' lives. This is something I build upon more throughout my thesis, but particularly in Part III: Spirit Affects.

Aside from enabling me to pick up on the ordinariness and everydayness of spirit, being immersed in life at Bethel and becoming-with-others at Bethel had another affect. Namely, the unsettling, captivating-disturbing affectivity of being re-submerged into a lifestyle that I had chosen to leave behind. Undertaking my immersive ethnography for this thesis not only meant going back to church for the first time since 2011 but it meant joining in again, it meant becoming invested again. So, it was the first time since 2011 that I had sang along to worship songs, prayed and been prayed for. It was the first time since 2011 that I had been prophesied over or read a Bible. My ethnography was an approach that required me to tap into my vulnerability as I was reunited with memories that caused me to revisit a time in my life I did not leave on very good terms with. After almost a decade of being away from the church my willingness to go back into church life, allowing myself to be consumed and surrounded in that type of world once again hit me and unsettled me in ways that I was naive to not expect. Andrews (2014) explains, non-representational approaches often seek to disturb and disrupt yet through the researcher's engagement with the field they themselves may also become disturbed and disrupted.

The growing disturbances and disruptions that I encountered during my months of immersive ethnography at Bethel were reflected in the extensive notes in both written and video format that I took at Bethel. These notes formed a record of the moments that I noticed – the moments that made me feel as Bethel brought me into its affective clutches. As time went on, however, the disturbing nature of being re-submerged into church life meant that I found myself utilising my video diary more and more. Indeed, aside from generally filming during meetings or around Bethel campuses I often found myself returning to my hire car after a meeting or interview or encounter and talking to my camera. Using the device as a particular mode of evocation and

witness (Lorimer, 2010), my camera became almost like a companion whom I could debrief with as well as a tool through which I could notice. Whereas I could not always say what I wanted (in the ways that I wanted!) to the people I met at Bethel, to my camera I could speak freely. I could laugh and joke. I could be angry. I could shout and swear. I could rant and rave. I could cry and I could question.

I had not initially planned to utilise vlogs to record my ethnographic diary. Yet, the ease through which I could record the textures, richness and felt aspects of embodiment (Simpson, 2011a) and get my thoughts out of my head meant that my camera often became my go-to recording device. Perhaps this was in part due to how surrounded and enveloped I am in the 'spatialities of the screen' (Ash, 2009) - where moving images have become the main way that most of us make sense of the world (Shapiro, 1999). Indeed, whilst they were not in my initial plan they proved to be a useful experiment in stretching my methodological approach; allowing my methodologies to 'dance a little' (Latham, 2003: 2000; Vannini, 2015b) as I unpacked the range of sensory experiences that I had at Bethel. My video diaries contributed to the ways that my immersive ethnography was embodied and experienced as they made my body visibly, audibly and viscerally present (Bates, 2014). Taking my camera around with me, pointing it at things that were happening, holding it up to my face as I spoke, letting it capture emotions as they were being expressed and felt created a methodological strength in how my camera was able to vividly communicate the sensorial and physicality of my embodied experience at Bethel (Brown et al., 2008). In this way, my recordings were not realist representations, for they did not necessarily capture what was happening, but they made up "expressive performances of the everyday" (Pink, 2003: 55) experiences I was having at Bethel. In other words, my recordings opened up possibilities for affectively encountering spirit and becoming-with relations with others at Bethel as they made them knowable in the flesh.

These muddled and rambling video diaries were revisited often upon my return back to the UK and made the basis for a lot of the work throughout my thesis and work into my argument that the whole of my research process was in motion, living and lived. They allowed me to capture the moments when I would be pulled by wonder, the moments when I would ask myself what if as well as engaging with the what is. As I re-watched the clips I had recorded I would be cast back in time, I would relive those moments again. They resituated me within Bethel, enabling me to not only remember that exact moment and feel those feelings all over again but to do so

from a different perspective. From a different passing of time, with different levels of intensity. So to account for the ways through which I was unsettled and disturbed during my time at Bethel – and after I returned home too - my ethnography writes in rather than out (Weatherall, 2019) my own emotions as I become-with ordinary life at Bethel. Examples of this can be found in various forms and to varying degrees throughout my thesis but emerge most explicitly as I reflect upon my time at Bethel more broadly in Part V: Endings.

Whilst my ethnographic exploration was the main methodological approach within my research, I did also supplement this with some semi-structured interviews. My interviews were conducted with the people that I got to know during my time living in amongst the community at Bethel. As I mentioned earlier, I spent much of my time doing informal interviews and having conversations with people. Yet, I also decided to ask certain people if they would be interested in talking to me in more depth and having our conversation recorded. This decision takes from MacKian's (2012) advice to look to lived experiences of spirit as told by believers, building upon and adding to the multiple ways of knowing and experiencing spirit at Bethel. For whilst I was unsure as to whether I was to personally experience anything spiritual for myself, I could definitely talk to others about their experiences with spirit at Bethel. For, the very point of this project to explore the unseen or immaterial yet deeply consequential encounters with spirit. This proves a methodological challenge! How can I explore spirit when I perhaps will not see or feel or experience spirit?

As McDowell (2010) reminds us, talking is often seen as the most obvious methodological approach when doing data collection regarding people in place or space. This again follows the rationale that I want to be looking to how the spiritual is actually experienced by believers rather than how academics think it should be experienced (McKian, 2012). So in the spirit of talking about spirit - I interviewed a mixture of 18 BSSM students, Bethel staff and church members whom I had got to know fairly well during my time at Bethel. In thinking about sample sizes, Bryman (2016) notes how there is often a question surrounding the minimum requirements. However, what exactly the 'minimum' number of interviews are in supplementing a qualitative, immersive ethnography is unclear (Warren, 2002). Firstly, the notion of continual interviewing until data saturation is reached simply would not work within the context of my thesis where I am not trying to create a more 'whole' understanding of Bethel but rather trying to presence spirit through glimpses, moments and vignettes. Secondly, in

Mason's (2010) exploration of PhD sample sizes he found that most ranged between 1 and 95 interviews and so varied rather considerably. Essentially, as Bryman (2016) reiterates, rather than stressing over the number of interviews the research should reflect the theoretical framework of the thesis more broadly. For this thesis, the people whom I interviewed were people who I lived with or met along the way at Bethel, some of the participants were people who had relocated to Redding from my own church community in Liverpool. Through word of mouth and as I met more and more people at Bethel I found more people who were interested in and willing to be interviewed. But I also met lots of people who were unwilling to be interviewed too. So the number of interviews that I did reflected this. It was a direct result of my building networks and developing relationships within Bethel during my immersive ethnography. My experience growing up in church gave me greater insight into just how impactful and affective spiritual experiences and encounters are and talking about spirit just felt like a natural way to investigate the everydayness of spirit at Bethel.

I opted for semi-structured rather than structured interviews firstly to give the interview a more relaxed feel. As I had already started to develop a relationship with each of the people I interviewed, I wanted our interviews to feel like a conversation rather than anything formal or forced. I found that this also helped the people I interviewed to relax and communicate better, safe in the knowledge that there was no right or wrong answer or way of answering. Rather, they could just speak to me as they had previously in a normal informal way. Generally speaking, I began by asking the people I interviewed to share with me why they came to Bethel before going on through different themes of experiences at Bethel such as miracles, prophecy and worship. However, my approach had a sense of freedom and flexibility to follow the rhythms of the conversation enabling me to diverge from my planned questions to probe or change my questions as I saw fit (Delyser, 2001). This meant that the interviews were very different and followed many different pathways and tangents opening the doors to glimpses of their experiences of spirit. This meant that the interviews often went in to quite a lot of depth and detail and tended to last between 2 and 3 hours. They were all audio recorded with the permission of the participants and the participants chose a pseudonym before they were transcribed.

Taking this approach with the interviews that I conducted allowed for a fluid approach that looked to spirit as it was encountered. In other words, by following the relations in our

conversation we discussed spirit as we happened into it. Practically this meant following down tangents and me asking carefully probing questions. However sometimes we would happen into spirit in more unexpected ways. For instance, in Part III: Spirit Affects when one interview was interrupted by the mighty sound of blue jays that, to me, were nothing more than annoying yet to Ben were a confirmation of spirit presencing Himself within our conversation.

Overall I found this style of research to be a fairly easy way to listen to and learn from peoples' experiences and encounters of spirit. This is, in part, I believe due to the concept of sharing one's testimony within Christian culture as a widely accepted way through which to present the things that God has done in your life. So this method is already a well-versed tool for sharing the affectivity and emotionality of the sacred between people in church. By asking people to share their testimony in terms of why they wanted to come to Bethel I found there was a sense of informality, for this would be a story that many of the participants would most likely have already shared in some way or another. Thus, the comfortable language of sharing testimony was helpful in getting the conversation flowing so I could follow other points of interest and intrigue as they cropped up.

My positionality as in-between became apparent often during the interviews. The participants weaved their stories and their experiences of the divine with their questions surrounding my own beliefs and experiences. Therefore in many of the interviews, I found that we not only discussed their experiences of the supernatural but we also talked about how that related to my own. I think this also reflected the way that the interviews were informal and conversation-like. In some interviews, the productive tension of my positionality presented as an opportunity for conversion. In this sense, I was not just the interviewer but I was the lost sheep who needed help returning to the flock whilst the participant was not simply answering my questions but was that helping hand reminding me of salvation in Christ. On the flip side of this, I also quickly became aware that my research project was presenting to several of the participants as a catalyst or grand 'sign' of some sort of coming revival wherein lots of others would become believers as a result of reading it... This was a much more difficult thing to navigate than people trying to convert me perhaps because I'm actually quite used to people trying to persuade me to come back to church given my history! So when people started to give praise or prophesise over this PhD attaching certain kinds of spiritual ramifications I found myself in a difficult spot. For, I did not want to just shut down or dismiss this kind of talk in case it damaged the flow of the

interview despite my own belief that my thesis is definitely not a sign of or catalyst for revival. My discomfort at this is not to say that I have some kind of academic superiority in my dismissal of the spiritual potential of my thesis but rather an affective response to something that emerged in the tension between the strange and the familiar.

Back home: Analysis & Writing

Arriving home after immersing myself back in the church world of Bethel initially felt like a relief. It was as if the past few months had been a weird dream that I had woken up from in that no one really knew the extent of what that time had been like. Whilst I reflect upon this more in Part V: Endings, there was no doubt that I was a different person after my Bethel experience than I was when I went. Indeed, in the first few weeks back in the UK I continued to write and record video diary entries. The method that had brought me some comfort during my time in the field continued to provide a sense of still in my mind. During those initial weeks I reflected heavily upon my time at Bethel, what I had seen, what I had felt, how becoming-with others at Bethel had impacted and affected me. Before normal life and thoughts of how to turn months of research into a functioning thesis document began to take over.

I began to think about how I would translate the hours of journaling and pages of notes and transcripts into something that resembled a thesis. Indeed, one thing that I wanted my thesis to do was to look towards detail and align itself with the NRT desire to produce more multiple and complex rather than 'whole' knowledges (Dewsbury, 2010) that are sensitive to the 'partial-ness' and 'moment-ness' of the phenomena being studied (Latham, 2003). This strategy helped me to avoid falling down a rabbit hole of over interpretation, generalisation and relying solely upon representation in an attempt to keep my methodological approach in line with my theoretical framing. But also, after the months I spent at Bethel, there was no overarching way of experiencing spirit. Rather, there were multitudes of different ways that spirit emerged and became attached within ordinary life. Given this, attempting to extract meanings through, for example, thematically coding could start to generate assumptions surrounding a more 'whole' knowledge rather than the situated, partial and incomplete approach that I am aiming to take. Indeed, Ringrose and Renold (2014) argue that coding is a practice arguably rooted in a positivist epistemology that as MacLure (2013) explains keeps the researcher at 'arm's length' from the data. Given my immersive ethnographic style of data

collection alongside my in-between positionality, being at arm's length really did not feel like it fit the agenda of my research. Additionally, MacLure's consideration that "the productive capacity for wonder that resides and radiates in data" (2013: 228) presents the untapped potential of affectivity in qualitative research and so works well within the epistemological approach of this study.

In practice, I resonated with MacLure's (2010) example, where she discusses how she acquired a wearying mass of ethnographic data and decided that rather than doing a thematic analysis she would instead focus upon where the data 'glowed'; where the data began to glimmer and gather her attention. By this, she essentially means that she allowed the affective intensities of the data to guide her in the analysis process. Taking this approach as I looked to my equally wearying mass of ethnographic data (from my scribbled field notes to my emotional ramblings on video diaries, from hours and hours of interview transcripts to my in-depth journal entries) enabled me to be reactive to the affectivity of the research and so reinforces the ways through which this is an ethnography conducted through affect rather than of affect.

As I typed up the words in each of the parts of this thesis I tried to remain tuned in to Bethel and to its affects upon me. I paid attention to the moments that stirred up something within me or made me feel something. Whether that stirring was led by a broader excitement, energy and laughter or was awkward, embarrassing or boring. As I did this, I also listened to Bethel Music. Letting the sounds from Bethel's musicians flow through me as I typed each word onto the page. Reminding myself of the world that I spent so much time getting to know. My analysis and writing up strategy meant engaging with Bethel and spirit beyond Redding. It was allowing myself to remain open to events, to the wonder as it emerges through my relations with it. To put this into Deleuzian terms, this is about the "extent that events are actualised within us, they wait for us and invite us in" (Deleuze, 2004: 169).

An openness and attention to events is one of the reasons why writing my thesis through vignettes and stories is so important. Indeed, in making the conscious choice to set out my thesis in this way I position my research as particularly sensitive to affect and open to the event – something that scholars engaging with NRT are encouraged to do (Anderson and Harrison, 2010). But in doing this, I also allow for the reader to glimpse into what life at Bethel was like, how the ordinary evolves and moves with spirit. It allows the reader to become invested in the

people who populate the vignettes, to perhaps also increase the reader's sensitivity or ability to be affected. Writing in this particular style, where vignettes seemingly bleed into one another acts as a way that I can continue to expand from my beginning points, introducing new ideas and concepts as I oscillate between the empirical and the theoretical. Writing like this also communicates snapshots of feeling, of affect. This therefore builds into how I try to presence, rather than present, ordinary life at Bethel. The stories that I share build into the idiosyncratic map of connections or the so-called dry-stone wall of my Bethel ethnography. They are generally approached with a disposition of friendliness, but some are less friendly than others. They do not make a more whole knowledge nor do they tell a full story. Rather, they offer glimpses into the world at Bethel. They presence rather than present the ways through which spirit emerges and attaches itself in everyday life. But they are never complete and never finished in how they speak to where the research glowed for one reason or another. In this sense, I resonate with Kyle Green who argued that his "own body had to be a part of [his] heuristic; and, [his] own fears, pains, desires, joys, doubts, and pleasures, part of the data" (2015: 47). Essentially, writing in this way attends to the affective 'present-ness' of the data as I treat the entire research process as a series of relational, more-than-representational events in relation to the spiritual.

Methodological Beginnings: An Overview

In Methodological Beginnings I looked to NRT in action and how conventional methods such as ethnography and interviews can be twisted and stretched in the NRT spirit of experimentalism and embracing creativity. In this section I also introduced myself to the reader further, exploring my own positionality and how my upbringing impacts the thesis. I also used this section to approach some of the questions that emerged in other sections, such as how to research spirit and spiritual experiences at Bethel. Through spending time with the community at Bethel, living not only with them but like them I found myself becoming more and more exposed to the concept of spirit not only with regards to my own life but also how spirit emerges and becomes attached within people's lives. This exposure came in part through the stories that the people I interviewed told me about their lives and experiences but also through the relations that I developed whilst at Bethel. Through the memories, the encounters and the joining in I was able to build up my own peculiar map of spirit; of singular experiences and happenstances

joined together by spirit. The people I spoke to and the relations I made allowed me to add to this map, joining together other's experiences of spirit with my own. Where my own and others embodied experiences become-with as they are pulled together by spirit – or at least in my case pulled together by an openness to the potential of spirit.

I also used this section to discuss how I negotiated my angle of arrival into Bethel as one that is not necessarily critique but embraces alternative critical dispositions. Most commonly, the disposition I approached with was one that holds friendliness and suspicion in a tension, yet this was not always the case. Regardless of what affective disposition I arrive with however, the method retains a sense of exploring a more complicated, more contradictory and more fragmented version of Bethel. In other words, the detail of specific examples is more important than comprehensive depth as I produce a piece that promises more questions than answers. Having explored both my positionality and the critical lens through which I approach Bethel I then turn to discuss my work in the field. In introducing my ethnographic approach in more detail I use this Beginning to start oscillating between theory and empirical examples offering further insights into some of the difficulties of immersive styles of research. This style of writing continued as I talked about my research when I came back home, facing the difficulties of readjusting to life after church once more. Overall the aim of this section of Beginnings has been to highlight how experiences of spirit at Bethel – and my attempts to research them - are multiple, complex and entangled.

Where to Next?

Beginnings are always arbitrary, they are always imagined, they can always be extended back further or move off sideways. Yet, beginnings are also important. They are necessary in attracting the reader's attention, in pulling together some type of focus for what is potentially to come. They act as some sort of starting point that help to make sense of the next thing. Yet, this is not to say that my thesis builds upon these beginnings in a linear and steadfast fashion. For, this part of my thesis has not been written to form the root from which the rest of the thesis can grow and emerge. Rather, Beginnings acts as a rhizomatic node, containing potential points of beginning, and many potential points of entry. Beginnings is a passing in time, it acts somewhat like an icebreaker in how it enables the reader to better come to know what they are about to delve into. Through exploring these initial points, Beginnings introduces three main entryways into my thesis: Theoretical, Contextual and Methodological.

In Theoretical Beginnings, I introduced the influence of non-representational theories and affect within Human Geography. I also discuss how the shift towards atmosphere enables my project to explore how boundaries become blurred, as well as highlighting the concepts of relationality and multiplicity and atmosphere's attention to space. I also discussed how atmosphere can be a critical lens of attunement or way of noticing things that happen. In Contextual Beginnings, I introduced Bethel Church in more detail through telling the story of their transformation from the appointment of Bill Johnson and leaving the AG to their increasingly global networks. In this section I also questioned what spirit is in the context of my thesis before moving on to explore embodiment. In this section I also introduced wonder – not as an independent fourth mode or direction to embodiment but as the shuttle of the weave

- that pulls being, doing and sensing together with spirit. I argue that this is an important way of thinking about embodiment at Bethel as it highlights the importance of being-in, being-of and becoming-with relations with spirit in ordinary life and so enables me to move away from the question of what spirit is to allow us to notice what spirit can do. In Methodological Beginnings, I fluctuated between empirical examples and theoretical discussion as I explored my methodological approach both in Redding and back home. In this section, I look to how NRT allow for a sense of experimentalism and creativity in how they stretch and twist conventional methodology. I also discuss the way that I tried to approach Bethel through the alternative disposition of friendliness. I also opened up about my own relations with spirit and the subsequent difficulties that I faced as I became-with Bethel during my research.

In each of these Beginnings I introduced some of the initial literature that informed my early decisions. I also discussed how these initial thoughts developed over time, how my thinking and approaches changed. This way of writing Beginnings demonstrates how multiple starting points are and how they can emerge and evolve, how they are lived and experienced. In this sense, Beginnings is embedded in the research process more widely. It is performed as a part required in order to make sense of thesis writing.

In taking this approach to thesis writing, I find myself crossing over and between the empirical and the theoretical, muddling them together as the research muddled them through my embodied experience of it. For, the theoretical and the empirical has spread out and grown, causing me to explore new ideas and face new concepts as it has been lived in motion. What is key, however, in understanding what comes next is that Parts II-V all rotate around different aspects of sensing spirit in everyday life at Bethel. Whether that be as it is perceived and expected, how it is or how it could be. In this way, each of the parts is formed out of my conversations and experiences of becoming-with others – including spirit - at Bethel.

Interlude One

The sun was out and the sky was clear; the Californian heat felt glorious in comparison to the cold that I imagined to be creeping through Britain in October. I had with me my supplies for the day. A laptop, a voice recorder, a notebook and pen. I also carried the Bible that a friend from home had given to me for the occasion. I was going to Bethel Church for the first time.

I pulled out of the road where my Airbnb was located. The wide, quiet roads made driving around Redding simple. The drive was short. Just a few straight roads, a few turns. Passing a university, a coffee shop, a gas station. Tall trees, the Shasta mountains; their snowy peaks a stark contrast to the sun that scorched my arm as it lay resting on the edge of my open car window. A stop sign, a set of traffic lights, then College View Road - Bethel Church's location.

The road inclined upwards and was lined with flags from countries far and wide. I joined the line of cars that were slowly making their way up. The campus came into my view on the right. A beautiful garden nestled in on the left. People wearing high visibility vests directed the line of cars towards the car park. It was busy. Spaces were limited. I ended up in the overflow parking. Grabbing my things I walked across the car park, following the crowds of other people who were also heading towards the large pale grey building with tall blacked out windows in the distance. It looked more like a warehouse than a church. As I got closer, I saw that there were posters lining the outside area reading that they would be filming for the global live stream and entering the building meant you were consenting to potentially ending up on screen. I wondered if I would end up having my face broadcast across the globe and felt conscious of this momentarily as I entered the building.

I, like so many people had arrived at the campus a good 15minutes before the service was due to start. For, through the heavy black glass doors, was loud and lively. People of all ages milled around. They filled the space, congregating around tables, forming clusters of conversation and laughter. Kids shrieked as they played, darting around racing each other whilst their parents chatted amongst themselves in the coffee shop. I walked through the lobby noticing how beyond the coffee shop was the Bethel store. I decided to venture inside. My eyes darted across the shelves that were bursting with possibilities. I wondered whether I should buy something on dream interpretation. Or perhaps on prophecy and healing? Other shelves offered different options. There was literature on practical topics such as managing finances or working through marital difficulties as well as popular Christian autobiographies and fiction. As I worked my way around the shop, I came to the range of Bethel merchandise. Bethel branding covered mugs, hats, magnets, t-shirts, jumpers, post cards, pens and even Bethel prayer oil. I made a mental note to come back another day when it was not so busy and buy a mug as a souvenir.

Heading out of the bookstore I walked back out into the lobby and instead of taking a left back into the coffee shop I took a right into Bethel's main hall. As I walked into the darkened room, the first thing that caught my eye was the huge cameras at the back of the room. They also had cameras on cranes at either side of the room. I was reminded once more of the notices on the building's exterior. Keeping my head down I headed towards the abundance of chairs, many of which were already filling up. I had come to the 1pm Sunday service, the 3rd of 4 services held on Sundays in this building. I found a seat near an aisle towards the back of the room.

Two women followed me down the row, sitting next to me. As they got settled in their seats they asked me if it was my first time at Bethel. I wondered if it was really obvious that it was. I responded that it was and returned the question. They told me that they had been before, but that they were from Oregon and would often travel via Bethel whenever they were driving down to San Francisco. I was struck once more by the pull of Bethel. By the ability of this church to bring people from all across a nation – a globe. I engaged in polite conversation a little while longer with

the two women but before long, the clock hit 1pm, the main lights dimmed and the musicians entered the stage received by large cheers from the crowd…

Part II

Atmospheres of Allure

That Uncertain Something

It was a warm afternoon when I met Helen. She was on a late lunch break having spent the first part of her day working with a group of 2nd year BSSM students as part of her internship – a required portion of her third-year curriculum. We sat on a picnic bench outside of Bethel's College View campus whilst the 2nd year students milled around, sitting on various other benches laughing and chatting amongst themselves. Originally from the UK, Helen told me about how she had given up her career and lifestyle in England to join the BSSM programme. "I thought I'll do one year, get my life wrecked, then go back to England," she explained, laughing that she was still at Bethel 3 years later. In a pause in the conversation, Helen began to reflect upon how many others in her class had also left behind their previous lives and travelled for miles to be a part of the movement that was occurring at Bethel.

After the interview was over, Helen rushed off to her next meeting and I remained on the bench for a little while, enjoying the Californian sunshine and soaking up my surroundings. As the students around me began to get themselves organised to attend their next class I paid attention to the voices that intermingled in the air. The language was English but the accents spoke to a variety of diverse places. I was reminded of Helen's earlier reflection: "The history of the spirit in this place is just crazy! You probably feel it too, you know? It's like, what is it about this place? What is it that makes people come from all over the world?"

Like Helen, none of the other people that I interviewed during my ethnography were Redding locals. This was not a particular choice; I had not set out to pick only those who had travelled

from near or far to join the church. Rather, it seemed that few people who called Bethel home were from the local area. Some people had relocated permanently whilst others were only in Redding temporarily. People tended to pass through, like the girls I met in Interlude One or, like Helen in order to study at BSSM. Whether people had chosen to make Redding their home indefinitely or intended to return home in the near future, all the people that I interviewed identified Bethel as having 'something' or being 'somewhere' different. Somewhere that was worth visiting, that was worth being in and around – even if only temporarily. Bethel was seen as a significantly spiritual space. Somewhere where faith could and would be pushed and relationships with God strengthened. But Bethel was also seen as somewhat of a peculiar place where impossibilities were troubled, intrigue was inspired and novelty generated. In this way, Bethel is surrounded in a particular type of mystery; a sense of *je ne sais quoi*. The 'certain (or perhaps uncertain) something' that emerges out of Bethel circulates well beyond the boundaries of Redding. It is transmitted through the wires, waves and currents of technologies. It travels in friendships, conversations and testimonies. It emerges within affective forces, flows, atmospheres and atmospheric practices.

My desire to come to Redding to explore Bethel ethnographically for this project was grounded in, as touched on in Part I: Beginnings, an acknowledgment of the church's importance whilst I was growing up and a growing realisation of Bethel's increasing influence in my own community's expressions of Christianity. It came from a genuine interest for meeting believers and listening to their stories. It began from a place of curiosity, of intrigue – with a friendliness towards the unknown and a willingness to get involved. My thesis began from a particular point. A point that was entangled in my history and memory. It is from this point that my entry into Bethel life was angled. Indeed, as I began my research, going out and about around Bethel, meeting more people and having more conversations the idea of the angle of arrival became an important point. It was almost an icebreaker, a way of negotiating oneself into small talk with others. It was asking if it was someone's first time. Or sharing stories of how Bethel first became entangled into their life even if from afar. Learning about each other's relations with Bethel became a very normal way of making conversation, of getting to know people. Whilst I perhaps did not initially recognise it, these types of questions and answers looking to understand the motivations and desires within people's hearts for Bethel turned out to be a really interesting insight into the imaginings that Bethel creates. So for this reason, I want to use Part II: Atmospheres of Allure to look a little more closely at these stories and responses, opening up

the thesis to Helen's question: "what is it that makes people from all over the world come to Bethel?"

Part II: Atmospheres of Allure, therefore, looks to that 'uncertain something' as I explore the particular type of motivating mystery that surrounds Bethel. My suggestion is that these imaginaries begin to emerge in relation with Bethel's style of spiritual allure – one that broadly centres upon the church's pursuit of revival and their prioritisation of encountering spirit's presence. Within the broader literature, the concept of allure and 'the allure of things' has generated some traction, particularly with regards to philosophy and aesthetics (e.g. Faber and Goffey, 2014; Harman, 2005; Lunning, 2016). However, several geographers have also looked to the concept as a means of further exploring our ever-complex relations with the world around us (e.g. Ash and Simpson, 2019; Thrift, 2010; McCormack, 2017). Ideas surrounding allure, being allured and alluring relations are therefore unpicked and examined throughout this part as I weave ways that people encountered and mediated affective atmospheres of allure with some theoretical understandings and discussion. So in this section, the vignettes pay attention to people's initial relations, their early recollections and memories of Bethel. It illuminates people's motivations and the desires and passions that drove their relocation to Redding. It looks to how they imagined the church to be, painting a picture that reflects the conditional mood (Vannini, 2015c) as it brings attention to potentials and possibilities that may or may not be fulfilled in the end. It is by looking to these possibly unfulfilled potentials that this chapter tries to evoke fragments of what Bethel is, or what Bethel can be. Allowing for us to wonder how else something could be, as we notice what is.

Here, I focus upon the stories that the people I met at Bethel shared with me, looking to the lived experience of spirit as told by the participants in addition to my own immersive ethnographic endeavours at Bethel. As I knit them together, this section pays attention to the ways that Bethel's affective allure unfolds within the atmospheres of people's everyday Christian lives. Looking to the ways through which atmospheres with the power to enchant, to attract and to allure emerge as people become-with Bethel. As I look to the affective allure of Bethel and introduce the reader to some of the people that I met during my ethnography, I oscillate between empirical reflections and theory. This means that I centre my approach upon how Bethel's affective allure was actually experienced and reflected in the empirical fieldwork and allow the theory to weave in and flow with the conversation. Therefore, this section builds

upon recent discussions within Geography that highlight the importance of shared feelings and the collectivity of affect with regards to spiritual or religious experience (Bartolini et al., 2018; Finlayson, 2012; 2016; Scriven, 2019; 2020; Williams, 2016). But also, as I switch between theory and ethnography I also step sideways, following the research as it is lived and moves. For instance, later in this section I introduce the importance of enchantment and being enchanted – but also the power of not being enchanted - as particular technologies of Bethel's allure.

By taking this approach and following the research I attempt to slow the quick jump to representational thinking and critique just long enough to perform "some of the intensity and texture that makes [ordinary affects] habitable and animate" (Stewart, 2007: 4). As mentioned in Part I: Beginnings, this follows Kathleen Stewart in how I use my thesis to create an "idiosyncratic map of connections between a series of singularities" (2007: 5). Essentially, I am not trying to provide a concrete theory surrounding why Bethel is growing in popularity nor am I trying to assimilate the different people that I meant and their diverse experiences of spirit into some false sense of commonality with some sort of magical closure. Rather I focus upon noticing what drew people to Bethel. The affective allure that tended to be entangled and woven into the participants testimonies and experiences. Sometimes only flashing by momentarily, sometimes simmering along for a while. However, by writing in this style and noticing the ways that Bethel's affective allure comes into view, my research demonstrates more diverse ways of being - and being allured.

An Unopened Envelope

Phil, a first year BSSM student, invited me to the house he was renting in Downtown Redding for what would be the first interview I'd conduct two weeks into my ethnographic fieldwork. Originally from the UK, I asked Phil why he had left home and travelled across the Atlantic to be at Bethel. Taking a moment to pause and reflect on my question, he responded, "I don't know what it was but I think I really loved what I saw coming out of Bethel. Like if there's any type of Christian that I want to be it's like what I saw coming out of Bethel." I nodded along, understanding the idea that there was indeed a particular 'type' of Christian and Christianity created by and formed within Bethel. "I'd never even met anyone from Bethel but it was just on how they appear, the sound that they are releasing," Phil continued. Interestingly, as Phil explained, he had never met anyone from Bethel before he decided to apply for BSSM,

he just felt there was something different about Bethel. Something felt different, looked different, sounded different. What the difference was, he never actually expanded upon. But I found myself strangely understanding exactly what he meant. There was just a feeling that there was something else, something more that can be normally experienced in everyday life. This particular thing underlined Phil's reasoning for wanting to come to Bethel, to experience it for himself, to become the 'type' of Christian that Bethel creates.

Phil's understanding of Bethel, before he applied for BSSM, was not too dissimilar to the reasons I chose Bethel as a case study for my thesis. For, before I had even visited Bethel I also was affected by the imaginaries that surrounded it. Indeed, in my own personal upbringing within a Charismatic Christian community Bethel was held up as this mysterious and mystical place where the supernatural was commonplace. It was not uncommon for members to go out to visit Bethel to encounter the supernatural for themselves. Upon their return, they would share the experiences they had with our small, inner city church in Liverpool. Their stories of gold dust or gemstones suddenly materialising in their hands, experiences of healings and prophecies and having visions of or encounters with ethereal spiritual beings troubled our boundaries of what we conceived as impossible. To me, Bethel was a mysterious place, where the natural becomes supernatural, where weird yet powerful spiritual encounters can be had. Everything that I had heard about Bethel (good and bad) pointed to it being a particular space that was especially spiritual. It was just different. In this way the mystery of this something different, something else - this *something* more - at Bethel is key to its affective allure.

The general idea of having hidden qualities or hosting mystery is central to the power of allure. In his work on stratospheric envelopes, Derek McCormack (2017) argues that the sealed envelope is alluring due to its distinctive mode of withdrawal. Yet, its allure also comes from the fact that the withdrawn object remains open to possibility, it presents a multiplicity of writings and readings and trajectories of thought. The closed envelope enacts possibility and intrigue: a handwritten letter containing news unknown or perhaps a birthday card that may or may not contain money. It is the uncertain status of the unopened envelope that arouses our interest and stimulates our curiosity.

Like the unopened envelope, Bethel with its uncertain status of events, occurrences and supernatural happenings mark it as alluring. In its distinctive mode of withdrawal Bethel

stimulates “explorations of their nature and character because they are able to arouse repeated interest or stimulate curiosity” (Thrift, 2010: 296). Whilst Phil did not really expand upon what he meant by ‘type of Christian’ he almost did not need to because I understood instinctively what he meant. There was just something that from afar drew us both in by intrigue and curiosity. We were never quite close enough to understand what we meant to be able to put that in words but we both felt it. We felt Bethel’s atmosphere of allure.

For Phil, Bethel’s mode of withdrawal meant he could only access fragments of Bethel online. A song, a preach or a testimony streamed on Bethel’s digital platform or YouTube. There was so much more to experience, so many more possibilities that could be opened out, unlocked and reached if only he could visit. For me, it was the promise of being in touching distance of the spirit presences and supernatural occurrences that had impacted my community in Liverpool. It sparked my interest making me want to explore it further, luring me in, driving my desire to visit. Perhaps this is because things whether they are supernatural churches or unopened envelopes become alluring when they can evoke the idea of some sort of ‘dark agents at work’ below the surface (Harman, 2005: 150). Where they not only display particular qualities but also allude to something deeper than that which can actually be displayed (Shaviro, 2014).

Yet, as something withdraws it also becomes intensely presenced and felt. Like perhaps how that mysterious unopened envelope can play on our mind. It’s particular mode of withdrawal does not mean that it is distant or aloof. On the contrary, through allure’s relations with withdrawal, things are able to grow in their ability to touch us, to preoccupy our mind, to hold us captive and captivated…

The Laptop Screen

It was not long after I interviewed Phil that I was put in touch with another first year BSSM student named Chloe. Chloe was a bubbly, 19-year-old and was more than happy to share her experiences with me and so we set a date for the interview. In a similar way to my interview with Phil, I started off by asking her what it was that made her decide to come to Bethel. I had learnt quite quickly that this question was never easily answered and often demanded somewhat of a back story. For Chloe, this back story included how one weekend she had the

flu. “So I was really sick and just started watching a bunch of Bethel videos,” Chloe told me. She explained how she had spent the whole weekend in her bed back home in Florida staring at the laptop screen. She was held captive by Bethel’s worship videos. “I just loved the way they worshipped so freely and just the presence of like I don’t even know.” Indeed, as Sydney-Smith (2006) notes, our impressions of places come from audio-visual representations as they also do from real life.

The moving bodies, the band, the songs all built into what Chloe understood as worship. Yet, the worship scene that moved across her screen shifted from its qualities. It became something else as Chloe felt a presence of something unknown, some type of mystery, some dark agents (or perhaps in this scene – light agents!) that made her exclaim, “I want to go!” The worship scene was at once both recognisable and distinct yet something other communicated through Chloe’s laptop screen that weekend with such power that Chloe relocated across the country at great personal effort and expense.

Allure has been understood fundamentally as an interaction between objects and their sensual qualities (Harman, 2005). The interaction of allure functions differently from ‘normal’ perceptions or interactions due to how it splits the objects from its sensual notes. Here, notes mean the cultural concepts that are attached to the object; referring not only to the object in question but the objects that it is related to via its community, its history and its relations with concepts and conditions that surround and often define that object in the world (Lunning, 2016). So at Bethel, the church’s sensual notes could be said to combine into a kaleidoscope of material, relational, sensuous and personal arrangements that make up what Bethel *is*. The chairs, stages, lighting, music, cameras, dancing and worshipping bodies. Bethel’s particular history, its renown, its influence, its positioning and relations within Christianity locally and globally. Bethel’s impact on Redding’s local community as well as Redding’s economy and city council. All of those things make up Bethel and Bethel is inseparable from those things. These things can be accessed through the computer screen by Phil and Chloe, making up a picture of what Bethel is about. However, allure “allows impregnable objects to communicate with each other in their sensual form” (Nieuwenhuis, 2014: 12). Allowing notions of ‘what is’ to change to possibilities of ‘what if’ or ‘what could be’ as things break free from their qualities (Faber and Goffey, 2014), or shift whilst remaining recognisable and distinct (Ash and Simpson, 2019). Allure therefore creates pulls towards difference, change and potential.

This can be seen in the people that Phil recognises as Christian - but there is something else, something separating them making them appear to function differently, splitting them from his perception of 'normal' Christianity. Or in the video that Chloe watched, a recognisable scene of worship playing out across her screen yet something distinctly other. The allure of Bethel emerges as a tension or a "a special sort of interference" in "the usual relation between a concealed sensual object and its visual symptoms" (Harman, 2005: 150). In this tension, allure splits the object from its notes, unleashing the object to unfathomable depths producing "another special sort of reality, one that awakens numerous overtones of an object now grown deeply hidden" (Harman, 2005: 187). In other words, allure alludes to some kind of mysterious depths beyond the quality of the 'thing' itself. Exuding something beyond in the overtones hinted at though a sense of a different style, sound, image.

The allure of Bethel means that the large video cameras that immediately caught my eye when I first visited a Sunday service are not simply machines to document but devices that captivate as they communicate hope and wonder. They become technologies that enable spiritual encounters beyond the boundaries of the room engaging with the hearts and souls of viewers like Phil and Chloe from all over the world. The chairs become more than convenient and comfortable objects for rest and sitting that are ordered by and order bodies in particular ways in particular services or class layouts. Rather chairs become vehicles that move around the room, that may be suddenly cast aside, that are stood on, nuisances that must be climbed over. The cups of coffee that are served in the lobby, no longer hot beverages that provide refreshment and an energy boost but modes of, as one participant explained, "finding God in the little things, in the everyday things, my coffee cultivates an awareness of His presence." Bethel is not just a church of passionate believers but a space where heaven ruptures through the atmosphere, where supernatural presences manifest and bodies are miraculously altered, healed and transformed.

Allure creates a space beyond. In its particular ability to split things from their sensual notes, allure stretches Bethel Church in our imagining. Allure opens up potentials for becoming-with extending us beyond even the realms of possibility into the alluring realities of the wonderous and the miraculous. Essentially, Bethel is alluring because it generates a "lure for feeling"

(Whitehead, 1978: 86)[24] – it allows for and animates this process of change, of creativity, of becoming-with.

Intensities

Rachel, a third year BSSM student was one of the participants that I found myself spending a lot of time with during my ethnography. Her hospitality and interest in my project meant that she was not only a valuable gatekeeper to further interviews but also a whole lot of fun. During one interview session that I had with her we got onto the topic of why she had wanted to go to Bethel in the first place.

She explained that she always knew that there was more: "Like I didn't come here to just learn how to quote Bible scriptures and say nice prayers or preach really well," she explained as she manoeuvred around her kitchen making us some fresh coffee, "I really wanted to actually find out what's true and experience God. Like if there are ways in which people experience God and I'm not, then I want to know what that is like." For Rachel, much of the power of Bethel's allure came from her perception that Bethel would allow her to *really* experience God. To really feel something different. To find that 'more' that she was certain existed. For her it meant opening her mind to the possibilities of experience that could be had at Bethel.

As Sara MacKian (2012) argues, when spirits erupt into the earthly world they collapse established boundaries requiring individuals to renegotiate 'reality'. This idea of troubling our understandings is important within Bethel's affective allure for Rachel. For, if allure is something that leads us by curiosity or draws us in through intrigue, alluding to something beyond the quality of itself then the potential that Bethel offers to glimpse and operate within that differently imagined or shifted reality is important. In this way, allure not only points to a

[24] This notion of a lure for feeling can be understood as a rather poetic way of Whitehead describing the two natures of God (See, Dorien, 2008). Where there is firstly the primordial nature (God as a concept which does not change) and the consequent nature (as a result of choices, this is derivative and open to change as the world creatively advances). In other words, within Whitehead's philosophy there is a sense of givenness - the 'what is' - as well as a 'lure for feeling' or a pull towards a sense of being eternally alive with indeterminacy – the 'what ifs'. This pull and change occurs through creative processes. So for Whitehead, neither God nor creation would be seen as complete but rather both are evolving through their relations with creativity. Therefore, this idea of an ever-evolving sense of God and religion, one that becomes-with feeling and evolves and advances with our creative entanglements with it resonates with my suggestion of the power of allure in the becoming-with of Bethel.

quality of mystery and fascination or as something that is hidden yet recognised but allure also acts as an affective force that intimately connects people and things (and spirits) in 'magical' ways (Dernikos, 2019).

The allure of Bethel can therefore be thought of as an affective force, inviting us in through its captivating power and holding us in its affective grasp. In part, Bethel's magic or magical capacities to attract or captivate people, rely upon the imagining that Bethel can intensify people's sensory and emotional attachments with spirit. For Rachel, a deeper, more intensely sensed and felt reality with spirit was what was magical about Bethel. It was what she could not get at home. Intense ways of being with and becoming-with spirit is therefore important within Bethel's affective allure. Indeed it was this that guided Rachel's decision to apply to BSSM.

Bethel's renown as a place of miraculous encounters means that people like Rachel visit Bethel with particular understandings and expectations of what they will encounter. From afar, there is a sense of an ideal or utopian Bethel, where what may feel impossible at home can somehow become possible at Bethel. Where "what is otherwise unsubstantiated and culturally improbable in the present world is now validated, somehow 'proven' by its existence in another, distant one" (McCracken, 1996: 106). For Rachel, going to Bethel is therefore captivating through its ability to intensify her sensory and emotional connections with spirit which in turn would allow her to experience and learn things that she could not do at home in the UK.

Bethel's ability to affectively captivate largely circulates in tandem with the value that they place on experiencing spirit rather than just understanding it. For example, during my first visit to BSSM, Bethel's senior pastor Bill Johnson was teaching the first-year students. He explained how, "God doesn't want the gospel to be reduced to human understanding [where we value] concepts over experience […] It is not good enough to simply grow in understanding. There has to be an experience of God." This ideology where experiencing God is the most important part of the Christian lifestyle is, in part, one of the reasons why Bethel has caused such an uproar within the broader Christian scene. But it is also why it has become so attractive within the neoliberal shift that increasingly favours personal spirituality over institutionalised religion

(Finke and Stark, 2005; Taylor, 2016). As Steve Pile (2018) suggests, the move away from religion's institutional forms creates new ways of being 'religious' in the world.

For Phil, Bethel's magical allure emerged through the ways that it presented an alternative Christian reality. Similarly for Rachel, this alternative Christian reality would enable her to experience and practice her Christianity in new and more intensified ways. Empowering her to access new truths and new understandings of the world around her. In this way, the allure of Bethel was not simply a "vague metaphysical dimension" of the church but "its allure is also a quality of the form it takes, the affects it catalyzes, and the surfaces it presents" (McCormack, 2017: 5). In other words, the affective world that the allure of Bethel creates, circulates and recirculates produces a sense of mystery, of magic, of wonder and possibility, drawing people closer through intrigue and captivation. As Phil, Chloe and Rachel explained, the magic of Bethel was communicated non-discursively from afar through particular feelings, thoughts and affects of something other. Yet, the affective pull of Bethel's distant allure was strong enough to persuade them to pack up and relocate.

The Friends

We were sat in the living room of the house that Sarah shared with her husband and another couple who were also Bethel members. By now I was in the swing of doing my interviews and had already spent a lot of time getting to know Sarah in the previous weeks. So I found myself swaying away from the handwritten scrawl of potential questions in my notebook with an ease I only wished I had had in the start. Following the flow of the conversation, Sarah began to open up more about her life before Bethel. In what was only a brief moment in our conversations, she told me how she first heard about Bethel. "I heard about it from friends back home, like some friends who had done it before." Continuing, Sarah explained, "I really loved them – like they were amazing role models and I just looked at them and was like I don't know what they have but I want that! Like even what they are going after in life, that type of thing." The affective allure of Bethel transmitted between bodies, circulating within Sarah's relationship with her friend creating particular feelings and stirring particular desires. Therefore, the allure of Bethel presents as a potential for people's own qualities to shift whilst remaining recognisable and distinct. Sarah's friends were different, their qualities had shifted

at Bethel yet they were recognisable and distinct in who they were to Sarah. They had become and were going after something different, and Sarah wanted that too.

Companies increasingly attempt to appeal to what Tarde calls "passionate interests" (in, Thrift, 2010) - where they sell particular qualities of feeling or experiences that build into a certain type of lifestyle - not simply a product. Similarly, Bethel also offers promises of particular qualities of feeling and experiences that fold into specific supernatural, radical Christian lifestyles. This lifestyle is based upon their own practices and the radical Christian or revival culture that they create. The offer of naturally supernatural, revivalist lifestyles appeals to the passionate interests of Christians like Sarah. It draws people in, offering them a modification of being. For, there was something about those friends, having come back from Bethel, that was altered. Sarah did not quite know what they had done but she wanted to do that too. In this sense, the affective allure of Bethel is caught up within the mystery of the modified self of who you could be – or who you could potentially transform into - if you were to only go.

In thinking about how the affective allure of Bethel was tied up within how Sarah witnessed her friend's modification of being and wanted that herself, I want to shift the thinking of the affectivity of allure towards alluring atmospheres. Bille and Simonsen (2019) note the recent conceptual turn from affect to affective atmospheres, where atmospheres emerge as the particular lens for considering the affective engagements people have with the world around them. Indeed, in most recent accounts, atmosphere is described as a kind of aesthetic-affective quality of space (Duncan et al., 2020). As "something distributed yet palpable, a quality of environmental immersion that registers in and through sensing bodies while also remaining diffuse, in the air, ethereal" (McCormack, 2008: 413). Where "atmosphere does not so much reside in place as emerge from our ongoing encounters with it" (Sumartojo and Pink, 2018: 20). In this way, atmosphere is a "spatial carrier of attunement" (Böhme, 1995: 29, in Bille and Simonsen, 2019: 8) that emphasises "the emergent and fluid dimension of how place is sensed and experienced" (Adey, 2009: 5). It is therefore from bodies that atmosphere emerges (e.g. Ash,2013).

Sarah had not visited Bethel but the particular tone of feeling or attunement that she had towards Bethel was mediated through this meeting with her friends. In their very being, very attitude to life, Sarah was able to engage with the performative hue as imaginings of Bethel

were pressed upon her, emerging out of her friendship as an alluring atmosphere. This points to how atmosphere emerges from practices, bodies and material culture (Bille and Simonsen, 2019) in ways that are both relational yet autonomous; belonging to "collective situations, and yet can be felt as intensely personal" (Anderson, 2009: 80). For instance, looking towards Anderson and Ash (2015), they explain how when they encountered a woman with a tube up her nostril they began imagining the sensation of the catheter despite never having experienced it. Through this example, the woman, "created an atmosphere through the assemblage of entities that were very localised to her own body, but still had a powerful, transmittable affect" even after she had left the room (Anderson and Ash, 2015: 46).

For Sarah upon being reunited with her friends, the affects that were communicated and took on new intensities were also transmitted to her - erupting out of that relation as a new atmosphere. It was something that the act of conversation created. It was out of the meal they shared, the coffee they drank, the conversation, the laughter, the reminiscing. The sharing of time amongst friends, the difference and transformation that occurred between the friends they were 'before' and the friends they are now. This was what allowed Sarah to imagine what she could be if she went to Bethel, despite never having been. For Sarah, this recognition of marked 'difference' in the assemblage of entities that were localised to her friends and their experiences at Bethel whilst also having a powerful and transmittable effect upon her created new atmospheres of intrigue, desire and allure.

Atmosphere, however, is not just the outcome of some kind of encounter between bodies (Sumartogo and Pink, 2018) but atmospheres imbue space with a 'performative hue', 'pressing' upon bodies, shaping how we move, negotiate and inhabit spaces (Anderson, 2009: Bissell, 2010; Duff and Moore, 2015; Duncan et al., 2020). In this way, the affective allure of Bethel becomes something that is not just sensed but practiced by lived bodies; people are continuously affecting and being affected through how they take part in atmospheres (Bille and Simonsen, 2019). This points to how atmosphere is understood *as* the relation between bodies rather than emerging *in* relation to the affectivity of life. In other words, affective atmospheres are not something that are just felt or simply condition our perception but atmosphere "simultaneously positions the felt space as something humans *do"* (Bille and Simonsen, 2019: 10 emphasis in the original).

The atmospheric allure of Bethel therefore emerged as the relation between Sarah and her friends - but also within her own relations with herself. In this sense, by creating the opportunity for the transformation of self, Bethel Church affectively catalyses the emergence of, and emerges in, atmospheres of allure. In other words, as Bethel's atmospheres of allure are practiced through the imagining of potential versions of self if one attends Bethel, Bethel both brings forth such atmospheres of allure and is revealed by what is alluring. Allure, therefore, emerges as an atmospheric practice as Sarah begins to wonder who she is now and what she could metamorphosis into if she also attended Bethel church…

The Stage

Jordan, a worship leader at Bethel, shared with me about how he had grown up in a very conservative, very traditional Mennonite community. Not long before he decided to come to Bethel, he told me how he and his wife had moved to a more contemporary, evangelical congregation. Whilst the transition was initially difficult, his passion for worship music was important in driving this change. We began to talk about this church he started attending. "It was a church of like 50 with no skilled musicians at all […] I sing, lead worship and love music in general and that was a big thing that Bethel had," Jordan explained to me. As a passionate musician, the affective allure of Bethel for Jordan was wrapped up within the opportunities of Bethel Music. Like Sarah, the alluring imagining of what you could be or become at Bethel was apparent within my conversation with Jordan. In this way the atmospheric practice of worship in his own church was much different to what he imagined it to be at Bethel.

"[Being on] the Bethel stage, leading like 900 students with top-quality musicians and top sound equipment and all this stuff was intimidating," Jordan explained, "I had to hold my plan very open handed and stay very humble I guess." As Jordan reflected on his initial excitement and the lure of being a part of Bethel Music, this was underpinned by a sense of intimidation, of not really being sure that he belonged on a stage so well known for producing huge Christian hits. In this sense, the atmospheric practice of allure, of wanting to go to Bethel, was underpinned by the presence of other bodies. These bodies include other human bodies – the music technicians, the producers and songwriters. The popular artists who have become well known in the world of contemporary Christian music and the marketing moguls and videographers who bring their sounds to a wider audience. But also the bodies of non-human

music technologies. The speakers, amplifiers, soundboards and PA systems. The instruments, the pedals, the microphones and recording systems. Therefore, not only are relations with human bodies important but so is the material world around us in its ability to affect and be affected. For, both human bodies and materiality are "attuned with affective potentials, where the resulting atmospheres are affective forces" (Bille and Simonsen, 2019: 11).

Making worship music at Bethel was simultaneously alluring yet terrifying for Jordan. Bethel materialised in his imagination as a space that was both able to attend to his passionate interest in music but would also push him way out of his comfort zone as he predicted his entanglement within the material world of Bethel's stage. The power of allure as he reflected upon the careers that have been made through playing on that stage. Allure as an affective force therefore becomes entwined within other affective forces through Jordan's atmospheric wondering of his own talents and abilities being used within Bethel's musical scene. Could he live up to it? Would he have the nerve or the charisma to lead, not only the church's congregation but the many thousands tuning in from all across the globe? In this way, an atmosphere of allure is not just a simple outcome of encountering Bethel Church for Jordan but demonstrates how atmosphere affects bodies differently, with differing levels of intensity (Bille et al., 2015). For Sarah, imagining herself at Bethel, having what her friends had felt wholly positive, driving her desire to attend. For Jordan, it was entangled with feelings of inadequacy but nevertheless a willingness to give it a go albeit keeping his plan to be on the worship team 'very open handed'. In this way, atmosphere is as Bissell (2010: 273) describes - a "propensity: a pull of charge that might emerge in a particular space which might (or might not) generate particular events and actions, feelings and emotions". The emphasis here is on 'might' – Bethel might generate feelings of allure or of intrigue and curiosity. But importantly, it might not. Or it might, but it might also be entangled within a lot of other feelings and actions and emotions too, as is the case with Jordan.

A Stirring

I was sitting in the kitchen of my Airbnb in Redding when a message popped into my inbox. It was from a woman called Eliza. In her message she told me how she had heard about my project through a friend of hers and she wanted to be involved. She asked if I was free that afternoon. Glad that all those hours of networking and awkwardly trying to strike up

conversations and meet people around the Bethel campus was paying off in the form of a willing participant - I agreed and we met.

"God is really blessing your project," she told me once we were sat down at the café we were meeting at in reference to people spreading the word about what I was doing.

"I've heard that from a few people actually…" I responded, feeling once again unsure as to what to do with this type of sentiment that I was increasingly finding aimed at my research. Turning the conversation back to Eliza, I asked her what had made her come to Bethel. She told me how she was listening to a Bill Johnson sermon in her North Carolina home when he mentioned BSSM. Eliza explained, "I felt a stirring from the spirit. I just knew. I just had to go. So I did."

Coming to Bethel was, as mentioned earlier, alluring in the ways that Bethel allows for more potential encounters, or more possibilities for potential intense sensory and emotional encounters with God and therefore deeper relationship with God to be established. The idea of having a relationship with God is significant in understanding how Bethel cultivates atmospheres of allure across bodies and things. Yet, these atmospheres of allure are not only transmitted out of relations between the materiality of human bodies and objects or technologies. But they also cross the ontological divide disrupting im/materiality as spirit generated more-than-material or beyond-material atmospheric practices.

For Eliza, the alluring atmosphere of Bethel arose in that moment. In that relation between Bill Johnson, spirit and herself. Yet, within Geography, little attention is given to the role of spirits "that co-constitute the material, bodily, sensational and sensory worlds" (Williams, 2016: 3) – or atmospheres – within spirituality and spiritual practices. However, as Eliza explained, the role of spirit in co-producing her desire to go to Bethel was important. For whilst she may have independently wanted to one day visit and she enjoyed listening to their sermons and worship songs, it was not until this 'stirring' within her emerged that her decision to go was cemented.

In a somewhat similar way to Sarah, a collective or a relationship was an important factor in generating the tangible sense of allure that prompted relocation to Bethel. Yet, for Eliza, allure did not emerge out of the atmospheric practices that the scene of friends reunited once again produced. Rather, allure emerged out of her relationship with spirit. As the spirit stirred her, it

evoked an alluring sense of something that needed to be acted upon. As Pile et al (2019) explain, faith can produce all kinds of affective intensities and atmospheres that are registered in the body as deep and personal. In this way, atmospheres capture a 'store of action-potential' that trigger particular 'structures of feeling' that modify people's willingness to act in response (Bissell, 2010; Duff, 2016; Duncan et al., 2020). That stirring, the tangible, bodily knowledge that was a commonly described sensation throughout the interviews was interpreted by Eliza as spirit's way of co-producing an atmosphere that modified Eliza's willingness to move her life.

"I'm a feeler – although I don't really like that term," Eliza told me. I asked her to expand on what she meant, "It's like you feel things, like it's how I hear from God kind of thing." Her being a feeler could be understood as her being attuned to how God creates atmosphere that she must decipher emotionally, trying to detect a message through the ways her body picked up on the particular tone or aura of atmosphere.

In Pile and colleagues (2019: 8) work on affect in mediumship, they argue that it is important to think about how affect moves between corporeal bodies, "but also through non-corporeal bodies – such as ideas, images, representations and, of course, Spirit itself." Their move to include spirit as an agent in the production of affectual forms is a rare example within work in the social sciences and one that I also wish to take. For in that small moment when Eliza was listening to that sermon, the incorporeal spirit, was materialised within Eliza's own corporeality through the production of its affects. Spirit therefore should not be discounted in its role of an active agent "who is affecting and being affected through the practices of the lived body taking part in atmospheres" (Bille and Simonsen, 2019: 10). The stirring within her, a particular atmospheric practice of allure that generated a need to respond, a desire to go, a sign from above. In other words, spirit was an agent in the production of the affectual forms of Bethel's allure in Eliza experience – and she was not the only participant to relay the importance of God's spirit Himself in the allure of Bethel.

A Vibe

One of the last interviews that I undertook was in a small, dimly lit café in Downtown Redding with Tamara. Now a BSSM alumni and staff member, she reflected back on how she initially

heard about Bethel. “My friend told me stories about here and about what he had seen here. I’d never seen a miracle! I was like - how can this information have been withheld from me?!” Tamara continued to explain how after hearing about the miraculous encounters that could be had at Bethel she turned to her computer and spent all weekend watching videos and researching Bethel. Having grown up in the ultra-religious southern ‘Bible Belt’ Tamara was shocked by what she found online.

“I just thought it looked really creepy and she’s like shaking and going OOOHHH and I was like does she have a demon?! It was not normal […] and she’s telling healing stories but I can’t get over the weird stuff!” For Tamara, the world at Bethel was not ‘normal’ it was in stark contrast to all she knew of Christianity and Christian practices. Therefore, the things at Bethel that were alluringly different for some of the other people I met, actually had the opposite effect on Tamara. For, as Tamara told me, after her research she dismissed Bethel and did not think much more about the church – that is, until one year later.

Tamara told me about how she had been going through a rough time at her own church and was beginning to question a lot of what she thought she knew about God. She told me how one day she was randomly reminded about what her friend had told her and decided that she would take a chance and just visit Bethel. In this way, the allure of Bethel only began to affectively creep into her life when her home church began to fail her.

Hardly catching a breath, Tamara explained how she decided to just drive up to Redding and visit Bethel for a long weekend. Intrigued by what she had heard from her friend. Attracted to the notion of another way of being Christian. In remembering his narrative of Bethel, an alluring sense of a new world of possibility, of mystery and of miracles began to emerge.

Tamara recalled how she spent the whole weekend going to various services and ministries at Bethel. Her southern accent, sense of humour and incredible story telling ability had me sat in the café drinking my coffee, fully attentive and laughing along with her as she explained those first experiences of Bethel. I found myself empathising with how she had perceived the absurdities of encountering Bethel for the first time. How random people you did not know would come up to you and prophesy over you. How people would jerk and seize around in the

space right next to you during worship. Indeed, many of her reflections on those initial experiences were unnervingly consistent with my own.

One experience that particularly resonated with me was when she began to tell me about her trip to the Healing Rooms. "Well I just had no grid for that!" she began. I soon found myself nodding along remembering how I too had attended the Healing Rooms. As my mind filled with memories of my own trip, Tamara continued. "Everything was just like circular. It was like different. A different energy. Like anything could happen here. It's like you know, you just feel this energy in the room like something's going on, what's happening here. Like it is lit. So I walked into the room and everyone is really calm but it felt like a concert. It was a vibe."

I understood exactly what Tamara meant by Healing Rooms being a 'vibe'; a juxtaposition between calm and concert as the colours, lights, music and general composition that contributed to the atmospheric practice of just sitting there in it. It was a stark contrast from sitting in that same room for a Sunday service. During the Healing Rooms, the chairs that normally fill the entire space only lined the walls. In the centre of the room there were a collection of large paintings on easels that I was told were prophetic paintings that inspired as well as generated healings themselves. People wearing brightly coloured clothes, dancing on the stage waving colourful flags in harmony with the soft background music from the band. A tangible energy, an affectively charged and practiced atmosphere that was produced by a constellation of material and immaterial bodies in ways that we both had never encountered before. It induced a certain imagining of spiritual potential, as Tamara reflected, "it felt like anything could happen here."

When I was sitting in that big, almost empty room, watching the dancers and listening to the music I was filled with a sense of wonder. What was going to happen next? The main room was the preliminary room before you were called to the smaller side rooms where the healing takes place. I sat, wondering; what will happen when I walk through those doors and take my turn under the prayerful hands of the healers? I felt this "perception of *something* unseen but profoundly felt" (Williams, 2016: 46 original emphasis) – this vibe – so intensely that I did not end up following the inevitable directed journey through the doors to the secret small side rooms. The atmospheric practices of just sitting within a space of healing where spirit seemed to circulate in the air, charging it with some sort of potential. An electricity that buzzed with

possibility, evoking a future impression of what the journey towards the side rooms would elicit in me. I sat in there for a while. In amongst the particular composition of colours, lights and music. Watching the moving bodies both on the stage and those around me entering the room, before following its pathways towards healing. It's intensities creating "actual bodily dispositions, leaving marks in the landscape of existence, and affective memories, or traces within [my] body" (Dewsbury and Cloke, 2009: 697). I made a rapid exit.

Tamara, however, made it through to the small rooms where the actual healing occurs. When she was there, Tamara explained how she witnessed a little boy being prayed for and his sight being supernaturally restored. She recalled how during the event at The Healing Rooms the kid's mum was "bawling her eyes out on the ground" whilst his dad was, "taking steps back and holding up numbers and the kid was just saying the numbers then they back up and the kid just keeps saying the numbers and he's like backing up and up and the kid kept saying the right numbers over and over!" She explained how she later saw someone post about the event on Facebook. When she read the post about this little boy's story, she learnt that he had been born severely partially sighted and had undergone 6 different surgeries each unsuccessful in their attempts to completely restore his sight. It appeared that nothing could be done to repair this little boy's vision. Until, that is, he came to Bethel.

"My whole world was just rocked," Tamara explained noting how everything in her belief and theology had been, "flipped upside down with tangible evidence," by this enchanting trip to the Healing Rooms. Tamara decided at that moment that she was going to leave her life behind and move to Redding to be a part of Bethel. The particular movement of spirit that Tamara witnessed in the Healing Rooms, the atmosphere that she lived that day became wrapped within an enchanting sense of allure. The role of the miraculous movement of spirit therefore played a central part in her decision to relocate – replacing her earlier scathing with a new sense of captivation and wonder. As I touched upon briefly earlier, Thrift (2010) explains how allure is powerful in its ability to create digestible 'worlds' that communicate with us non-discursively. As I have gone on to argue, much of this is due to the ways through which allure is encountered and practiced atmospherically as a relation between bodies, spirits and things.

The allure of Bethel therefore emerges through its ability to produce atmospheres that are practiced in such a way where the boundaries between the immaterial and the material or the

spiritual and the earthly are increasingly blurred. For Thrift, this is what allows allure to generate "certain kind of secular magic" (2010: 290). Thrift's language concerning the magic and magical properties of allure are in this sense strictly metaphorical. He emphasises that whilst allure is producing a more magical world, it "generates enchantment without supernaturalism" (2010: 290). Yet, within the context of Bethel – its affective allure is arguably practiced in ways that generate enchantment *with* supernaturalism.

The type of enchantment that Tamara experienced that day in the Healing Rooms, that was "on the one hand, of excitement, awe, and wonder and, on the other, of unease, dislocation, and unpredictability" (Holloway, 2010: 625) was enchantment *with* supernaturalism. For, enchantment manoeuvres our sensory perception allowing us to become transfixed in wonder and transported by sense (Wilson, 2017). It generates a disturbing feeling that our "sense of order has flown out the door" (Bennett, 2001: 34). Enchantment brings forth excitement as it simultaneously lifts us out of the mundane, giving us a glimpse into a new understanding of the world. Enchantment cultivates a sense of unease as your prior world views or understandings are moved. The 'magic' of enchantment, according to Bennett (2001), is in its ability for flux and mobility. In this sense, allure is similar. For, the 'magic' of allure also comes from its ability to move us, both emotionally and with respect to the world (Thrailkill, 2006) – or otherworld! Indeed, work on atmosphere frequently points to their fluidity and inclination towards motion. In this way, the potential for supernatural enchantment builds into the atmospheres of allure at Bethel. For Tamara, having experienced a certain kind of supernatural enchantment at the Healing Rooms that day, the lure of being in that environment and exposed to those co-produced human-spirit atmospheres built into her decision to relocate permanently.

This potential, where enchantment is a technology of allure at Bethel was often talked about at Bethel in terms of being 'wrecked.' Indeed, as Helen had told me earlier, "I thought I'd do one year [of BSSM], get my life wrecked, then go back to England." Here, Helen's desire to get her life wrecked refers to how Bethel would generate a tension in her life somewhere between the wonderous and the disturbing, where her understandings are moved, forcing her to renegotiate reality. Essentially being wrecked is a very particular a type of enchantment at Bethel. For being wrecked speaks to how Bethel aims to upset people's prior theologies and understandings of God. How Bethel try to coax people to move outside of the mental box that

they had put spirit in and instead remain open to possibility. This can be seen in action through how Bethel is often viewed as controversial with provocative teachings on numerous topics. Essentially, this idea of troubling our understandings through being wrecked is key to Bethel's particular style of affective allure. For, if allure is something that leads us by curiosity or draws us in through intrigue, then the potential that Bethel offers to glimpse, operate and exist within an alternative spirit-infused reality is key to their allure.

Bethel's ability to open up people to spiritual possibilities and renegotiated realities, creates a sense that Bethel is "standing for a world without troubles or with troubles you want" (Thrift, 2010: 298). In other words, Bethel both creates new ideals or imaginaries of a certain type of utopia whilst also troubling or 'wrecking' our existing understandings of the world, in a way that we want. So whilst many of the people I met told me about how troubling they initially found such experiences, ultimately these experiences were sought after and pursued. Being wrecked, feeling that certain sense of unease, or some type of "disturbing-captivating element" (Bennett, 2001: 131) was an expected part of becoming-with Bethel.

To put it in Ahmed's (2010) terms, people come to Bethel 'angled' for a spiritual experience; with a willingness to be enchanted (Holloway, 2010). Indeed, as Tamara expressed, the regular experiences of the supernatural are important within the affective allure of Bethel. People were drawn to Bethel because it was understood as a space where they could experience miracles, signs and wonders. It was a place where the atmosphere was imagined to be thick with supernatural potential. To be alive with spirit presence. The allure of Bethel therefore is often readily entangled with the lure to be enchanted.

It would, however, be a mistake to assume that Bethel's entanglement with and emphasis upon the supernatural automatically denotes enchantment; Christianity does not become enchanted by simply adding a supernatural 'layer' (Smith, 2010). Rather, the belief that God 'charges' things with His Spirit is what enables the boundaries between the material and immaterial to become blurred (Smith, 2010). Arguably, this blurring of boundaries is what allows for Bethel to generate moments that are at once enchanting *and* spiritual or not enchanting *and* spiritual.

Whilst the lure for enchantment did work into some of the stories that the interviewees shared with me surrounding why they wanted to attend Bethel, for others, it was the desire for the

supernatural to be *less* enchanting and more mundane. For Jane Bennett, to be enchanted is "to be struck and shaken by the extraordinary that lives amid the familiar and the everyday" (2001: 5). Yet, Julian Holloway suggests that we should also "seek out the extraordinary as practised and sustained in the ordinary" (2003: 1961). This notion of the extraordinary as normal and every day or ordinary at Bethel was important. Where that process of being wrecked leads to a reorientation towards reality, a new extraordinary normal. As one participant Sasha explained, "It's about asking God to take you to a place of wonder because then you can get to a place where it's normal. You want to get to a place where the supernatural is normal because that's how God created us to be."

Future Self

I met Olivia, a BSSM student, through another student that I had made friends with at an earlier point of my ethnographic fieldwork. Olivia had agreed to be interviewed and once we had settled in the small yard outside her home we soon got into the flow of it. I was taken back by her honesty and the ease with which she was able to reflect upon her short time at Bethel despite having only really known me for a short while.

When I asked Olivia why she wanted to join Bethel she quickly responded. "Well honestly I did not want to come. It's a real long story. So I guess in order for me to tell you why I came in I have to go back a little bit," I was not overly surprised by her response. As many of the people I met would tell me how they were not initially enthralled by the idea of Bethel. I sat and listened to her explain. She reflected upon how she had experimented with various religions, faiths and beliefs before coming to the conclusion that she wanted to attend a Christian ministry school and randomly thought of Bethel. "I was like they're a little weird you know because I had already visited so I was a bit like… I don't know," she smiled at the irony. Olivia recalled how she ended up speaking to her mum about her dilemma of which ministry school to apply to - when her mum suggested Bethel.

To Olivia it was a sign from God that both her and her mum had separately thought of Bethel as the best place - despite both of them thinking it was a little out of the ordinary! Unlike with Tamara, for Olivia visiting Bethel did not bring around that same sense of enchantment or lure to be wrecked. Nor did Bethel present the same type of affective allure that the other

participants talked about. If anything Bethel had come across as a little weird. Yet, feeling like it was a sign from God to attend, Olivia decided to apply – on the condition that she did not have to pay for it.

As many of the people that I met during my ethnography shared with me, the financial costs of attending one of Bethel's ministries or schools were difficult. Understanding the high tuition costs, Olivia decided that if God really wanted her to go then the money would come to her through spirit. For Olivia, the miraculous needed to happen in her everyday life outside of Bethel in order to confirm that she should continue with her plan to go. She explained how she spent a lot of time praying for the money, patiently waiting to see if spirit would provide and confirm to her that Bethel was the place she should go. Sure enough, money was donated to her from a variety of diverse and some rather mysterious channels, confirming that Bethel was where she would end up and demonstrating the role of spirit in her decision to relocate.

It is important to notice here, that for Olivia the idea of Bethel being a space of the miraculous where what could be experienced there would be more than what she could experience at home did not feel like it rang true in the same ways that it perhaps did for other people I met. Indeed, in response to my question about what she had imagined BSSM to be like she rather nonchalantly expressed how, "[she] knew that [she] would see the miracles and the signs and wonders and everything." In this sense, Bethel's miraculous atmosphere did not necessarily hold the same type of captivation or enchanting fascination for Olivia unlike many other people I spoke to.

The allure of Bethel, for Olivia, was therefore not in its supernatural potentials or in its ability to enchant and fascinate. Rather, Bethel was alluring as a space of facilitation for her future self. Its lure was located within what the church with a global network and international renown could do for her in the long run. Attending BSSM would align Oliva with Bethel. The church's status and reputation could therefore help legitimise her plan to "change [her home church] from the inside." The miraculous and supernatural was just something that was going to be a routine part of Bethel life in a somewhat similar way to how it was a routine part of her everyday life in Oregon. But what was really alluring about Bethel was her perception of the church as enabling her to develop a sense of real authenticity. Of being, perhaps as Phil recognised, a particular type of Christian. One that could be legitimised through her becoming

a BSSM alumni. But more than just becoming-with Bethel and metamorphosing into a particular type of Christian, for Olivia the affective allure of Bethel was also about being a part of the movement. It was about being in the hub of what was going on in Bethel. The lure of being a part of the movement at Bethel demonstrates a similarity with how Jordan experienced Bethel's affective allure through his desire to be a part of Bethel Music. Essentially, alluring atmospheres are experienced and mediated in a varied manner of ways, indicating the diversity of textures, experiences and feelings towards Bethel as an alluring place.

As Olivia described, going to Bethel was much more about her future aspirations for personal and social religious change more broadly than being enchanted by the miraculous. This is an important point. For as Bartolini, MacKian and Pile (2017) suggest, in many spiritual practices the marvellous is actually rendered mundane. This notion rejects the framework of enchantment as a mode for exploring spiritual experience. Similarly, for Olivia the marvellous and miraculous were practiced in her everyday life both at home and during her time at Bethel. As MacKian suggests, believer's links with spirit tend to be centred on "an openness to mystery and the conscious development of extrasensory perception, which allows the individual to comprehend the world in radically different ways" (2012: 53-54). This can also be seen at Bethel through the deliberate construction of atmospheres. As the BSSM website states "everything is connected to the presence of God" (BSSM, 2019) and this results in developing those naturally supernatural lifestyles that Bethel promotes. Therefore, Bethel creates an alternative spirit-infused world in ways that are both magnificent and miraculous but also every day and ordinary – but always spiritual.

One way to think about this further as I focus on the ordinariness of spirit at Bethel would be to acknowledge the *between*. For as Bartolini, MacKian and Pile (2017: 12) argue, the "production of a space *between"* the spirit world and the believer is important in disrupting the divide between the material and the immaterial – but that its 'inbetweenness' is "predicted on its ordinariness and familiarity" rather than enchantments. In other words, there is a sense of entangled relations that inhabit the space between people and spirit but that these relations are not often experienced as enchanting but rather as normal and familiar.

Whilst the idea of relations in the space between spirit and Bethel goers could be a way to understand spiritual experiences at Bethel, it does not quite feel right. For, was not so much a

sense of a space 'between' spirit and themselves – even if that space between was filled with relations. Rather, spirit was understood as being located *within* them. Spirit was within the world all around them. Spirit was found in and within everything – especially so at Bethel. This builds into, as de la Cadena and Blaser (2018) argue, the ways that knowledges are world-making practices that often reinstate themselves. This means that people tend to make and remake the same worlds that they know. Taking this on board in my research means staying alert to the "the crucial point that spiritual believers orient themselves to a different social world than that constructed by many academic observers" (Corrywright, 2001: 197). This, I found, to be very pertinent when I was undertaking my ethnography at Bethel. For, spirit was found *within* – rather than between - everything. Essentially, Spirit was key in how the people that I met made and made sense of the world around them. Given this, it therefore feels more appropriate to understand Bethel, not as producing a space between, but as producing a space *within*. Yet, in a similar way to how Bartolini, MacKian and Pile (2017) explain, this space within tends to be mediated through its ordinariness and familiarity. Whilst it can also be mediated through its extraordinariness and unfamiliarity, these elements are considered to nevertheless be a part of everyday Bethel life.

Through the ideology of 'spirit within' the affective allure of Bethel can transition and flow from atmospheres where the supernatural is enchanting to generating atmospheres where the supernatural is normative. Where there is an understanding that the supernatural can become an ordinary part of everyday life. Where you move from, as Sasha said, the 'place of wonder' to the 'place where it's normal'. Where wonder, as the shuttle of the weave, the spiritual relations that tie together aspects of embodied life become so part of everyday normal life that they become less enchanting and much more normal. This ultimately enables wonder as an understanding of the embodiment at Bethel to become the default mode of experience. In other words, when wonder becomes normal, so too does the notion of spirit relations in everyday embodied experience. Therefore in asserting that the supernatural can become ordinary, and believers can live 'naturally supernatural' lives, the affective allure of Bethel is worked and reworked within people's desire for a new everyday life through the normalisation of wonder.

Atmospheres of Allure: An Overview

Part II: Atmospheres of Allure has begun to, if read in a linear fashion, introduce several of the people whom I got to know during my ethnographic research. In this part I recall their testimonies, weaving in their experiences with my own, as I notice the ways that atmospheres of allure emerge as relation with Bethel. Taking this approach, and writing through affect, I provoke different ways of feeling the affective atmospheres of allure; giving a partial, incomplete glimpse into how Bethel pulls us towards (as well as away from) itself.

In Part II I also discussed the ways through which affective atmospheres of allure are powerful in creating vivid imaginings of alternative realities of Bethel with the ability to transgress the boundaries of Redding as they are transported through bodies in relation – both human, non-human materialities and technologies and more-than-human spirit. In this sense, I circled away from my earlier discussion on atmosphere in Beginnings as a potential path towards exploring affect to how atmosphere emerges as relations and practices at Bethel. In doing so, I looked towards the testimonies that the people I met shared with me and began to draw my idiosyncratic map of connections between a series of singularities (Stewart, 2007: 5) to illuminate the affective pull of Bethel as a particular space of modern spirituality. As such, my research demonstrates the different ways through which allure becomes an affective force within people's lives, driving them to uproot their lives and head to Redding.

This part of my thesis also looks to the metaphysics of an alternative reality – or the imagined sense of reality that the alluring atmospheres of Bethel create. These atmospheres pull people in through their lure for feeling, through their promises of potential and change. In other words, an important point in the section is the idea of an alternative sense of ordinary that can be lived and known at and through Bethel. Desiring this alternative, spirit-infused, supernatural world of Bethel brings forth notions of wonder. I discuss here about the process of being wrecked – of how one can transport themselves from one understanding of ordinary life to another. In doing so, wonder, as defined in Beginnings, becomes normalised. This folds into concept of enchantment. For as I looked towards individual stories it became clear that the diverse atmospheres of allure that emerged could be enchanting or not enchanting – but still always spiritual.

Part II: Atmospheres of Allure has followed the idea that there is an affective pull that surrounds Bethel, drawing people in from all around the world. As such, this part has begun to paint a picture of what ordinary life with spirit at Bethel is like, as well as what it is imagined to be like. Essentially, what became increasingly clear during my ethnographic fieldwork was the role of spirit within the participants everyday lives; being both a direct and indirect force of reason in all of the participants decisions to go to Bethel. Whether that be a tangible spiritual stirring within or the desire to increase their own personal relationships with God. In this sense, whilst the diversity of allure has been highlighted, so too have the diverse ways of becoming-with spirit at Bethel – even if those ways only ever remain imagined.

Interlude Two

It was a warm evening when Chloe and I were sat outside in her back yard. She had prepared a vegan cake especially for us to eat during our interview. So between mouthfuls of the surprisingly delicious cake we chatted about her faith before and during her time as a BSSM student. She was mid-way through a story about an experience with inner healing when she stopped and looked at me and asked, "When you were a kid, did you like do ballet?" Her question interrupted our conversation that had flowed from story to story. Bemused, I told her that I did, as memories of being 5 years old and having to wear those uncomfortable shoes and trying to manipulate my frizzy hair in a neat bun resurfaced. Encouraged by my admission, Chloe smiled at me and continued, "Okay, because I just got this vision of you as a little girl in a ballet studio like having so much fun." I smiled back at her, inwardly reminiscing about my actual hatred of my ballet lessons. Indeed, my memories of stupid ballet and the stupid ballet hair and stupid ballet shoes did not quite add up to her fun-loving vision of me échappé-ing and arabesque-ing all fancy and carefree around a dance studio…

After a while, we cleared up the cake and began to say our goodbyes. Chloe randomly asked me if I liked to draw. I said that I did but that I was not very good. She laughed and said she had just had a vision of me drawing birds, and did that mean anything to me? As we were walking towards the door I found myself apologising and awkwardly explaining that I was not sure that it did but promising her I'd have a think about it some more and let her know. Indeed, on the drive home I reflected upon Chloe's question, coming to the conclusion that her vision of me drawing birds definitely did not mean anything to me.

I kind of enjoyed how these sorts of messages or visions from above would pop up so regularly in my conversations with people. They would always seem to find ways to flow in and out of otherwise fairly normal exchanges. I found it bizarre. Like, for instance when Sasha interrupted the flow of our conversation one time to ask me if

I was a writer. I found myself immediately escalating down into an internal debate: Yes, I am a writer, I guess..? Maybe? Well I'm writing a PhD. Does that count? I mean I do not really write for fun, but I t hate it. Where does that leave me? Am I a writer or a *writer*? Is there a difference. God I have no idea. I'm always writing, I'm a God damn writer.

"Yeah," I said. My voice verbalising a condensed version of my internal workings. She smiled and continued on, speaking to me about how my writing was going to impact nations. I did not really know how to respond. How do you even respond to that? Just say thank you and move on with your day? Inwardly, I often would quite cynically relish in how wide of the mark these types of messages would feel. It was secretly fun to hear people's prophecies for the type of future I will have as well as their imaginings for my past. When this was the case it was easy to shrug away these questions. But on occasion messages from above hit me differently. They entered the room, changing the tone. Their deliverance raising goose bumps on my arms or sending shivers down my spine. Such was the case with Sasha's next message for me:

"Oh and I heard," Sasha continued, "Well I don't know if it will be this season or the next, but I just heard that the presence is going to show up for you. He will show Himself to you..."

Part III

Spirit Affects

Whole Other Paradigm

As with a lot of the interviews that I undertook during my ethnographic fieldwork, when I met with Chloe, we were sat outside - making the most of the autumnal Californian sunshine. Some way through our interview, the conversation turned to miracles and healings. After trying to explain some of the things that she had seen and done during her time at Bethel Chloe stopped mid-sentence. It was as if another thought had suddenly entered her mind, interrupting the previous one, "There is this whole other paradigm, like this whole supernatural world exists and you don't even know about it," Chloe said. Her tone of voice communicated an underlying sense of frustration towards me not really being able to fully relate to her own miraculous experiences. She was right, I did not know about it. Well, I knew *about* it. But I did not *know* it. Not really. At least not like Chloe and many of the people I met at Bethel did.

As I soon discovered during my time at Bethel, the supernatural was a core part of everyday life. So in the interviews this was also an important discussion point underpinned by the belief that the world is infused with spirit and spirit actors. Reflecting the importance of the supernatural in people's everyday lives at Bethel means that I want to look towards this further. In doing so my research explores how alternative ontologies and different modes of being in the world are lived and embodied in more-than-representational ways. Importantly, my acknowledgement of these alternative ways of being in the world is constitutive of experiential knowledge so should not - as Dewsbury and Cloke (2009: 708) argue - be dismissed as 'scientifically' irrelevant or simply quaintly folksy. My research therefore rejects the ideology that yours, ours or mine is the only reality. Rather, as anthropologist Jack Hunter (2015) suggests, my research actively engages with alternative ontological possibilities that become actualised at Bethel. It presents moments when alternative ontological possibilities became

entangled within my own reality. Passing's where different understandings of reality, different modes of being in and being with the world emerge and are experienced in everyday life at Bethel.

Understanding how believers orient themselves to the particular paradigm of reality at Bethel is important because people "will act in the world according to their understanding of it – including the possible presence of the unknown" (MacKian, 2012: 124). This notion was present not only within the miraculous or spectacular but also in everyday, ordinary life. It therefore makes sense to pay attention to the little moments during the fieldwork where the ordinary affects of spirit emerged, making me think, making me wonder. The points that drew confusion or laughter. The interruptions and disruptions. Where something was happening.

It is these moments where something was happening that make up Part III: Spirit Affects. This part does little to draw together a solid conclusion nor a more whole knowledge of how life at Bethel is experienced collectively. However, what this section does do is give space to the little moments or vignettes of spirit affects. For, my research does not aim to do the impossible (and pointless) in demystifying the supernatural but rather curiously "provoke[s] attention to the forces that come into view" (Stewart, 2007: 1) as spirit emerges from and attaches itself within life at Bethel. In this way, my research stresses not only the potential of spirit but its very necessity in forming and creating attunements and attachments within everyday life at Bethel.

The attention to the forces that emerge, often briefly and in passing, highlight how the world believers orient themselves to at Bethel is a world infused with spirit. Earthly and everyday spaces are seen as infused with (and within) spiritual moments, spiritual beings and spiritual geographies. I weave in my own ethnographic experiences with those of the participants, demonstrating how the alternative ways of being in the world that were actualised at Bethel left their traces upon my own body and my own experiences at Bethel. How being at and becoming with Bethel opened me up to encountering the spirit affects that made the air thick with potential, infusing the space with spiritual dynamism. As I attempt to presence rather than present these little moments I aim to resist the notion of some kind of imagined divide between earthly geographies and spiritual geographies. Rather this section draws attention to how the two worlds collide, interact and work within and through each other. At Bethel, spirit was much more about what you could "feel, smell, hear and see" than simply a "faith in things unseen"

(Morgan, 2010: 5). Indeed, as Holloway (2013: 206) reminds us, religion and belief are enacted across many different and sensuous registers of affect and emotion that "tone and colour what it is to have faith as a sensibility or disposition in and to the world." This notion was particularly pertinent during my interview with Ben…

Blue Jays

It was a clear and warm autumn day when I was sat across the table from Ben in the back yard of the house he was renting whilst he was a BSSM student. After eating some brownies that his housemate had prepared earlier that day, I pressed record on my dictaphone and we began our interview. Following the natural flow of the conversation, the interview turned to the topic of hearing from God. As Ben was in the midst of telling me about how he hears God speak to him, a sudden and very loud noise broke out from one of the trees that we were sitting under. The flock of shrieking birds were *so* loud that it became clear that trying to speak over them was futile. I could not help but feel annoyed and disappointed that the interview, that I felt had been going so well, was now well and truly disrupted. We waited for what felt like several minutes for calm to return, all the while I hoped that Ben would not forget the interesting point he had been making.

As the commotion from within the tree finally quietened, it was clear that Ben had indeed forgotten his point. Instead, Ben just laughed as the birds started to quieten down before exclaiming - "That's so funny because I literally had a word from God about blue jays yesterday!" Continuing to talk through his laughter, "And now there are blue jays here! The Lord is right here with us! That is hearing from God! You see what I mean?" I was still somewhat annoyed that the articulate point that Ben had been making before had been absorbed by and lost within the blue jay's interruption that I missed the important point that Ben had made instead. For, he had previously heard a word from God about blue jays and now, sitting with me in the back yard here were some blue jays, evidencing not only God's word but spirit's very presence in our interview. Indeed, it was actually not until I came back to transcribe this particular recording that I was reminded of the prolonged screeching from the tree.

For me, the blue jays were a problem, a hullabaloo that ruined a particular moment that I was naively certain had academic potential. Yet, as I sat at home listening back to my recording

and reliving that particular moment in the backyard it was clear that I had let my own annoyance cloud what was going on around me in that very instant. For, the noisy blue jays *were* the answer to the question I had asked. The blue jays were how Ben heard from God in that very moment, how God had demonstrated His being there in our interview, showing up and speaking through the blue jays just as I had asked Ben - how does God speak? For Ben the blue jays were not just birds. They were vehicles of spirit through which he could hear from God and sense the presence of spirit around us during the interview.

Despite having missed it the first time, this encounter with the noisy tree demonstrates the affective attachments and resonances the blue jays held for Ben. They enabled him to feel both affectively and emotionally connected to the world as well as generating a sense of "vivid otherworldliness" (Finke and Stark, 2005: 1). They enabled him to remain grounded in what was there, the noise, the feathers, the commotion. But they also enabled him to imagine the what if – the conformation of a word, the presencing of the divine.

Kathleen Stewart (2007: 128) explains, "ordinary affect is a surging, a rubbing, a connection of some kind that has an impact" - it is not about one person's feelings simply becoming another's – but it is about bodies generating intensities and affecting one another. At Bethel, those bodies that generated intensities and affected one another included spirit bodies. Spirit, blue jays, Ben and I pulled together through affect generating particular intensities that were experienced in different ways. Yet, importantly for Ben was the intensity of spirit, sounding through the noise in the tree, acting as a physical and tangible spirit affect in an everyday way. The notion of spirit as entangled within the participants everyday lives, generating affective attachments through the connections between human and spirit bodies where the world is a vivid space of potential 'otherworldliness' was made clear. For instance, in my conversation with Jordan…

The Morning Coffee

It was early when I met the worship leader Jordan. We were sat in his living room drinkingsome locally roasted filter coffee that he had proudly told me he had managed to source from a shop across town. "How do you create relationship with God?" I asked him after he had mentioned the importance of pursuing a spiritual relationship with God rather than following religion.

"It's actually really natural," Jordan responded, "I think that's what blew my mind and I'm still finding God." Asking him to explain further, he told me that it is about, "Finding God in the little things, in the everyday things. In the morning coffee."

"The morning coff-"

"So, what does finding God in the coffee mean?" Jordan said, cutting through my follow up question with his own. After a brief pause in the conversation where he took a minute to think how to answer his own question, he continued, "I think it means cultivating an awareness of His presence." We discussed this for a few minutes, talking about how Jordan believed that God created everything good and also revealed himself through the good things of life. Through the simple things such as taking a sip of coffee and delighting in the way the strong and bitter taste sweeps across your taste buds reminding you of a God that created the coffee bean as well as the hands that crafted it into a drink as well as the tongue and taste buds that enable you to enjoy it. The first coffee in the morning was not just a cup of hot joe but a reminder of a series of events before it. A line of production from producer to consumer all encompassed under the divine creation of God. Perhaps any negatives that are associated with the production of coffee were swept under the rug of the 'locally roasted' label, allowing Jordan as a consumer to envisage a higher quality and more ethical product. His coffee was a good thing. For Jordan, God is in the good things. God is in his morning coffee.

Aside from God's role as a creator, it was also important for Jordan to highlight that finding spirit in his coffee linked in to the routine and daily conversations he would have with spirit. In this way, his morning coffee was just a small part of his daily routine; a daily routine that completely revolved around and incorporated his relationship with spirit. He told me how he would go throughout his day talking to and listening out for spirit, conversing with Him like you do a close friend. Jordan also shared how he would ask spirit questions. Wondering why he created certain things or thanking Him for doing so.

"I've just learnt to, throughout the day, be aware of that like he is doing things and saying things. You know like that maybe we can't see or maybe even understand […] He is always around us and behind us and for us. So just developing my awareness of the presence has been

a big thing here." In this way we can see how the manifest spiritual presence of God was not reduced to imagined spaces up in heaven or in some kind of 'great beyond' but earthly and everyday spaces and bodies were seen as infused with (and within) spiritual moments, spiritual beings and spiritual geographies and temporalities.

Like many of the people that I met at Bethel, for Jordan becoming more aware of, and acknowledging spirit in the everyday was a major part of his Bethel experience. The morning coffee was therefore no longer simply a dark hot drink but a mode through which the ethereal can communicate power and presence in a very every day and routine way. This notion was one that stuck with me throughout the remainder of my ethnographic fieldwork. Indeed, as I would visit the Bethel coffee shop *HeBrews* I would try and remember what Jordan had said. Allowing myself to envisage the journey that that coffee had made before it passed over my tongue. Reminding myself to be grateful for the passage that the beans had made, and the hands that had planted, picked and packaged them. Remaining thankful for my ability to walk over to pick up the cup and taste its contents. For, even if I was not sure I could find God in my morning coffees, I could appreciate the skill and the time that went into my cup. I could appreciate how I took for granted my ability to consume coffee. Therefore, taking the time to be more mindful of a world beyond what I could see felt important - even if, for me, that world was not spiritual.

Finding spirit in the coffee speaks to the normality through which spirit becomes presenced in people's everyday lives at Bethel. The cup filled with coffee was also a cup filled with spirit. In this glimpse we can see how drinking coffee was imbued with spirit affects. Yet, as I got to know more people during my time at Bethel I began to understand how spirit affects also had the ability to generate new spaces that were more-than-body or beyond-body. Where spirit in its omnipresence infuses and abides within bodies allowing bodies to be stretched beyond themselves as they become-with spirit. Essentially this means that the immaterial spirit and material body disrupted each other as they start to work within each other. For instance, when I was listening to Brian talk about a time he practiced his faith through beyond-body practices…

Chuck

Brian began by telling me how he was at home in his garage listening to music and fixing his skateboard, something he liked to do. All of a sudden he felt a wet nose touch his ankle. As he looked down, Chuck his little dachshund, had gone into some kind of seizure. Brian noticed the urine streak across the garage floor and recognised that in his pain and confusion little Chuck must have crawled across the garage towards him. As Chuck convulsed at Brian's feet, he stepped back away from the dog, and thrust out his arm and declared the Greek word, h*aptomai*.

Nothing happened. So Brian tried again.

Standing a little further back, Brian declared haptomai again. "The power of God hit my dog so hard that he literally rolled across the floor! And he just jumped up and started wagging his tail! He was totally healed! Instantly! That whole day he just didn't leave my side!" Brian explained. He carried on, telling me how haptomai was the Greek biblical word that was used when Jesus 'touched' people and they were healed. Declaring haptomai means, he continued, "to release with the fire that changes the person's life like an invisible anointing that comes forth from your body."

As Brian explained, the miracle of healing happened to his pet dog in his garage. It was not when there was a big crowd or after hours of intense worshipping. He was simply in his garage doing a chore when his dog started to seize. Brian's response was to raise his hand in order to release the healing power of God. The power of God's spirit within Brian allowed him to transfer that to his dog and therefore the little pup received the spirit and was healed. Whilst this example is a rather novel one, it demonstrates how the participants are informed by an awareness of and responsiveness to a spiritual realm. This causes the imagined divide between earthly geographies and spiritual geographies to dissolve as material and immaterial worlds collide, interact and work within and through each other. For instance, the belief that God literally inhabits the bodies of believers (Elisha, 2008) allowing their body to "exude 'something special' to anyone who might encounter it' (Olson et al., 2013: 1427) – pet dogs included.

For Brian, the spirit-body relations that co-constituted his body enabled him to operate in ways that he would not normally be able to. The notion of spirit within bodies as enabling extra-human abilities was key for the participants at Bethel. Indeed, in his book *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind: Access to a Life of Miracles,* Bethel's leader Bill Johnson (2005: 86) writes that supernatural healing is a normal part of everyday Christian life. The prevalence of BSSM students or Bethel attendees within Redding meant that even when I was not on any of the Bethel campuses the tendency to be affected by healing practices was not uncommon. For instance, when I met up with Eliza in *The Stirring*, a popular and trendy coffee shop in Redding…

The Sore Shoulder

Eliza had told me that she was fasting and was only drinking water but when I said that the coffee was on me if she wanted something different she quickly took me up on my offer. With an americano for me and an iced macchiato for her we headed over to one of those booth type seats near a window, its high sides giving us a false sense of privacy for the interview. During the interview, Eliza shared about a mission trip to Bulgaria that she had recently just come back from. "It was very relaxed, although we could not understand them and they could not understand us and we had limited translators so we mainly just loved on the children and tried to show them what God's love was like."

"Oh really, was that difficult?" I asked her, inwardly (and cynically) wondering why Bethel would send a team abroad where they were unable to communicate with the people they were meant to be ministering to.

"Yeah, we spent most of the time with the children," Eliza replied skipping over my cynicism as she continued, "But at night we would go out in the village. Like we would go with a translator!" Perhaps my cynicism had landed. Feeling like I needed to remedy it, I asked her what sort of things they would do in the village. "Lots of prayer and prophecy. I prophesied over this one guy and he had this encounter with Jesus because of it like I said to him tha–"

“Hey girls sorry to interrupt but do either of you have pain in your shoulder, by any chance?” interjected a new voice. I glanced at Eliza trying to read her body language in an attempt to know how to react to this rather bizarre question.

“No, it’s not me sorry,” shrugged Eliza. Her response puzzled me, she seemed very unsurprised by the whole situation.

“Erm no… but thank you,” I awkwardly followed with. Undeterred, the voice, that belonged to a young man in his twenties smiled and continued on to the next table, asking them if they had a sore shoulder. Passing over the interruption as if it was nothing but a slight inconvenience, Eliza continued to talk on about her trip. But I could not help but be distracted by the man in the background. Preoccupied by the determination in his mission, I watched as he continued around the café asking each person in turn if they were the one with the sore shoulder. After doing a full loop of the café, the man returned to his table. I presumed he had been unsuccessful in his task as he gathered his things and left – leaving me to wonder whether he was abandoning his hunt or going to continue elsewhere…

Eliza’s nonchalance towards what I thought was a thoroughly strange encounter confirmed it in my mind that this was not an unusual interaction to have in Redding. Indeed, the more I mentioned this particular incident to other people in Redding the more convinced I became that this was not unusual. The notion of normalising the spiritual and supernatural by interacting with it and through it in everyday ways was a big theme within my conversations with the participants. For example in my conversation with Laura…

The Car Park

Laura began by emphasising how important it was at Bethel to just live your day-to-day life with spirit. I asked her to tell me more about that. “Okay so like if I am going into the car park it’s being like ok Holy Spirit I need a space and then there’s a space like right by the front,” she explained. Whilst experiences like this may cynically be put down to sheer chance, for Laura this was an everyday example of living her life at Bethel in conjunction with spirit. As she continued to tell me, “This whole big thing is meant to be your everyday life! Just living with God and Him doing life with you!”

As Laura explained, a big part of life at Bethel comes from being close to and living with the Holy Spirit in everyday ways. In her example, experiences such as finding the perfect car parking space are intertwined with spirit, where a space is evidence of God providing for her in ordinary ways. So we can see how embodied practices generate particular emotional, affective and sensory forces that fold back into people's lives, spiritualising everyday movements. This is interesting as it demonstrates the specificity of the role of everyday practices in re/creating religion through sensory embodied habitual practices.

Through her relationship with spirit a space becomes available to her, meaning that the parking space is not just an object in the world to be studied nor is it simply an assemblage of its parts (the tarmac, the lines, its positioning etc.) but it is "a sensuous, lived body that changes through interacting with an environment that it both responds to and actively structures" (Bille and Simonsen, 2019: 6). For the ways through which the parking space interacts with spirit, becoming available for Laura in her time of need demonstrates how the space both responds to spirit but also actively structures the ways through which Laura understands the world around her, in ordinary ways.

Another way through which we can explore how materiality becomes more than itself when infused with spirit, enabling objects to become affectively charged with a liveliness beyond itself can also be seen through looking into the prophetic. For, the belief in and practice of the prophetic was a diverse yet central aspect of everyday life at Bethel. Generally speaking, the prophetic is somewhat of an umbrella encompassing different terms relating to different aspects of the prophetic including: vision, word, word of knowledge, picture and prophecy. The most commonly used by the participants were: 'word' and 'prophecy'. Even though these two have different meanings they were often used interchangeably or combined into 'prophetic word'. Olivia explained to me that there is a difference between getting a word and prophesying: prophecy is about things that are to come whereas words of knowledge are more about the present or past. Rachel built upon this by saying that it is hard to know if prophecies are 'accurate' because they are about things that have not yet happened - whereas 'words' can be 'spot on' as they are about things and situations that are happening now or have happened previously. It is important to note that whilst most of the participants would probably agree with Rachel and Olivia's distinction between 'word' and 'prophecy', in our conversations the

distinction was not always clear. What is most important, however is the notion that the prophetic incorporates a whole lot of different meanings that all pull together under the idea of a message from God being interpreted or mediated through another person or thing for someone else. In this way, the emphasis upon the prophetic at Bethel is founded upon the belief that prophets and divine prophetic messages are not restricted to ancient Old Testament scriptures but rather modern-day Christians can operate in the prophetic realm as intermediators for spiritual messages between people, things and God. This was especially prevalent at Bethel's Open Heavens conference, the first large international conference I attended during my ethnographic research…

A Rainforest Fern

Arriving at the Redding Civic Centre for Open Heavens I was early and had some time to explore the variety of stands and stalls that filled the foyer space. Milling around in amongst hundreds of others who had also timed their arrival before the main conference room was opened I came across a prophetic stall. Alongside several flyers promoting different prophetic courses and resources available at Bethel, there was a prominent display of different photographs. Most of the pictures displayed scenes of nature; of sunsets, wildflower fields, rainforests, oceans. Others contained more urban photography; high-rise cityscapes, groups of people navigating a busy street, joggers in a park. One of the people staffing the table instructed me to choose the photo that I was drawn to. As my eyes scanned the images, the photograph of a rainforest fern stood out. I picked it up and handed it to the staff member.

Taking a few moments to look at the picture, the staff member used it as a medium of prophecy telling me how God was saying how he was going to meet me when I was drinking coffee. Essentially, the message from spirit to me was mediated through the photograph I was initially drawn to. Whilst there was no obvious connection between the specific photograph I had chosen and the somewhat generic and uninspiring message that I received it did demonstrate once again how the everyday routines of ordinary life are spirit infused at Bethel.

Despite leaving the table feeling a little unenthused by the spiritual message I had received I did find myself feeling a particular attachment to the photo of the rainforest fern itself as I was given a small printed copy to take home. Digby (2006) talks about how souvenirs can perform

a ‘magic’ role as they bring distant, faraway places into the close orbit of everyday, ordinary life. In this way, the print demonstrated how, “little things” can “hold explosive possibilities” (Love and Kohn, 2001: 61) of the spiritual word (and world) held within the colours and shapes that had drawn me towards it in the first place. I put the photo in my purse for safe keeping and found myself keeping it there for the rest of my time out at Bethel. For, if I was going to meet the ethereal creator of the universe during my research, doing it with coffee in hand might be nice…

Despite the central importance of the prophetic for believers at Bethel, few geographers have looked into the prophetic as both an action of belief and as a tool for harnessing the supernatural. Where the prophetic has been investigated, it has mostly been situated within historical and geopolitical religious understandings of ‘end times’ or political warnings to be heeded surrounding some impending type of doom apocalypse (Dittmer, 2008; Dittmer and Spears, 2009; Holloway, 2015; 2018; Megoran, 2010; 2013). The prophetic at Bethel was less “fire and brimstone!” and “the end is nigh!” - and more of a very every day and normal form of spirit communication – usually mediated with a third party. Generally the prophetic refers to hearing God’s word for someone else. As Sarah explained to me, the prophetic is asking God what he wants to say about someone then you tell them that. For instance, the spirit spoke to me through the photograph and that message was interpreted to me by the staff I met at the table. Therefore rather than being utilised to caution or alert towards some large event or political disaster more often than not prophecy engaged with everyday sentiments or in the form of encouragement where positivity and aspiration were projected upon the receiver of the prophecy…

A New Season

Towards the end of my interview with Tom, a final year BSSM student, we were talking about what he was thinking about doing after he graduates. Being originally from the UK, he told me how he had spent a lot of time feeling anxious about what life after Bethel would be like. Wondering where he would move back to and what church he and his family would settle into – if they were to even go back to the UK at all. The unknown of returning home and leaving the Bethel community that he had been a part of for the last three years was a major point of

uncertainty, worry and fear for Tom. He expressed how he spent a lot of time with his wife in prayer and talking to God trying to find some answers.

"I've had a lot of words here like where I've been talking with God about something specific and then someone will come up and be like hey I heard God say this and I'm like oh I was just talking to God about that thing, like that happens so much," Tom told me. He reflected some more about how at Bethel receiving prophetic words was a normal occurrence. Yet, in this time of uncertainty the prophetic words he received surrounding his next move were particularly important.

"So someone gave me a prophetic word that really confirmed what we had been praying about," Tom explained. With all the stress of being in his final year at Bethel with no idea what to do next, receiving a word acted as, "a confirmation of what you have been praying into or discussing. It's an encouragement for that season."

For Tom, receiving a prophetic word, spoke into the private discussions that him and his wife had been having with God. The prophecy, ruptured into their life, confirming that God had heard them and was encouraging them onwards. Tom never shared with me what that particular prophecy was. But he did share how it, "gave [him] a hope to hang on to."

In this sense, the prophetic weaved itself into Tom's life and the very normal worries that he had about moving on from Bethel, into what he described as a 'new season'. Yet rather than receiving warnings or a sense of dread about this new season the prophetic alleviated some of Tom's worries transfiguring them into a sense of hope or security. Enabling him to feel closer to God and relax knowing that God had heard their prayers and was close by. Ultimately, at Bethel, Tom explained, "The whole essence of the prophetic is that it's supposed to be encouraging." This theme was reflected within many of my discussions with interviewees…

Bread

I was chatting with Helen about times when she gave prophetic words to other people during her time at Bethel. She explained how she would just get a sense of something to say, an impression or a picture. "I'd rather say it and look silly than not say it and them feel discouraged

that they didn't get a word that day," Helen explained. Her rationale pointed to how normal, and regular, getting a word was within Bethel. Indeed, Helen would rather look the fool by potentially interpreting her impressions wrong in order to offer encouragement to others at Bethel. This was something I found to be quite common during my time at Bethel. Especially with the BSSM students. Ultimately the goal of BSSM was to learn how to be receptive to spirit in order to operate in the supernatural. This therefore means a lot of practice and so, a lot of trial and error.

Like many of the other people I spoke to, Helen was okay with the trial and error approach to practising the supernatural. In this sense, we can see how the friendly approach towards spiritual experiences at Bethel works out. For, even if the prophecy that Helen gives ends up being her interpreting her own thoughts or impressions wrong, even if they are not from spirit, she will give it a go. She will be friendly towards her own impressions, rather than being strictly critical and suspicious of her own mind wondering whether it is spirit or whether her mind is out to get her, to trick her. Instead, she takes a chance, she risks that it could be false but it also could be spirit. In this sense, her critical stance is not abandoned but it is approached in a friendly way acknowledging that it may or may not be spirit but she will go for it anyway just in case it is.

"So I went up to this girl and I said I just see you baking bread," Helen continued on. I listened as she animatedly re-enacted this particular memory of hers. "She was like – OH GOSH I'M A BAKER! And I was like - OH WOW! And she was like - I don't know how you knew that! And I was like - me neither!" As Helen retold this memory it was clear that both Helen and the baker girl were encouraged by the prophecy that Helen had given. Helen was encouraged that she had trusted the impression, the spirit affects that pulled her towards a particular conclusion of baking bread. The girl also encouraged, feeling seen by the spirit as mediated by a stranger who would never have known her tendency to bake. Spirit affects surging between the bodies, surprising each of them, connecting them, making them feel something – even if that something was pretty ordinary…

Birthday

I met up with Sasha in an outdoor café at a place called Turtle Bay. Sat in the shaded section, a stone's throw from Redding's famous Sun Dial Bridge, I bought in a round of iced tea. We chatted about how our days had been, catching up in general conversation before our interview officially began. With the dictaphone recording, I asked her what her to tell me what her first week at Bethel had been like. Sasha explained how she had been invited to a BBQ to help her get to know other people in the church.

"We were all just getting to know one another it was very peaceful. I'm not usually one to just put myself out there in a group but everyone was just so great and so welcoming," Sasha explained. She told me how the day of the BBQ also happened to be her 21st birthday. When the others at the BBQ discovered this, in addition to singing her happy birthday, they also 'gifted' her prophetic words – something she explained she really appreciated. This small example demonstrates how at Bethel, the prophetic was less about political warning and more something that was done at a BBQ between new friends, a part of a Bethel birthday celebration. In this way, my fieldwork at Bethel presents an alternative and important narrative of prophecy than that which has been previously engaged with in Human Geography. For this uplifting and generous form of future telling opens up possibilities to explore particular types of spiritual attunements and affective attachments in everyday ways.

The emphasis on everyday spirit communication at Bethel meant that it was very common for people (even people you did not know) to approach and prophesy over you. This happened to me several times where my interviewees would momentarily halt the interview to interrupt with a message from God for me, encouraging me strongly to keep going, keep collecting stories and keep exploring how God operates at Bethel and beyond. In this way, my research itself was often the subject of prophetic encouragement.

"This project is just, like the Lord is releasing a gift on you," Sasha proclaimed mid-way through our interview, "I feel like you are just showing other people who God really is. I know a lot of people are telling you their experiences and I think it's going to come to a point where, like I just feel you are called to the nations, like the Lord is going to take you places where other people have not been. Like He is creating a journalist inside you where you can document

what God is really doing and show people that God is alive on this earth and God is really real."

Initially I felt really uncomfortable with the type of extreme encouragement and generous, aspirational future telling that I commonly encountered at Bethel. Yet, by the time I met up with Sasha I found myself becoming less awkward and almost used to such grand statements and overestimates of my ability. Where, according to the participants, my work was going to not only impact and transform the people who read it, turning them to Jesus, but was also going to access and transform the British academy. The research was going to take the power of spirit from Bethel and stir it up in the UK, starting with the professors who read it first. Despite the aim of my PhD not actually being about bringing revival to the British academy, the praise that was heaped on my personal abilities and sense of self did encourage me. It did feel like people at Bethel were, as Phil said, "good at getting people to be great at who they are." It did make me wonder whether I could be as great a friend, as great a peacebuilder, a writer, a leader as I was told to believe I was. So whilst it was equally as frustrating as it was amusing to have these sorts of words prophesised over my project again and again it does demonstrate one way through which prophecy circulates and becomes ordinary to those who spend enough time at Bethel…

Step Out

"Sometimes you just don't know until you step out," Chloe told me as we were talking about whether the feelings or impressions that people would get and interpret as spirit were actually of spirit. For the ordinariness of prophecy and spirit communication at Bethel also demanded a critical sense of discernment.

As Chloe went on to explain much of her ability to discern what was spirit – opposed to other aspects of affective life – was based upon a faith to believe that it could be. In this sense, prophecy circulates in normal life at Bethel because people choose to believe it does and actively work to ensure it continues. This can be done, as Chloe illustrated, by stepping out in belief, trusting that the feelings or impressions, the affective traces that resonate upon and within her body are spirit.

She explained that, as with most things, the more you do it the better you get at it. The more you tune in to these impressions, the more you can notice them. In this sense, the first step was simply to be more in tune, to try and listen out or notice spirit. To make sense for the possibility of spirit was the first step in becoming-with spirit at Bethel. This part of the thesis works within this step. It is a noticing of spirit. It is allowing the thesis to be caught up within the possibility that impressions of spirit impact ordinary life at Bethel.

After you have begun to attune yourself to spirit, noticing spirit in everyday life, developing a highly cultivated – or what MacKian (2012) calls an extrasensory - perception, recognising the world as infused with spirit, the next step is acting upon it. This is, like Helen said, just giving it a go and ignoring your own fears of looking silly. Essentially, it is taking that step out in faith to believe that these impressions could be spirit but being gentle with yourself in the process. Allowing yourself to be wrong, understanding if other's prophecies upon your life are wrong. But it is allowing yourself to wonder, to become wrapped up in becoming-with spirit. It is asking the question that evokes the conditional mood (Vannini, 2015c) – as you ponder what if? The more you do this second step, the better, as Chloe explains, you get at distinguishing between which impressions are spirit and those which are your own.

"When it's your voice it's like logical. You go back and forth trying to figure out should I do that, you know? The spirit leaves an impression of peace and love or joy. That's how I know." Chloe explained. For when it is spirit, it is good. It is pure. It is wholesome and kind. It's connecting with something that you would tend to associate with a divine presence who adores you. It's an affective pull it is not just a logical argument. In this way, spirit alters Chloe's direction, her daily rhythms, her intensity, her joy as she follows it. As she allows herself to become swept up into the affectivity of impression, following its call, she finds herself channelling spirit as she taps into a sense of the beyond.

This process of distinction or discernment when coming into contact with spirit was one that most of the people I met at Bethel wrestled with – indeed it is also one that I too pondered upon. For, there was a tangible tension between the 'what is' and the 'what if'. The 'what is' being the thought that interrupted, the feeling that would unexpectedly consume, the sudden impression that would captivate, the picture that sprung to mind out of the blue, the vivid dream that left an imprint. The 'what if' being the question, what if this is spirit? The more that this

question of ‘what if’ was acted on as a ‘what is’ - the more that Chloe would be able to distinguish when these impressions or thoughts were spirit. Thus, by opening herself up to the possibility of wonder, by allowing herself to imagine that all these feelings could be spirit and acting upon them as if they were the more she was able to discern these small moments as spirit.

This idea of allowing such experiences to come forward, where the boundaries between what is and what could be become troubled, allows for us to see how spirit affects are lived, lively and living. They are not a simple or linear outcome of encounter. Rather, spirit affects fold into and emerge out of the continual motions of everyday life at Bethel – as I found to be the case myself…

Carol’s Garden

Carol’s garden, an enclosed area brimming with life and colour, was one of my favourite spots for reflective writing in my Airbnb. Indeed, I would often take to one of the hammock chairs that hung from a tree next to the patio on a sunny afternoon. Trusting the ropes that held the material suspended above the ground, allowing myself to become enveloped in its shape as its gentle swinging would eventually slow. From here I could look across at the bushes, the shrubs and trees. Taking in the herbs and flowers that filled the air with sweet aromas and watch as hummingbirds buzzed around the special bird feeders that Carol hung from the fruit trees. Carol, my host during my stay in Redding, had explained how she had cultivated the garden as a space for prayer and contemplation. Where she could connect with spirit through the calming serenity of creation. Where sounds of the breeze rustling through the leaves and the wings of hummingbirds would collide with the soft notes of the windchimes that hung from the porch. Where the butterflies would flaunt their colours in amongst the flowers and fruits that Carol planted. The garden was a space that Carol could relax and simply be in the presence. Whether that was during her time in prayer in that hammock chair or as she tended to her herbs, selecting what to cut off and consume or leave for next time. Each aspect of that garden was designed for those who spent time in it to connect with, honour and praise the ultimate creator.

I enjoyed retreating to the calm of the garden. I found its serenity particularly conductive of inward reflection and ethnographic ponderings. It was as if the garden had some sort of magical

properties that allowed me to slow down and be captivated in its stillness. In the garden I could meditate from afar upon the busyness of life at Bethel with its multitude of services. Its loud music and cheering crowd. The hustle and bustle of the campuses with their overflow carparks, queues for coffee and swarms of people manoeuvring and circulating around every space. I could acknowledge the complexities of being back in a Christian world. Reflecting upon the memories evoked, the sensations and emotions that arose.

I permitted myself to wonder how many other guests at Carol's Airbnb would have also sat in this chair, offering up their own praises and prayers. Others who too perhaps retreated from the busyness of Bethel to soak up a different, more tranquil, atmosphere of spirit. For, Bethel often felt chaotic, brimming with activity, overwhelming the senses through its abundance. A sensory overload as the lights glowed, sending streaks of colour across the room, bouncing off walls, off bodies, off things. Bethel constantly swirled with action and movement. The cameras would maneuverer upon their cranes, the screens flashed, people swayed, jumped and danced, arms and flags were waved, the band played. The preachers often would dash across the stage, their voice changing pitch, echoing out across the speakers in alternating intensities, setting the tone that would ripple through the crowd. The bass notes, drumbeats, the clapping hands and stamping feet sending vibrations through the floor, the chairs, the walls. Yet, the abundance that overwhelmed at Bethel could be undone in the atmosphere of quiet and calm of Carol's garden.

The garden held a different mode for engaging spirit. The garden's affects generated a meditative sense, an inward gaze. For believers like Carol, that inward gaze I imagined led to the spirit-within through her quiet introspective prayers. For me, contemplation often meant a complicated and troubling entanglement between self and spirit. Indeed, I would sit in the hammock chair, slowly rocking under the dappled shade the above tree provided and imagine what would have happened if my life had of taken a different course. What would have happened if I had never left the church in the first place. If I had of continued down the path rather than diverting away from the route that my upbringing had prepared me for. Wondering if there was a way back? If there was, did I wish to take it? Indeed, many barely comprehensible entries in my ethnographic journal were scrawled from this place of wonder. In one such entry, several weeks in to my immersive ethnography I reflected upon how I had been attempting to put my cynicism aside in order to allow myself to wonder. Sitting in the chair I wrote, "I am

here. I am waiting. If you are real you will have to prove it. I allow that. I give that permission to happen. If this is real, if you are really out there and everything these people say is real - then fucking prove it to me. Now is your chance." Putting pen to paper. I was writing to spirit. Threatening the divine with some sort of ultimatum.

When I returned home, rereading that particular entry was difficult. It made me laugh. It made me cringe. It made me sad. But it was a moment that glowed as my rereading stoked those embers of affect and stirred my feelings. Stepping back into that sad, funny, cringey moment, reminded me of the varying emotional dimensions and intensities that my fieldwork tended to elicit. Of the affective forces that abided within Bethel. That circulated and sprung forth as I lived alongside and like believers. As I got to know people and their stories as I listened to their experiences. How I became saturated in their essences of spirit, their beliefs normalising in my own day-to-day life. My own realities and experiential knowledges beginning to fade into the background as the masses of stories and testimonies of spirit that I had read, listened to, heard about and discussed in what felt like every waking hour of those few weeks leading up to this day in the garden had overwhelmed my senses. They had wrapped me up in particular modes of life, I was submerged in the affectivity of this way of life and I was drowning.

Whilst I could quickly dismiss this particular entry under the guise that I was simply 'losing my mind' as I found myself being sucked into the cogs of Bethel's alluring spiritual machine this ignores how emotions are relational, connective mediums in our research (Scriven, 2020). Whilst I can rationalise that that entry was as a result of the more-than-representational spiritual practices and beliefs that I was once again submerged within - in that moment, in the garden, I was not thinking about that. I just *felt* it. I was in it; entangled in the sticky affectivity of spirit. For, at Bethel, faith was so viscerally felt and so passionately enacted. Bethel was brimming with spirit affects, that were bridged by and discerned through my emotions.

My attempt to discern spirit – despite beginning my thesis determined not to try and do this – came as a result of my own intrigue. My own desire or need to figure out whether the things I had seen, felt and been told were spirit or whether they were not. In this sense, my intended friendly approach to the spiritual was compromised and overcome by an innate sense of distrust, suspicion and anger. So my approach towards discernment was not quite how Chloe had explained hers to be. Spirit was not accompanied by an overarching feeling or impression of

joy or love or peace. Indeed, rereading the entry I remember writing it. I remember feeling frustrated. I was caught in the between. The connection between those affective spirit potentials and myself, was far from peaceful. It was confrontation. It was twisted within memory, hurt and anger.

The surging capacities to be affected by spirit at Bethel intensified during those moments in the garden. When I could truly look inwards I found it easy to tap into the muscle memory of prayer and my spirit communication of years before. Yet, aside from the anger and confrontation - ran a thread of potential, a crack in the façade. An opening that said, prove it to me. I was writing from a place where the alternative reality, the other modes of being in the world that the people I was around were convinced of, was beginning to bleed into my own conscious once more. I was not totally sure I believed in it – but I was not sure I completely did not either. But I noticed it. I was embroiled in the affective pull of spirit.

The abundance of emotions and the intensities of spirit's affectivity at Bethel impacted me during my fieldwork more than I could have expected. Indeed, in the garden, writing to the divine I connected with and traversed within the affectivity of spirit. This particular moment was one that stuck with me long after my return to the UK. My becoming-with spirit was, in this sense, living and lived. It evolved and grew; it was in motion long after my return back home. Taking me around twists and turns and spiralling me out. I became-with spirit as I entertained possibilities and potentials even if those possibilities and potentials remained unfulfilled in the end.

Whilst spirit did not prove itself to me (although I do wonder what I was actually expecting to happen or whether I'd have been able to cope if some type of proof did occur!) - for others the affectivity of spirit did prove itself. Indeed, for many at Bethel spirit tended to repeatedly confirm itself as the divine. For instance, in my conversation with Rachel…

The Necklace

Rachel, a 3rd year BSSM student, told me about a time when she was sitting on the steps outside the school, writing prophetic words for some new students she was about to meet. As she was sitting there, two girls whom she had never met before, were talking nearby. They had heard a

message from God that they believed was for a girl sat writing on the steps – and had spotted Rachel whom they realised must be the girl from the prophecy. This sort of detective work was a common theme when the participants talked about prophecy. Especially so when receiving a prophetic word for a stranger. For instance, the man who had heard from God that someone had a sore shoulder, went around until he found (or perhaps did not find…) that person to deliver the healing or message from spirit. In this case, the girl sat writing on the steps was Rachel.

"Hi, sorry to interrupt you," the first girl said, "But I'm just hearing God talking about the story of Abraham and Sarah, like the promises of God and like the promises fulfilled. There is just something about Sarah!"

"I also just like, I just hear the Lord saying that you carry an anointing of a mother and people find you really safe and you are going to be a mother to all nations!" the other girl followed with. As Rachel retold this interaction, she told me how she found this encounter really funny. Firstly, because her mentor's name was Sarah and how after she had written the prophetic words she was going to go to a meeting with Sarah. Secondly, because the first prophetic word that she had ever received was that she was to be a mother to all nations, and here it was again – just as she was writing the first prophetic words that the new students would be receiving as a welcome to BSSM. Feeling encouraged, Rachel finished writing those prophetic words and headed to the meeting.

Laughing, Rachel told me how during the meeting with Sarah another person who she did not recognise walked in, disrupting their conversation and handed Sarah a gift. The gift was a silver necklace that read: 'Mother to Nations'. "I was like cool. Fair enough. Just things like that, just like yep okay, that was a word from God. It was a double confirmation of what I had already felt Him say. Things like that happen all the time," Rachel told me.

Through a series of disturbances and interruptions in Rachel's day, she heard from God. The necklace therefore became a mode through which spirit was made present. But also, how spirit confirmed the presence of itself in the earlier words that the girls spoke to her. The necklace, to Rachel, was less of a piece of nice jewellery but a way through which prophecy was repeated and confirmed. In this sense, like the parking space or Carol's garden, the necklace affects and

is affective in particular spiritual ways. This opens up the possibility of being affected by objects that in turn opens up studies of religion to the dynamism of objects themselves. For, objects are important in "their ability to affect us; to afford particular moods, sentiments and imaginations" (Haldrup, 2017: 57). Indeed, geographers interested in affect have increasingly looked towards the material world as a "vital element in the constitution of affect" (Thrift, 2004: 60).

Objects are also important in how they tune us in to particular atmospheres "from which subjective states and their attendant feelings and emotions emerge" (Anderson, 2009: 78). Materialities in their ability to affect us generates particular feelings and senses or presences and through that blurring Edensor (2015) argues that atmospheres emerge; atmospheres are an interrelated dynamic of bodies and moments (Bissell, 2010). The necklace elicits different feelings and senses and presences different affects than the hammock chair but both of these objects are affective and provoke particular experiences of spirit as we relate to them. For discussed in more detail in Part II, atmospheres emerge as relations and they are not something that we just feel but they position the felt space as something that we do (Bille and Simonsen, 2019). As such, the hammock chair or the necklace can be understood as "attuned with affective potentials, where the resulting atmospheres are affective forces" (Bille and Simonsen, 2019: 11). In other words, thinking about objects atmospherically means paying attention and noticing the ways through which they gesture to moments of excess. Where a woven chair, suspended by ropes that form a tangled knot around a branch, swings with the kinetic energy of an Airbnb guest lulling their thoughts inwards. A hammock chair: a quiet retreat, a comfortable resting place, a swaying journey inward. Or, where a piece of silver is heated and melted into a certain shape, stamped with the words 'mother of nations' marking a particular passing of time. The necklace: a gift from a loved one, a precious possession, the perfect accompaniment to that dress, a spiritual message confirmed.

McCormack (2015: 96) notes how atmosphere gestures towards a "sense of affective excess between and across bodies." Indeed, this idea of atmosphere as a sense of affective excess that positions the felt space not only in ways that can be perceived by sensing bodies but also as something humans do (Bille and Simonsen, 2019) was key during a seminar I attended…

The Corridor

Going back to the first week of my ethnography, I attended a seminar series that was aimed at helping people learn how to steward encounters with spirit. Armed with the email proving my acceptance onto the seminar I drove from Carol's house towards Twin View Campus. From the outside, Twin View was an unassuming building positioned on a winding road that seemed to lead to nowhere, making me question whether my satnav was even taking me in the right direction. Nestled amongst the almost industrial warehouse buildings that seemed out of place against the mountainous back drop of Shasta County.

However, once I got out of the car and entered the building the similarities of the Bethel campus were obvious. The Bethel branding, the font on the information signs as well as an interior that was in keeping with the interior of the main campus I was familiar with all indicated that I was indeed in the right place. I entered through the main door and headed to reception where I had to sign in.

I walked towards the double doors that led into the main room where the day's seminar would take place. Upon turning the corner to enter through the doors I was immediately greeted by a group of around ten people. They were positioned in two lines, creating what seemed like a corridor that must be walked down in order to enter the room. Somewhat unnerved by the situation I cautiously began the journey between the group, following the route their bodies determined. As I began to walk down the corridor hands emerged from the 'walls' landing momentarily upon my head and my shoulders and the word 'fire' was declared. With each step a new touch, and a new voice imparting some sort of spiritual fire over me. A strange entrance for someone who thought they were just coming along to another conference meeting…

Before we had even found our seats or helped ourselves to the coffee at the back of the room there was this sort of spiritual impartation of fire. It generated a sense of stepping into 'something different'. It felt like we were being initiated into a new atmosphere that lay beyond the administrational space of the foyer with its mundane processes of queuing, registering and signing in. This new atmosphere was 'known' by being in it; "grounded in specific configurations of people, things, technologies and immaterial qualities of places" (Conradson and Latham, 2007: 238). Atmosphere did not just reside in the main room but emerged as we encountered it (Sumartojo and Pink, 2018) and practiced it (Bille and Simonsen, 2019). In this

way, exploring the atmospheric practices of walking into a room means understanding atmosphere as something that we are *in* and something we actively produce rather than something that we can stand back, look at and examine.

Walking into the main room I wondered whether I was to thank the people making up the corridor or just ignore them and walk through them as quickly as possible. I ended up just smiling at them and hurriedly manoeuvring myself to the coffee table. It seemed like many were doing the same, perhaps all feeling some sort of collective weirdness by this encounter. Yet, despite my initial hesitation and awkwardness, the corridor of bodies generated a sense of anticipation within me; a guarded wondering of what the hell I have come to or come into. Of wondering what that ritualised touching of 'fire' had done, if anything, and what would come after it… In the walking down the corridor of bodies, atmosphere was not just felt but was practiced. From our movements and organisation, from the relation between bodies placing hands and declaring fire in this particular moment. Felt in how we encountered one another, collective but individual. A certain type of feeling that caught me off guard. Leaving me open to the possibilities of wondering what if?

Walking into a room as an atmospheric practice implies how "human bodies and materiality [are] attuned with affective potentials" (Bille and Simonsen, 2019: 11). Perhaps I would have been more used to this sort of thing later on in my ethnography after I had spoken to people who shared their own experiences with the fire corridors – or fire tunnels as I later learned them to be called[25]. But in that initial week it was particularly strange to be touched by 10 or so people within the first minute of entering a room. Even more so when they were spiritually declaring 'fire' over you, whatever that meant…

Walking into the seminar room evoked a particular atmosphere. This was practiced in the speed of my walk, the shiftiness of my eyes searching for a destination or escape, the awkwardness of my smile as I caught the eyes of the strangers laying hands upon me. For a moment let's just contrast my walking into that seminar room with my everyday practice of walking into new rooms as something I do multiple times a day. In this example, the act of entering a room, solicits different atmospheric practices. These depend upon the room in question as well as perhaps who occupies the room, the motives of your entering or the way you walk into it.

[25] See: *Burn* in Part IV: Sensing Spirit

Walking into my office when I have stacks of reading to do and a backlog of emails to respond to is a totally different atmospheric practice to walking into my kitchen late at night to get a snack or forage a cold beer from the fridge. Walking into Bethel's College View church service on a Sunday was a completely different atmospheric practice to walking into the Healing Rooms[26] on a Saturday – even though both of these events occurred in the same room space.

The atmosphere, the mood and intensity of walking into a room affects the walker. It generates certain tones of feeling. Walking into the seminar room heightened my senses, drawing my attention to its oddness in a way that walking into my kitchen back home would never. Walking into Carol's garden brought a sense of zen, a quiet and a calm that being alone and uninterrupted that walking into a service at College View would never allow. But also, the walker affects the feel of that space. We have all been in situations where someone enters a room and the atmosphere changes. When your boss walks in and you scramble to look busy. When you pick up a friend at the airport and finally see them walk through the doors. When someone walks in with muddy shoes on the floor that you have just mopped. My awkward quick walk into the seminar room whilst searching for an escape was maybe not as atmosphere changing as the above examples but I would say was reflected by those following me like I had followed those before me. Essentially, something as ordinary as walking into a room can be understood as an atmospheric practice. This both adds to the idea of atmosphere as a condition for perception (Bille and Simonsen, 2019: 12) as well as centralising the role of materiality and bodies in the production of atmosphere. This was also something important during the first Sunday service I attended at Bethel…

Gold Hands

As I noted in Interlude One, I had arrived at my first Sunday service at Bethel early so as to be able to peruse the bookshop and Bethel's trendy onsite coffee shop *HeBrews*. After an hour or so of worship a speaker came out onto the stage and interrupted the chatter as people made their way back to their seats. He asked if anyone here was new. Several hands were raised across the large warehouse - mine included. People surrounding us new people were invited by the speaker to pray for us, spiritually welcoming us into Bethel. As his words echoed around the speakers, several hands were placed on my shoulders, my head, my knees, and stretched

[26] See: *A Vibe* in Part II: Atmospheres of Allure

out towards me from every direction. Surrounded by hands at the centre of this impromptu prayer circle I felt odd. It felt strange and intrusive. I closed my eyes as the strangers' hands imparted some sort of welcoming or blessing upon me. During the prayer a lady in the row in front of me, who had placed her hand on my knee exclaimed to the group that gold dust had manifested on my hands.

"What?" I asked her, my eyes immediately opening wide, confused by her assertion.

"Look," she said, smiling as she sensed my obvious bewilderment. I looked down and could not help but stare at my hands that were indeed glistening gold under the lights.

"Wow! God bless you!" said one of the girls from Oregon that I had chatted with earlier as my hands became an object of inspection and intrigue. I stared at my hands like they were an abstract body part that I had never encountered before, like they were not connected to my body. I stared, still and stuck in disbelief, gazing at my golden palms. My mind raced.

Reflecting upon this experience of Bethel, I could not help but think about two years prior when I was conducting interviews with friends for my MA. The conversations we had were laced with stories surrounding the impartation of divine gold dust; golden flakes circulating in rooms or appearing on bodies, hands and faces. Indeed, Karen Stollznow, writes how "people report angel feathers, gemstones, and gold dust raining down "from Heaven"" (2014: n.p.); a supernatural phenomenon that has been seen across the globe (Poloma, 2003). I was therefore pretty familiar with the concept of gold dust as a form of spirit making itself present but I was definitely not familiar with spirit choosing to manifest itself via gold dust on my hands – least of all on my first day of fieldwork!

For anthropologist Keane (2008), sacred materialities are produced within spiritual rituals and traditions that then become deeply tangled within the lived experience of religion. Indeed, in Holloway's (2003) discussion of objects in spiritualist rituals, he notes the potential of material culture with regards to receiving messages from the 'other' side. Whilst Keane and Holloway are talking about less ethereal objects such as alters and cups, the materiality of the phantom gold dust on my hands was also meaningful as it became entwined within the affective spiritual experience of that prayer circle. However, neither Keane nor Holloway give spirit the agency

to act outside of the human organisation of those particular objects. Yet this was something that was key in this example. Indeed, Williams (2016: 3) urges geographers to take seriously the role of spirit in co-constituting "the material, bodily, sensational and sensory worlds" of religion – something that has remained distinctly absent within geographical discussion. In this way, it does not really matter whether or not the gold dust 'actually' manifested from a spiritual origin or whether it was as a result of getting the golden bronzer from my cheeks on my hands at some point preceding the prayer circle. Rather, what matters is the belief that it was spirit - and the subsequent affective attachments and atmosphere that swirled within that prayer circle as a result. For, it was believed that spirit, as an active agent, manifested itself through the golden sheen on my hands. My hands therefore became recognised through a whole host of emotional forces – wonder, glory, joy, surprise, confusion, dread… The materiality of the gold on my hands entwined in the lived, affective experience of spirit for those of us in that circle that day.

The golden hands were not only affective in how they impacted my experience of Bethel that first day but they played into and became entangled within the broader experience of being at Bethel. They became a sticking point for intrigue. Where faith and curiosity combined. Where I would later spend hours inwardly deliberating the validity and rationale of hands that miraculously appear golden from a hammock chair. In this sense, the affectivity of spirit was materialised through golden hands as well as the atmospheric practice of wondering about golden hands. In a similar way to how walking into a room can elicit different atmospheres where both the walker and the room are affected by an entrance – so too perhaps is the practice of wonder. For wondering what to cook for dinner is a completely different atmospheric practice to wondering what the hell is going on when your hands have apparently been miraculously blessed through the apparition of the golden sheen you saw with your very eyes...

MacKian (2012) notes, there is an intimate relationship between materiality and spirit; spirit is central to how materiality is not only understood but through how it emerges and appears. Yet, when matter becomes infused with supernatural dynamism, things may not be understood as mere things anymore (Santo, 2013). Unlike the necklace, which acted in such a way as to reaffirm God's word, the golden hands were a demonstration of actual physical presence. A manifestation of something that was absent now present, spirit turning hands that were skin coloured golden. In this way, the ontological divide is blurred through the lively materiality of

my golden hands as they affected our sensing bodies. As such, in those brief few minutes where strangers prayed for me, my hands became what Santo (2013: 46) calls a technology of ontological transformation "generative of spiritual presence in the physical world." They had the power to hold me transfixed. Looking at the 'what is' my golden glow kindled a wondering – a what if?

Pongratz-Leisten and Sonik (2015: 11) ask, "What makes specific matter or materials or forms uniquely capable matrices for presencing or presenting, rather than merely representing the divine?" This is not to say that materiality like the gold dust is a spiritual presence of its own akin to a sense of idolatry where the gold itself is divine. For it was clear that the golden hands were not in and of themselves divine. But rather, the gold that had joined with my skin became the mode through which spirit made itself present in that prayer circle. The gold did not represent spirit but *was* spirit. In a similar way to how Merleau-Ponty (1962: 184) describes how the communicative body expresses in the form of living meaning where when, for instance, one is "faced with an angry or threatening gesture […] The gesture does not make me think of anger, it is anger itself" so too the gold did not make the group *think* of spirit but it was spirit itself, manifesting through living meaning upon my skin.

Gold hands, on that first day of fieldwork, were understood as a presencing of spirit. So, even if I did not (or did not allow myself to) believe that the gold was a mode through which spirit presenced itself, being in the centre of a group of people who did generated very particular affective intensities. Indeed, this experience marked only the beginning of the ways through which my own beliefs were troubled. As Richard Scriven (2020) argues, emotions are a connective force that enables the distances between the material and the sacred to be bridged. For instance, Scriven (2020: 3) notes how in visiting Saint Brigid's Well aside from documenting and observing the well he also found himself being called upon to simply experience the well space, "to be with it, to listen, and wait." As he did, the atmosphere effervescing from the well emerged in his own empathetic and emotional reactions. In a similar way to how Scriven explains that he could not help but be affected by the intensities that the statues, letters and other objects left at the well generated – I also could not help but be swept up into the affective grasps of the golden skin on my hands. Enveloped within a tangible and flowing atmosphere of wonder, shock, disbelief.

My hands were unfamiliar and alien objects. Thoughts of the golden bronzer on my cheeks being transferred to my hands as I nervously touched my face in the moments before the prayer circle were absent in those initial moments. Instead I was suspended by the notion of wonder, the 'what ifs', the potentials of spirit sitting upon my upturned palms. Capturing a certain 'store of action-potential' and triggering certain 'structures of feeling' as my body's willingness to respond was modified (Duff, 2016; Bissell, 2010, Duncan et al., 2020) by golden hands. The very hands that had betrayed my desire to sit back and quietly observe. Or perhaps the hands that reminded me that I was there to experience spirit, even if I did not want to.

Spirit Affects: An Overview

Spirit Affects ultimately reflects the importance that Bethel places upon finding and relating to spirit in everyday life - whether that be finding spirit in your morning coffee, in a garage, in a particular message or birthday wish, in a noisy tree or in an empty parking space. This theme of finding spirit is also seen within my own journey of becoming-with spirit at Bethel, as I wrestle with my own relations with the affectivity of spirit in ordinary Bethel life. In doing so, Part III has presenced a collection of small moments that affected me during my ethnography. I particularly tried to pay attention to the moments that emerged through disruption or interruption – whether that be to me personally or to the people that I met. This included the small or slight annoyances, interruptions or unexpected amusements that I or others were not anticipating – the noisy blue jays, the silver necklace or the interrupting man in the cafe. As well as some of the more disturbing and disruptive moments that emerged – with poor Chuck's seizures, the golden hands or the unforeseen vulnerability in the hammock chair.

What pulled these disturbing moments in this part together however is a distinct focus upon the ordinariness of spirit affects. This part of my thesis folds into the ways that an alternate sense of the ordinary is created at Bethel – one that is infused with spirit. In doing so this part notices the ways that spirit agency emerges as well as demonstrating how an awareness of spirit creates a highly cultivated, almost extrasensory perception of everyday life. This enables believers to not only understand the world in radically different ways but allows them to relate and to forge relations with other bodies (human and non-human), things and spaces in distinctive, new ways. Thus as bodies relate within the alternative spirit-infused ordinary at

Bethel – where all aspects of ordinary everyday life are mediated through spirit affects – specifically spiritual atmospheres can become practiced.

Like other parts of my thesis, this section also oscillates between theory and the empirical, introducing new ideas that add to and nuance existing work within geographies of religion. From the lived experiences of spirit to how spirit is communicated with, known and knowable through people's embodied encounters with it. Also with regards to the ordinariness of prophecy, the routineness of future telling and the generous friendly way that such futures are received and discerned. This part has also developed work on the ways that spirit manifests through materiality and bodies - allowing geographers to reconsider how spirit can be sensed through the sensing of materiality and how spirit materiality is important within specifically spiritual atmospheres.

Interlude Three

The thing I always looked forward to when I went to the main meetings at Bethel was the music. Even though I often did not know all the songs, the lyrics would flash across the large screens allowing me to sing along and get involved. I enjoyed the way that the melodies of instruments and voices combined. How the tempo would change, how the intensities of the worship would fluctuate throughout the hour or two that the music would play. Moments when the music was so loud that the bass would rattle in your chest would contrast with moments when only the soft strings of the guitar and hum of the lead singer effortlessly floated around the room. As the music played, the crowd would move as one. We would sway with the slow songs. We would jump and dance with the quicker ones. There was a certain routine, a rhythm of worship that I became accustomed to. As time went on I began to find myself picking up the lyrics and having to lean less on the flashing lyrics.

On this particular Sunday, a few weeks into my ethnographic fieldwork, I was as normal getting into the flow of worship. They had played a few songs that I had got to know and particularly liked. By now I was getting comfortable. For I had developed a sense of how this bit of the service worked, I knew the general trend. The upbeat starting point that got more intense before quietening down before getting loud again before somewhat plateauing to set the stage and ready us for the next act – the preach. As the loud music quietened and the heavy drumbeat made way for the gentle strumming of the guitar an unmistakeable melody resounded in my ears. I knew this song. Not from my time at Bethel but it was a popular old Hillsong[27] melody that I knew from my home church…

A thousand times I've failed, still Your mercy remains
And should I stumble again, I'm caught in Your grace.

[27] For Hillsong performing their 2006 song 'From the Inside Out' see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F881DVFZr8g

Everlasting. Your light will shine when all else fades
Never ending. Your glory goes beyond all fame.

It had been years since the words of this particular song had crossed my lips, yet I knew it completely. Whilst before I had simply been enjoying the movement of the crowd, enjoying the music and the beat, now I saturated in by memory. Closing my eyes I would be back in that church room in Liverpool with all my friends. I thought about the 18-year-old me, who would have been at the front dancing with the other members of Bethel's congregation who had abandoned their chairs to worship at the front of the stage. The ease by which I could close my eyes and transport myself back a decade into a space of memory felt comforting and familiar. It was easy. My body remembered how to move, what to sing, just how to be in this very moment…

In my heart and my soul, Lord I give You control
Consume me from the inside out,
Lord, let justice and praise become my embrace
To love you from the inside out

The words effortlessly left me, joining the words sung out by the crowd. Becoming entangled in the space above our heads. I felt myself being pulled in, held up, drawn out along with the surging intensities of the song. Yet, the moment was brief. A new melody approached signalling the next song coming in, mixing into the moment of nostalgic praise. As the familiar sounds faded out and were replaced by the growing volume of the new song I felt myself return back. Floating back down, passing through time. No longer a teenager but a researcher. I was no longer in that memory space. Now I could observe and think more clearly. As the song changed, there was a sense of relief.

Part IV

Sensing Spirit

Without Words

It was late in the afternoon when I packed my things into a bag and headed to the Alabaster Prayer House. Situated on the top of the hill opposite Bethel's main campus, the Prayer House was a space that I enjoyed spending time in. Mainly this was because surrounding the building was a garden with some benches and large rocks to sit on. There was a pond that glistened under the sun, casting rays of light up onto the bushes and trees that surrounded it. It was a calm oasis where I could sit and enjoy the sunshine in peace. I could spend time alone. I could think or I could read. Indeed, when things got too much in the Airbnb, when interactions with Carol felt fraught, tense or just draining, the Alabaster Prayer Garden was a welcoming sanctuary. Yet, heading to the Alabaster Prayer House today was not to escape. It was an intentional trip to practice a thing called 'soaking' that I had been introduced to a few weeks prior.

When I reached the garden I managed to find space on one of the benches and began to unpack my things, pulling out my notebook and pen. I sat for a while with my headphones in but no music playing. Just taking in my favourite view. I always enjoyed looking out from Bethel's College View Campus towards the Shasta County mountains. Flicking through my Spotify I found the album that I wanted to listen to - *Without Words* Bethel's instrumental album. It had been a few weeks since I had been introduced to it at a soaking seminar and I had since been trying to spend some time practicing soaking on my own. At its most basic, soaking is a time of still and rest as one listens to instrumental music and 'soaks' in the presence of spirit. In this way, soaking was one way through which to intentionally connect with, encounter and

experience spirit. Because of this, soaking often resulted in the very intense emotions and sensations of being touched by spirit…

It is here, therefore, that the impetus of this part of the thesis lies – in the sensuous poetics of sacred embodied experiences (Holloway 2006; Kong, 2001; 2010) as they emerge through particular practices. In particular, Sensing Spirit explores the reality of being 'touched' by spirit – "something which has been absent in most academic discussions to date" (MacKian, 2012: 51). Part IV: Sensing Spirit therefore looks to the ways that people at Bethel welcomed the touch of spirit, inviting spirit to encounter them in ways that were visceral, tangible and captivating but also disorienting and disturbing in their ability to shift people's notions of reality. So whereas Part II looks to the ways that a spirit-infused sense of ordinary life at Bethel is imagined, and Part III looks to how that ordinary is presenced in everyday life, Part IV looks to some of the ways that this particular sense of ordinary life is made routine or comes into being - how it is forged and felt through practices at Bethel.

Sensing Spirit looks towards these particular but diverse experiences of spirit that generate experiential knowledges of the world beyond language. I look to how being touched by spirit can emerge in ways that are excessive, that incorporate a sense of becoming overwhelmed. But also being touched by spirit can occur in a quiet and calm manner, in a way that was gentle and relaxing. Sometimes, being touched by the spirit fluctuated, it evolved through time, it faded in and out. But regardless of how spirit touched the people that I met at Bethel, the common thread that ran between the accounts, that connected them all into something like a map of spirit was the idea that the body was central. Indeed, I have called this part, Sensing Spirit because it was through the body that spirit was so often located. In this way, my aim with this section of the thesis is to focus upon the ways that the touch of the spirit – as a sensuous sacred experience – folds back into, forges and reaffirms ordinary affective life at Bethel through bodily encounters with spirit.

Bodily encounters with spirit where spirit is experienced and sensed through and has the ability to radically affect the corporeality of the body are called manifestations. Manifestations typically refer to a body's seemingly uncontrollable physical or emotional reaction to spirit and emerge in a variety of diverse ways. For example, jerking, shaking bodies, whooshing necks, burning sensations and unrelenting crying or laughing. So I presence ways that ordinary life

becomes known as spirit-infused through looking to how experiential knowledges of spirit emerge in manifestation. To do so, this part follows my own experience at a soaking seminar whilst also connecting the dots to other examples and testimonies from the people that I met at Bethel, looking to examples in music and sound as well as in heat and movement. So as I weave together these embodied experiences of spirit from my time at Bethel with those that were shared with me during my interviews I follow different pathways that denote the diverse ways through which spirit was sensed…

Soaking

Sitting in the Alabaster Prayer House gardens, with the gentle rhythmic sounds of Bethel's instrumental music playing through my headphones, I remembered back to when I attended that soaking seminar in the first week of my ethnographic fieldwork. How we had all been instructed to leave our chairs and spread out on the floor. How the lights were dimmed and the music began. How we were told to close our eyes. How the guy leading the seminar explained that, "God is going to move through the room and He is going to touch each one of us in different ways and if you don't shake and quake and laugh and cry it's okay, just receive." I remembered how the bodies on the floor around me grew still. Together, we lay on the floor. We closed our eyes. We listened to the track. We waited for spirit's touch…

"Spirit we just invite you… we welcome you here… come Holy Spirit… come…" the speakers words gently spoke over the soft instrumental background music that had begun to increase in volume. The music was not solemn or dreary. It was upbeat yet restful and almost mysterious. The piano and strings that were underpinned by rhythmic drumming bringing to my imagination the entrance of spirit whom the speaker had welcomed and invited in. Our bodies laid still, sprawled out across the floor. The invitation had been given. The soaking had begun. We prepared for the spirit's touch.

Whilst there is some variety in the ways that soaking is practiced, as Wilkinson and Althouse (2014) note, much of the practice embodies a ritualised similarity. Their account of how soaking tends to take place in a dimly lit room accompanied by soft, instrumental music was also replicated in the soaking seminar that I attended. Soaking is therefore intrinsically linked to cultivating particular sensory atmospheres. With the quietened and darkened room and

bodies sat or laid on the floor cultivating an atmosphere of calm and focus, soaking elicits notions of mindfulness. Indeed, the practice could be thought of as a specific form of mindfulness that is angled towards sensory experiences of spirit. Yet, whilst most of the work on mindfulness in Geography concerns the idea of bringing awareness to the self (See: Heelas et al., 2005), during soaking, the key was to bring awareness to sensing spirit. In other words, soaking is a practice wherein people are just to rest in spirit's presence opening their minds to spirit's voice or touch. In essence, the whole point of soaking is to viscerally encounter the divine.

The instrumental music that invaded our ears with its soft melodies was important. It enabled us to draw our thoughts inwards. The sonic affects within its melodies acted in ways that soothed. They gave us a focus. But sound often does more than one thing (Kanngieser, 2015). Indeed, Geography, a historically visual discipline (Paiva, 2018), has seen a recent increase of attention being given to sound and sonic registers across a variety of diverse scholarship (Wilson, 2016). With the increasing influence of non-representational and more-than-representational theories, the affectivity of sound has become central within sonic geographies (Doughty et al., 2019). Such theories help geographers to conceptualise, capture, be affected by and affective in our studies of that which is "not-quite-graspable" (Vannini, 2015a: 6). Sound is frequently noted for its ability to move bodies and activate particular feelings and emotions and speaks to the geographical prerogative to explore and investigate the world beyond just representation (Doughty et al., 2016; Simpson, 2017). In its ephemerality, multiplicity and fluidity, sound has been understood by geographers as an affect and as implicit in the re/creation and flow of affective atmospheres (LaBelle, 2010; Gallagher, 2016). Geographers have noted how sonic affects, beginning as raw vibrations, have the ability and potentiality to create, shape and change spaces, bodies, sensations, emotions and moods (e.g. Simpson, 2011b; 2017; Revill, 2013; Wind et al., 2018). Indeed, the sonic affects of the music regulated the space. The music centred us and drew us to a still. The sonic affects configurated the room for spirit. They abounded our ears, flowed over our bodies, connecting us as we readied ourselves to encounter the manifestations of spirit…

A Deaf Spot

Despite numerous calls for geographers to engage with the sensuous 'poetics' of sacred embodied experiences (Finlayson, 2012; Holloway, 2006; Kong, 2001, 2010), little work on the sounds of the sacred has been done. When sound is considered, it often it remains within the realm of religious difference and multiculturalism (e.g. de Witte, 2016; Garmany, 2013) or is fleetingly noted within broader explorations of religious or spiritual experience (e.g. Holloway, 2010; Lopez, 2019; Williams, 2016). Indeed, whilst geographers have explored how certain styles of music can conjure up imaginings and ideas, or stereotypes, of certain places (e.g. Shobe and Banis, 2010) few have explored how music conjures up imaginings and ideas of the spiritual. Plus, music's ability to activate feeling and emotions where sound is "an intensity that moves bodies" (Gallagher, 2016: 43) tends to be neglected within the geographies of religion despite Williams, noting how music has the ability to "open up, and close down capacities and affective atmospheres of the divine" (2016: 46). More generally, Daniel Paiva (2018) asks, "what has Geography been listening to?" and whilst he does not identify religion as a geographical 'deaf spot', I argue that the lack of attention towards the vast and diverse sounds relating to religion and religious or spiritual practice present as a huge 'deaf spot' within Geography's growing concern for the sonic. Given these points, in this part of my thesis I want to draw attention to the ways that music and sounds operate in ways that bring forth and fold into spiritual experiences. I do not do this in a full and comprehensive way. But rather, as I talk through examples I bring into view moments where music and sound become entangled within spirit's touch.

With regards to soaking, it has become such a popular practice within some Christian expressions as a particular way of connecting with spirit (Wilkinson, 2017) that instrumental music has developed into its own soaking subgenre. Bethel Music have released several soaking albums to date. Yet, instrumental music has had significantly less attention than lyrical tracks within Geography (Kirby, 2019) but is particularly interesting to me especially since the lack of lyrics lends itself to NRT emphasis upon aspects of life beyond the represented. For instance, McCormack reflects, when looking at the *Star Wars* theme music, how the "Star Wars affect" emerges through an "abstract yet moving complex of gestural, figural and musical refrains" (2003: 498-499). Indeed, in his fleeting comment on film score, McCormack (2003) acknowledges how the sonic-affective tendencies of Star Wars music connects people with aliens and spaceships and light sabres. It cultivates particular scenes, particular energies and

does so without requiring the listener to hold any pre-existing knowledge of particular musical forms. In other words, the pre-cognitive emphasis that emerges from becoming captivated by sound as you simply soak in it is the essence of instrumental music's sonic-affective tendencies. Essentially, feeling the spirit of the music rather than focusing upon particular musical forms allows us to stop overthinking and reducing the experience of the music's affects (Revill, 2004). For, the harmonies of sonic affects that emerge make us feel the spirit of the music in particular ways. So whereas the spirit of the Star Wars film score is epic space battles in galaxies far, far away – soaking music's sonic-affective tendencies captivate and connect people with spirit.

Soaking music is therefore designed to cultivate affective atmospheres that are ripe for connection with the divine. It opens up the capacities for atmospheres of spirit's touch. Listening to music whilst soaking was therefore an important way through which our bodies could become emotionally connected with and encounter spirit. As the music links and moves spiritual and human bodies, the lack of lyrics build into soaking music's objective to step away from the distractions of life and focus our attention upon the spiritual presence around us. The sonic space that is created through playing soaking music allows for certain processes to be blocked out (e.g. hearing everyday 'distraction' noises) whilst bringing the sensory experiences of the soaking music to the forefront. In this way, as the sound travels through space and sonically affects bodies, affective atmospheres of spirit begin to emerge – driven by the sounds of the soaking genre. Indeed, most tracks within the genre tend to start off fairly softly, creating a sense of something coming – something as ethereal as the instruments gently portray. Their sounds create atmospheres of anticipation and expectation, enabling and facilitating connections between human and more-than-human spirit bodies as the music grows in drama and volume. The fluctuations of intensity driving feelings and angling atmosphere. To highlight the powerful sonic affective tendencies of soaking music a little further let's listen to Bethel's track *I Won't Forget*[28] from one of their instrumental albums *After All These Years...*

Listening to the track, the song begins with soft strings and slow, moody piano notes. The strings become more prominent and staccato and are joined by soft percussion and wind instruments as the 88-piece orchestra joins together growing louder. As more and more

[28]Listen to the track here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7nDqmc0oJm8

instruments join in and intensify the rhythm and flow of the track, the feeling of anticipation also grows in intensity. As the track comes to crescendo, the drums become louder and mood becomes more dramatic. These peak levels of intensity, rhythm and volume rework the atmosphere, reflecting indeterminate feelings of the 'presentness' of an encounter with something higher and more powerful. When the song reaches its peak intensity and volume it will stay at that level for a few moments before dropping to a contrastingly quieter, slower and more reflective mood. As the drums stop and the moody piano music and quiet strings that filled the initial moments of the song return it is as if the song returns to its origin before ending on a final loud, long note from all the orchestra before fading out. The quiet and reflective mood of the final moments of the music reminding us again perhaps of the mystery of the Creator. As the flows and peaks of the music are encountered it generates new spiritual attunements, knowledges and perceptions in the ways that sonic-affective tendencies of the music were specifically created to facilitate.

Work within the frame of non-representational theories or post-phenomenology has caused the affectivity of sound upon the body to become a central theme within sonic geographies. This approach is also handy as it allows the common concern, wherein the authors wrestle with the nuances between listening and hearing and what those differences mean (Nancy, 2007; Paiva, 2018), to be overcome by. In other words, rather than trying to decipher sound or figure out what different sounds mean you focus upon what is actually happening in the moment. It is looking to the "spectrum of different kinds of responsiveness that includes but also goes beyond active human audition" (Gallagher, Kanngieser and Prior, 2017: 622); listening means paying attention to the *"responsiveness of bodies encountering sound"* (p.620, emphasis in original). This enables me to explore the ways through which the sounds of soaking have the capacity to connect different bodies (LaBelle, 2010) and shift or change them (Kanngieser, 2015) at Bethel.

So during the soaking seminar, as we lay there on the ground, we were taking in the soft sounds of the instrumental music that were similar in style to *I Won't Forget*. The waves of sound held us suspended or captivated in feeling. Enabling us to connect with spirit. I thought back to the words that the leader had spoken as we found our spaces on the ground. How in this soaking space we might laugh or we might cry or we might shake or quake. That this would come forth and be brought into being as the sonic affective tendencies of the notes swept us into their

clutch. But whilst the leader had proposed that these things may happen – he also noted that they may not. So perhaps, there is a certain similarity here between the sonic affects of music and the affectivity of spirit. For, both sound and spirit could be thought of as having an element of being 'ungraspable' as well as having the power to connect and move bodies and generate tangible impressions of something infinitely intangible.

This idea of spirit having the power to connect and move bodies, creating tangible impressions of the intangible was something that a lot of the people that I met at Bethel talked to me about. For instance, in my conversation with Tamara…

Woosh

I enjoyed meeting up with Tamara during my time at Bethel. Her story telling and light-hearted attitude towards life was always refreshing in what was often quite a heavy and intense experience of fieldwork. I had quickly found that building relationships with people like Tamara was very important in my exploration of Bethel. For, it was nice to be able to come to such people with questions that I had developed over the previous week. This particular morning we were sat having coffee in a café in Downtown Redding and the conversation quickly turned to experiences of spirit. I had asked Tamara what she thought about manifestations; what were they? Did she experience them?

"Manifestations are the physical responses we have when we encounter spirit," Tamara explained. I already had a sense of what it was to witness manifestations up close not only from the short time I'd spent in Bethel but also from back home. So I nodded, agreeing with her unusually succinct way of answering my question. After taking a large sip of her hot tea she smiled and quietly continued, "When I first started having manifestations I had no theology for them, in fact I was embarrassed by them."

Tamara explained that she had seen some really cool things when she first came to Bethel. There had been the time a little boy had his eyesight miraculously restored[29]. As well as another time when her knee was healed from chronic pain and a time when she had a surprising

[29] See: *Healing Rooms* in Part II: Atmospheres of Allure

supernatural vision. As a result, for a short while after, every time she even thought about God she would manifest. As Tamara put it, "My neck would just go whoosh! It would like twist. I could not control it. It looked like a Tourette's tic. I just thought I must be looking crazy, can you imagine. I was just so overwhelmed with God's goodness."

I had heard of similar types of things happening to people before. I knew that when spirit would touch people they would react in different ways. Some might start shaking or twitching. Others might tremble or perhaps wobble back and forth. Some people manifest through emotions. Through loud screams. Through seemingly uncontrollable crying or laughter. Some fall to the floor whilst others stand seemingly frozen in time. Indeed, I had grown quite accustomed to people manifesting in a whole variety of ways as they found themselves overcome by spirit. Yet, just as the ways through which spirit manifested through people's bodies was diverse, so were the ways through which people responded to it.

I thought back to the soaking seminar, how as the music had continued to play, people around me began manifesting. The bodies that had once been still as they simply let the soft tones of the instrumental music wash over them holding them captivated now manifesting spirit. Their captivated bodies coming together with spirit through the sonic-affective tendencies of music and reacting. In this way, the jolting, crying, groaning bodies that emerged around me at the seminar were understood to be undergoing a spiritual manifestation where the spirit moves through and within believers' bodies causing people to, as the leader had earlier said, "shake and quake and laugh and cry". Therefore in the seminar, like for Tamara, manifestations emerged in ways that were beyond-the-body as corporeality becomes entangled with an autonomous spirit actor who is given the opportunity to take control or cause these physical reactions to occur.

Whilst remaining controversial within some Christian expressions or traditions, for groups like Bethel, manifestations are an important indication of spirit working within the church's broader framework of radical, supernatural Christianity and revival. Tamara explained how having grown up in the more conservative 'Bible Belt' meant that she always been taught that manifestations were demonic. So coming to Bethel and finding her body to move and manifest in new ways beyond her control in response to the divine – rather than her assumption of the demonic – brought about mixed emotions. For on the one hand it is perfectly understandable

to reason that a body part moving outside of your control could be a recipe for embarrassment but also these movements indicated a shift in Tamara's own theology. In her own understanding of reality. In the whoosh of a neck twist the manifestations shifted from some sort of imagined demonic movement to a spiritually divine reality of encountering God.

As Tamara would think about spirit, and all of the things she had seen, it was as if Tamara was able to move between two spaces simultaneously through the touch of spirit. Indeed, as her neck manifested spirit by 'whooshing' with an uncontrollable twist Tamara would be transported into a 'higher' sense of understanding with spirit. Where she would exist both in this realm but also in another otherworldly space through the sensory reminder of spirit in her neck. Where the manifestation was no longer a scary indicator of the demonic but folded into and out of her own personal spiritual awakening with the divine. In this sense, the manifestations were the embodied event of spirit-within, of being pulled by spirit, affected by spirit's presence. Manifestations were ways of Tamara becoming-with spirit as her body is physically moved and her sense of the world around her is reorientated.

These bodily encounters with spirit where believers become-with spirit help people to foster deeper connections with the divine. For Tamara, these beyond her body movements served to both shift and affirm her beliefs and faith. For, if she was not already convinced by all the things she had seen at Bethel, then the addition of a whooshing neck was doing much to help her along the way! Manifestations were therefore really important for Tamara, as her body became controlled and taken over by a spiritual force, sending shockwaves through her neck upon the mere thought of God, the ways through which she knew spirit evolved. Indeed, these movements confirmed there was something 'more' for her to experience and convinced her that God was able to impact her life in ways that were unarguably and inherently tangible and knowable.

Often this type of physical movement of the believers body seems to be out of their own control. So, it is important here to note that the seemingly out of control experience of being touched by the spirit where something ethereal takes charge of the body, like making the neck twist is not some sort of spirit possession. By this I mean, that whilst spirit and body do become entangled within one another through manifestations, as Tamara explained, they are a physical response to spirit. They are not an aggressive or forceful possession akin to some kind of horror

film. Indeed, as many of the people that I spoke to about manifestations asserted, there remains the notion of choice. In other words, people would repeatedly tell me about how important it was to be open to spirit in order to experience it. Thus, it was through this willingness to be open to being touched by spirit that sensuous moments of encounter would emerge. Manifestations come from a deliberate and intentional openness to being touched by spirit. In this type of context, I understand being 'open' to the spirit as being willing. As not becoming closed off with reason and rationale, but rather being open to possibility and wonder. It is taking the stance that declares belief in something higher and allowing oneself to submit to the power and will of the divine – even if that results in a twisty neck.

It was clear to me during my time at Bethel that only when people purposely opened themselves up to the spirit through practices like prayer or worship or soaking that the spirit would touch them in this way. It is from this point, of intention and intent that Part IV: Sensing Spirit engages with. Indeed, the importance of deliberately opening yourself up was reiterated during most of the meetings I attended. For instance, the leaders would encourage us to be open to spirit and open to inviting and welcoming spirit into our lives and into our bodies. Certain practices – like soaking – were particular ways to facilitate this openness. Soaking gave us time to just be open, clearing our mind of distractions, creating room for openness and encounter. Yet, it was not just soaking that was powerful in how it allowed for deliberate and intentional atmospheres to emerge that were ripe for spirits touch. Fire tunnels were, as Phil explained, also a channel through which people at Bethel would cultivate spirit's touch…

Fire

Phil told me how he had recently taken part in a thing called a fire tunnel. As Phil explained the concept, I was immediately reminded of the time when I myself had unknowingly and inadvertently walked down a fire tunnel as I entered a seminar early on in my ethnographic research[30]. For me, the affectivity of the fire tunnel I walked down created a sense of something about to happen. The declarations of 'fire' imparting an atmosphere of anticipation that accompanied what was a strange and odd entrance. It generated a sense that I was heading into a different space – even if I was not too sure what that difference was. Yet, for Phil, the fire

[30] See: *The Corridor* in Part III: Spirit Affects

tunnel took on different affects. Phil already had an idea of what a fire tunnel was from his prior knowledge of Bethel. So he knew that deliberately walking down the fire tunnel was a way of being open to the transfer of spiritual potentials upon him. Whereas I got the sense of walking into a new indeterminate space – Phil got the sense of walking into a spiritual space. Where walking down through the tunnel was a way that Phil could be open to the fiery spirit of the divine. The tunnel was therefore a chosen path towards a space that was alive with spiritual potential. It was a space wherein such potential would transfer and transform. Where believers could be hit by the electricity of spirit. Essentially, fire tunnels produce spaces for affect built around excesses of sensation, intensity and a connection to the divine – and Phil was ready for it. He was, in Ahmed's (2010) words – angled for it. So he began to walk.

As Phil began to walk down the tunnel he explained how his throat started getting very warm and, with each step further, this warming, heat sensation would spread. The heat, radiating from his throat, began to pass down into his chest, his stomach. It rippled through his legs, shooting along his arms. As he continued to walk the heat became more and more intense. It progressed from a gentle warming, to a deep burning sensation as the spiritual heat energy flowed throughout his whole body. As he walked, his body became more and more consumed in the lived sense of temperature through the beyond-body burning sensation of spirit. Phil explained to me how these types of sensations had become a familiar sign of spirit's touch and became a mode through which he could not deny God to exist. Therefore manifestations of heat worked in a similar way for Phil as the whooshing neck did for Tamara, reinforcing belief. As such, burning sensations not only acted as a mode through which spirit was sensed through Phil's body but played, as MacKian (2016) also reminds us, a fundamental role in making his faith real.

In the fire tunnel, heat becomes more than just an inescapable cosmological force that exists on earth (McHugh and Kitson, 2018) but a recognisable sign of something otherworldly. So, I want to take a moment to understand these thermal sensations as particular affective modes through which people manifest spirit through their bodies. Where their encounters with spirit produce particular physical thermal reactions.

In the tunnel, the heat energy spiritually maneuvered between and within the bodies making up the tunnel and Phil. Circulating the warmth through the bodies who enter the tunnel and sending

vibratory convection currents through Phil's body - resulting in a felt thermal intensity with the power to overwhelm him. As Phil continued to tell me about his fire tunnel experience he explained how one of the people making up the body of the tunnel reached out and touched Phil. As soon as there was a connection between the two bodies it was as if the burning sensation that was flowing throughout his body was doused in petrol causing his entire body to instantaneously go up in flames. Phil was already primed and angled for encounter; he was walking down feeling the burning sensations of spirit. Yet, upon this touch there was an impartation of spirit that blew him away. It hit him with such a power and magnitude it, as Phil told me, "felt like my whole body just burnt up. I just dropped down… and people had to carry me away."

In the fire tunnel, the sensation of spirit grew from a gentle warming in Phil's throat to an almighty inferno with the clout to consume his entire body. Indeed, Phil explained how the sensation of fire came as he connected with another person's body through their touch. The fire hitting him with such a force that he collapsed, falling to the floor. Whilst he was physically unharmed, for those few moments he was completely unable to utilise his body. He was reliant on being picked up and extracted from the fire tunnel, as friends carried away his limp body. The tangible thermal-affective tendencies of spirit left Phil on the ground, overcome.

Geographers have engaged with heat in different ways. From heat as a sensory phenomenon (Vannini and Taggart, 2014; Strengers and Maller, 2017; McHugh and Kitson, 2018) to heat as a potential threat to life and wellbeing (Buzar, 2007), to how heat is modified and modulated through technology (Harrison and Popke, 2011; Walker et al., 2014). But, as Oppermann and colleagues note (2020), whilst much of this current work in Geography is attuned to heat as a form of energy it rarely focuses upon the body as a site of thermodynamic interaction. This means that Geography tends to fail to acknowledge the ways through which thermodynamic interactions connect embodied ways of doing with ways of being. Yet, this is important in my thesis. For, sensations of heat were felt thermodynamic interactions with spirit occurring within Phil's body in the fire tunnel. So his embodied ways of doing the fire tunnel are connected with his being hot. This comes together as Phil walked down the fire tunnel, reaffirming his faith in God in a very tangible and powerful way. Essentially, the thermodynamic interactions in the fire tunnel connect human bodies with more-than-human spirit bodies through the sensory medium of heat.

Whilst the notion of thermal sensations and thermodynamic interactions in the body as it connects and becomes-with spirit is not explored by any geographers it would seem, examples of when this would happen often tended to unfold within my conversations at Bethel. For instance, in my conversation with Helen…

Heat

Later on in my interview with Helen, as we were sat outside Bethel's College View Campus, she told me about a conference that she had gone to. During the worship portion of the conference, she recollected how a particular and strange feeling of heat began to spread throughout her body. "I felt it all over my body. Like I could feel my body just growing in temperature. I kept just looking around like thinking, is this just me?" Helen explained.

Throughout my ethnographic research I always found it particularly interesting when people would talk about experiencing spirit through heat. Perhaps, because the thermodynamic interactions that emerged as people like Phil or Helen encountered spirit were in contrast with my more general popular ideology surrounding the thermoception (as the sensing of temperature, see: Vannini and Taggart, 2014) of spirits. Typically, if you were to imagine what the thermoception of spirit is you would perhaps lean upon occulture or the popular cultural understandings of the paranormal. Where spectral hauntings and ghostly encounters are often sensed through dropping temperatures (Massullo, 2017). Where an eerie, icy sensation shivers through the body as it senses a ghostly presence and suddenly drops in temperature. The shiver that later rattled through my body as I sat in the soaking seminar… Or, perhaps a sudden freezing cold draft, circulating bone-chilling convection currents in the room generating an uncanny sensation that you are not alone… But unlike my paranormal imagining of recognising something otherworldly through a perceived sudden decrease in temperature, at Bethel spiritual thermodynamic interactions usually meant a sudden increase in temperature.

As Helen explained, spirit was encountered in the heat that flowed through her body. But those thermodynamic interactions that emerged within her body generated a heat that was alien and unusual; it had agency. She told me how the heat felt like it rushed down into her arms and seemed to diffuse out of her hands. As it did, it felt like it bounced and returned back,

circulating back in towards the centre of her body with greater power than it had left. Having a heat manifestation as she encountered spirit was new for Helen. But so too was the heat itself. The heat worked differently, it moved differently, it affected Helen differently than other - earthlier – experiences of heat. For it was not the heat of sitting in front of a log fire, nor the heat of being submerged in a hot bath. It was not the heat of eating a peppery curry nor of realising you have gone out with way too many layers on. Indeed, the feeling of that heat itself was a new sensation. One that she was not familiar with. It was a feeling in her body that was specifically spirit, "I was trembling so hard. I could hardly stand. It was the encounter to end all encounters," Helen reflected.

As Ali Lara (2015) points out, much of the current work on thermoception is focused upon how people control and regulate temperature through their consciously driven physical activity. For instance, how people try to stay warm or stay cool as they adapt to new climates (Strengers and Maller, 2017) or work in particular extremes of heat (Brearley et al., 2015), where heat is a vibrant energy through which all social practices must engage (Oppermann and Walker, 2018). Yet, as work in affect has shown, much of life occurs beyond representation and beyond that which people experience through conscious decision making or practices. So Lara's (2015) argument is that there are ways to experience the agencies of heat beyond how we as humans attempt to regulate and control it in our own processes of thermodynamics. Thinking like this changes our experiences of heat away from simply being about the body as an organism trying to maintain its homeostasis equilibrium.

To explain this further, I want to take a moment to look at the example given by Ali Lara (2015) of eating a taco from a street food stand in Mexico as this outlines a possible way through which heat can be encountered beyond human practices of regulation and control. Lara explains how heat is encountered from the heat of the city, from the days weather. It comes from the fires that cook the taco, the smoke that rises and joins together warming your lungs as you inhale their smells. The heat is an affective force, an atmospheric attunement to warmth (p.283). Indeed, as the taco is received and then eaten, the body also warms up. The hands warm as they hold the hot taco. The insides warm as you swallow it, absorbing the taco's heat into our own. Yet, there is also an element in this scenario which has its own heat agency - its own ability to "trigger heat and modify the chained process of thermoception: it is capsaicin, the molecular component in the soul of the chilli" (Lara, 2015: 283). It is the capsaicin that

when you bite into the taco - bites you back. It evokes the pain receptors on the skin. It causes you to sweat. It causes your blood to flow, your mouth to burn and the sensation of being on fire (p.284). Yet, the thermoception of eating a taco also includes the cultural practice of preparing the taco (p.286). Of, setting up the fires for cooking, deciding which part to cook first, picking the right chilli for the salsa. Of, how do you take your taco? All of these things have the ability to alter the aforementioned experiences of the heat. The heat of taco eating therefore reflects "a hub of activities" (Vannini and Taggart, 2014: 66). Where all the activities are events that are related in different ways, creating many possible trajectories of heat within the experience of taco eating – included those beyond human regulation.

Feeling the thermal sensations of spirit rushing through your body or being overcome with the burning, fiery sensations of spirit are really quite different examples of thermoception than eating a taco. Yet, just as how the eating of a taco creates a sensation of heat through a hub of activities, each with the ability to alter the sensation of the warmth so too could the thermal-affective tendencies of spirit be understood. For instance, Phil encountered the fire tunnel space in a much different way than I did. The particular affective forces that emerged created different atmospheric attunements to warmth for both Phil and me. But also – in the taco example, all aspects of thermoception were brought together through the mediation of the affectivity of taco eating. Within this, the affective feeling that the capsaicin creates, of pain-pleasure (where eating the taco causes you to both be in pain but in pleasure) pushes the body against the homeostatic equilibrium into disequilibrium (Lara, 2015: 279). The body in disequilibrium feels like it's on fire but it is not. The body is in pain but it's also in pleasure. The eater is not suffering nor does it dislike the suffering it is in. In these ways, eating a taco can help us understand heat beyond our own attempts to regulate it.

Like the capsaicin, there is a similar sense of this ethereal heat manifestation being able to push the body out of its equilibrium. For instance, as Helen explained the warmth that radiated from her body out into the world before being fired back into her with greater force left her trembling. It was the spirit in the heat that 'hit her back' as she invited encounter during worship. It pushed her out of equilibrium as she was hardly able to stand but she could. Trembling under the force of the heat that seemingly came from the beyond. It was an encounter of heat to end all encounters yet she remained in no actual danger. The heat disoriented her, causing confusion yet enjoyment as it pushed her away from her sense of

equilibrium. Similarly, the fire tunnel that brought about intense, fiery burning sensations that left Phil overcome. Feeling like his whole body was doused in petrol and burnt to a crisp when someone from the tunnel reached out to touch him. It pushed him away from equilibrium. He was a body in distress, but he was not. No longer able to stand, but unharmed. A pain-pleasure feeling that at once left him in a state of disequilibrium.

When I had walked down the fire tunnel and was touched by the people who made it up, I was not overcome by the same flaming sensations or thermal forces. I was not pushed out of my equilibrium by spirit. Sure, it felt a little weird, it was out of the ordinary but it did not push me into disequilibrium - but I did still mediate the fire tunnel through its thermoception. Through the warmth of anxiety. Of anticipation. The type that makes you sweat a little, that makes you feel uncomfortable and awkward. So both Phil and I navigated the thermoception of fire tunnels but it was the other elements of heat that played a vital part in how the affectivity of the tunnel space was mediated by us. In this case, that particular element was, of course, spirit.

In both Helen and Phil's accounts of thermal sensations, spirit is perhaps akin to the capsaicin in the taco. Spirit is the molecular component, the soul (or rather - spirit!) of the fire tunnel or the conference worship session. Spirit is the element that has its own heat energy, its own ability to trigger heat and modify the connected processes of thermoception. As Phil deliberately and intentionally walked down that fire tunnel asking for impartations of fire it was the spirit that imparted. It was the spirit potentials that created the sudden change in temperature. That took Helen by surprise, causing her to look around and wonder if it was only her feeling this.

But it was not just manifestations of thermal-affective sensations that pushed the body away from and beyond its equilibrium. For instance, in my conversation with Katie…

Tingle

During my ethnographic fieldwork, as mentioned in Part I: Beginnings, I stayed in an Airbnb hosted by a Bethel member named Carol. Throughout my stay, other guests also came and went. Staying perhaps only one night or for a few days to attend a conference or a week for a seminar series. Occasionally guests would stay a little while longer. One such guest was Katie. She had come over to California from Melbourne in order to attend a work conference in LA

but whilst she was in the US she wanted to make the most of it and so planned a bit of a stay in Redding. She had told me that she had always wanted to visit Bethel and so this work trip seemed like the perfect chance to do so. As Katie was around and about in Carols home for about two weeks I got the chance to spend quite a bit of time with her, getting to know her and her story.

During one of our conversations around the dinner table she shared how her mum was really into New Age spirituality, especially astrology. I found this interesting as I too have family who are into New Age. She shared how despite having grown up always engaging with a sense of the spiritual the astrology scene conveyed a sense of darkness that she could not quite put her finger on. She contrasted this with how she now experiences spirit in the Christian context. "I'm very experiential," Katie told me, "I find it hard to read the Bible so I find God through feeling His tangible presence, you know." I heard this sort of thing quite a lot whilst I was at Bethel. There was a clear prioritisation of personal spiritual experiences or individualised notions of knowing God through feeling God over institutionalised notions of religion or Biblical theology at Bethel. Nevertheless, I asked her what she meant by this. She told me that she would recognise spirit by how it made her feel. She would sense spirit through the times when she would spontaneously just burst into tears, overwhelmed in emotion. Or, sometimes she would sense spirit through the deep impressions of peace that would weigh upon her. Or, like waves washing over her anxiety with their serenity. Like most of the people I spoke to, there was not just one simple way that Katie sensed or manifested spirit.

"Sometimes," Katie told me, "I feel an odd prickle or tingle in my hands - like pins and needles! It happens especially like when I pray for someone." Katie continued on to explain how when she would get this prickly tingle, the people that she prayed for would get healed. She explained this all fairly nonchalantly, as if it was perfectly ordinary to elicit supernatural healing through a pins and needles sensation. In this way, like with Phil and Helen, the discomfort of getting pins and needles was, I imagine, accompanied by normal blood flow. Her nerves were being stimulated, but they also were not. A prickly, uncomfortable feeling for her that also brought healing comfort to other bodies. Spirit therefore pushing her body out of and beyond its own equilibrium as she senses something beyond herself within in herself. In the tingling of her hands, Katie's body becomes-with spirit.

Other people that I got to know at Bethel also described these sorts of feelings. The types of sensations that pushed people beyond themselves as they become-with spirit. From the peculiar tingling's in hands to sensations of waves rushing down bodies to the warm heat that radiated. These sensations as people were touched by spirit occurred in ways that were beyond-body and more-than-human. They had the potential to move and stretch what people could do in ways beyond simple comprehension. These types of sensations did more than one thing. Sometimes reaffirming faith, sometimes being an answer to prayer. Sometimes generating healing, sometimes cultivating peace. The sensations were ways through which people could have embodied, tangible encounters with spirit. Sometimes in big ways, in falling over and being overcome but also in small, barely noticeable ways. Like Laura's twitch…

Twitch

When I first met Laura, as we got chatting it turned out that we actually had some mutual friends back in the UK. Also, in a weird twist of fate, the guy who was once my youth pastor before he moved away from Liverpool had ended up moving to her city and becoming her youth pastor. Having this kind of connection with someone made the interview feel really relaxed, as if we already knew each other or had some kind of entangled history.

During our interview we talked a lot about worship. About how important it was to her and how much she loved to sing. It was this love for worship that really drove her to apply to BSSM so she could get involved in Bethel's music scene. We also chatted about manifestations. She told me that she did not really experience them. She explained how she had got used to being one of the few people at Bethel who did not physically react to spirit through manifestation. How spirit did not really touch her like that. Interestingly, whilst Tamara had reflected her embarrassment at manifesting so strongly through her whooshing neck, Laura explained how her lack of manifestation was embarrassing. She told me about times when everyone would be manifesting around her and she would not feel spirit like that. This is not to say that her body did not respond to spirit – it did. She would find herself crying or laughing or filled with spiritual impressions of peace and joy. Yet, she did not experience the beyond-body movements usually associated with manifestation.

"Although," Laura interjected, "recently I have started to get this really small twitch and I don't think oh now I'm going to twitch now, so it's definitely God."

This small twitch was important for Laura. She explained how it happened exclusively whilst she was worshiping. And, in a similar way to how Tamara described the whoosh in her neck as being something she did not consciously decide to do for Laura this small twitch was also not premeditated. Yet, it brought her comfort – even if it was so slight she did not think anyone would ever be able to tell it was happening. No one could look at her and tell she was having this type of response to spirit perhaps unless they really stared at her carefully. It was not the falling on the floor and having to be carried away like what Phil described nor did it hold the supernatural healing powers that Kate's tingle did - but it was gentle and quiet. It was a slight shift in herself that allowed her to recognise or sense and mediate the presence of spirit through embodied sensations that signalled something beyond her own body.

I found it really interesting to think about the ways that these slight manifestations meant so much. For, as Laura explained that no one would be able to tell that she was manifesting unless they really stared at her. I had grown accustomed to the larger manifestations that would draw my eye and spark my intrigue during my time at Bethel. But sensing spirit through perhaps these sorts of micro-manifestations, small sensations that were barely there but still tangibly sensed as different and beyond the body's normal responses signifying a quieter more low-key becoming with spirit. These were also, as Laura's example shows, a very important way that spirit is sensed at Bethel. In her example, we can see how manifestations work in ways that are intimately connected to processes of inclusion and exclusion. They have the capacity to strengthen and reproduce group rules and norms. Manifestations therefore have transpersonal qualities as they multiply and infect bodies physically bringing people into the spirit's touch – or excluding them from it. In this way, the affective forces of manifestations worked in ways that "attract and repel bodies into and out of collective folds" (Nixon, 2017: 33).

The ways through which bodies are affectively attracted into or repelled from collective folds of spirit's touch through manifestations are interesting. For, manifestations attract and repel in multiple ways and through various modes. Manifestations are both desired where it's embarrassing not to manifest for some like Laura and undesired and embarrassing to manifest

for others like Tamara. This ability to attract and repel was something that came up in my conversation with Rachel…

Crazies

During one of our many conversations, Rachel shared one of her memories from being back in the first year of BSSM. Now a third-year student she laughed as she recalled how she thought that the people in her 1st year classes who would manifest were like "the crazies" whilst those of them who did not were like "the normals." She recognised the ways through which manifestations at Bethel had the power to pull people in, attracting them into their affective grasps. She explained how Bethel creates an environment where it is easy to, "get drawn into it because you want that sense of inclusion or you want to feel like oh that's fun."

She told me the story of how she transitioned from being one of the 'normals' to being one of the 'crazies'. For Rachel, it began with a fire tunnel. She explained how as she walked down the tunnel she, as usual, did not feel anything. But one of her close friends – another 'normal' – entered the tunnel and dropped to the ground. She began to shake, as she fluctuated between crying and laughter. Rachel told me how her friend lay on the ground for over an hour in this heightened state of encounter, "I'd never seen anyone so close to me do this…" She continued on to explain what she had seen her friend do in the fire tunnel, "her eyes were glazed over, she could not speak. Like she tried to get up but was just laughing and falling over. We had to drive her home. I've never seen such a change in someone." As Rachel continued to explain what had happened she noted how both her and her friend with their medical backgrounds had been so sceptical of manifestations in general. Yet, coming face to face with one, changed things.

After Rachel saw her friend go through this encounter she began to feel more open to the benefit of manifestations in her own life and her own personal relationship with God. The manifestations of her friend affectively attracting her too into manifestations fold. Indeed, after a little while, Rachel told me that she crossed the line from being one of the "normals" into being "completely one of the crazy ones where I did not know what was happening."

For some of the people I spoke to, manifestations were a way of igniting or reaffirming belief. But for Rachel manifestations were more about sensing spirit in a different way, they were about changing or reorientating her beliefs. They were about letting go of control and allowing the spirit to consume her; manoeuvring her body in ways that were beyond her own governance. In this way, we can see how the affective pull of manifestations at Bethel emerges in various ways and through many different modes enabling people to understand their beliefs and relate to their bodies and the world around them in different or new ways. As was abundantly clear to see if we switch back to my ethnographic fieldwork during the soaking seminar…

Shiver

Over the instrumental soaking music, soft sobs and sniffs started to emerge around me. I found myself opening my eyes and slyly trying to look for who was crying. As I looked, I noticed how the middle-aged lady next to me, who was a second before simply lying calmly - jolted. Just once every so often at first, before beginning to spasm more and more. She appeared unaware of how each spasm was causing her body to edge across the carpet getting closer to me. I tried not to stare. Out of the corner of my eye I glimpsed each jolt becoming more and more violent. With each jolt she gasped more loudly and I could not help but pay attention to it. I felt her encroaching upon the part of carpet I occupied as her foot and mine touched momentarily. I pulled my feet up closer to my chest and hugged them into myself; protecting what little space I had. Sobbing continued to edge in at the corners of the soaking room. Ministry team members began placing tissues into the palms of those whose tears visibly flowed down their faces. In the brief moments where the music came to a still as the track changed only the noise of inhaling and exhaling of breath filled the air. A shiver rolled down my own body, like a wave. It took me by surprise as it rippled down my spine.

As I touched on a little earlier, there are certain similarities between soaking and other mindfulness practices, such as meditation. Both practices encourage a certain sense of focus and looking within. So here, Carvalho's (2017) work on meditation is useful. He explains how as one begins to engage with the therapeutic functions of mindfulness, looking inwards and reflecting upon the self in general, a deeper focus upon the sensate occurs. This means that meditators will often describe their experiences with expressions of sensations throughout their

bodies: “such as tingling, flowing water, pins and needles, static electricity, energy, vibrations, etc” (Carvalho, 2017: 215). Whereas meditators are looking within and reflecting on the self, for believers (as discussed in Part I: Beginnings), the notion of ‘spirit within’ is important – the body is believed to be the temple of the Holy Spirit so believers literally embody spirit. This means that looking inwards draws the focus to spirit who inhabits their body. In both scenarios, the practice of looking inwards heightens the sensate. So these experiences that Carvalho describes as occurring during meditation are very similar to the types of sensations that people described to me when they were putting their focus on spirit as they practiced soaking.

There are many different practices at Bethel that explicitly encourage people to look inward and focus on their internal sensate. One example is worship, a time that many of the people I spoke to highlighted as key in reflecting inward and generating sensuous experiences of spirit. Likewise, soaking also created important almost meditative atmospheres that enabled bodies and spirit to react and respond to one another. What is important is that as people look inward, their internal sensate becomes aroused by the sense of spirit within. Spirit within acting like a flaming torch setting them ablaze or warming them up. Or spirit within sending shockwaves or ripples of motion down their limbs. Similarly to how in the act of meditation, the body becomes more susceptible to the multiplicity of intensities and vibrations that are affecting it (Carvalho, 2017) practices like soaking allow for the soaker’s body to become vulnerable to the entanglements of its environment - more vulnerable, more aware and more tuned in to the vibrations and intensities that affect it. Essentially the intensities and vibrations that emerge from people’s deliberate and intentional engagements with a spirit agent can therefore be felt more strongly.

Due to this deep sense of focus, a looking inward, a concentration upon the spirit within, soaking cultivates atmospheric attunements that are specifically geared up to physically experiencing sensations of spirit. For me, those atmospheric attunements at the soaking seminar were tangibly felt in the shiver that flew down my spine - reminding me of the same way that I get goose bumps when watching a horror movie. The certain feelings of spiritual haunting – or indeed what felt like the very real possibility of a spirit encounter during soaking – caused my body to react. I was not sure that I believed in *it* - but I also was not completely sure that I did not. Unsure of what was happening around me and not entirely comfortable with what could come. I was conscious of not trying to ‘explain away’ (as the interviewees called it) what

could be happening around me. I tried not to think about the air conditioning units that turn the 30-degree sunshine outside into an uncomfortable chill. I felt like I was on edge. The atmosphere in the room had changed.

The initial sense of anticipation that I had when I arrived at the seminar had evolved. The lady jolting beside me continued to violently move around making the space I occupied ever smaller. I shuffled slightly over to my right, closer to another woman. She was groaning as if in pain and holding her stomach as she rocked herself on the floor. I felt the vibrations traveling across the carpet. I listened as the crying and prominent breaths of the people around me became more intensive, folding into the music and adding to the sensed affective atmosphere of soaking. Tears alongside laughter. Pain alongside peace. The room becoming a hub of activities of spirit. I could feel myself getting distracted. I closed my eyes and tried to focus once again upon the enchanting melodies of the soaking music…

Music is really important, not just in cultivating particular atmospheres for soaking but in the larger fabric of life at Bethel. Indeed, in Contextual Beginnings I elaborate on the role of music in putting Bethel on the map as a Christian epicentre and in Atmospheres of Allure I look to how music plays a fundamental role in attracting people to Bethel from all across the world. But music was also really important in how people sensed spirit. Music was important in how I accessed memories at Bethel, such as I share in Interlude Three. There was, as Jordan told me, a particular sound that Bethel cultivated…

Distinct Builds

Towards the end of my interview with one of Bethel's worship leaders Jordan, we got talking about his role in Bethel Music. He explained how Bethel carefully cultivates their particular sound, using specific builds of intensity, volume and rhythm, "There's like certain things that happen in a song. There's like very distinct Bethel builds and they're like - duh duh duhh!" I laughed along with Jordan as he tried to explain further, jovially singing several hooks and builds from various songs to prove his point. After a pause in the conversation he looked at me and quietly reflected, "It gets very predictable. Or I feel like it does."

I understood what Jordan meant. In the short time I had been at Bethel I had begun to pick up on the subtilties of Bethel's distinct style of worship. It is carefully crafted out of a sonic building of intensities and volume that translates the emotionality, passion and revival that its music is known for. As Woods (2019) explores, sonic triggers in music can stimulate spiritual experiences. This likens itself to how Gallagher (2016) explores sound as affect. He explains how the particular structures of, for example, loud dance music compels people to move. DJs profit from the affectivity of music and develop knowledge surrounding which tracks are most likely to achieve the required result. This, Gallagher suggests, means that "it may be possible to identify certain sonic-affective tendencies, which are then modulated by specific bodies in specific contexts" (2016: 45). Within the context of worship or in the soaking seminar, certain sonic-affective tendencies of the music could be understood to influence people's emotional and physical reactions.

Arguably, Bethel Music's ability to produce a variety of sonic emotional or physical responses could be understood through the concept of the 'affective condition' that "does not slavishly determine action" but rather "shapes and influences as atmospheres are taken up and reworked in lived experience" (Anderson, 2012: 10). This would mean that the spirit manifestations all work within the particular affective condition - that did not determine those particular actions - but allowed for and encouraged such responses to emerge. In other words, like how the affective condition of the Star Wars theme song shapes atmospheres that can be reworked into lived experiences through the watching of the films, where certain parts of the soundtrack stimulate different affective encounters. The different sonic affects causing you to perhaps watch with heightened attention whilst your focus may lessen at other points. In terms of Bethel Music, perhaps the affective condition means that as the music is loud and bouncy it leads you to dance. It does not determine that you will dance, but it creates an atmosphere primed for dancing. Or perhaps, when it is a familiar melody it sparks a memory taking you back to a time far behind you, eliciting odd feelings that you have not encountered for so long[31]. Or maybe where the music is soft and quiet it may lead you to become overwhelmed with emotion, feeling certain impressions of peace and joy.

Here understandings of the 'affective condition' could provide a sense of a certain rationale for particular bodily movements and reactions to soaking music. This could enable me to determine

[31] See: Interlude Three

that it is Bethel priming the participants through the sonic-affective tendencies of the distinct builds and the particular intensities of rhythm that generate feelings that are then interpreted as spirit. Whilst to a certain extent this is true, what runs parallel to this is the notion that spirit as an active agent is the one that conjures up emotion and physical manifestations. Thus the role of Bethel as cultivating particular atmospheres becomes entangled with the belief of spirit as moving and manoeuvring within and co-producing the affectivity of such. Essentially, for the participants manifestations may be encountered in relation with music but the manifestation is not *because* of those sonic-affective tendencies of the music – it is because of spirit.

The idea of an affective condition potentially bypasses the belief in an autonomous spirit actor by rendering the reactions of the worship or soaking music to somewhat of a cynical chain of eventuality. Maybe it is possible to think through the affective condition whilst leaving room for spirit. By this I mean that rather than thinking that the affective condition assumes that these responses occur without the influence of spirit, a spirit-infused atmosphere would indeed create an affective condition that would both render these experiences plausible and meaningful in the ways that the participants explained them to be whilst also demonstrating the ways through which atmospheres modulate specific bodies in specific contexts. Thinking of the affective condition in this way becomes less about providing a sense of rationale and more of an openness to the presence of spirit as an actor in generating certain embodied experiences. This approach therefore acknowledges Williams call to take seriously the role of "'other' actants (God, Higher Powers, spirits) that co-constitute the material, bodily, sensational and sensory worlds" (2016: 3) of religion.

Thinking back to my time in the soaking seminar, it was not just the intensities of the music that opened those of us there to the affective condition of the spirit-infused atmosphere. Rather there was a folding in of sounds. Of vibrations across the carpet. Of crying and breathing and one sound that became the most prominent of all – laughter…

Laughter

I had not closed my eyes for long when a short, loud laugh abruptly interrupted my attempt to concentrate on the music and continue to try and soak. I opened my eyes instinctively. A man across the room laughed again. His chuckles continued to break the calm and disrupted the

relaxing effect of the soaking music. I found myself watching him as he lay flat on his back, his head rolling, his mouth open and his hands grabbing his stomach that was shaking as breath rapidly entered and exited his lungs. He laughed more and more and more.

More often than not, laughter is considered to go hand-in-hand with humour; "laughter provides the most obvious verbal and visual clue that something funny has been encountered" (Butler, 2015: 47). The deep-rooted connection between laughter and the experience or sense of humour has been reflected within most geographical explorations of laughter (e.g. Bissell et al., 2012; Brigstocke, 2014; Dittmer, 2013; Emmerson, 2016) Indeed, as Parvulescu (2010) explains, most theories of laughter explore it as a response to something else - that 'something else' often being humour. This has developed a "form of lexical slippage … whereby laughter and humour become synonymous, and thus discussions of "laughter" almost always equate to a discussion of humour" (Emmerson, 2017: 2084). For example, when laughter itself is considered, it is often just fleetingly commented on whilst remaining firmly in reference to experiencing a prior comic or humorous event. Yet, as my ethnographic endeavours at the soaking seminar demonstrate, the laughter at the seminar did not seem to arise out of anything remotely humorous or comedic. This type of laughter, sometimes called 'holy laughter' or 'laughing in the spirit', was not a response to humour but it was a manifestation of spirit. A different way through which people sensed spirit's touch.

Other bodies released small chuckles that eerily echoed around the room. Some of the small chuckles evolved into deep belly laughs. The laughter continued to rise as more and more people became infected by its contagious nature. As the laughter continued to consume the room more shivers ran down my spine. Sounds of bodies sobbing, sniffing, snoring, groaning and shuffling along with the soft, calming soaking music - that had initially felt so prominent – became consumed by the growing volume and intensity of the laughter. It continued to grow. It was at once overwhelming and disturbing yet intriguing and entertaining.

In a similar way to how sound has been argued to 'belong' at different times (Gallan and Gibson, 2011; Kerr et al., 2018) laughing in the spirit belongs to times of revival. Instances of spiritual laughter have been reported as far back as the revivals of John Wesley in the 1700s (Alcorn, 2017). Since then, laughter has become an important manifestation of spirit within many major Pentecostal revivals in the United States. For instance, the 1904 Azusa Street

Revival in LA (McDaniel, 2018). The 1992 Rodney Howard-Browne "laughing revival" was also particularly influential at igniting revival through spiritual laughter and acted as predecessor to scores of other revivals in the 1990s including the Toronto Blessing in 1994 and the Pensacola Florida Outpouring in 1995 (Poloma and Green, 2010). The influence of previous revivals, especially the Toronto Blessing, and the ever-increasing fervour at Bethel for more and more revival[32] has meant that manifestations of laughter have been documented at Bethel (Poloma and Green, 2010; Christerson and Flory, 2017). Whilst remaining a controversial aspect of religious experience with critics arguing that the Bible rarely considers laughter beneficial or spiritually enriching (e.g. Morreall, 1989), laughing manifestations are a growing phenomenon within certain Christian understandings like Bethel.

Laughing in the spirit, as a particular non-linguistic soundmaking manifestation presents as an interesting example to continue to explore the more-than-representational and affective ways that spirit's touch is sensed. So, whilst I did not experience any holy laughter myself during my time at Bethel, many of the people that I met did. In our conversations about laughing in the spirit people often talked about it as an awakening or revival of joy in their lives. Or, as Sasha explained it, like being hit by a 'joy bomb' – a bomb of joy that explodes within and blasts people from the inside out resulting in an excess of joyfulness that bubbles out of them through uncontrollable laughter…

Joy Bomb

"I just fell," Sasha recalled as she was explaining to me how the sensation of being hit by a joy bomb was like. "I was just on the floor. It is like you're in your right mind but you are just laughing so hard. Like every problem just fades away as you enter into a state of pure joy. It takes over you, I just couldn't stop laughing!"

Being hit by a joy bomb, builds into the ways that laughter is transpersonal in its ability to overflow the bounds of the body as sound is projected outwards (Emmerson, 2017) in excessive ways that exceed representation through affective relations between and within different bodies (Colls, 2007). Most explorations of the transpersonal capacities of laughter within Geography

[32] See: *Contextual Beginnings* in Part I: Beginnings

concern the ways that laughter is considered contagious in how it transmits between bodies (e.g. Emmerson, 2017; Macpherson, 2008). During the soaking seminar, the laughter seemed to retain its trademark contagiousness. It started off with one laugher before multiplying out and infecting others.

Phil Emmerson (2017) explores how laughter operates through both material and affective flows that disperse across and intersect with other bodies with indeterminate capacities to generate atmospheres. Yet, these atmospheres are experienced differently by different people and are often informed by previous interactions and experiences – like how Phil and I both experienced the fire tunnels differently. Or how Phil and Helen experienced the thermal affects of spirit differently. So whilst I encountered the soaking atmosphere as disorientating and disturbing and found the laughter to be eerie and unnerving, I imagine that the laughers were experiencing the explosive ecstasy of being hit by some sort of spiritual joy bomb.

The idea of spirit detonating some sort of joy bomb within believers points to the idea that laughter can be transmitted and flow between human and non-human spirit actors also. In this way, laughing *in* the spirit demonstrates how laughter can be both a spiritual response to an excess of joy as a manifestation but also an action of spirit that is outworked on and within the laugher's body. In other words, laughter can push the idea of manifestation beyond it being just a physical response to spirit to acknowledge the ways through which the laughter is a form of spiritual soundmaking. For instance, Michael Bradley (2018) argues that during a laughter manifestation, the laugh is God's laugh not your own laughter. You are only a vehicle for the laughter, your voice box, your vocal cords and breath a tool through which spirit laughs through you. But whether the laughter is believed to be given from spirit or literally be spirit's laughter working through the body it raises an important point. Laughter manifestations cannot be disentangled from the role of spirit in producing those sounds. The affective geographies of laughing in the spirit therefore become entangled with, and unfold out of, the emotional geographies of spirit. Holy laughter's capacity to multiply and infect bodies is key to its spiritual potentiality as it opens up the possibilities for understanding how spiritual experiences can bind together different bodies and generate atmospheres through the sensations of sound and soundmaking.

Parvulescu (2010) explains how in order to look at laughter as a phenomenon itself rather than laughter as a response to something (i.e. humour or joy) we should ask what does laughter do? Indeed, thinking in this way is key throughout my research. I have always been less interested in what things are, less interested in wondering whether things are spirit or are supernatural and much more interested in what such things do. This means thinking about how the atmospheres of healing and transformation that emerge from the sensations and sensing of holy laughter work in ways that are more-than-therapeutic.

Another Dimension

For many of the people I chatted with whilst at Bethel, being touched by the spirit tended to be both therapeutic and not so therapeutic. This reflects back to earlier when I was discussing how manifestations often push the body beyond its own equilibrium. They create a sense of volatility where the body reacts differently. Laughter was not so different. For as Sasha told me, "I was the last person there with my brother, he had to carry me home. Because sometimes when you're under the presence the glory gets so strong that you lose the feeling in your body. Because it's like your just in another dimension I guess."

The therapeutic/non-therapeutic affective tendencies of the laughter are not too dissimilar from the affective pain-pleasure of the fire tunnel. Indeed, when the spirit would touch people resulting in a thermal sensation of heat or the joyous sensation of laughter the body would be pushed against its homeostatic equilibrium towards disequilibrium (Lara, 2015: 279). Both of these very visceral embodied forms of sensing spirit resulting in the loss of physical ability. As Sasha had explained earlier her laughter was a visceral expression of feeling like she was in a spiritual state of pure joy and how that enabled her to deal better with the progression of her father's disease. This builds into how laughter positively impacted both her spiritual and mental wellbeing. This was therapeutic as she felt that it was exactly what she needed during a difficult time of her life, but also it was more-than-therapeutic as the laughter carried her into another dimension, disrupting both her notions of space-time and her physical capabilities. In the interviews, this idea of the normal feelings in your body becoming lost or distorted as you feel like you are in another dimension or engaging with alternative reality as you are pushed to disequilibrium was a really common side effect of spirit's touch.

Experiencing manifestations and sensing spirit through corporeal channels therefore is really important within the idea of being distorted, where you feel like you are in another dimension or alternative reality. These sensations are key in making spirit and spiritual worlds real. In this sense, manifestations are really important in how the people I got to know during my ethnography related to the world around them through spirit.

Sensing Spirit: An Overview

What I have tried to do in this part of my thesis is pay attention to some of the ways through which spirit is sensed through the body. I primarily do this through the concept of manifestation as the particular corporeal physical or emotional responses to spirit that often occur outside of the person's control. Whilst these manifestations are seemingly out of the person's control they are not akin to spirit possession. Rather they emerge from a position of openness and willingness to be enchanted or 'wrecked' by spirit. Because of this, manifestations are pivotal in how they enable people's beliefs to develop, be affirmed or turned upside down. Therefore, manifestations play a key role as they unfold out of, forge and reforge a spirit-infused sense of the ordinary at Bethel.

By focusing upon how the body changes as it reacts and responds to spirit I have highlighted and further nuanced the sensuous poetics of religious life where the phenomenon of being touched by spirit is taken seriously. Indeed, through keeping the body central this part explores the diverse ways through which the body becomes-with spirit. This part therefore does much to also add to my experiment with the fourth route to embodiment of wonder – as I explore the ways that spirit combines with the body in specific ways that filter through to impact all aspects of religious life.

In Part IV: Sensing Spirit I also pay particular attention to the deliberate ways through which spaces and atmospheres are cultivated and ripened for sensuous experiences of spirit. Here, I have paid attention to the role of music and sound as well as to the ways that sonic affects build into particular affective conditions, altering the feel of a room and the capacities of bodies to act within that room – including spirit bodies. Therefore the role of music and its sonic-affective tendencies are very important factors in eliciting spiritual manifestations.

As well as sound, I also looked to heat and thermoception as another particular mode through which spirit's touch was communicated in felt, embodied sensations. Importantly, these sensations often occurred in ways that pushed the body beyond its normal search for equilibrium. The body in these moments, joining with spirit, is pushed to disequilibrium wherein the body is at once both in pleasure and pain, or perhaps is more-than-therapuetic. This can be seen through how the spirit's touch often results in people losing their functional abilities that they normal have whilst enabling them to tap into therapeutic angles. For example, how healing would come about simultaneously with discomfort. Or how people would find God whilst losing an aspect of themselves.

In addition to its emphasis on bodily sensations, Part IV is also interested in the role of certain activities and practices in the generation of these sensations. For instance, through the deliberate and intentional focus inwards that soaking cultivates, I explored how this leads us to a greater awareness and heightened sensitivity towards our own sensate. Yet, importantly, when believers look inwards they are looking to spirit which means that as believers look inwards putting their focus on spirit they increase their spiritual sensate. In other words, they are more likely to have a more intense encounter with spirit that is felt physically through their bodies when they partake in practices that require a deliberate, inward focus. Following this, I explored other modes that also increased people's likelihood to have an intense encounter with spirit. In particular, fire tunnels. I looked to how spaces that are cultivated with particular atmospheric conditions like fire tunnels create spaces that are ripe for encounter. I looked to how these sensations have an affective pull that prompts notions of inclusion and exclusion that fold back into how Bethel cultivates atmospheres wherein people are more susceptible or vulnerable to spirit's affects.

Here, I remain rather ambivalent about the degree to which Bethel is an active, intentional agent in creating these encounters. In part this is informed by the critical disposition of friendliness that I set out to employ and reflects the participants testimonies where it was spirit rather than Bethel that generated such responses. But also, I am less interested in understanding what these manifestations are and much more interested in what they do. For, the sensations and manifestations that emerge often do different things. Some result in healing whilst others in reaffirmed belief or a reorientated sense of self. But all of the ways that spirit was sensed and communicated corporeally built into experiential knowledge of the world. For instance, if

the manifestation served to reaffirm belief – it was belief that a spiritual reality existed. If the manifestation changed or reorientated people's beliefs it moved them towards a more spirit-infused world than before. Essentially, as I have demonstrated throughout this part, sensing spirit builds into how ordinary life at Bethel becomes understood as infused with spirit - ultimately creating an alternative supernatural sense of reality.

Interlude Four

Even if you can not get your head around what this all actually might be or what it might mean - you at least know who you are. You remind yourself that you have come so far, you will not let the emotion of setting foot into a past life bring you down. You tell yourself you got this, because you know who you are. But do you?

Again, as you questioned the realities of the experiences you had, your notion of self too becomes a point of questioning. You reflect how your identity was moulded as a child - created within a sense of relationship with spirit. How when that ended you had to recreate your identity. You remember how difficult it was to try and forge a new sense of self that was reliant on yourself and founded on the cornerstone of you. And you wonder whether that cornerstone really existed or if it was a lie that you told yourself, to make it easier to cope with all that was going on around you. When you step out of a relationship with religion that went beyond till death do us part the offer of eternal certainty fades into something else.

Pondering upon the stories and encounters that seem familiar but foreign all at once. For what if you had never left, where would your life be now? Are you even happy you left? Are you missing out on something? Whilst you will never know the answers to those questions, what you do know is you. But do you?

You feel like you have unearthed a dragon that is breathing fire and melting away the steel rods that once held you up. The things you were certain about feel shaky. You used to be sure, sure that you were okay enough to do this. Sure that you were strong and independent. That you had opinions that you could express freely and confidently.

But things have begun to stir to feel less solid. You find yourself reminiscing on an experience of church life that you are not sure whether you miss or you resent. An experience that seeped into every aspect of your being because it demanded all of

your everything. Yet, an experience that kept you tongue tied. An experience that was not to be questioned. Where you were made to feel small and guilty and just not good enough whilst simultaneously demanding of everything you had to offer. You remember the nuggets of good that were just about large enough as to prevent you from leaving.

But there came a point when you did leave.

You made something of you, with you, by you and for you.

So you know at least you have you.

But do you?

- **A letter to self (from field notes)**

Part V

Endings

Closing Carol's front door behind me for the last time, I began to walk down the driveway, pulling my suitcase as I went. It was early, so I had said my goodbyes to Carol and the other Airbnb guests the night before. Getting in the car and driving back along the wide, dusty Redding roads, I retraced my path to the airport. Parking up, the white Honda that had been my little space of sanctuary during the months I spent at Bethel, was unloaded and the keys returned to the car hire desk in the terminal. Inside, I followed the usual tiresome passageway towards the plane. My passport was checked. My ticket printed and scanned. My suitcases sent off into the hold. I waited in queues. I went through security. I waited in lounges. I waited for the announcements. I walked to the gate. I waited in more queues. Finally, heading out across the tarmac, my eyes fell upon the tiny plane once more. Climbing the staircase, I took in one final look at the mountainous views of Shasta County that were now lit up by the early morning Californian sunshine. Once inside, I quickly found my seat and buckled my seat belt. I closed my eyes as a sense of relief washed over me. It was finally over. It had ended.

Yet, as the novelist Ann Leckie (2015: 316) writes, "There is always more after the ending." Even after death, which is arguably the most permanent of endings, there is more. The dead, for instance, live on through our rituals, memories and interactions with them (Hallam and Jockey, 2020; Heng, 2020). Indeed, just like how starting points are always arbitrary - so too are endings. Nevertheless, my thesis ends because it must. Because such is the convention. Because I'm out of time. Because funding is drawing to a close. Because I have ran out of words or perhaps I have just ran out of steam. Yet, in reaching the final part of my thesis, I

wish not to write a conclusion necessarily but to offer some finishing reflections on its contributions and ending points but also some indications of where it could go next – for there is always more.

In Endings, I speak to the broader aims of my thesis and highlight what my research has contributed not only to geographies of religion but the social sciences and qualitative inquiry more broadly. Endings also connects with the other parts of my thesis and demonstrates moments that could be expanded upon or further explored as well as pointing to some questions that remain unanswered. In this sense, Endings does not necessarily build upon - in order to conclude - the previous parts of my thesis but continues to open them out as I explore how affective traces remain on bodies long after the event.

Part V: Endings looks firstly to the key concept of spirit - identifying where my work has enriched and contributed to existing work on spirit. From this, I then turn to explore how this emphasis on spirit has broader impacts within the growing subfield of geographies of religion as well as adding to knowledges on the multiplicity of worldings. After looking to the ways through which my thesis makes theoretical contributions within Geography, I then turn to think about how my work adds to discussions on method. Here, I pay particular attention to my attempt to engage with NRT's call to experiment and remain open to the event and sensitive to affect. In the second half of Endings, I reflect upon the critical disposition, or mood, through which I approached my research, thinking about the particular repercussions that it evoked with regards to ethics as well as my experience feeling the research process – reflecting how the research process is living and lived. I finish up this final section of my thesis by asking what else can we do, reflecting upon alternative ending points and potential beginnings.

Taking this approach with Part V: Endings means that my work continues to circle away from itself. In this way, Endings also utilises empirical examples, highlighting ways that we can actually employ in order to be open to the event but also unraveling some of what it means to do so. Endings therefore reiterates my aim to create an "idiosyncratic map of connections between a series of singularities" (Stewert, 2007: 5) rather than a concrete, whole knowledge of everyday life with spirit at Bethel. In other words, as I draw some final connections between moments or everyday encounters and relations I offer points that present new ideas or potential futures of the research; looking to what could come next. Endings therefore muddies the waters

of what is an ending and what is a beginning by looking to what lives on through my project as well as exploring how my project lives on through me.

Finding spirit

Finding, experiencing and encountering spirit seemed to be at the heart of Bethel life. Indeed, the more time I spent at Bethel, the more I found myself becoming increasingly inundated with personal testimonies and diverse witnesses of spirit. Everyone around me, everyone I encountered or spoke to, had had some story or another about how spirit had impacted them. For me, being in and around this environment was as interesting, curious and intriguing as it was disturbing, haunting and unsettling. I found myself in situations, discussions and in amongst moments that were overwhelming and disorientating as well as times that were joyous and fun or events that evoked memories and imaginings. I quickly found that in my disbelief, I was the outlier. This in itself was unnerving. It was a flipping of circumstances. A turning of my ordinary. Indeed, my sense of what was normal was often and routinely contested and disturbed by the people that I got to know at Bethel. For example, in my experience, people do not tend to be miraculously healed by a spiritual force - yet at Bethel, stories and experiences of that abounded. Or - in my experience, people and their habits do not just change overnight, but at Bethel this sort of thing was commonplace. Thus, a multitude of stories of healing, of personal transformation, of revival and supernatural restoration resounded in my head. As they did, my ethnographic momentum, where I said yes to everything, slowly started to become disrupted by the disturbing-captivating thought that there really may be an alternative plane of existence. Bethel was a space where these spiritual things really seemed to happen every day to ordinary people.

Whilst Geography has tentatively started to think more about the concept of spirit agents, as I discussed in Beginnings, this has tended to be done outside of the context of organised, lived religion (e.g. Holloway, 2003; McKian, 2012; Pile et al, 2019). Indeed, spirit experiences or supernatural encounters are almost exclusively explored by the discipline within New Age ideologies, Occultism or Spiritualism rather than within major world religions like Christianity. Essentially, the geographies of spirit within Christianity are seldom taken seriously (Tse, 2018). This not 'taking seriously' spirit and spiritual geographies has been somewhat of a

longstanding criticism of the discipline (see McKian, 2012) and is one my research responds to.

In my research, I wanted to move beyond the idea that spirit is a distant and otherworldly entity or as some kind of paranormal experience that occurs outside of the realms of religious belief. Instead, I wanted to move towards an exploration of how spirit is encountered and mediated in everyday, earthly ways, where all aspects of life at Bethel are infused with spiritual affects. This ethos is one that has informed almost every part of my thesis, from the way that I engaged with the field to the way I have written my thesis. My emphasis upon spirit encounters is a distinctive shift in the literature within Geography - one that enables my research to begin to make both theoretical as well as methodological contributions to the field.

Lived Religion

My thesis therefore does much to add to and further a spectrum of work within Lived Religion. My particular attention to spirit both speaks to the poetics of sacred experiences and religious life (Finlayson, 2012; Holloway, 2006; Kong, 2001; 2010) as well as the ways that spirit affects are mediated; illuminating different notions of being in, encountering and understanding the world in everyday ways.

My research highlights some gaps in the literature as well as offering some contributions towards them. For instance, in the broader context of lived religion the divine is rarely acknowledged as an active actor. Rather, focus tends to fall squarely upon the religious subject. Whilst my research is also highly concerned with believers or the people that I got to know during my time at Bethel my work also places a focus upon spirit as an actor with agency to affect and be affected. My thesis therefore moves beyond the idea of spirit as an aloof entity as it highlights a multiplicity of ways that spirit emerges and is mediated in everyday life. In doing so, my research acknowledges the ways that spirit as an active agent actually contributes to and coproduces the ways that believers sense and make sense of the world.

Taking this approach and looking to the lived experience of the divine also opens up how we think about religious life. For, in bringing our focus to the ways that spirit affects are mediated

my work does much to further nuance our understandings of the religious subject too. In other words, my research not only thinks about the geographies of spirit but also their active role in defining Christian geographies at Bethel. In doing so, I push forward Tse's (2018) acknowledgment of the important role of human-spirit relationships. Rather than positioning my work within a discussion of theology, however, my research looks to how these relationships are outworked in everyday Bethel life. My work therefore explicitly attends to gaps in the literature concerning taking spirit and spiritual geographies of Christians seriously (Tse, 2018; McKian, 2012).

In taking spirit geographies at Bethel seriously, my work further tones and complicates the ways we can think about belief and how people embody faith in space. About the everyday, poetics of sacred experience (Kong, 2010) at Bethel. For example, I pay particular attention to the ways that people can recognise spirit through their bodies as a sacred space. Where their particular theology or beliefs emerge not simply through "doctrinal knowledge but the ability to sense the transcendent in the body" (Sutherland, 2017: 324). Yet, I also point to the ways that these embodied feelings and sensings of the divine through the body are juxtaposed with their rationale and prior knowledges and experiences with church or religion. In this way, knowing spirit for many of the people at Bethel was not only through their embodied experiences but through a more-than-rational assemblage of things, bodies, relations, knowledges, histories, memories, experiences and encounters. This is something I also explore within my own life and my own ethnographic experience researching Bethel – and something I go on to reflect on some more later in Part V. Therefore, my work adds to the ways that geographers can engage with felt aspects of more-than-representational, more-than-rational affective life.

Through telling stories that pay attention to these things, my research therefore develops current work in the discipline on how people at Bethel contextualise their experiences of spirit in ordinary life. But this also nods towards the specific role of place and the importance of the material in actualising affective encounters with spirit. Varying spaces around Bethel were important in how they shaped encounters with spirit. As my work demonstrates, spaces of encounter were not limited to Bethel buildings but were also found in garages, gardens and even coffee cups. These spaces were also not always physical but included spaces that troubled

the boundaries of the present and the absent, the material and the immaterial as spaces of encounter were also imagined, envisaged and remembered.

Bodies are a key site in my thesis' troubling of the im/material boundary. For bodies are a key space where spirit is not only for sensed but also where belief is shaped and re/formed. So the concept of bodies as a particular space and thus embodied experiential knowledge is a really important part of my thesis. In Beginnings, I outlined the three modes through geographers have tended to approach embodiment in religion: being, doing and sensing. I then built on this throughout my thesis through the experimental direction towards embodiment of wonder – where being doing and sensing are woven together with spirit. This builds into the notion of alternative ways of sensing and making sense of the world around us. This is a theme that runs through many of the vignettes within my work. One that highlights how spirit emerges in relation with new experiential knowledges. In doing so, my work demonstrates a multiplicity of ways that new beliefs emerge and circulate and how these are intimately connected to sensing bodies becoming-with Bethel. This further nuance geographical work on the poetics of sacred experiences and folds back into the importance of spirit as a significant actor in sculpting ordinary life at Bethel.

As I experiment with wonder as a particular way of approaching embodiment my research sought to open up the literature on embodied knowledges to better deal with the more-than-representational, more-than-rational and more-than-human. For not only do I highlight the ways that being, doing and sensing bodies relate to one another but how they relate to (and through) spirit. My research therefore paints a clear picture of the body's role as a site for experiencing, producing and reconfirming belief. So in addition to adding to work on embodied knowledges, my research also responds to calls to focus upon where modern spiritualities are created (Bartolini, Chris, MacKian and Pile, 2017).

Building upon the ways that my work contributes to 'taking seriously' notions of spirit geographies, I want to turn to think more about what that meant to my research in practice. To do this, I want to start off by looking to an important mood that runs throughout my research: a generous commitment to an alternative, spirit-infused sense of the ordinary.

A Spirit-Infused Ordinary

One of the things that I wanted to try to really notice throughout my time at Bethel were the ways that spirit was situated and emerged from within the folds of the ordinary. We can see this in Part II: Atmospheres of Allure as I look to how the ordinary is imagined to be at Bethel or in Part III: Spirit Affects as I look at the paradigm of ordinary that becomes present at Bethel. Likewise, Part IV: Sensing Spirit shows how particular embodied ways of registering the divine become routine through practices. In this sense, my work enriches academic understandings of reality as heterogeneous (De La Cadena and Blaser, 2018) and adds to a more textured understanding of our more-than-rational worlds.

My research also does another thing by taking this disposition towards the ordinary as heterogenous. It brings forth relations between the researcher and these alternative or heterogenous worldings as they emerge in the field. This therefore means that geographers have to think about how they can relate to this but also raises the problem of how researchers actually relate to alternative realities in our ethnographic research.

One method that I set out with to relate to alternative realities at Bethel was through my particular theoretical and methodological 'toolkit' - employing a 'friendly' critical disposition. As I introduced in more depth in Beginnings, this friendly disposition was an alternative to critique. It was not necessarily an abandonment of suspicion but it was an approach that did not assume distrust. Essentially, this is similar to how you never can fully know your good friends but you still would not think that they were out to get you. However, despite setting out with this experimental disposition, or generous reading of Bethel – I found that this was not always the way (or perhaps the best way) of relating to the heterogenous worldings at Bethel.

Whereas Hitchings and Latham (2020b) note how geographers often have an ambivalent attitude to method and a tendency to retreat into the 'invisible interviewer' or the 'elusive ethnographer' I have tried to bring forth and presence my voice and my positionality throughout the research and writing process. This idea was a key part of enacting and unfolding my NRT-in-action approach to immersive ethnography in the field. This means that my disposition of friendliness furthers the notion of NRT-in-action through its commitments to

exploring worlds through our relations with them. In taking this approach, my thesis creates an ethnographic account where I am not an elusive or invisible researcher as I write in my own emotions, as well as my troubles, as I relate to the field. By situating myself as a messy, feeling participant (Weatherall, 2019; Williams, 2016) my work responds to the call for geographer's to actually "say what we did, why we did it and perhaps importantly, how that all went." (Hitchings and Latham 2020a).

I want to respond to this some more along two different but interconnected pathways. Firstly, in 'Ethics of Omission' I want to briefly note an ethical problem where being 'friendly' became somewhat of an obstacle in my research. Then, in 'Disturbing Affectivity' I want to explore in more depth how being friendly and open to the event actually impacted me as a researcher.

As I share my experiences with my approach I reflect upon how NRT asks researchers to remain open to the event and sensitive to affect (Anderson and Harrison, 2010) as well as what it means to become "embroiled in the site and allow ourselves to be infected by the effort, investment and craze of the particular practice or experience being investigated" (Dewsbury, 2010: 326). Part V: Endings therefore reflects upon the implications of following NRT's methodological advice - highlighting the difficulties, challenges and opportunities for cultivating a NRT-in-action approach to ethnography. So in reflecting a little more on my critical approach of friendliness as an alternative to critique I want to draw attention to the ways that this disposition worked as an ethos throughout my thesis and offer some suggestions and reflections for further NRT-in-action methodologies.

Ethics of Omission

The critical disposition of friendliness was important in my immersive ethnography. Mainly because it helped me by allowing me to build a great sense of rapport and trust with the community around me. It was a way through which I was not required to adopt an overtly cynical nor dismissive attitude towards people's beliefs. Indeed, I often reminded the people that I was interviewing that I was not interested in trying to prove or disprove anything, I was only interested in their interactions and experiences in everyday life. In this way, my critical disposition as a researcher was to focus on what was there rather than search for what was hidden. To notice and pay attention to the things that emerged through the relations that I

developed rather than to try and investigate what could lurk under the surface. Bringing this attitude to the table ended up fostering somewhat of a safe space where people would freely talk and confide in me about a whole manner of things. However, this also cultivated an unforeseen ethical problem.

This problem was that throughout the course of my ethnography I often became privy to information that people did not necessarily want me to research. I could know things as a sort of honorary member of Bethel, a person who just always seemed to be there. But I could not know it as a researcher, it could not be part of my work.

For example, there were a number of times during the interviews when people would ask for things to be off the record or where someone would later ask if they could redact some of what they had said. Sometimes this was asked of me because the respondent had perhaps shared with me an intimate or personal aspect of their lives that other church members did not know about. In these cases, removing the parts of their narrative they did not want exposed as part of my ethics of care was pretty straight forward. It came out of the 'generous sensibility' (Popke, 2009: 84) of relations, the ways that ethics are practiced in the everyday keeping of secrets and confidences that make up parts of normal life.

However, more often than not, when I was asked to keep things quiet or omit things from my interviews, it tended to be out of a sense that the participants felt they should protect the Bethel brand. If I were to talk about some of the more 'out there' practices at Bethel, the reader may take it out of context or twist the narrative into something new. I found this type of redaction less straightforward. It felt easy combining my critical disposition of friendliness with an 'ethics of generosity' (Thrift, 2014: 93) when I was keeping people's personal confidences – it was less simple when I was doing the same for Bethel as an institution.

This was particularly pertinent when I was asked to redact experiences and encounters that came up through casual conversation outside of the formality of the participation consent form. For on the one hand, some of the odder or seemingly weird practices would do much to add to the ways that life with spirit springs forth at Bethel in a multitude of ways. It also would have made for some interesting points about how large non-denominational churches like Bethel create new ways of being religious and doing religion. The stories would have done much to

presence the ways that every day, ordinary life with spirit is multiple, complicated and contradictory.

My critical disposition of friendliness, of giving the benefit of the doubt, was troubled by these requests. For, the very approach that I had taken, that had allowed me to get close and build relations with people at Bethel was based upon a willingness to accept what was there. It was an alternative approach to critique's quest to uncover what was hidden. Yet, in taking this pathway I came to know things that I then had to keep in the shadows of my thesis. My very intention to notice 'what is' seemed flawed by this dilemma. It felt like I was hiding something from the reader. As if I was recreating the notion that all is not what it seems.

Perhaps, in reality this simply reflects how we can never really or fully know Bethel as well as pointing to the ways that suspicion and caution are very much entangled within the dynamics of the ordinary at Bethel. So whilst I may approach with a friendly disposition and a generous ethics of care it does not mean that this is extended back to me, or to the reader. Indeed, I ended up deciding not to share these moments. I imagine that since Bethel regularly receive negative press and social media attention, members of the church are particularly sensitive to outsiders coming in and misrepresenting their community. Or, representing what happens and outsiders reading it and not understanding. For, if the ethics of my project emerged in relations, as a particular orientation, a friendliness to the community I was researching - then breaking their trust for the sake of a adding another couple of vignettes, when I already had an excess of examples to choose from, did not feel worth it.

But as a researcher, I found it difficult to stop thinking or, as Andrea Thorpe (2014) put it – unthink – about the experiences that I had to omit. Indeed, even if I did not write them into my thesis directly, the felt dispositions and affects that they induced continued to shape the way that I thought about Bethel and coloured the experiences that I had there.

In addition to continuing to complicate the way that I encountered Bethel, this ethical dilemma also raises some points for further reflection. For instance, how it was easy to implement an ethics of care towards people, but less so to a mega church in the centre of an international network of Christianity. So how (and to what extent) should an ethics of care extend to a powerful brand or institution like Bethel? Especially given that this notion of protecting the

Bethel brand was not something that was limited to my interviews[33]. But also, how is an ethics of care actually navigated and mediated by researchers? How does this ethics of care become reworked within the ways researchers relate to the field?

In a similar way to how Human Geographers tend to avoid discussing their methodological failures (See: Hitchings and Latham, 2020b) so too it would seem do they tend to avoid interrogating and exposing their own ethical decisions and dilemmas. Therefore, this could be another route that I could take my research down, interrogating in much more detail how relating to alternative worldings often emerges through notions of mis/trust and being mis/trusted. Another future direction that my thesis could evolve into is how the ethics around omission also speak to the power and influence of representations. Therefore, it would be interesting to follow this trail of thought and look more into what representations of places like Bethel do – or even perhaps what representations are imagined to do. Whilst this is something I touch on briefly in different parts of my research[34] a fuller exploration of this could also present as a worthwhile avenue of future interest.

So having firstly looked to a particular ethical consideration or problem that arose through my critical disposition I want to now reflect on another dimension or repercussion of my experimental NRT-in-action approach to researching spirit. In the next section I look to how approaching the field with a sense of openness and friendliness impacted the ways that I became-with Bethel. A little later I expand upon this to think about how that becoming-with continued to develop beyond the field as Bethel's disturbing affective traces remained upon me throughout the research process. For, despite my best intensions, my disposition towards Bethel emerged and unfolded in ways that were not always friendly. Part V: Endings therefore not only opens up geographical discussion surrounding how researchers can relate to the alternative worldings of the field but also highlights some of the realities, difficulties and troubles of doing so.

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[33] During the soaking seminar that I attended, for instance, we were all asked to not take any photographs or video recordings during the day. The leader told us that they had had issues previously when people had posted videos of Bethel members manifesting on social media. Similarly, it was apparent that some of Bethel's more controversial lectures and sermons are not broadcast publicly on Bethel TV but were reserved for more private moments like the seminars and the smaller healing classes I attended.

[34] As I have touched upon elsewhere in my thesis (See *Birthday* in Part III Spirit Affects), my research tended to be imagined as having much supernatural power and a broad reach by the participants and people that I got to know than I believed it to hold. So, this could potentially be another reason why people did not want me to add some of the more complicated or seemingly weird practices in.

Disturbing Affectivity

The first few weeks of my ethnography were really exciting. Bethel was loud and lively. It was alive with spirit and spiritual things. It was full of people who were willing to share incredible stories with me. I knew how to be in church spaces, it came back to me much easier than I had ever imagined. My first impressions of Bethel were that it was an interesting place with interesting people who were keen to include me and I was more than willing to be included. Indeed, in an email I sent to my supervisors just over a month into my fieldwork, I told them how much I was enjoying things and I was really considering extending my planned fieldwork period to follow more of the connections and networks I had made.

It did not take long for me to find my feet in my ethnography at Bethel and I soon found myself becoming involved in the full flow of Bethel life. In part, this was because I began saying yes to every possible experience. Supernatural healing course? Yes! Introductions to people's friends? Yes! Responding to a call for prayer? Yes! Going to this event or that seminar? Yes and yes. I basically tried to remain open to the events at Bethel by agreeing to participate in all of the opportunities that Bethel presented to me. As I did, I continued to meet new people and so I developed relationships with Bethel members from all walks of life. My initial anonymity slowly became eroded as my face became known to a few more people. Around this same time, I started to ask people if they would let me interview them. In doing so, conversations that tended to revolve around getting to know people and chatting about ordinary everyday stuff turned to a more explicit exploration of everyday encounters of spirit in people's lives. And, it was here that the disturbing-captivating affective tendencies of Bethel started to emerge and attach themselves in my research experience.

As I reflect on my own becoming-with Bethel, Endings folds into a broader methodological contribution within the field of NRT. For, much of the literature on NRT asks researchers to have a disposition or ethos of being open to the events as they are "actualised within us" (Deleuze, 2004: 169) and to be sensitive to affect (See Anderson and Harrison, 2010). However, few geographers acknowledge or explore what does that means in practice as well as what this does to both the researched and the researcher? In a similar way to how discussions surrounding how to engage with and implement a NRT approach through empirical examples

are scarce (Maclaren, 2019), so too are conversations surrounding the outcomes of trying to do so. In other words, whilst there is an encouragement for researchers to be open and sensitive, little is written on the realities of doing so.

The things I thought I was certain of became loose in my mind as the beliefs and values that I had consciously chosen in my transition out of church became muddled into Bethel's. Questions that I had struggled and wrestled with upon leaving church began to re-emerge, demanding answers that I wasnot sure I had. Why did I believe, or not believe what I did? Who am I, and what is important to me? What values do I uphold, and why? What are my own ethics and opinions? Many times towards the end of my ethnography I would go to Alabaster Prayer House and sit in a corner and meditate upon different things I had been told about the potential of spirit at Bethel. In this way, my interviews and my ethnography intentionally folded into and out of one another. Informing and troubling each other. Indeed, I would wrestle with my own thoughts, my own beliefs. Did I believe in healing? What about prophecy? Or spirit? I would battle and query my own bodily reactions to atmospheres. What did those goosebumps mean? Why am I fighting back tears?

The intensities of ordinary, supernatural life at Bethel thoroughly saturated me in its disturbing-captivating affects in ways that were both intriguing and overwhelming. My attention to spirit meant that I became increasingly drawn to the notion of potentials that could be fulfilled at Bethel. In other words, as I positioned myself to be open to the possibility of another reality I found myself becoming more open and more captivated by the potential of spirit. The what ifs of the supernatural in everyday life. I had begun to embrace the dislocation of my own epistemological certitude and allowed myself to respond to what is not understood (Gherardi, 2019).

The more I got into Bethel life, the more Bethel got into me. Yet, in doing so I also became more disturbed as my sense of self and sense of the ordinary felt like it began to slip away from me. This is something I share in Interlude Four as well as the vignette *Carol's Garden* (in, Part III: Spirit Affects) where I got to the point of being open to potential encounters with spirit and threatened spirit with ultimatums of proof. That particular moment in Carol's garden sticks in my mind as one of the most vulnerable moments of my ethnography. In fact, I feel like in that moment I wasnot specifically engaging in research but I was just feeling. I had become so

sucked into the surging capacities to be affected by the range of intensities at Bethel that I was spiralling down, losing myself within the peculiar cogs of everyday life at Bethel. Indeed, as Kathleen Stewart writes, "the ordinary can turn on you […] it can catch you up in something bad. Or good. […] it can start out as one thing and then flip into something else altogether. […] Either way, things turn out to be not what you thought they were" (2007: 106).

This disturbing-captivating sense of becoming-with Bethel that I became pulled into was, however, not unique to my situation as researcher. Rather, accounts throughout my thesis offer glimpses of how alternative notions of ordinary at Bethel were often forged through disturbing-captivating affects or through an embodied sense of disequilibrium. For instance, in Part II, I point to how people's imaginings of what the ordinary is at Bethel and their own experiential knowledge of the ordinary fold into one another through the notion of being 'wrecked'. Being wrecked referred to the 'disturbing-captivating element' (Bennett, 2001: 131) where spiritual experiences had the potential to turn your world upside down, forcing you to renegotiate reality. For most of the people who I got to know, Bethel's disturbing-captivating element was an expected and desired part of becoming-with Bethel. Bethel presented as hosting the potential for tapping into another, alternative supernatural reality and being 'wrecked' was the embodied, emotional process of being transported or reorientated from your original worldview into alignment with Bethel's supernatural one. In this way, this disturbing enchantment or promise of a new normal was a large part of the church's allure for many people. Part III and Part IV continue to circle away from this notion of an evolving sense of ordinary allowing the reader to follow as the participants share moments that were important in forging a new world view through their experiences of spirit.

So, throughout my thesis we can see how people become caught up in the disturbing or unbalancing affects of spirit at Bethel. From Rachel's transition from one of the 'normals' to one of the 'crazies' in Part III, to Phil's experience in the fire tunnel in Part IV, to how Tamara's whole world view was challenged when she witnessed a healing in Part II. By looking at these types of accounts, my thesis complicates what it is to be religious. But it also does a lot to emphasise how belief is always evolving through the body and can be re/created in embodied ways. However, the disturbing affectivity of the things that people shared with me (both the redacted and unredacted) as I immersed myself in the relations that made up Bethel life did more than one thing. They opened up interesting avenues for analysis allowing me to build

upon current discussions within Geography - but they also had the ability to impact me emotionally – reorientating or turning my sense of reality. They pulled me in and allowed me to wonder what if?

My thesis highlights how bodies and relations are vital components within experiences of spirit and the re/productions of belief – but my work also nods how this impacted me. For, conversations with people at Bethel acted like catalysts that actually shifted me in my thinking, pulling me into disturbing atmospheres. For, it was in these relations – rather than my relations with Bethel itself - that held the affective potentials that could move me. It was therefore from within these relations, from affective atmosphere *as* relations that my state as ethnographic researcher to potential (re)convert hung in the balance. In this way, the role of relations in creating modern spiritualities is something that my thesis highlights. For, it was relations with people who had relations with spirit that pulled me towards the allure of a radical Christian lifestyle once again.

Feeling the process

I had gone into Bethel trying to be open and friendly in how I related to the idea of an alternative reality. Yet, it was in forging these relations that I was disturbed the most. This intensified as time went on and in the final few weeks I became increasingly disconnected from the person I recognised as myself, unsure what I believed or where I belonged. The things and people that usually keep me grounded, that provide certain reference points for balance, or self, felt far away. My understanding of the world and of reality felt increasingly twisted and unbalanced as all my prior experiential knowledges felt like they were progressively up for challenge and deconstruction at Bethel.

Despite there being a sense that my becoming-with Bethel was indeed intensified by my disposition of friendliness and commitment to being open, perhaps the ways that I was sensitive to the disturbing-captivating affects at Bethel would have prevailed regardless of my intended critical approach. For, as Sara Ahmed (2014: 90) explains, affects become 'stuck' to objects through repetition, where "stickiness is an effect of the histories of contact between bodies, objects and signs." So how something impresses into us is often dependent upon the histories that have already left their mark. In my case, the affectivity of Bethel stuck to me differently

than it probably would have if another PhD student undertook the same study. In this way, the stickiness of affect means that some people have a greater sensitivity or vulnerability to it. This means that some people can 'afford' affect more than others can - because affects perhaps do not threaten or aggravate and amplify their structural and emotional vulnerabilities (DeFalco, 2018). But for me, being at Bethel did threaten my sense of self. It aggravated and amplified my emotional vulnerabilities as someone who grew up in a repressive and oppressive community. Asking how to get unstuck, DeFalco (2018: 50) suggests coating oneself in the "greasy excitement" of the spectator who can always extract herself from the troubles of affect. Whilst her suggestion is based upon Alice Munro's stories where the "canny protagonists seek to dodge these sticky subjects, refusing their clingy, risky supplications" (DeFalco, 2018: 49) there is perhaps a sense that I too tried to dodge and escape or extract myself from the sticky disturbing subjects of self and belief. Looking back on my ethnography, one rather stark example of this is my increasing anger towards Bethel more directly.

The more I got annoyed and angry or increasingly cynical about Bethel and the church's institutional power and influence, the less I felt in crisis with myself. Allowing myself to be angry was a refuge from the feeling of Bethel's disruptive affects (Campbell, 2002). Anger was therefore a rather deliberate and intentional affect that I could conjure up without much energy or effort. Yet, other less intended affects also emerged as a means to extract myself from the increasing stickiness of being disturbed. One example of this was the way that I grew increasingly paranoid that my landlord Carol, was going through my things and reading my notes when I was out. I would return home and clothes that I thought I had put on the chair would be folded on the bed or a chocolate wrapper that was on the desk would be in the bin. There were times when she would ask me a pointed question about my beliefs or my research that seemed just a little close for comfort as if she already had some sort of inside scoop from reading my ethnographic musings. Small things that maybe I had done subconsciously or perhaps forgotten about or was just overthinking – or not? I found myself on occasion taking photographs of the room before leaving to try and convince myself that I wasnot going mad. Remembering the actions of this paranoid researcher, photographing the exact arrangement of their items and positioning of their chair in order to cross reference when they returned home makes me feel sad for her. But, in her obsessive paranoia, she also coated herself in a greasy excitement (DeFalco, 2018) – waiting for that moment when she could finally confront Carol with proof about the moved pencil case instead of herself being confronted by Bethel.

That sense of relief that came as I sat on the plane replaced the heaviness that had weighed me down and slowly consumed me in Redding. But when I got back to the UK, back in and amongst 'normal' things the disturbing affectivities of Bethel still remained. Indeed, as Pollard (2009) explains, the writing-up process often means the continual reliving of fieldwork difficulties. This meant that the relief was somewhat short lived. For I would dread re-reading or re-watching my notes from the field. It would make me cringe. It would unsettle me once again. Both with regards to the optimism of my earlier writing and the increasingly dark and disturbed notes that followed, bringing back to life a whole kaleidoscope of feelings. Yet, as I did, I was both pushed and pulled out of Bethel's disturbing affective grip. Reading pushed me away as it heightened my discomfort. It confronted me with my own dark thoughts and feelings, moments when I was certain that I was losing my mind. It pulled me into Bethel, reminding me of times when I didnot know what was real, or what could be trusted as credible and honest. It made me feel the intensities of Bethel again. Whilst the disturbing affective traces of Bethel remained on my body - I was just far enough away that their intensities couldnot consume me. Perhaps, it is only because of this perceived distance that am I able to now write in those vulnerabilities.

As with much work on the spiritual, Stodulka et al (2019) note how there's a need for ethnographers to be vulnerable, both in the field and in their writing. Indeed, the emotional intensities of an ethnography on the supernatural can enable researchers to harness and advance our geographical knowledges and practices. However, as Wainwright et al (2018: 284) explain, geographers do not tend to "readily admit discomfort and concern, especially when it is deeply personal and related to our own embodied presence." Therefore, in deciding to write-in rather than leave out my emotion my thesis responds to calls to *feel* the research process as it creates geographies; "pushing the edges and folds" of embodied knowledge-making (Tolia-Kelly, 2010: 363). Throughout my thesis, and in the reflections here in Endings, I position how experiencing spirit emerges through the disturbing-captivating affective condition of spirit at Bethel. In doing so, my work pushes at the boundaries of admitting discomfort and so responds to calls from the discipline to expand upon "what is deemed acceptable to feel and embody in academia" (Todd, 2020: 17).

Writing about my time at Bethel was as much a part of the research process as being in Bethel was. For in writing up I felt like I could still access those moments of spirit. I could see it around me still, in the transcripts, in the video recordings, in my journaling. Writing in moments that presenced my own inner turmoil and the affective forces that sprung forth and held me captive along my way becoming-with Bethel built into a broader picture of how Bethel creates an alternative world of spirit. An ordinary that is spirit-infused and how this creates disturbing-captivating atmospheres that further pull people in towards them. How the affectivity of spirit attaches itself in ordinary life. It speaks to how Bethel is a space where the affective potential of spirit abounds. Where the intensities of atmosphere cause those who enter to become saturated in their intensities. So, including these moments of distress, where the disturbing affectivity of Bethel moved me and turned me inside out allows me to contribute to the ways that we understand "identity, emotions and experiences as relational and institutional stories affected by social and cultural structures" (Haynes, 2017: 217). So whilst my project has very much focused on the ways that sensing bodies experience spirit in relation with Bethel in particular ways – an exploration of the ways that Bethel deliberately orientates bodies could offer a worthwhile future of investigation. An avenue that looks towards the ways that Bethel as an institution has it's hand in aligning people to have certain experiences through the deliberate cultivation of particular atmospheres.

What else could we do?

When Felski (2015: 1) asks what else we could do instead of trying to demystify and destabilise the response that I took with my thesis was to construct a friendlier approach, looking to where friendliness and suspicion work together in a lived dynamic entangled with spirit. However, my response to NRT's call to experiment and be creative with methodology through embracing this disposition did not quite work out as I had perhaps hoped it to. For, our critical approach can increasingly open us up to or enhance our sensitivity to affect and be affected.

Making space for failure is something that the discipline encourages but rarely seems to follow up on. Geographers tend to escape or disguise their failings within their writing - almost never presenting cautionary accounts of things going wrong (Harrowell et al., 2018; Hitchings and Latham, 2020b). This is not to say that my research was a complete failure, as I have

highlighted throughout Endings my work has added to and enriched many aspects of geographical thought. However, this has not been done with no cost. Whilst there is always a sense of cost so to speak, the specific way that I approached life at Bethel, through friendliness and a deliberate openness to the event, an intentional willingness to be affected, an overindulgence of immersion, a willingness to use my own body within my method - did not work out for me as a researcher. The cost was too high, and the disturbing affective traces of Bethel have remained on me for long after I returned to the UK.

For, whilst I think it is fair to say that people are always, in one way or another, at risk of being disturbed, unsettled, challenged and deconstructed by our relations and collisions with the world. Yet, trying to tune in to the ways that we make ourself open to events and sensitive to affect in our research surely leaves us more vulnerable to these risks? Perhaps this is especially true for geographers who are taking spirit seriously. For, there is already a sense of vulnerability in the need to be open to some type of spooky present absence in order to take this approach. If critique is increasingly being considered as a contemporary genre or mood, or a certain ethos or disposition – emphasising a "diverse range of arguments, attitudes, and reservations that are in play" (Anker and Felski, 2017: 10) what could have been an alternative route or disposition? What pathways can we take that allows us to be open to the events, and remain sensitive to the affectivity of the site yet does not leave us so rattled and disturbed?

Maybe, here a future pathway for exploration needs to go back and rework entryways into researching embodied experiences of spirit. To think again, what else can we do? Perhaps this is what Vaninni means when he encourages researchers to "experiment and to fail – indeed to try and continue to fail better" (Vannini, 2015b: 324). For in thinking about what else we can do, how we could continue to fail better, opens up possibilities to wonder what else I could have done and what other ending points could have emerged if I had of taken a different methodological route?

Looking to the ways that our research played out means that we can develop our approach. This is especially pertinent given how experimental methods arguably characterise NRT-in-action. My approach allowed a focus on what was there as well as making space for us to wonder what could be. In this way, the openness of the approach may have navigated my project around some of the larger existential questions that other approaches can get bogged

down in. But in its openness, the intensities of potential at Bethel grew – opening up my bodily capabilities. This approach did much to enhance my aim to "resonate rather than validate" (Vannini, 2015a: 15) by presencing an "embodied sense of the world" (Stewart, 2007: 6). But what this approach also did was open me up to be increasingly affected by the stories and testimonies I was hearing. I wonder if I had of channelled more anger or maybe just more caution in how I approached these stories and testimonies my experiences researching Bethel could have been much different.

Part V: Endings has reflected on several different ending points within my research - pointing to the things that my thesis has done as well as commenting on the ways that my work has got there. In doing so I reflect upon how my work contributes to how spirit is conceptualised, experienced and encountered by believers to how such a topic is approached and practised by researchers. Thinking through key ideas and threads that run through my thesis, I explore where my work fits within broader geographical discussions on religion, affect, critique, ethics and method. I have responded and added to gaps in the literature and tentatively pushed the boundaries of the discipline as my thesis looks towards the ways that life springs forth within the more-than-human, spirit-infused ordinary at Bethel. But Part V: Endings has also opened up new ideas, expanding upon what has gone before it to notice what also happened alongside and against it. In this way, I have wrapped up this part by asking 'what else can we do.' This in itself points to movement. But it also muddies what is an ending and what is a potential for something new, or something different. It speaks to the futures that can emerge from where we are now, hinting at what is imagined to be ahead.

A Final Thought

From when the reader opened the thesis I wanted them to feel like they had also arrived in Redding. To immerse themselves in arriving at Bethel, uncertainly following some sort of journey through a new world. Continuing on, learning more about Bethel and the way of life it promotes through noticing how spirit bursts into life but also how spirit drives people, how it powers them and their motivations. I wanted to create an embodied sense of the worlds at Bethel so that the reader can witness some of the ways that spirit moves people in their emotions but also in their bodies. Or how relations with spirit allow people to move beyond themselves, beyond their own experiences and capabilities – allowing them to see into different

realms or encounter different dimensions. My work glimpses into some of the ways that spirit challenges and changes people's understandings of, and relations with, materiality, space and self – and nodded towards how this does much to alter people's lives, mindsets and their experiential concept of belief.

Through the telling of short stories, my thesis has presenced rather than presented spirit across numerous different contexts. In doing so, I reflect how Christian expressions at Bethel prioritise seeking, connecting with and being in spirit's presence. These stories allow for spirit to be somewhat understood as the people that I got to know understood Him. But what has remained central is that it does not matter whether or not a spiritual realm exists – what matters is that the people that I met at Bethel *believe* that it does. Indeed, their belief in an alternative spirit-infused ordinary was clear. This was something that I was repeatedly reminded of as people shared their experiences of spirit with me. Some moments that my thesis has looked at were big and bold, they were magnificent and wonderous. But most of the moments were small, they were ordinary and every day; moments that were weaved within the fabric of normal life. Regardless, all of these moments speak to how life at Bethel is mediated through more-than-human atmospheres in ways that are often beyond the body and more-than-material with the potential to change and transform people's lives, beliefs and practices. So it is ultimately in relations with belief that encounters with and experiences of spirit are made meaningful and impactful.

This final thought perhaps encapsulates the idea behind my thesis - that an attention to more-than-human relations with spirit brings forth geographies that are infused with spiritual potentials in the folds of everyday life. For geographers this creates opportunities to further explore affective and emotional lived experiences and generates calls for us to develop methodologies that are better attuned to such dimensions of life. Ultimately, my thesis argues that geographers must increasingly make room in our accounts for the seemingly immaterial but nevertheless deeply consequential dimensions of lived experience in space, such as spirit.

Postlude

The question that I often faced when I returned from Bethel was what was it *really* like there? Different people wanted different responses to this question depending upon their opinions and perceptions of the church. Usually, I found myself responding to this question through retelling the same handful of stories. How one time I woke up to the thick, black smoke of the Camp wildfire coming through a crack in my window. Or how some people would bring guns to the Sunday services. Or the time one of my interviews went horribly wrong, descending into the interviewee going off on a racist and homophobic rant. I would tell people about the time gold dust was spotted on my hands but it was really makeup or when I was asked to pray for someone to be healed and I just ended up going along with it - hoping for the best.

What I did not share was how, like Alice, I had curiously followed the oddly dressed supernatural rabbit down into the Bethel rabbit-hole. Exposing how in doing so, I "never once consider[ed] how in the world [I] was to get out again" (Carroll, 1992: 38). For, being at Bethel was in a sense like being in an affective wonderland; an intriguing world saturated with spiritual potential where it felt like anything could happen. Whilst there were no mad hatters or Cheshire cats there were a whole host of people to whom the wonderland that emerged at Bethel was very real and very ordinary. Where the supernatural flowed in and out of people's daily rhythms and routines with its captivating-disturbing potentials for change and transformation. And it was in embracing and allowing myself to become open to this idea - the everyday (metaphorical) eating of cakes and drinking of potions - that my very sense of self began to shift.

Undertaking this PhD has simultaneously been one of the best and one of the worst decisions I have ever made. It has tested and pushed me to my limits in more ways than one. The last two years, since I returned from Bethel, have been a somewhat cathartic process of trying to re-establish my sense of equilibrium once more. A process that has revealed that I am a different person, a different writer and definitely a different scholar than I was at the beginning of this project.

Reflecting upon my experience of the research process, as one that was both de-habilitating but also energising, reminds me of the impartation tunnels that I encountered at Bethel. The way that walking through the tunnel would open you up to being 'wrecked' through visceral, tangible experiences of spirit. For, in the tunnel, you may cry or break down. You may fall over. You may feel burnt alive. Essentially, the tunnel is an intense space of feeling. Similarly, during my ethnography the affective intensities of Bethel raged, ravaging me, tearing me apart. Yet, once you have exited the impartation tunnel, whether you walk out of it or end up having to be carried, you can begin to come to. From the edge of the room your incapacitated body can begin to awaken, reflect and decipher what in the world just happened. From your position at the edge of the room, you eventually find your feet, head towards the door and leave the room. Arriving home, changed, transformed, forever.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Example Ethnography Week Plan

My ethnography at Bethel was fairly unstructured as almost every moment of the day I was doing something Bethel related. However, this plan is an example of some of the more structured things that I did. For instance each weekend I would visit the church campus several times, attending meetings and healing events. I also went to the healing class every Thursday night and tended to go to BSSM at some point throughout the week. Aside from this I spent much time with Bethel members and students both socially as well as through doing interviews as well as attending a couple of large conferences and smaller seminars during my time in Redding.

Day	**Activity**
Monday	Day off - relax
Tuesday	Attend BSSM
Wednesday	Alabaster Prayer House
Thursday	Healing class
Friday	Friday night meeting at Twin View Campus
Saturday	Healing Rooms – coffee at HeBrews - networking
Sunday	Morning meeting at College View Campus or Cascade Theatre. Evening meeting either at Twin View or College View Campus

Appendix 2: Interview Participants

Of the many people that I got to know, I conducted 18 interviews. These interviews were typically very long and in-depth yet conversational and often lasting up to 3 hours.

Pseudo Name	**Description (not mutually exclusive but their most current Bethel connection)**
Chloe	BSSM 1st Year
Ben	BSSM 1st Year
Sasha	BSSM 1st Year
Phil	BSSM 1st Year
Olivia	BSSM 1st Year
Laura	BSSM 2nd Year
Helen	BSSM 3rd Year
Rachel	BSSM 3rd Year
Tom	BSSM 3rd Year
Sarah	BSSM 3rd Year
Jordan	Bethel Staff
Eliza	Bethel Staff
Tamara	Bethel Staff
Katie	Visitor
Dave	Visitor
Wendy	Bethel Goer
Paul	Bethel Goer
Julie	Bethel Goer

Appendix 3: Interview Themes

Tended to start the interview by asking people why they came to Bethel and asking more questions from there.

Examples included:

- How do you feel spirit?
- Can you hear God?
- How does God speak to you?
- Have you had any experiences with visions?
- Tell me more about what BSSM is like
- How important is music?
- How important is spirit in your everyday life?

Appendix 2: Example Information Sheet

I used this information sheet and obtained verbal consent from all of the participants with regards to the interviews being recorded and transcripts used in my thesis.

Researcher's Name: Abigail Joiner

Project Title: The Affective Geographies of Religion: Spirit and Transformations in Christianity

This research is funded by Northern Ireland & North East Doctoral Training Partnership

WHAT IS THIS STUDY ABOUT?

This study is interested in how people experience God at Bethel. in particular, this study is interested in the ways that the holy spirit is sensed, experienced and encountered in everyday life at Bethel. This study is less about trying to figure out if God is real – or what spiritual experiences are – and much more interested in what spirit feels like, or what God does through these experiences of Him.

WHO IS A PART OF THIS STUDY?

This study includes the use of voluntary participant interviews with people who are involved with Bethel Redding in addition to reflections and 'self-interviews' with the researcher herself. Participants will be found using personal contacts, social media, and a 'snowball effect' wherein research participants may suggest other people to become involved.

HOW LONG WILL THE STUDY TAKE?

The interviews for this study will take approximately 1 hour, but have the scope to go on up to 2 hours.. You can choose to stop the interview at any time.

WHAT AM I BEING ASKED TO DO?

You are being asked to talk about your experiences or encounters with the Holy Spirit in whatever way you would like. These can be ordinary or extraordinary. It is up to you what you would like to share. I would like to audio record the interview, if you consent, so I can accurately remember the information you provide. I will keep these tapes secure, on password protected devices accessible only by myself.

POSSIBLE RISKS:

Your participation in this study does not involve any physical or emotional risk to you beyond that of your everyday life. However, if you wish to take a break or stop the interview, you are free to do so at any time.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Your identity will remain anonymous through the use of pseudo names, chosen by you, if desired. All interview data will be kept securely on password protected devices.

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