

The Art Education of Recklessness: Thinking Scholarship through the Essay

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Abstract

This document has been (for me, writing) and is (for you, reading) a journey. It started with a passing remark in Gilles Deleuze's 1981 book *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*. That remark concerned the cliché. The psychic clichés within us all. The greatest accomplishment of the mind is thinking, which according to Deleuze means clawing through and beyond the cliché. But how? I found in my research that higher education art schools (like the higher education English departments in which I had for years taught) claim to teach thinking, sometimes written as “critical thinking,” in addition to all the necessary skills of artmaking. For this dissertation, I set off on a journey to understand what thinking *is*, finding that Deleuze's study of the dogmatic image of thought and its challenger, the new image of thought—a study he calls noo-ology—to be quite useful in understanding the history of the cliché and originality, and for understanding a problematic within the part of art education that purports to *use* Deleuzian concepts toward original thinking/artmaking. This document is both *about* original contributions to any field and *is* my original contribution to the field. A critique and a proposal.

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Fields of Study

Major Field: Arts Administration, Education and Policy

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Prologue

Cinema is easily characterized as storytelling. Screenwriters, then, are easily characterized as storytellers. They show us a character (or characters) in the (or *a*) world. They give us a beginning, middle, and end to satisfy our unconscious craving for rising action and closure, the arc of our days and lives. The arc. Charlie Kaufman, screenwriter of such remarkable films as *Being John Malkovich* (1999), *Adaptation* (2002), and his directorial debut *Synecdoche, New York* (2008), has managed to carve a career out of a more complicated kind of storytelling that dissolves the false notion of a subject (one who thinks) traveling straight within time, interacting with others (who are separated from the subject) and objects (the practical *outside*). Kaufman blurs the outside/inside binary. Kaufman follows the rules to a degree: he shows us a character in a world. But he breaks the rules to a degree, too: he takes us inside his own head. At any one time within his movies, then, the viewer is both watching a story and watching the story being created and laid before them. Writing anything is essentially an enfolding. Writing a story is the epitome of enfolding, for the writer performs a doubling—enfolding her thoughts into those thoughts of the character and/or characters. What Kaufman does—and which is different from other writers—is to lay bare the illusion. Kaufman is Deleuzian to a degree, if only accidentally. We generally think time is linear because we look at all the daily occurrences that were actualized before us and line them up in order of appearance. We like to believe in order, in organization. Deleuze, on the other hand, was/is interested in *potentialities*, not actualities *just*, and in chaos, not organization. Any one actuality is

just one of several potentialities unfolded before us. Kaufman's work asks the simple question: What if the typical story were unfolded? What would we find there?

Being John Malkovich was Kaufman's first foray into this experimentation.

Through a portal in the wall behind a file cabinet in a nondescript office building, the protagonist—Craig the puppeteer, played by John Cusack—is transported inside the mind of actor John Malkovich for roughly fifteen minutes per trip. Kaufman challenges the notion of a Whole mind, preferring instead the fracture, the dislocation, splitting the inside/outside. When Craig goes inside Malkovich's mind, he must still be inside his own mind, as it were, on the outside of Malkovich's mind. He is both Craig and John, seeing what John sees, thinking what Craig thinks, aware of each person's thoughts. Subjectivity gives way to potentialities. The subject is split open, spread out, flattened. When Malkovich catches on—i.e., when he feels someone inside his head—Craig understands that he has been caught because he *knows* Malkovich's thoughts, but he knows them *as Craig*. He is both. Looking back on the film years later Charlie Kaufman (2011) had this to say:

Storytelling is inherently dangerous. Consider a traumatic event in your life.

Think about how you experienced it. Now think about how you told it to someone a year later. Now think about how you told it for the hundredth time. It's not the same thing. Most people think perspective is a good thing: you can figure out characters arcs, you can apply a moral, you can tell it with understanding and context. But this perspective is a misrepresentation: it's a reconstruction with meaning, and as such bears little resemblance to the event.

That final sentence is telling—the reconstruction, the retelling, versus the *event*. The retelling bears little resemblance to the event. An explanation is not an event. What if a piece of writing could rise to the event? Could it transcend the form to become what Jan Jagodzinski (2017) via Ziarek calls *forcework* (p. 267)? Kaufman adds: “it’s very important that what you do is specific to the medium in which you’re doing it, and that you utilise what is specific about that medium to do the work. And if you can’t think about why it should be done this way, then it doesn’t need to be done.” I love that. And I have tried herein to take his advice. I have tried to deliver a blow. I have tried to reach the central breakdown (see glossary). I have decided (right here at the outset) that it does need to be done and it does need to be done *this way*. I have used what is specific to the dissertation medium—“chapters,” footnotes, a glossary. But I have used them toward the event.

This dissertation deals with, among other topics, the inherent problems in arts-based educational research (ABER). I argue, among other things, that we could re-think ABER toward Deleuze’s new image of thought (e.g., think-*ing*) with Recklessness, a concept pulled from poet Dean Young’s life and work; and that the current ABER is problematic because it privileges objects, not events, tellings instead of doings. Before I can discuss ABER, though, and put forward some thoughts on where ABER could go (e.g., to where essayists and film essayists have gone and continue to go, unencumbered by the strictures of the Academy), I must first set the context: why is thinking important in art education (specifically higher education)?; and what is thinking (original versus cliché)? Put simply, Recklessness is a way toward a thinking ABER, which is a thinking

scholarship; but I couldn't know that until I did, as Elizabeth St. Pierre encourages, a study of noo-ology (new-ology), of the dogmatic image of thought and its challenger, the new image of thought. I could not have arrived at my "conclusions" without the *forcework* of this dissertation. I ask then for your patience: please read carefully and with Negative Capability (see the glossary), i.e., without reaching for easy answers and pithy explanations before they can arrive organically within the multiplicity. You may lose your spot along the way because footnote gives way to footnote gives way to footnote (see the glossary). You may be five or six pages lost before catching your breath and returning to the main path. Think of the multiple discussions as plateaus (see the glossary). Reconsider the definition and uses of the "body" and "footnote" and recall that a transversal motion sweeps one way *and* the other. Consider that I understand the form of the dissertation and cannot (and do not want to) completely discard it—the same way that Charlie Kaufman must follow the rules whilst challenging the rules. Consider, too, that I have worked hard to create a form that approaches force because an argument (no matter however roundabout) for a new brand of thinking scholarship can be achieved through Recklessness in the form of the essay/essai. Writing an ABER dissertation is not homework; it is *forcework*. The graduate school appears to agree with me. When I clicked on the link for dissertation format sample pages, this is what I found¹:

¹ I have always wanted to insert a figure or table into a piece of writing but lacked the proper rationale—until now. This figure—the sole figure within this dissertation—is perhaps a pithy way to introduce what Kaufman asks of me: to use the tools of the medium; to work within

Figure 1: Sample Pages

the medium. Originality, according to poet Dean Young, is not a turning against the cliché but a passing through, a nosedive; not a turning away from history but a cantankerous rebellion and acceptance. The AND.

Chapter 1: Conceptual Framework

I. Introduction

Ravitch and Riggan (2012), those oft-cited arbiters of research methodologies, define the conceptual framework as “an argument about why a topic one wishes to study matters, and why the means proposed to study it are appropriate and rigorous” (p.xiii). The conceptual framework sets the table for the “reasoned, defensible choices” about what to study, and what has heretofore remained unexplored (but needs for some reason, for some specific reasons, to be explored) (p.xiii). The pair describes the process of forming a conceptual framework like this:

You dive into these assorted literatures, noting the ways in which they speak to you and to each other, how they shape and refine your research questions, sharpen your focus, and give you insights into your methods. You continually reshuffle and reorganize them as you become better acquainted with their content. By the time you are finished reading, and thinking about what you have learned, you have a pretty clear idea of what you are looking for, and why, where you want to look, how you plan to look for it, and what you will do with what you find. And while you cannot be sure of what precisely that is, you have some reasoned ideas about what you will find will inform your thinking, and that of others, about this topic. You are ready to go... you have constructed a conceptual framework. (p.2)

What follows is thus an image of my conceptual framework—a glimpse of the assorted literatures, my thinking, and the hazy way forward². Because I am pulling heavily on

² The history of art is infinitely interesting to me (as perhaps it should be to any art educator). Not only is it the basis for our field—especially the evolving subset of the field that is concerned with philosophy, e.g., Deleuze | Guattari—but it holds the ideas about aesthetics that continue to shape what we see as important in thinking about art. Without Panofsky (1927/2005) we would think differently about perspective. Without Wölfflin (1929/1950), we would think differently about the evolution of style—the painterly versus the line. And back before those two was Hegel, that creator of the disrespected dialectic, with whom I disagree on mostly everything except the one contribution he made to the art of writing that is often overlooked—and, it must be said, that Deleuze and Guattari picked up in *A Thousand Plateaus*. The journey. In the preface to *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807/1977), Hegel says that he knows what is expected of him as author: “an explanation of the author’s aim, why he wrote the book, and the relationship in which he believes it to stand” in the history of thinking (p.1). But, he says, this is wrongheaded in a work of philosophy, where “such an explanation seems not only superfluous but, in view of the nature of the subject-matter, even inappropriate and misleading” (p.1). The reason, says Hegel, is that a work of philosophy—and I am including the dissertation in such a category—is not to be summarized *for* the reader but rather gone through *by* the reader (p.2). For who could summarize a thunderstorm, and what good would that do for understanding the thunderstorm? The aim *in itself* is meaningless in the truest sense of the word. The

Deleuze and his followers, however, this should be perfectly acceptable. A way forward rather than an outline. In the preface to *Difference and Repetition* (1968/1994), Deleuze says

How else can we write but of those things which one doesn't know, or knows badly? It is precisely there that we imagine having something to say. We write only at the frontiers of our knowledge, at the border which separates our knowledge from our ignorance and transforms the one into the other. Only in this manner are we resolved to write. (p.xxi)

Deleuze was also fond of saying that we learn to swim by becoming wave³, i.e., by the event of swimming, and not by such impracticable ancillary methods as watching an instructor model arm movements or reading about displacement in a book. It is impossible to write a dissertation; therefore, we do it.

execution—and all its particulars—is meaningful. I cannot tell you what this dissertation is about—you must experience it. All of this is to say that your way forward will be hazy, but that's okay.

³ Part IV of “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird” by Wallace Stevens (1954) goes like this:

A man and a woman

Are one.

A man and a woman and a blackbird are one. (p.92)

II. The Post-Qualitative

Some researchers advocate getting better at not knowing. This is the post-qualitative group with which I align myself. I follow Patti Lather (2014) who says “I want to endorse the incalculable, the messy, and the responsibilities of not knowing” (p.16), a pronouncement not unlike those from the scientists Stuart Firestein wrote about in his book *Ignorance: How It Drives Science* (2012). “Forget the answers,” he writes, and “work on questions” (p.16) because “knowledge is a big subject” but “ignorance is bigger. And it’s more interesting” (p.10). Firestein unsurprisingly refers to Keats and “Negative Capability⁴” to say that scientists “do reach after fact and reason, but it is when

⁴ Basically, poet John Keats thought Shakespeare was the model to which we should compare ourselves as poets because Shakespeare possessed a marvelous ability to write with mystery and doubt, about mystery and doubt, etc., without wishing to reconcile the untied threads*. Whitman would pick this up in the late 19th century, embracing contradictions because “I am large, I contain multitudes.” Keats’s pronouncement is difficult for us to wholly understand in the 21st century when “knowing” everything *right now* has become a preoccupation. Firestein is saying NC is still alive and well in the sciences (although we prefer to think science knows no doubts).

*The poet Dean Young, from whom I take many ideas, and who is fond of Keats, has cast doubt over the phrase “Negative Capability.” The original letter in which the

they are most uncertain that the reaching is often the most imaginative” (p.17). We may take issue with his use of the concept “imagination” but the point remains. Firestein tells the story of physicist Albert Michelson who won the Nobel Prize for failing to find “luminiferous ether,” a substance many others had claimed to have found (p.22). In a sense, Michelson won the prize for breaking from the herd, for, as Deleuze might say, seeing lines, not points. He got good at not knowing. Patti Lather and Elizabeth St. Pierre (2013) advocate post-qualitative research because it enables “what becomes possible in the sense of ‘lines of flight’ that open up in not having to over-attend to external pressures and developments” but also remind us that we must “question our attachments that keep us from thinking and living differently” (p.631). This reminds me of Vilém Flusser’s (2104) concept “gesture,” which challenges “intuition,” and thus opens up a space for the in-between—not a *deliberate* move and not a *not-deliberate* move with a cause. What is a dissertation, then, but a clumsy gesture. Rajchman (2000) writes: “to make connections one needs not knowledge, certainty, or even ontology, but rather a trust that something may come out, though one is not yet completely sure what” (qtd. in St.

concept is named and defined is lost. It was transcribed by a man who married the widow of Keats’s brother, George, to whom the letter had been written. The transcriber made other mistakes, such as writing “insolated versimilitudes” when, says Young, “Keats probably meant ‘isolated versimilitudes’” (2010, p.84). How wonderful to cast doubt on a concept about doubt!

Pierre, 2013, p.652). In art education, Sullivan and Miller (2013) have called for “innovative graduate research” that is “not only systematic and rigorous but also creative and critical, and is an exciting prospect” (p.3), that “break with the strictures and mandates of yet-again current positivist and technical-rational versions” of what they ironically coin “acceptable” research (p.4). We must be knowledgeable about research methods—this is that rigor again, that reading closely that St. Pierre (2013) all but assigned to young researchers—so that we may break where necessary from the herd⁵.

⁵ My dissertation attempts to play with form and the abstract idea of plateaus, to *enact* a kind of braided essay. This is and is not ABER. The essay is the in-between. I have a fundamental philosophical difference with the ABERs, and it goes like this: they believe art can communicate; I believe art cannot communicate*. A few years ago, in an arts education course, a professor assigned a reading by researcher Kakali Bhattacharya (2009) in which was a poem called “The Small Small Things.” I contended then (and still now) that Bhattacharya’s poem fails because it tries to communicate academic information in the guise of a poem, rendering the attempt not at all a poem but something else. This is a charge indirectly admitted by Bhattacharya: “I was positioning transnational de/colonizing existence that cannot claim indigenous ways of existing... that might be possible for some members of other cultural groups” (p.14). Wowee! Like Dean Young, I believe that more than intending, the poet ATTENDS. Recall, too, what Deleuze learned from Proust: friends “communicate to each other only the conventional,” which means that they conceive “only the possible.” Bhattacharya’s is just one example but an emblematic one. Eisner (2006), a proponent of

arts-based research, believed that “arts-based research will need people who know how to create films, videos, narratives, literary texts, as well as texts of other sorts” (p.17). He said that if arts-based research is to be accepted, it must increase in quality[§] (p.17). Later I will say that I, too, think a new kind of ABER could use films and videos, if they take on the form/force of the essay, and if the practitioners possess the requisite skill (which I think they can learn if we teach and value a new kind of thinking scholarship). What Bhattacharya did is incompatible with my definition of poetry. Instead, it is communication—sharing representations of the possible—and it is also an example what the poet James Wright called hacking lines into arbitrary prose, something he warned young poets against.

* This means that this dissertation cannot be art even though it aspires to approach art. Scholarship has as its core a need to communicate something, even if, as the essay does, it aspires toward doubt and the impossibility of truth.

§ Our own James Sanders III (2006) has criticized arts-based researchers, too, specifically for “exploit[ing] arts technologies, mining them for meanings and metaphors that inspire new ways of conceptualizing problems, but without seriously considering their histories, sensibilities, or material characteristics” and “scholars who appropriate the language of an arts media

Elizabeth St. Pierre (2013) calls on Deleuze, too, saying “Deleuzian ontology is also experimental... to help us with the work of thinking the world differently” by rejecting “binary logic in favor of a logic of connection, a logic of the *and* (this *and* this *and* this *and*...), of becoming” (p.652). “Once we take up the Deleuzian ontology,” she says, “representational logics and phenomenology are unthinkable” (p.652) because we are talking about “living rather than knowing” (p.652). For St. Pierre and other educational theorists, “The Deleuzian concepts *assemblage*⁶ and *rhizome* are particularly

and/or its construction techniques... without a sound grasp of a media’s technologies, history, or its metaphoric potential” (p.91). “Such performances,” he writes, “(re)produce a simplistic, shallow, surface semblance of skill—practices that disserve and disrespect” (p.91). This is a pitfall of ABER that should be remedied by the practitioners themselves. Admirably, Bhattacharya has taken poetry classes, but ultimately improvement means a shift in the underlying philosophy of ABER—not to communicate the possible but to think the heretofore unthought.

⁶ I find kinship with David Shields whose 2010 book *Reality Hunger: A Manifesto* has provided support and reassurance as I write this dissertation. The book consists of unattributed blocks of text that build and build until the reader hears/sees/recalls them all as one. The curious reader could look to the back of the book for attributions—Picasso is quoted on X page, for instance—but who said what hardly matters. The voice is multiple but one. Some of the

helpful in thinking connections rather than oppositions, movement rather than categorization, and becoming rather than being” (p.653). She and others point to Deleuze’s transcendental empiricism as a way forward (not, recall, a “method” because Deleuze opposes methods in the traditional scientific sense). The task is damn near impossible with such distinctions as ontology, epistemology, and the false distinctions of objectivity (see Haraway, 1988) and validity. But there is hope. St. Pierre, Jackson, and Mazzei (2016) suggest “rethinking the nature of being is an experimental project in which we lay out a different plane of thought on which we can create new concepts that will help us live a different existence” (p.100). Unsurprisingly, they call on us to use Deleuze to lead the way to this “new” research:

Whether work is “new” is always a matter of debate, and scholars doing new empirical, new material work usually begin by addressing that issue and pointing out that the descriptor “new” does not necessarily announce something new but serves as an alert that we are determined to try to think differently. (p.100)

The authors quote Deleuze scholar Brian Massumi, who explained “that by definition the ‘new cannot be described, having not yet arrived’” (p.104) and bring in Spivak to ask “What counts as ‘new?’” and “how new does your work have to be considered new?” and “How do scholars even know if their work is new?” (p.104). They then echo what poet

words were written by Shields, but which ones? Some of the snippy phrases we have heard before, but where and by whom were they spoken or written? Hardly matters. If you want to know what is “going on,” you (1) missed the point; and (2) will dislike this dissertation.

Dean Young says about originality—that it is both a nod toward the old and a defiant break from it (p.104)—in order to adapt what Spivak called “persistent critique” (qtd., p.104). Following St. Pierre, who advocates for following Deleuze, we cannot adopt the old ways of doing social science but must adapt for a new way of doing *this* particular study in *this* particular moment—“emergent in the act of creation” (p.105), what Deleuze and Guattari called a “groping experimentation” (qtd., p.105). As such, any “new” research, says Bryant (2008) “must remain open to the outside, which will contaminate and disrupt it” (qtd., p.105) in the most delicious ways. One of the ways to think differently is “*a heightened curiosity and accompanying experimentation*” that St. Pierre traces to Foucault, Deleuze, and Deleuze with Guattari (p.102). She urges us to study the image of thought⁷ because the social sciences are no longer able to claim that the Cartesian tripartite of “the knower and the known for the sake of knowledge” (p.102) is invisible. The “new” work of my dissertation is to work those connections, to cross the borders again and again—from others’ artworks and concepts to my artworks and concepts. By the end, I hope the boundaries are blurred but that something clear has emerged about *thinking toward the new*, something that perhaps we researchers/pedagogues could use.

III. Philosophical Inquiry

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (2015) defines a “concept” as “senses relating to thought or understanding,” tracking it from the 15th century through Robert Browning’s

⁷ Section “V: Noo-ology/New-ology” is my response to St. Pierre’s advice.

1880 line “a thought has fired you” and given “some cramped concept expansion.”

Borrowing from Nietzsche, Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994) write that “you will know nothing through concepts unless you have first created them” and “to create concepts is, at the very least, to make something” (p.5) and then to turn around and use it. They expand concepts. Concepts exist to be expanded. For Deleuze, “concepts” are shapeshifters—“they change along with the problems” they investigate because they work “along a moving horizon”⁸ (p.xx) wherein “[e]very concept is at least double or triple” (p.15). For poet Dean Young, a concept is a hammer and the proper use of a hammer, as he tells us, is to stand fifteen feet away and throw it at the nail. *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (1981/2003) represents one of Deleuze’s most ambitious attempt to *use* concepts (e.g., fact, diagram, cliché, event) on visual art to illuminate what makes the work unique. Using concepts is a *way forward* but not a method. Deleuze invented concepts (the diagram, for instance) in addition to using existing concepts (the cliché, for instance), though renewed, and he used them to *illuminate*. Once we have

⁸ Think of Andy Goldsworthy’s ephemeral artworks, such as the one for which he fused icicles together with the heat from his mouth before laying them to melt in the sun, glistening, on a rocky crag. “The very thing that brings the work to life”, i.e., heat, he says, “is the thing that will cause its death” (qtd. in Barrett, 2008, p.137). In the film *Rivers and Tides* (2001), the viewer is privy to the ephemerality of Goldsworthy’s works, such as those made with leaves that must eventually blow away, or those made in water that must eventually drift away or sink, or fall apart as pieces come unmoored.

questions and a toolbox of concepts at the ready, it follows that we should be able to write insightful, persuasive texts that challenge and overcome psychic clichés. Deleuze so helpfully showed us in *Francis Bacon* that we can do this with very little, using only two physical items: interviews and artworks. My sources, both the artists and the thinkers, I have chosen because, as Deleuze advises, I like them and admire them. “If you don’t admire something, if you don’t live it,” says Deleuze, “you have no reason to write a word about it” (2004, p.144). He learned this from Nietzsche and Spinoza, two philosophers “whose critical and destructive powers are without equal” and who used them to advance affirmation “against those who would mutilate and mortify life” (p.144).

I deal with several concepts herein, especially the *plateau* (a challenge to the circular “book”/text), but also the *cliché* (“the same unicorn” or “what prevents the genesis of thought”), the *diagram* (“two halves of the head split open by an ocean” or “real appleyness”), *the possibility of fact* (“he knows what he wants to do, but what saves him is the fact that *he does not know how to get there*”), and *Recklessness* (“getting better at not knowing what one is doing”), and all the others defined in the selected glossary and/or throughout. Even when I do not explicitly refer to them, they are here. Borrowing from Deleuze, I define the concept as a tool, something to be used on something to reveal something. A concept is only as good as its use. Like Nietzsche, I don’t trust a concept simply because it exists, because someone before me urged its uptake, but because I intuit its use on something to make connections, to create new living. Deleuze was particularly interested in using concepts to uncover “the violence of paint as the aesthetic truth of art, as opposed to pleasure and the harmony of the beautiful” (Bernstein, 2006, p.259), a clear

break from aesthetics but a new aesthetics. The question is not “Is it good?” but “Is it alive?”, which jives with translator Brian Massumi’s (1987) summary of Deleuze’s entire oeuvre: “The question is not: is it true? But: does it work? What new thoughts does it make it possible to think? What new emotions does it make it possible to feel? What new sensations and perceptions does it open in the body?” (p.xv). And, I’ll add, does the artwork work on you in unexpected ways? In *Francis Bacon*, Deleuze urges us to “listen closely... to what painters have to say” (p.99). I urge us to listen closely to what poets and filmmakers have to say, too. Badiou and Cassin (1981) remind us that Deleuze’s book (and books) is no ordinary book, adding “is this even a book ‘on’ Bacon? Who is the philosopher and who is the painter?... Who is thinking, and who looking at thought? One can certainly think painting, but one can also paint thought” (p.viii). Is this even a dissertation on art education?

IV. Transcendental Empiricism

My dissertation strives toward the improbable work of transcendental empiricism. You must read this dissertation to know this dissertation. “The idea that one can *design* a study using Deleuzian concepts appears nonsensical,” says St. Pierre (2016), because “such normalized concepts and practices condition a study in advance and tie it to the strata” (p.122). On the other hand, one can *move forward* with transcendental empiricism. According to Deleuze, concepts and practices occur “in the context of the problem” (qtd., p.122), which is to say they “cannot be determined in advance” (St. Pierre, p.122), meaning, in a sense, that any research questions laid out in advance of my project here could not do justice to those found within and throughout. Deleuze (1987) says “we think

too much in terms of history... Becomings belong to geography, they are orientations, directions” (p.2). “The question ‘What are you becoming?’,” then, “is particularly stupid. For as someone becomes, what he is becoming changes as much as he does” (p.2). What we can do, then, is shift our research “from identifying the characteristics of the thing (what is this?) to its genetic conditions (how is this possible?)” and a belief that “anything could connect to anything” (St. Pierre, p.119) at any moment. A transcendental empiricist study, then, cannot set out to produce new knowledge (logical empiricism) nor “to study things in themselves” (phenomenology) (p.121) but must be set toward something heretofore unthought. Notions of true and false give way to questions of the “singular and the ordinary” (p.120). Quoting Deleuze and Guattari, St. Pierre urges us to “[e]xperiment, don’t signify and interpret!” (p.120). “One cannot experiment,” however, “as long as one is tried [*sic*] to ‘a dogmatic image of thought’” that, says Patton (2000), “‘supports the view that thought needs a method, an artifice which enables the thinker to ward off error’” (qtd., p.121). Beyond the prototypical social science methods is something else. This is where Recklessness enters to lead the/a way. “It is impossible to write poetry,” says Dean Young (2010), “therefore we do it” because “sometimes the more impossible it is the greater the debacle, the greater the poem” (p.148). He could have been talking about research. Thus what I have here is a reckless dissertation project—about Recklessness and hopefully itself reckless—clawing its way forward and out of the psychic clichés on the so-called tabula rasa. As Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) say: “it is not enough to say, ‘Down with genres’; one must effectively write [and create] in such

as a way that there are no more ‘genres’” (p.17). This might not fit well into the dissertation genre. Good. This is that AND not.

Chapter 2: Selected Glossary: A Primer

Primer: A brief, introductory book on a subject; an underlying coat of paint; a glossary that is both an introductory “book” and “underlying coat of paint.”

Central Breakdown: When thought is unable to take on a form, unable to be the dogmatic image of thought, it has reached what Antonin Artaud called the central breakdown. This is what critic Clement Greenberg meant when he defined the “new” as an artwork that cannot be reduced to anything not itself. This allows us to talk not about what is “good” or “bad” art (who am I to judge!) but about what reaches or fails to reach the central breakdown.

Cliché: Psychic representations that prevent the genesis of thinking within thought.

Communication: This is what friends do when they share representations of the possible. We can overcome communication but only despite our saboteur selves, as in the case of the errant cobblestone.

Creation: This is the act of thinking within thought, which is akin to Artaud’s “genitality” (although I take issue with the latter’s connotation).

Dadaism: Hugo Ball et al.'s mad scientist experiment in art from the abolition of sense.

Ball's original (1916) manifesto says

It's a question of connections, and of loosening them up a bit to start with. I don't want words that other people have invented. All the words are other people's inventions. I want my own stuff, my own rhythm, and vowels and consonants too, matching the rhythm and all my own.

Two years later, Tristan Tzara would write Dada's second manifesto, saying

"DADA DOES NOT MEAN ANYTHING," which sounds insane, but also defines the movement as "a distrust toward unity," which sounds rather sane and jives with the Deleuzian inside/outside tension at the heart of this dissertation.

Short of creating a new language that others sought to use, Dadaism was bound to fail because its proprietors leaned toward nonsense. The sign, as Deleuze says through Proust, has the potential to deliver violence(s) that push us into thinking. Nonsense can deliver only confusion.

Diagram: One way to overcome the cliché is through the diagram, which includes the clearing away of expected iterations in place of unexpected combinations, the aggregate of which amounts to the artist's inimitable style.

Dogmatic Image of Thought: This is the ideology of the cliché machine. This is not only an image but a force. The dogmatic image of thought takes its form as the cliché, which keeps us from thinking. The new image of thought, on the other

hand, takes its form in the rhizome, which is created out of Recklessness, and which bears all the scars of a battle with cliché.

Encounter: That which forces us to think within thought is called the encounter.

Error: When Marcel Duchamp's *The Bridge Stripped Bare with Her Bachelors, Even*

(1915-1923) was cracked in shipment, the artist reportedly said "it's better with the cracks." Dean Young reminds us: "YOUR GENIUS IS YOUR ERROR."

Klimt: "Genius is an error in the system." Error implies truth, which implies right, which implies a binary system. Error is a byproduct of the will to truth. How silly to believe in error if you believe in becoming, which means I don't know what I'll be this next minute, let alone next week, next year. In a now-famous reading, former Poet Laureate Billy Collins retold the old joke that if you want God to laugh, you make a plan. The biggest joke, Nietzsche (1889/2003) reminds us, is that "God has been eliminated" and yet people still "behave just as people did, or ought to have done, when He was still a pervasive presence" (p.13).

Footnote: Section 2.12 of the sixth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2010) tells us that footnotes should "supplement or amplify" necessary information with the body of the text (p.37). The authors add, though, that footnotes "should not include complicated, irrelevant, or nonessential information" (p.37). In short, the manual goes to great lengths to discourage the use of footnotes. The manual fears that footnotes will detract from the main body, or the thesis being explored within the main body. But which is the "main" text—the body or the footnote? On the other hand, the *Oxford English Dictionary*

includes entries for both the noun (the footnote) and the verb (footnoting) form of the word, the latter of which fits in this dissertation.

Genitality: Artaud once said that the poet's problem was and is "to bring into being that which does not yet exist (there is no other word, all the rest is arbitrary mere decoration). To think is to create—there is no other creation—but to create is first of all to engender 'thinking' in thought" (qtd. in Deleuze, 1968/1994, p.147). Artaud thought of this as both genitality and the central breakdown, but the latter, in my opinion, is more apt to describe violence—both a noun and a verb. See *Creation*.

Ideological Cynicism: According to Žižek, this is a 21st century phenomenon replacing Marx's "they do not know it, but they are doing it" with "they know it, but they are doing it anyway." For instance, we know that we are being dominated by the news media, but we allow (and perhaps enjoy) it anyway. This is the phenomenon that allowed roughly a quarter of the population of the United States to vote for a presidential candidate that for years worked against their best interests and used language that would render most humans ashamed.

Imbecility: The philosopher's⁹ purpose is to critique baseness of thought, i.e., imbecility, by inventing concepts that illuminate and turn shameful that baseness. Those who

⁹ This is perhaps the scholar's purpose, too, or could be. Jan Jagodzinski leads the way in this respect for art educators. Perhaps more of us should follow, for nothing new, original, will happen if the cliché is not publicly discouraged. Notice, too, that after Jagodzinski critiques

perpetuate baseness of thought are the imbeciles. They are caught up in the workings of the cliché machine. Nietzsche started the war against imbecility, aiming his criticism at Christianity (and Christ), calling it “the *one* great curse, the *one* great intrinsic depravity... the *one* immortal blemish of mankind” (qtd. in Tanner, 1990/2003, p.15). Deleuze took up the torch in the 20th century. I am trying to find my foot(note)ing so as to take up the torch, too, or part of it.

Kitsch: A result of the booming industrial capitals of the 20th century and their growing population, kitsch amounts to cheap, mass-produced objects designed solely for unintellectual consumption. Kitsch is all about representation—its purveyors find what you like and exploit it for gain, giving it to you again and again.

Modernism: Greenberg (1965) identifies modernism as “the use of characteristic methods of a discipline to criticise the discipline itself, not in order to subvert it but in order to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence” (p.774).

Representational art says *This is an apple* whereas Modernist art says *This is my*

imbecility, he always puts forth a “proposal” for moving forward, a strategy of affirmation (instead of ultimate damnation) he likely borrows from Deleuze. Furthermore, jagodzinski enjoys the conversation. After Juuso Tervo commented on jagodzinski work in the pages of *Studies in Art Education* (in “The Problem of Representation”), for example, jagodzinski wrote a response—a reply to a reply (called “Materialist Nonrepresentational Thought”). A conversation was thus begun in the public academic sphere. More art education scholars should perhaps take notice.

apple, which has given way to *This apple is a construct*. Conversations about quality are thus rendered moot. Modernism failed (if that is the apt word?) because it was a reaction against something and not, like a chemical reaction, unto itself.

Negative Capability: John Keats coined the term Negative Capability to refer to Shakespeare's ability to remain contentedly submerged in a state of not knowing. Dean Young extends this to the 21st century with *Recklessness*.

Noo-ology: This is the study of the history of the image of thought (which was recommended as an exercise for young scholars by St. Pierre). Deleuze created noo-ology in order to understand the dogmatic image of thought (cliché) and how to overturn it ("creation"). Noo-ology led him to create the concept "difference-in-itself," which is the inability of identity to take shape or the Ideal to be referenced. Mimesis is thus out of the question. See *Rhizome*.

Originality: Dean Young (2010) calls this "not the denial of origins" but "the acknowledgement of them, the acquiescence and exploration of that trace of history, the common imperative, while being in cantankerous, maybe competitive objection and declaration otherwise" (p.38). One must look back to go forward.

Plateau: Here lies the hidden footnote, the key to this text (a body note?). In my junior year of college, I took a philosophy class called *Fin de Siècle* in which I was introduced to the AND. What is a plateau but the AND ad infinitum? Brian Massumi (1987) calls *A Thousand Plateaus* "a book that speaks of many things, of ticks and quilts and fuzzy sub sets and noology and political economy," adding

that the book is difficult to understand not the least of which because its authors devote chapters to music and animals while denying that these are chapters at all (p.ix). Their book is something else—“a network of ‘plateaus’” arranged as chapters but that can be read in any order with “a complex technical vocabulary drawn from a wide range of disciplines in the sciences, mathematics, and the humanities” (p.ix). The plateau does not amount to a book. Deleuze and Guattari recommend that we read their plateaus “as you would listen to a record” (p.ix). But recall, too, that Deleuze and Guattari admit to being unable to produce the multiple from the many plateaus (p.22). But they woke up every day and went at it: “we watched lines leave one plateau and proceed to another like columns of tiny ants” (p.22). The book is still circular. This dissertation cannot outrun the book. But what if I could create a series of linked lines that shoot from one place to another, connected but independent, luminous, multiple, never one.

Possibility of Fact: To practice Negative Capability is to refrain, unconsciously, from reaching after fact or reason. The thinker thus has created the possibility of fact without fact. For Deleuze, this meant the artist knows what she wants to do but what saves her is the fact that she does not know how to get there, nor what *getting there* means. Not an artwork but a *becoming artwork*.

Postmodernism: Modernism’s optimism gave way to Postmodernism’s skepticism (of science, religion, philosophy, etc.)—a skepticism so deep it denied the existence of its own capacity to be skeptical, because its underlying principles are not above the scrutiny it places on everything and everyone. The modern poet, for instance,

like Wallace Stevens, could write the transcendence of the imagination; but the postmodern poet, like, say, Katie Degentesh, could not take transcendence seriously, challenging the very foundations of poetry, e.g., language itself, as an effective vehicle for anything. Like Modernism, though, Postmodernism directed itself toward the negative, not the affirmative, to the NOT instead of the AND.

Recklessness: This is the central concept of artmaking that connects all other concepts within my dissertation. Recklessness is a concept of assertive force and contradiction, of a desire to stand off from the herd and be part of it, that artists can use to achieve originality, which looks an awful lot like the new image of thought. Recklessness is thus a way of working that maximizes opportunities for success against the cliché. Importantly, though, Recklessness is *not* a direct opposition to cliché, i.e., working to defeat the cliché, for as Deleuze tells us such an action will produce a different kind of cliché.

Rhizome: The new image of thought that aspires to no image at all is the rhizome. Much has been written about the rhizome in the art education literature. Unfortunately, much of *that* has seen the rhizome as a method. Deleuze opposed method, and I, following Patti Lather and Elizabeth St. Pierre, fine purveyors of post-qualitative, Deleuzian informed frameworks, oppose method, too, choosing instead a becoming research. If you want rules, play chess.

Surrealism: A central piece of the avant-garde, Surrealism was “a belief in the supremacy of poetry and a loathing of the parental generation whose values had led to the insensate slaughters of the war” and a belief that art “would refresh our

sense of the world by disclosing a whole network of hidden relationships” wherein “chance, memory, desire, coincidence would meet in a new reality — a *sur*-reality, in the word he borrowed from Apollinaire, who in 1917 had described the ballet *Parade*, whose collaborators were Picasso, Jean Cocteau, Erik Satie, and Leonid Massine, as producing ‘une espece de sur-realisme’” (Hughes, 1991, p.213). Surrealism thought dreams/the unconscious were the answer; Recklessness argues dreams/the unconscious are *an* answer. This is in keeping with Deleuze’s conception of multiplicity to replace the one/many.

Virtuality: Later I will argue that the essay could return scholarship to the virtual just as the essay film has returned—and continues to return—cinema to the virtual. In Deleuze’s philosophy, possibility presents a problem when it is thought of as all the things that did not happen in the past because we think of “real” as what happened and “possibility” as everything that did not happen but could have. For Bergson and then for Deleuze, the problem was that “real” had been characterized as something “more than” the possible because the real has *existence*, which carries a greater importance, a kind of phenomenological importance, whereas the possible *lacks existence*. In their conception, though, the virtual and the actual are co-existent but mutually exclusive. They both carry the surname “real.” Brian Massumi (1998) clarifies the distinction as this: “Deleuze and Guattari, following Bergson, suggest that the virtual is the mode of reality implicated in the emergence of new potentials. In other words, its reality is the reality of change: the *event*” (p.16). The virtual Real is a verb. For Deleuze (1985/1989), cinema is a

site for the “mutual images” of the virtual and the actual, which do not take place in our head but which are “by nature double” (p.69), creating not reality but a tear and a corresponding “*fusion* of the tear” (p.268). Deleuze uses the famous hall of mirrors scene from Welles’s *The Lady From Shanghai* as one example. At any one time, the actual person and the virtual person are one—or rather the actual person passes into the mirror and is spread throughout the hall via other mirrors, becoming real, while at the same time the virtual passes throughout the hall, becoming itself real, until it is found out as not. The barrier is porous. “What is actual,” says Deleuze, is always a present. But then, precisely, the present changes or passes” (p.78). The *what might’ve been*, the *what could be*, the *what possibly is* passes back and forth across the circuit that determines the actual.

Chapter 3: What Is an Original Contribution?

I. Introduction

When I returned to school to earn a PhD, I had been teaching writing courses at the college level for nearly seven years. Instead of teaching writing, though, my colleagues and I, all adjuncts and Graduate Teaching Associates, surmised that we were doing something else—teaching students how to think critically. What that meant we did not know; we simply thought we knew, or rather we thought it sounded *right*. In 10 weeks (these were quarters, not semesters), how could a teacher of any stripe be charged with teaching students how to write? The available textbooks seemed to agree with us. The first-year composition books, written by “experts” in the field of composition studies, all carried titles (and still do!) such as *Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing* and *Ways of Seeing*, implying that the goal was to challenge thinking, not to teach writing. No one seemed to care that “critical thinking” was ill-defined. There is some truth to the proposition that good writing follows from good thinking, or critical writing follows from critical thinking, for if a student doesn’t have anything interesting to say, it doesn’t matter how well she can say it. But here again a problem surfaces: what does “interesting” mean? The problem of teaching writing was compounded by the fact that I earned a master’s in creative writing with a focus on poetry, not in English with a focus on composition studies or rhetoric. The best poets, like the best of anything, carve out a niche, an uninhabited space, in which to bloom. No one has ever said, nor will they, that a

poet is superlative because he sounds exactly like that other poet, just as no one has ever said that of a painter or filmmaker. What I prized over everything was and is originality—as anyone who has slogged through 60 or so freshman essays in one weekend can attest. When I arrived at OSU, then, I had been thinking about this question of originality for nearly seven years, and I was thinking about this question across the boundaries of disciplines: from college writing to poetry to painting and everything in between. Artists prize what is presented to them as new, as original, even if for years, decades even, it goes undervalued by the populous—maybe especially if it goes undervalued, because the public doesn’t at first know how to deal with the new. This is why every creative enterprise has a sort of compliment that goes something like this: “she’s a comedian’s comedian” or “he’s a poet’s poet.” The filmmaker Alain Resnais, considered to be one of the fathers of the French New Wave, has remarked that he’s grown accustomed to the initial onslaught of bad reviews, which are followed closely by critical appreciation and now, after more half a century of works, canonization. The list of paupers-turned-prophets grows longer with each passing decade. We can picture Vincent van Gogh in his Arles bedroom, writing to Theo to send more cash, and fast, for the yellow walls were beginning to look edible. We can picture Jonathan Kennedy O’Toole, reading yet another rejection, the letter in one hand, a revolver in the other, years before *The Confederacy of Dunces* (1980) would be called by nearly every publication to review its late publication the best novel to arrive in years. We can picture Jean-Luc Godard in a Paris cafe, reading the first reviews for his just-released *Breathless*

(1960), wincing, yet knowing he was right—cinema was drowning and he had helped to drag it to shore, albeit carelessly. Time will tell, etc.

In my very un-Parisian apartment in Ohio, I was mulling this over. It was 2013. And then it was 2014. And so on. I was reading, or rather dipping in and out of, Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*, obsessing over the French New Wave and Guy Maddin, and trying to figure out why and how Dean Young moved me with poems that at first read like jokes but shifted and slid into vulnerability. These artists were very much *not* other artists. Without quite knowing it, I was looking for a way to define “the original,” or “the new,” because I was looking for what would become my PhD purpose: How do we educate *toward* the original? After all, if college is the time for “finding oneself,” shouldn't we educate away from the herd mentality, from the Hollywood franchise, and toward the lone wolf, the indie film, Duchamp's hanger nailed to the threshold floor? Let us move away from the romanticized war of *Schindler's List* and toward *Hiroshima mon amour*.

Some discussions in art education are not much removed from the discussion in composition studies when it comes to “critical thinking” (Eisner, 2002; jagodzinski, 2010; Lampert, 2006; Lazo and Smith, 2014; Stout, 1995; etc.). In addition, a slew of researchers concern themselves with questions of critical thinking in terms of aesthetic development and critique (e.g., Barrett, 2008; Bresler, 2006; and Greene, 2001), believing that thinking about art is a natural extension of making art, and vice versa. The logic goes that an artist cannot *really* make work until she understands what work is, what the different kinds of work are, and what exactly it is about those works that she wishes to make. The poet James Wright (1997), in urging young poets toward this kind of

intellectual gain, said that no quality poetry could ever be crafted by a practitioner who did not yet have a criticism of her own (p.82). This is why the most revered chefs present dishes both simple and ornate—because they can. They have thought long and hard about the potato. They have developed a theory about the potato. This is also why Donald Ray Pollock, the celebrated writer behind *Knockemstiff* (2008), *The Devil All the Time* (2011), and *The Heavenly Table* (2016), who did not start writing fiction until his mid-forties, taught himself to write by typing, word for word, what he read in books by John Cheever, Flannery O’Connor, and Ernest Hemingway, among others (ctd. in Gross, 2011). He thought long and hard about how books were put together—from the dialogue to the action, and how to “move from scene to scene” (qtd. in Gross, 2011). In his Chillicothe attic, he developed his own theories about how that might work.

Like Maxine Greene (2001), I am talking about education in the broad sense, not schooling (p.7). And like Dean Young (2010), I am talking about making birds, not birdcages (p.47). In fact, teaching art at the college level—which is my main interest—may be impossible without incorporating some element of critical thinking. In *ch-ch-ch-changers: artists talk about teaching*, two researchers, Mollin and Reardon (2009), reported on their interviews with 26 teaching artists. Among other questions, they asked point blank: “Can you teach art?” Many interviewees tried to dodge the question, or asserted the impossibility of defining art, let alone teaching it. John Armleder’s response is “I don’t know if it’s teaching... my experience with the students is more experimental, much more like a laboratory” (p.28). Phyllis Barlow says “no,” you can’t teach art, “but you can provide an endless process of enquiry and debate and discussion and

conversation around it” (p.45). Michael Corris says that at best teachers “can provide the means for that to happen, for learning to happen” (p.95). Vanalyne Green says “sure you can... You’re teaching people how to think” (p.198). Green begins every semester by telling students that their desire to “create a sublime moment for other people” is “a construction” (p.198). Klaus Jung says “art and pedagogy are very closely related because making art is a great way to learn,” adding “I can help people learn, which is very close to teaching, but it’s not teaching in a traditional sense” (p.238). Jan Jagodzinski (2008) is not much more optimistic. “While I recognize that very little of what I advocate will find its way in schools, universities, galleries, museums, art departments, design schools and so on,” he says, “in the machinery that produces contemporary art and its education, there is a multiplicity of such artistic becomings, that push this avant-garde ‘edge’” (p.159), suggesting that we shouldn’t shy away from trying just because it may not penetrate the system. Barbara Bolt (2007)—who is well-represented in the arts education theory-based literature—looked not at teaching and learning but intellectual insights—which she calls “theorizing out of practice” in order to begin a “dialogue with existing practical and theoretical paradigms” (qtd. in Smith and Dean, 2009, p.7). James Elkins, too, who was schooled in art and art history, eventually turned his attention toward these questions with such books as *Why Art Cannot Be Taught* (2001) and *What Do Artists Know?* (2012), both of which probe the history of art education and attempt to find footing and direction for both theory and practice of the current studio art undergraduate and graduate programs. Elkins (2001) says that we do not know how to teach art (p.91), a claim he says comes from Plato and the Romantics (wherein the artist

was an individual, so group instruction could not succeed [p.96]) and the Bauhaus (“craft is fundamental,” not art, which is impossible to teach [p.96]). More specifically, when we look at what art schools—undergraduate art schools and art departments around the country—teach, we see that teachers “continue to behave as if they were doing something more than providing ‘atmosphere,’ ‘dialogue,’ or ‘passion’” (p.92). According to Elkins, teaching is intentional—in other words, what happens in the classroom is not teaching until the teacher directs a lesson to a student (p.92). A teacher might, for example, tell a student to study the work of Francis Bacon. *That is an intentional move*. If the same recommendation came up “in the course of a long conversation about other subjects,” says Elkins, it would not amount to teaching (p.92). But if schools purport to teach thinking, which they do, and if thinking is unintentional, which it is, then maybe the way to educate toward thinking is to point students toward experiences (e.g., artworks) that provide the greatest opportunities for encounters?

II. What Do Schools Say?

Princeton University is consistently ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* as the best university in the nation. Within the university’s admissions pages (updated in 2016) is this note on the freshman seminars:

The students’ main responsibility is to think deeply about the material and bring their ideas to the table. Each freshman seminar is limited to 15 students and is developed and taught by a member of Princeton’s renowned faculty, whose main role is to serve as a facilitator of ideas. Each freshman seminar is hosted by a residential college, which means that discussions started in the

classroom can continue over meals or in other informal settings. Class discussions dictate their own direction and students are encouraged to argue, get inspired and be passionate.

Unsurprisingly, Princeton does not say that students' main responsibility is to think shallowly about anything, anything at all, and to leave all discussions, especially those that may give rise to indigestion, in the classroom, where their teacher, an underpaid, lovelorn adjunct, will happily resume the banal lecture in the morning. We can agree that the above is probably a fairly representative admissions statement. Colleges and universities wish to sell themselves as fertile ground for thought and experimentation, for healthy debate and intellectual growth. The art education department at OSU, where I am a PhD candidate, boasts the bold goal "to prepare students to lead through art education towards a critical and informed citizenry." Art schools, too,—and this is especially important given the art education nature of this dissertation—purport to teach thinking above making. CalArts, so goes its admissions materials, "actively promotes both the creative environment and the intellectual context for artistic experimentation. The School's programs prepare graduates to thoughtfully challenge the prevailing conventions of artistic expression, develop new forms, and become innovators and leaders in their chosen fields." Dean Thomas Lawson (2016) begins his recruitment pitch with "as a sanctuary for experimentation and cross-disciplinary artmaking, the School of Arts provides a forum in which to set forth new ideas in art and an intellectual framework in which to understand such work." The School of the Art Institute of Chicago's *Seek. Explore. Find.* (2016) admissions materials begins in a similar fashion:

In 1866, a group of explorers like you came together to found an art and design school in the relatively new city of Chicago, home to visionaries and seekers eager to strike their own paths in the world... True to our history, an SAIC experience is centered on a passion for experimentation... At SAIC, we challenge the notion that any field is ever beyond rediscovery, believing that the inextricable relationship between what we make and what we mean is best incubated in an atmosphere that tolerates risk and ambiguity, encouraging curiosity and resilience. (p.1).

This has all the rhetoric of the Lewis and Clark expedition. The Rhode Island School of Design (2016), another of the top art schools in the nation, begins its admissions booklet¹⁰ by saying “Students at RISD quickly discover that ‘the studio’ isn’t only where art is made, it’s also where community is created. By talking openly about process, collaborating on projects and exchanging techniques and ideas, you and your peers will

¹⁰ To collect “data” for this section, I signed up as a prospective student for what the Internet tells me are the top art schools in the nation—including the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Maryland Institute College of Art, the Rhode Island School of Design, and others. The admissions materials I received in the mail were no less than books, complete with high-quality photographs, graphic cover designs, glossy paper or fashionable chic-matte, and enough pages to warrant professional binding. The book is itself a selling point—a selling object. Black Mountain College’s first “admissions” material was a mimeographed announcement of the school and its makeup. Nothing special there.

grow together as thinkers and makers.” A few pages later the school touts its “legacy of risk taking” that “plays out in studios, classrooms, and galleries across campus. Students learn to question everything” (p.42).

On a personal note, two of my friends from my past life in poetry—both handsomely published poets with PhDs in creative writing—teach at the Columbus College of Art and Design (CCAD) in a department devoted to “Writing, Philosophy and the Humanities.” This department is part of the CORE studies, a required subsection of the curriculum that “complements and supports our college’s art and design programs by broadening your understanding of what it means to be an art student” (CCAD, n.d.). The general idea, says the website, is for students “to engage... intellectually, philosophically and culturally” because “education at CCAD means gaining the technical skills...while learning how to think critically and conceptually.” Recall that Deleuze was on the lookout for encounters. He read books, went to the cinema, and viewed gallery exhibitions. He wished to be presented with something original that would shock him into thinking. The message these schools are sending—with their CORE studies program that supplements the practice-based courses—is that encounters are important, that art technique alone is not enough: something *more* is necessary in great art. And let’s be clear: these schools want their students to go on to make “great” art—art that is deemed great by those who “matter”—because, to simplify, the success of alumni means a reputation of success for the school. Elkins (2001) reminds us that art school and department fliers list the famous alumni. At The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, for example, he says, “we list Georgia O’Keeffe, Thomas Hart Benton, Claes Oldenburg,

Richard Estes, and Joan Mitchell,” adding quite ironically (but seriously) that “most of them dropped out” (p.104). Elkins suggests adding this disclaimer to such “notable alumni” lists:

Although these artists did study at our school, we deny any responsibility for their success. We have no idea what they learned while they were here, what they thought was important and what wasn’t, or whether they would have been better off in jail. We consider it luck that these artists were at our school... any relation between what we teach and truly interesting art is purely coincidental. (p.104)

Perhaps if we can teach them anything at all, it is thinking, not making? The most comprehensive list of notable alumni—number of students-cum-celebrities—and faculty—the game changers in such disparate practices as dance, music, painting, and poetry—comes from Black Mountain College. The list includes students Ruth Asawa, Robert Creeley, Viola Farber, Ray Johnson, Kenneth Noland, Robert Rauschenberg, and Susan Weil, among others; and faculty Josef and Anni Albers, John Cage, Merce Cunningham, R. Buckminster Fuller, Willem and Elaine de Kooning, Franz Kline, Jacob Lawrence, and Peter Voulkos. This was the true school of thinking. John Rice founded the school “not to train professional artists but to sensitive people to the meaning of art.” The 1952 prospectus—a kind of admissions material without all the pomp and circumstance—boasted these two principles:

I. That the student, rather than the curriculum, is the proper centre of a general education, because it is he and she that a college exists for.

II. that a faculty fit to face up the student as the centre to be measured by what they do with what they know, that it is their dimension as teachers as much as their mastery of their disciplines that makes them instruments capable of dealing with what excuses their profession in the first place, their ability to instruct the student under hand. (qtd. in Katz, 2003, p.36-37)

Part of what made the school so special was its pedagogic diversity. Josef Albers was “a meticulous planner and organizer, entirely devoted to his task as a pedagogue... while being equally devoted and prolific in experimentation” (Katz, 2003, p.40). Willem de Kooning’s, on the other hand, was a pedagogy of the loose. Elaine de Kooning¹¹ remembers it like this:

¹¹ Elaine de Kooning was a superlative artist in her own right. Was she overshadowed by her husband or did she step back into the shadows for her husband? A 2015 show at the National Portrait Gallery, which showed “how she reinvented the modern portrait by using figuration with an Abstract Expressionist vocabulary” (Moonan, 2015), not only raised that question but made it more public. Interestingly, we can only know what we learn, which is that which is available to be learned, i.e., in the canon. Critic Sasha Archibald (2013) sums up the problem and its solution like this:

Finding specifically women progenitors requires a bit of extra effort—Warhol or Kerouac or Nietzsche are readier-at-hand than Kathy Acker or Claude Cahun or Agnès Martin—but, thanks to the Internet, feminism, and other cultural shifts, no one comes up empty-handed.

The above passage from Archibald comes from her review of Mary MacLane's little-read 1902 memoir titled *The Story of Mary MacLane*, reissued later with the more apt (and her preferred) title *I Await the Devil's Coming*. MacLane published the book at the tender age of 19. Arguably, MacLane all but invented the confessional memoir that would later find fame with such works as *On the Road* (Jack Kerouac—see, here's my obligatory Kerouac mention, as Archibald foresees), *The Liar's Club* (Mary Karr), and *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* (Alison Bechdel). With hyperbole and penchant for the ecstatic, MacLane becomes liberation before women's liberation. She wrote about what couldn't be written about, especially in the Midwest at the turn of the century—desire, mainly: desire for other women and the devil, a character who recurs throughout (there goes MacLane, playing with reality before it was cool). Impossibly, too, she possessed more arrogance (or is it confidence?) than Whitman. The first sentence of her first book goes like this: "I of womankind and of nineteen years, will now begin to set down as full and frank a Portrayal as I am able of myself, Mary MacLane, for whom the world contains not a parallel" (2013, p.6). A few lines later, she writes "I am a genius." And a few pages later: "Had I been born a man I would by now have made a deep impression of myself on the world—on some part of it" (p.13). MacLane was there for us to see, but I didn't see her, not until 2013 when the book was reissued by Melville House; shouldn't I have known about MacLane in high school, or at the very latest in college, when I was being introduced to memoir? How many originals have gone under the radar?

[Josef] Albers preferred to talk to students as a group; Bill liked to talk to students one at a time. Albers' students sat at desks and worked cautiously on small, neat compositions; Bill's stood at easels painting boldly on large canvases. Albers presents his students with the same specific problems; Bill waited until they had evolved their own set of problems¹² on canvas before discussing the range of options open to them. Since most of the students worked under both of them, the different approaches proved to be stimulating¹³ rather than mutually exclusive. (qtd. in Katz, p.40)

¹² Recall what poet James Wright wrote to younger poets back in the 60s—that they must develop a criticism of their own before becoming a poet. Otherwise they are just copying. And while copying is a great way to begin the apprenticeship, the combination of copying and thinking seems to be the space for becoming poet. In many ways, this dissertation is a copy of a copy of a copy. I have used footnotes within footnotes to enact plateaus. I take this method, in a way, from David Foster Wallace's essays. But I use his idea with a purpose, with a logic for *this* dissertation.

¹³ Perhaps too stimulating in some respects. Willem de Kooning was fond of telling students to quit, move to New York City, and start painting, as that was the only way to truly become an artist. This advice annoyed Josef Albers, who was a student of the Bauhaus and German—he was all about the hard work of preparation.

Black Mountain is an anomaly, though, and could not exist today¹⁴, founded as it was to challenge the State apparatus¹⁵. Consider what Deleuze and Guattari say of

¹⁴ Says Nietzsche (1889/1990): “Liberal institutions immediately cease to be liberal as soon as they are attained: subsequently there is nothing more thoroughly harmful to freedom than liberal institutions... it is the herd animal which triumphs with them every time” (p.103).

Black Mountain College, that liberal bastion, has lately risen from the dead. Last year saw the emergence of two BMC-related events—an art exhibition and an alternative school’s first session. In 2016, a new educational institution was launched on the original Black Mountain College grounds, which began as a grouping of church buildings but after the college’s closing had become—and still is throughout the school year—a YMCA camp. This new school, called simply Black Mountain School at first, was founded to challenge “the face of unaffordable, corporatized learning, and the ‘one size fits all’ curriculums that often define public and private higher education.” Strangely enough, this school was served a cease and desist from an institution of higher education that held the copyright to the name “Black Mountain.” In 2017, due to the unwinnable legal battle, the school changed its name to the School of the Alternative, losing its immediate link to the school upon which it built its mission. The school, which boasts “no accreditations, no prerequisites, no diplomas,” takes place each summer for two 2-week sessions during which the teachers and students live and work together, in the shadow of the Black Mountain originators. The founders call it “an experiment in education and community” and “a passion-driven model of education that encourages greater possibilities for thought, creation and collective action.” The founders

“seek to create conditions necessary for a present-day community of pioneering artists and critical thinkers.” Notice the language here. Much like MICA, RISD, SAIC, etc., the School of the Alternative uses language associated with “critical” thinking, experimentation, and—as stated in the Educational Philosophy section of the website—“actively producing knowledge and forming new aesthetic experiences.” New aesthetic experiences. This school is built on Recklessness, something the founders quite obviously understand: “We value experimentation as both an aesthetic drive, and as a way to push new ideas and old traditions to their limits,” they write. But what we have here at the School of the Alternative is an anti-philosophy. The school is built to challenge higher education art education, which charges high tuition and produces fancy admissions materials. The same was true of the original Black Mountain College. The difference is that the original BMC *was* an institution of higher education. Like Surrealism and Dadaism, then, it was destined to *fail*. A movement cannot be institutionalized unless it wishes to become an institution. The School of the Alternative charges \$800 for one 2-week session, which helps to mitigate the costs of running the facilities. Plus the school offers three full-tuition scholarships and eight half-scholarships per session—that is six full rides and 16 half rides. Not bad.

The other BMC event, occurring throughout 2015 and 2016, was an art exhibition devoted to Black Mountain College travelled the country. It was called *Leap Before You Look: Black Mountain College, 1933-1957*, and it was organized by the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston. Why now? The year 2016 is not a fancy anniversary of the college’s founding day.

The year 2016 is 83 years from the beginning and 59 years from its ending. The exhibition's title is a reference to a poem by W.H. Auden (1940), which goes like this:

The sense of danger must not disappear:
The way is certainly both short and steep,
However gradual it looks from here;
Look if you like, but you will have to leap.

Tough-minded men get mushy in their sleep
And break the by-laws any fool can keep;
It is not the convention but the fear
That has a tendency to disappear.

The worried efforts of the busy heap,
The dirt, the imprecision, and the beer
Produce a few smart wisecracks every year;
Laugh if you can, but you will have to leap.

The clothes that are considered right to wear
Will not be either sensible or cheap,
So long as we consent to live like sheep
And never mention those who disappear.

Much can be said for social savoir-faire,
But to rejoice when no one else is there
Is even harder than it is to weep;
No one is watching, but you have to leap.
A solitude ten thousand fathoms deep
Sustains the bed on which we lie, my dear:
Although I love you, you will have to leap;
Our dream of safety has to disappear.

Auden was a good poet to mine for a Black Mountain connection, for his verse, though probably thought of as traditional by the mainstream reading public, is marked by that groping experimentation.

¹⁵ The main building of Black Mountain College, eighteen miles from the liberal refuge Asheville, North Carolina, was strangely named after the Confederate General Robert E. Lee, a misnomer for a building at a school for the arts. The film *General Orders no. 9* (2009) plays with the tension of that order and what it means/meant for the South. The film, in my opinion, is the best film ever made about the State apparatus. The title is a reference to the order given by General Robert E. Lee to his soldiers upon the south's surrender to the north in 1865. Here is the entire message:

After four years of arduous service marked by unsurpassed courage and fortitude, the Army of Northern Virginia has been compelled to yield to overwhelming numbers and resources.

I need not tell the brave survivors of so many hard fought battles who have remained steadfast to the last that I have consented to this result from no distrust of them; but feeling that valour and devotion could accomplish nothing that would compensate for the loss that would have attended the continuance of the contest, I determined to avoid the useless sacrifice of those whose past services have endeared them to their Countrymen.

By the terms of the Agreement officers and men can return to their homes and remain there until exchanged.

You will take with you the satisfaction that proceeds from the consciousness of duty faithfully performed, and I earnestly pray that a Merciful God will extend to you his blessing and protection.

With an unceasing admiration of your constancy and devotion to your country and a grateful remembrance of your kind and generous consideration for myself, I bid you all an affectionate farewell.

The film has nothing to do with the Civil War. Yet, like everything in the south, the film has *everything* to do with the Civil War. The filmmaker's synopsis calls it an "experimental documentary that contemplates the signs of loss and change in the American South as potent metaphors of personal and collective destiny." The film, however, is a marvel, half a world away from any synopsis, the same way a retelling of a war battle would capture nothing of the experience of the war. One must watch the documentary to know the documentary. The film is an essay because it searches—through moving and static images and the way they interact with the indirect, literary voiceover and instrumental music—for meaning of "progress." The film is billed as "one last trip down the rabbit hole before its paved over." But the documentary refuses to choose a side. This is not an argument against progress, against urban sprawl or eminent domain. In fact, in a Q&A, the filmmaker, Robert Persons, when asked if the film was indeed a damnation of the loss of wild land, told a story about his own property, some of which was ceased by the government to make way for a natural gas pipeline. While mourning the loss of that land, Persons said "people need their gas." The film possesses that same Negative Capability—pulling us in multiple directions without a thesis statement nor superlative. The city doesn't oppose the countryside. The two are always in flux. Weeds sprout in sidewalks. Buildings rise above the tree-line. Art is not communication. "The struggle against purpose in art," says Nietzsche (1889/2003), "is

the smooth and the striated. John Rice et al. believed not in points but in lines. Do we neuter the dog or let it spread its seed all over the neighborhood? The board of trustees is the city whereas the *bored of trustees* is the countryside. Black Mountain College, says the 1933-34 Prospectus, was founded without a board of trustees. In its place, John Rice created a board of fellows made up of faculty members who had a stake in education, not business. Rice et al. also discarded the role of President in favor of a rotation of faculty members who would be responsible for the major administrative duties. So too were the deans replaced with faculty members who would take on short-term dean-like appointments and the students given a role, “encouraged to assume whatever responsibility they will

always a struggle against the moralizing tendency in art, against the subordination of art to morality... When one has excluded from art the purpose of moral preaching and human improvement it by no means follows that art is completely purposeless, goalless, meaningless, in short *l'art pour l'art*” (p.92). Get better at not knowing what one is doing.

Persons (2011) on the process:

I was messing around with it a good bit before I got married, but it was a long period of collecting material and trying to figure out how to put it together, and not really knowing what I was doing, and not knowing what the next steps were. After about five years of that, I realized I needed to start engaging the help of other people. So I found a few other people here in Atlanta, and we started working on it together.
(qtd. in Scott, 2011)

in the matter of work and conduct” (p.1). The distinctions of freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior were replaced with the junior college and senior college groups, where the junior college was the place for finding a purpose and the senior college was the place for carrying out that purpose. Each student was given the chance to find his or her own path:

When a student, after consultation with his instructors, thinks he has reached sufficient maturity to make an intelligent choice of a field of specialization and that he has built an adequate foundation for the work he proposes to do in the Senior College, he will be required to take comprehensive examinations, oral and written, set by a Board of Admissions to the Senior College, and to submit a plan of work to be done in the Senior College. (p.1)

Surely what all these art schools (and perhaps *all* schools), past and present, call for intellectual calisthenics, lest we produce a bunch of copies of copies who will go out and teach the youth of America to be Xerox machines. Let us instead lobby for a kind of arts education that challenges students *away* from the cliché and *toward* original thinking—whether they wish to teach or be artists or just to fulfill a requirement. Graeme Sullivan (2014), who believes that making and interpreting art can be one basis for constructing knowledge, writes that “both the practice of making art and the process of responding to it involve creative activity and critical reflection that can result in individuals and communities of learners taking ownership of knowledge and understanding” (p.284). These are what Liora Brelser (2006) refers to as “*soft boundaries*,” wherein the making

and interpreting (and I'd say educating) gain from an understanding of the same concepts and principles (p.53). A study of the dogmatic image of thought (in general and in artmaking), which permits the proliferation of cliché, and of the new image of thought (in general and in artmaking), which permits the creation of the heretofore unrealized, should, I think, benefit artists, students of art, and art educators.

III. Recklessness

Our brains are dulled by the incurable mania of wanting to make the unknown known.

The poet John Keats is known for “Negative Capability,” which he coined to describe what he loved about Shakespeare: the skill “of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason” (qtd., The Poetry Foundation). The best poets, including Shakespeare, possess “the power to bury self-consciousness, dwell in a state of openness to all experience, and identify with the object contemplated” (“Negative Capability”). The best poets, in other words, embrace curiosity and questions, not the narrow funnel of certainty and answers. This concept is behind the SAIC’s call for “risk and ambiguity.” The poet Dean Young has recently given Negative Capability a new life with the concept “Recklessness.” Art critic and poet John Ashbery, writes Young in *The Art of Recklessness*, indirectly coined the concept in an essay, writing “most reckless things are beautiful in some way, and Recklessness is what makes experimental art beautiful, just as religions are beautiful because of the strong possibility that they are founded on nothing” (p.42). Recklessness, per Young, is a way of creating art that “requires to some extent various polarizations,” such as “intensity and contradiction” because “at the center of any artistic practice is a resistance as well as a

contrary impulse to identify, to stand off from the tribe and to be part of it. Poetry is an assertive force” (p.37) and contradiction. Reckless art—a result of Recklessness—is “unhindered by doubt (while acknowledging that doubt can begin the inspiration toward liberation)” and it “is composed of convictions of first needs, first minds, of truth in language arising from the active impulse of emotion, moving through the calculations of the *rational toward irrational detonation*” (p.12, emphasis mine). Essentially, Recklessness is getting better at not knowing¹⁶. How we arrive at the irrational and stay

¹⁶ Ann Hamilton comes to mind as a preeminent not-knower, known by the art public for that very strategy, which gives experiences/events to the audience. In a 2008 interview with *American Art*, Hamilton describes the artmaking process like this:

What you’re doing all the time [is] trying to cultivate a space for yourself where not knowing is a really active, productive, intelligent space to work from. And that’s why it’s an act of attention. What you [the artist] hope is that you’re making a similar situation for someone else, so that instead of trying to tie it up and say what does all this mean and making a story out of your experience, you’re actually having an experience. (qtd. in Wallach, 2008, p.57)

A few years earlier, in 2000, she had this to say: “I’m interested in the form that’s not quite set. I’m at that point where I’m more comfortable not knowing. As a maker you have to allow yourself to not know. And that carries over into qualities of ambiguity in the work” (Enright, p.32). Hamilton’s collaboration with SITI Company, *the theater is a blank page*, which was commissioned by the Wexner Center for the Arts, is a prime example. I had the good

fortune of being at one of the rehearsals for this show, during which something accidentally occurred—one of the performers, who was supposed to extricate herself from a wrap of ribbon, instead danced the ribbon off in a kind of tailspin. Ann Hamilton looked to SITP's artistic director, Anne Bogart, and said *That is what we should do. That works.* They knew what they wanted, but what saved them was the fact that they did not know how to get there!

While there are indeed other interviews in which she expresses that same sentiment about wonder and enchantment (i.e., Negative Capability), her 2012 show at the Pulitzer Foundation in St. Louis, *stylus*, is a living example. The catalogue acts as a record of Hamilton's process, as emails to the curator from 2008 to 2010. "When we asked Ann to write an artistic statement for *stylus*," writes curator Matthias Waschek, "we received a stream of poetry via e-mail, selections of which are included in this volume" (2012, p.13). In the first included e-mail, we can "see" Hamilton begin the project by thinking about the building itself, a concrete bunker in the middle of St. Louis, and looking for a theme. Hamilton often uses words in her work and here we see her searching for the right word which will reveal the subject for what will become *stylus*:

I like thinking of the concrete house as an ear... as I do... I think about the orifice of the ear... listening...relating to sounding and sounding relating to speaking and speaking related to singing and singing related to strumming and strumming to stamping and so on...the appendages of voice and hand and foot.

And later in the same email:

and it seems interesting to also think about the concrete house as a broadcast

there, comfortable, not looking for a logical conclusion, is what makes the art reckless, full of Negative Capability, difficult to categorize as *X*, as that something we've seen many times before. Young is especially interested in the push and pull of the tribe—why, for instance, do we come into this world running full go with our creative impulses only to slack and give way to the pressures of conformity? As a poet in the schools, Young saw this firsthand: “Kids begin feeling immense pressure to conform and conceal, accept responsibility and obligation, expect punishment, fear being ostracized, shunned from the

and so the speculative search for word to for, begins

ear—resistor—broadcast

we will see where they go

This idea of the ear, of broadcast, became just one element of the final production, a 23-channel sound recording (including recordings generated by the patrons as they interacted with the installation, by writing their name at the entrance, for instance, the sound of which was translated into song). This was, according to Waschek, the “call and response” element, and recalls what Hamilton said about the form (/force?) that’s not quite set. This call and response element evolved based on what Hamilton was reading during the thinking about the installation-to-be. Hamilton has lauded the role of texts in her work:

The other part of my process is finding the right books to be reading. Sometimes I am reading for the information or argument, but sometimes I need to suspend into or create an atmosphere of writing out of which a project will come to the surface. Reading helps me trust my intuition about how I’m responding to a place. (Wallach, p.65)

herd” (p.14). Young saw this specifically in their writing: “Unicorns everywhere,” he notes, “the same unicorn, commodification” (p.14). The cliché enters. I saw this, too, when I helped facilitate a poetry in the schools program. In a subsequent article—“Aces in the Deck: Four Principles for Assessing and Strengthening Student Poems” (2008)—professor Terry Hermsen and I wrote about the experience, concluding that overall students hadn’t improved on the measured skills of metaphor, surprise, detail, and point of view. Only those students who started out strong yielded measurable improvement, suggesting perhaps that they were less likely to conform *anyway*, and not anything about our program. Nietzsche, writing in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872/1956), claimed that art is the utmost metaphysical concern of man, “a kind of divinity if you like, God as the supreme artist, amoral, recklessly creating and destroying, realizing himself indifferently in whatever he does or undoes, ridding himself by his acts of the embarrassment of his riches and the strain of his internal contradictions” (p.9). But the cliché stands in the way. Repetition as a return of the same stands in the way. Sameness, a comfort in seeing what we expect, stands in the way. “Civilization,” says Young, “makes us ill” (p.15). Recklessness leads to what jagodzinski calls “avant-garde without authority” (2012, p.85), in which the “creative event” is prioritized to become “*transversal* change that ruin representation” (p.85).

IV. Cliché

Young is of course not alone in his criticism of civilization, a criticism that runs throughout the critical literature. In “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception,” for instance, Adorno and Horkheimer (1944/2002) argue that “the specific

content of productions” are “interchangeable” and that “ready-made clichés, to be used here and there as desired” had “elevated to a principle the often-inept transposition of art to the consumption sphere” (p.98-107). They criticize MGM and Warner Brothers, two film production houses still in existence, for “insatiable uniformity” and products that despite marketing “are ultimately all the same” (p.107). Umberto Eco (1985) later wrote “I would like to consider now the case of an historical period (our own) for which iteration and repetition seem to dominate the whole world of artistic creativity, and which it is difficult to distinguish between the repetition of the media and the repetition of the so-called major arts” (p.409). Eco, doubtless without knowing it, predicted (like Adorno and Horkheimer) the current Hollywood obsession with a non-Nietzschean return and a non-Deleuzian repetition, categorizing the available products as repeats as retakes (“recycles characters from a previous story”), remakes (“telling again a previous successful story”), or series (“recurrence of a narrative scheme that remains constant”) (p.410). The conversation continues today, especially regarding cinema. Jean-Luc Godard has said that with American movies “more or less one every year is enough: they are more or less all the same... this is the world we are living in” (qtd. in Smith, 1996). Hungarian filmmaker Béla Tarr, now retired, started making movies in late-70s for this very reason: “Everything everywhere is the same. The whole fucking storytelling thing is everywhere the same. That’s why I decided I have to do my movies.” Screenwriter Paul Schrader (of *Taxi Driver* and *Raging Bull* fame) once told Roger Ebert that “grown-up films and creative projects were ‘over’ in the New Hollywood” (qtd. in Ebert, 2011). Roger Ebert agrees, writing “nothing is harder to get financed than an original idea, or

easier than a retread.” Critics have called this the “sequel machine” (Derek Thompson, 2016), not art but “brand extensions” (Mark Harris, 2016), which is “great news for the studio and their accounting departments but terrible news for popular art” or the “auteurist vision” (Matt Zoller Seitz, 2014).

In the visual arts, a distinction has often been made between the avant-garde and kitsch, where the avant-garde is the new and the kitsch is “immature expressions of emotion” or “‘superficial’ emotions” (Solomon, 1991, p.451-452), a sort of packaging of the known. Novelist Milan Kundera once said that kitsch causes two tears to flow: “The first tear says: how nice to see children running on the grass!” and the second says “How nice to be moved, together with all mankind, by children running on the grass!” (emphasis mine). Kundera added “It is the second tear that makes kitsch kitsch” (qtd. in Solomon, p.453). That second tear is the tear of the universal, of the “common experience,” which only the cliché strives to render for fear of alienating any one

consumer. Critic Clement Greenberg¹⁷ saw modernism¹⁸ as the illumination of materials and form and flatness all of which had been oppressed by the Old Masters (Barrett, 2012,

¹⁷ James Elkins* has made two notable contributions to art criticism—*What Happened to Art Criticism* (2003) and *The State of Art Criticism* (2008)—one of which rightfully speaks poorly of Greenberg. His 2003 book Elkins argues that though art criticism is everywhere—which would imply its success—it is in a crisis. “Art criticism is massively produced,” he writes, “and massively ignored” (p.4). Everybody is writing and nobody is paying attention. Part of the problem, he says, is the divide between the academy (art historians) and the ephemeral (e.g., magazine and newspaper critics). He says that Diderot, a philosopher capable of deep insight, “is effectively the foundation of art criticism” but that Greenberg, the 20th century’s most prominent critic, was incapable of understanding or caring about understanding Kant (p.7). The reason for such a divide, he muses, may be that art historians train in the academy—there is coursework and a basis—but art critics, unless they trained as poets or journalists, wherein the training is in the writing, not the art historical knowledge—have no academic training on which to hang their hat. He thinks that an academic home for criticism would give it “a center of some kind against which to push” (p.9). I agree with Elkins but agree, too, with John Yau (2013), that Greenberg “seemed to be turning art history into a scientific method, with a variety of materially verifiable ways by which one could evaluate art,” which is to say he is diametrically opposed to the kind of post-qualitative inquiry undertaken here. Greenberg raises interesting questions about the avant-garde and its reproducible brethren, the kitsch, but he fails because he tries to provide *the* answer; he holds

himself up as *the* authority on the progress of art. Abstraction isn't the end of modern painting any more than Gertrude Stein's poem "If I Told Him"[§] (1924) was the end of cubism, although perhaps one could make the case. Did she perfect cubism?

* Art education's own Terry Barrett, too, has done much to advance the teaching of criticism, writing such books as *Criticizing Photography* (2012), *Criticizing Art: Understanding the Contemporary* (2011), and *Why is that Art?* (2008), which, he says (1991), is an attempt to build on Manuel Barkan's (1966) belief that art criticism is essential for teaching art (p.83). Using Deleuze's definition of *thinking*, which happens within thought (that thing we do all day every day without question) and has the *rhizome* (becoming lines) as its image (which, as Artaud tells us, is no image at all), the very act of writing criticism may lead to new insights about artworks under investigation, especially if those artworks possess mysteries and doubts we cannot close neatly, in which case the very act of writing is trying to understand, and the very act of not understanding, of writing toward understanding, opens a space for thinking along the way. Also, as Elkins (2003) points out, criticism is inherently multidisciplinary—using concepts from philosophy (e.g., the Sublime) and the social sciences (e.g., the gaze), among other fields, which is a good argument for teaching the intellectual flexibility promised by major art schools and ivy-league institutions. According to Michael Schreyach (2008),

art criticism is characterized exactly by its *lack* of codification: one does not have to prepare to be an art critic by engaging in any specific professional training; art criticism has no common rules; no common set of objects to which it applies; it does not share a standard mode of writing, presentational format, or rhetorical conventions; it is not located in a single place. (p.12)

Not being located—just like not knowing—is here a virtue. The third most important goal of art criticism, according to a 2002 Columbia University poll, is “poetic art criticism”—i.e., the writing counts just as much as the artwork under consideration, if not more (Elkins, 2003, p.17). The essay is the ideal form for this kind of criticism because it embraces the search, not the answer, it allows for discoveries and connections, and it more than a descriptive essay has the potential to be a literary artifact (Elkins, p.49). Of the critics surveyed by Columbia University, 39% said theorizing was the priority and 27% said judgments and opinions were the priority (p.49-50). Elkins shares his surprise given that art criticism “from Diderot to Greenberg” sought to judge and theorize (p.50). Elkins points out that the term speaks to contemporary critics who are poets (e.g., Peter Schjeldahl and Michael Fried, he says, though I would add John Ashbery) and the history of criticism, which is chock-full of poet-types (e.g., Baudelaire and Wilde, and, for film, Godard and Truffaut before they became the French New Wave). Elkins focuses on Dave Hickey, who “makes readers think about voice, tone, and style” and “infuriates academics by refusing to write at any length about particular works of contemporary

art, and by steering clear of the kind of argument that could be distilled into a *Cliff's Notes*" (p.52). Hickey, in a sense, has a personality, what writer's call "voice," which includes

non-sequiturs, repetitions, asides, apostrophes, jokes, self-contradictions, impressionistic collages, delightful but largely pointless reminiscences, rough unpolished passages that sit cheek by jowl with prose poems, and especially to wild leaps of all sorts... as if writing itself had swallowed critical decorum, proper argument, and academic protocol, chewed them well, and spat them all out in a big spill of prose... that refuses to be dressed up in a logical argument. (p.52)

Elkins says all this to make the point that good writing should be inherent in all art criticism—including the judging and the theorizing—and that the purpose "to write well" is a silly excuse used to avoid the larger questions at hand. In my opinion, though, good criticism could be the kind of writing—and maybe even *thinking*—that "*acts* upon the reader in lieu of explaining," which is what Richard Shiff says about Walter Benjamin's art criticism (qtd. in Scheyach, 2008, p.17), and that thus we use in the introductory, writing-based art education courses that, as those introductory composition courses, purports to teach thinking. Terry Barrett was onto something for art education, although, in my opinion, he stayed too narrowly focused on the classroom.

§ Here is the complete poem, compliments of The University of
Pennsylvania:

If I told him would he like it. Would he like it if I told him.

Would he like it would Napoleon would Napoleon would would he
like it.

If Napoleon if I told him if I told him if Napoleon. Would he like it
if I told him if I told him if Napoleon. Would he like it if Napoleon if
Napoleon if I told him. If I told him if Napoleon if Napoleon if I
told him. If I told him would he like it would he like it if I told him.

Now.

Not now.

And now.

Now.

Exactly as as kings.

Feeling full for it.

Exactitude as kings.

So to beseech you as full as for it.

Exactly or as kings.

Shutters shut and open so do queens. Shutters shut and shutters and
so shutters shut and shutters and so and so shutters and so shutters
shut and so shutters shut and shutters and so. And so shutters shut
and so and also.

And also and so and so and also.

Exact resemblance. To exact resemblance the exact resemblance as
exact as a resemblance, exactly as resembling, exactly resembling,

exactly in resemblance exactly a resemblance, exactly and
resemblance. For this is so.

Because.

Now actively repeat at all, now actively repeat at all, now actively
repeat at all.

Have hold and hear, actively repeat at all.

I judge judge.

As a resemblance to him.

Who comes first. Napoleon the first.

Who comes too coming coming too, who goes there, as they go
they share, who

shares all, all is as all as as yet or as yet.

Now to date now to date. Now and now and date and the date.

Who came first. Napoleon at first. Who came first Napoleon the
first.

Who came first, Napoleon first.

Presently.

Exactly do they do.

First exactly.

Exactly do they do too.

First exactly.

And first exactly.

Exactly do they do.

And first exactly and exactly.

And do they do.

At first exactly and first exactly and do they do.

The first exactly.

And do they do.

The first exactly.

At first exactly.

First as exactly.

As first as exactly.

Presently

As presently.

As as presently.

He he he he and he and he and and he and he and he and and as
and as he and as he and he. He is and as he is, and as he is and he is,
he is and as he and he and as he is and he and he and and he and he.

Can curls rob can curls quote, quotable.

As presently.

As exactitude.

As trains

Has trains.

Has trains.

As trains.

As trains.

Presently.

Proportions.

Presently.

As proportions as presently.

Father and farther.

Was the king or room.

Farther and whether.

Was there was there was there what was there was there what was
there was there there was there.

Whether and in there.

As even say so.

One.

I land.

Two.

I land.

Three.

The land.

Three

The land.

Three

The land.

Two

I land.

Two

I land.

One

I land.

Two

I land.

As a so.

They cannot.

A note.

They cannot.

A float.

They cannot.

They dote.

They cannot.

They as denote.

Miracles play.
Play fairly.
Play fairly well.
A well.
As well.
As or as presently.
Let me recite what history teaches. History teaches.

¹⁸ A fascinating tidbit about Modernism, and one that is telling about its reception (and perhaps the reception of anything at first heretofore unseen, i.e., originality), comes from Theodor Roosevelt's (1913) review of the Armory show. Among other pronouncements, he wrote this:

Probably we err in treating most of these pictures seriously. It is likely that many of them represent in the painters the astute appreciation of the power to make folly lucrative which the late P.T. Barnum showed with his fake mermaid. There are thousands of people who will pay small sums to look at a faked mermaid; and now and then one of this kind with enough money will buy a Cubist picture, or a picture of a misshapen nude woman, repellent from every standpoint. (p.191)

Tellingly, Roosevelt reserves most of his criticism for the European painters, remarking that the American painters and sculptors hold the most interest. Roosevelt admires and endorses the sentiment for young painters to move forward toward new frontiers, stopping to say that "there is apt to be a lunatic fringe among the votaries," meaning, of course, the crazy European Cubists and Futurists (p.192). He compares the Cubists' work to "colorized

p.126), opposed the avant-garde to kitsch, saying the former are “artists’ artists” and “poets’ poets” (1939, p.8)—meaning their work is so original within the field, with its materials, that others take notice, respect, admire. This mirrors what Chuck Close once said: “I don’t give a shit how many collectors, how many critics, how many art historians there are. If artists don’t respect it, it won’t pass the test of time” (2013, Amirsadeghi, p.69). Their work, says Greenberg (1961/1989), “cannot be reduced in whole or in part to anything not itself” (p.6) and that “The alternative to Picasso is not Michelangelo, but kitsch” (p.13), irreducible as Picasso is¹⁹. Picasso was the quintessential painter’s painter.

pictures of the Sunday newspapers” (p.192). He then pokes fun at the name of movements, dreaming of such new names as “Octoganists, Parallelopipedonists, or Knights of the Isosceles Triangle” (p.192).

¹⁹ As far as contemporary filmmakers are concerned, Guy Maddin comes to mind as quintessentially *Guy Maddin*, committed to the cinema or Recklessness, not by reacting against the past (silent films, black and white, the *blur*) but by enfolding it, reconstituting it, making it lose time. In 2002 the Wexner Center for the Arts presented a retrospective of Maddin’s work, including *Tales from the Gimli Hospital* (1988), *Archangel* (1990), *Careful* (1992), *Twilight of the Ice Nymphs* (1997), along with a selection of others’ films selected by Maddin, including those with the Maddin-esque titles *The Devil-Doll* (Tod Browning, 1936) and *The Devil’s Cleavage* (George Kuchar, 1973). In the series introduction*, curator Bill Horrigan (2002) writes that he “can’t think of any other director who inhabits film history” like

Maddin (p.6). Horrigan is reminded of this fact while watching *Fugitive Lovers* (1934), a film that Leonard Maltin describes as a “Genially preposterous tale” that is “shot with ‘arty’ camera angles” and “Moves like lightning to even more preposterous climax in snowbound Colorado” (qtd. in Horrigan, p.4). Horrigan’s comment is meant to be a compliment to Maddin’s style, which is both in and out of time. “His films have the texture and the aura of handmade objects,” adds Horrigan, “painstakingly fabricated, as though each were individually rendered, a mildly ironic achievement given cinema’s aspirations to global reproducibility” (p.6). Maddin’s unique style is a mixture of “artisanal traditions of stagecraft to pitch-perfect use of the film stocks, the toning and tinting effects, and the ‘primitive’ sound-recording effects of cinema in the years immediately preceding and following the coming of sound” (p.6). Often the result is that we cannot tell if the films were made in the preceding decade or century. He uses title cards—the stuff of silent films—to insert little jokes along the way, such as when one says “Flapjacks!” during a scene in *The Forbidden Room* (2015) when the characters are indeed eating flapjacks. The film magazine *Cinephile* (2008) has marveled at Maddin’s success, given his lack of filmmaking knowledge or institutional affiliation at all. The result is

simultaneously aesthetically sophisticated and technically primitive. One of the several unique things about him as an artist (or at least as a successful artist) was his attempt to do quite ambitious, elaborate and sophisticated things with essentially no materials and no technical expertise. (Beard).

*In said same retrospective pamphlet—for it is not a book, not a program—Maddin presents a review of each of his films. Maddin’s “reviews” are quite humorous yet instructive. He calls *Tales from the Gimli Hospital* a “primitive first feature” (2002, p.11). “Setting out to be, not juvenile, but willfully childish,” he says, “Maddin shot the movie in the vernacular spoken by film in the year of its own glorious second childhood—namely 1929” (p.11). Maddin points out the tropes: “b&w with toned sequences, mime with talking, locked down expositional tableaux with bumpily fluid musical numbers” (p.11). He calls his “moral sensibility” “strictly precode” (p.11). All joking aside—of perhaps all joking inside—Maddin’s review highlights what makes his first film so him—including the mono soundtrack that “drones and hums out a comfy wool blanket of ambience” and the innovative structure that “dismisses the literal-mindedness of continuity” in order to capture dreaming (p.12). “The fluency with which Maddin speaks a dead movie-language,” says Maddin, “suggests he suffers from a most plangent nostalgia, that he has spent more of his life looking backward through misty eyes, and without absolutely no idea where he is going: (p.11-12). He calls this all of this “the delirious glee of a finger-painting preschooler” (p.11), but I call it Recklessness—getting better at being oneself by getting better at not knowing what is supposed to be known and done.

His “reviews” of his other films are equally irreverent and laughingly self-critical. He calls his second film, *Archangel*, “a full-blown amnesia melodrama” in “the

Kitsch is mass re-produced repetition whereas the avant-garde is “the genuinely new” (p.13). Kitsch relies on clichés, the already seen, whereas the new relies on the heretofore unseen. On one end, we take what we have seen and we reproduce it, often for profit, again and again, giving it new forms even (a t-shirt!); and on the other end, we invent

last war designed exclusively for the pleasure of children” (p.14). Maddin refers to it as “a Goya painting etched upon a child’s windowpane in frost” (p.14). For *Careful*, the filmmaker used two-strip technicolor to invoke the year 1929—very specific (p.15). By Maddin’s own admission, *Twilight of the Ice Nymphs* “drifts away from the familiar confines of the archaic film” with which his previous works had been obsessed. The film, according to Maddin, was “shot in 35mm full colour with a contemporary aspect ratio and nary an intertitle” (p.16), the latter being one of the director’s enduring obsessions. Maddin achieves the film’s unique language by mixing dialogue from Knut Hamsen’s *Pan* and “dollops of prosper Merrimee” (p.16). About his six-minute short *The Heart of the World*, Maddin says cheekily:

Some have described this frenzied feature-compressed-into-a-short as a call to arms meant to topple the complaisantly flaccid cinema of today, a plea to reinvent movies from scratch, or a reverent myth which finally places film at the very center of the universe where it belongs. Maybe Guy Maddin, that great lava-sprite, has been expressing all these impassioned sentiments since the very beginning of his career. Who am I to say? (p.17)

what we haven't yet seen: the unrealized. One gives us something to think about while the other, being a copy, at best has already been talked about, and at worst possesses no qualities about which to talk. "It is necessary to any originality," said Wallace Stevens, "to have the courage to be an amateur." Don't tread on me. jan jagodzinski (2012) extends the avant-garde to the "avant-garde without authority," which "finds itself in 'any space-whatsoever'," a phrase borrowed from Deleuze (p.84). Essentially, jagodzinski says the avant-garde without authority includes "*any* artist who is exploring the *virtual* Real so that representation is deterritorialized. Such artists are nomadic," wherein the virtual Real means that future that does not already exist as opposed to "a future that is already *possible*" (p.84)²⁰. The avant-garde without authority creates impossible sign-

²⁰ One artist who worked against the already possible, who worked to deterritorialize—specifically the Federal Reserve and the service industry—was James Stephen George Boggs. The story goes that in 1984 Boggs paid for a donut and coffee with a sketch of a one-dollar bill. The waitress gave him a dime, the change he was owed. From then on he devised and built upon (and built upon) the scheme nearly until his death. He would spend hours illustrating dollar bills on special paper with fine green pens. Instead of George Washington on the one, though, he might draw Martha Washington; instead of Lincoln, he might draw himself. The bank name would not be Federal Reserve; and the serial number would not be legitimate. He would then try to pay for meals all over town with these handcrafted bills, which, 90% of the time, were turned away. But if the waiter or waitress did accept the bill, seeing its value,

Mr. Boggs would note down time and place on the blank back of the drawing, ask for a receipt and take any change he was “owed”. After a day, he would call one of many avid collectors of his works; he would sell the collector, at roughly fivefold mark-up, the receipt and change; and from those clues the collector, if he wished to buy the drawing, would have to track down the new owner. Receipt, change, and drawn note, when reunited, became joint proof of the drawing’s value, confirmed by the transaction; and would then change hands, typically, for tens of thousands of dollars. (“His money or his art?”, 2017, p.78)

Boggs developed an endless array of connections, and that was the point of his bills venture. In fact, for any one “piece” to be complete, he needed at least one new person; but for any piece to be complete as a contemporary artwork, he needed it to enter the market, and thus he needed the collector to go the extra step to track down the original bill. His “art” takes on a new/different form with each iteration. Thus in actuality three people were needed for any one piece to reach fulfillment of its purpose—to be a bill in the scheme of currency and then to transcend its nature to become art. No two pieces would be the same, however, because Boggs relied on the waitperson *and* the collector to act. Their onus brought the work to fruition. But first the artwork must be a banknote, exchanged, as any banknote, for goods and services. We could argue, then, that Boggs’s work reaches the central breakdown each time even though the individual pieces appear at first glance to be identical. The artwork is a series of connections beyond the banknote. If, as noo-ology teaches us, the rhizome is the new image of thought, and if the rhizome is about connections, lines and fits and starts, then

events that work on an entirely different plane than identity, thus slipping free of capitalism's hold on monetary projections and calculated risk.

We can picture Godard showing up for the day's film shoot with a blank sheet of paper in his hand, all the actors waiting for their lines that had not yet been conceived²¹.

Boggs's currency is arguably rhizomatic, *thinking* art, creating encounters for many individuals along the way. He preferred not to deal with anyone he already knew (p.78). When all the pieces of the artwork—the first bill, the change, the receipt, the menu maybe, etc.—are collected on one wall, they become an artwork *beyond* the illustration. The artwork grows in several ways—esteem, value, and number of individual pieces—with each additional person on the case.

²¹ This is indeed what happened on the set of *Breathless* (1959), the film that launched Godard's career. Godard knew what he was up to. "What is difficult," he said, "is to advance into unknown lands, to be aware of the danger, to take risks, to be afraid" (qtd. in Andrew, 1987, p.5). A side note: he also wrote, like Dean Young would say of poetry years later, "The cinema is not craft. It is an art" (qtd., p.5). Godard famously filmed *Breathless* without a script. Francois Truffaut had written a treatment based on a newspaper story. Every night and/or every morning before shooting began, Godard wrote lines on scraps of paper (a practice that would become his way of working, his diagram). Instead of providing the actors with the written lines, he would shout out lines when the camera was rolling. The sound was added in post-production. The cinematographer, Raoul Coutard, remembers that "the

shooting plan was devised as we went along, as was the dialogue” (qtd. in Andrew, p.176).

He added: “There was the original press article on which Truffaut had based his story outline, but every day Jean-Luc would just turn up with his little exercise book and scribble some notes and some dialogue and we would rehearse maybe a couple of times so I knew where to point the camera vaguely” (qtd. in Solomons, 2010). Godard called this his laziness, saying that some days they would stop work at noon because he ran out of ideas (Sterritt, n.d.). So, too, the jump-cuts, the jarring jump-cuts, that epitomize the originality of *Breathless*—Godard said those were accidental. “The completed film was two and a half hours in length,” he said, “which was much too long, and I discovered that when a discussion between two people became tedious and boring you may as well cut between the dialogue. I tried it once and it went fine, then I did the same thing right through the film” (qtd. in Andrew, p.170). Yet he kept some long takes, some very long takes. His cutting is unpredictable. He tried to respect the rules, he said, but in the end gave up

a bit out of laziness: to express oneself through standard conventions demands very lengthy elaboration of the rules and I don’t like to work. If I wanted to show consistent characters, they had to act and talk like the people I know act and talk, including myself, and that one can hardly do a priori. Hence, *Breathless* goes outside conventions. (p.167)

Godard defies conventions *not* just because it’s new or shocking—one of the dangers noted by Deleuze—but because it approached the virtual Real, what he and the others on that side

of France were seeking to elucidate in the 50s and 60s. *Breathless* is an exemplar of the cinema of Recklessness.

Famously, as Andrew (1987) has pointed out, “*Breathless* is crammed with reinvention, as was evident in its incredulous first audiences” (p.11). Here’s just one example, this one from the *New York Times*, February 8, 1961: “As sordid is the French film, *Breathless* (A bout de souffle), which came to the Fine Arts yesterday—and sordid is really a mild word for its pile-up of gross indecencies—it is withal a fascinating communication of the savage ways and moods of some of the rootless young people of Europe (and America) today” (qtd. in Andrew, p.191). But on the other end of the evaluative spectrum were reviews like this one from *Le Monde*, March 18, 1960:

the work of a newcomer who, by taste as much as by necessity (having been given precarious means to work with), has turned up his nose at the rules of film narrative. Over against these rules he has preferred his instinct. This was the right move, for as a result he has found the exactly appropriate tone for the romantic chaos of his story. (qtd. in Andrew, p.181)

And this one from *Arts*, March 19, 1960:

Jean-Luc Godard has understood that the outside world comes to us in successive jumps, that the eye and the ear never cling to continuity in the act of seeing or hearing... This makes for a cinema of tension... Hence a sort of phenomenological observation of the characters, which makes *Breathless* the most important movie we have seen since *Hiroshima, mon amour*.” (qtd. in Andrew, p.183)

Le Figaro Littéraire called it “a rich, violent, poetic work that in no way resembles any film ever made” (qtd. in Andrew, p.189); and *Sight and Sound* called it “perhaps the most perfectly realized screen novel produced to date” (qtd. in Andrew, p.189). What Deleuze said about an idea speaks to what Godard says about an idea:

I’m not able to write a good script. I would do it if I could, but I’m not able to put a beginning and end together, to build it, to shoot it. I must have an idea and then discover it. It’s like painting, but it’s also different from painting, because you use not just space but time, imagining what comes before and afterward. I start with an idea, but I don’t know if it’s the beginning of a story. It’s what Giacometti called an *opening*. (qtd. in Sterritt, 1998, p.176-177)

Godard talked about making movies like Deleuze talked about making concepts (as perhaps he should): “To have a good script is very rare,” says Godard. “To have this is not only to have a story, but to have a subject—a meaning, a belief in something. American pictures usually have no subject, only a story... Julia Roberts doing this and that is not a subject... I call it a good script when you know the subject and try to explore it” (qtd. in Andrew, p.177). And here’s Deleuze on what it means to write:

If I wait to know what I am going to write—literally, if I wait to know what I am talking about—then I will always have to wait and what I have to say will have no interest. If I do not run a risk, if I settle and also speak with a scholarly air about something I don’t know, then this is also without interest. But I am speaking about the very border between knowing and non-knowing. It is there that one must settle in order to have something to say. (qtd. in Boutang, 2011)

Adorno (1991) would later publish his updated thoughts on the culture industry, urging consumers not to believe that the culture industry is harmless. “The concoctions of the culture industry are neither guides for a blissful life, nor a new art,” he writes, “but rather exhortations to toe the line, behind which stand the most powerful interests. The consensus which it propagates strengthens blind, opaque authority” (1991, p.105). Cue another deal with Lego. The culture industry, i.e., the cliché machine, is dangerous because, as Adorno argues, “it impedes the development of autonomous, independent individuals who judge and decide consciously for themselves” (p.106), the very qualities we purport to teach to the incoming college students, artists or not. In his introduction to *Anti-Oedipus*, Foucault (1972/2000) says that for Deleuze and Guattari—and Foucault alike—the “true adversary was not so much capitalism as ‘the fascism in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behavior, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us’” (p.xiii). Deleuze (1998) himself said in an interview with *Cahiers du Cinema* that

There are lots of forces today which aim to deny all distinction between the commercial and the creative. The more this distinction is denied, the more amusing, understanding and well-informed people think they are. In fact, they are only translating capitalism’s demand for rapid rotation. When advertising people explain that advertisements are the poetry of the modern world, this shameless proposition forgets that there is no art which aims to compose or reveal a product which corresponds to public expectations. Advertising can shock or want to shock, it corresponds to a presupposed expectation. An art, on the contrary,

necessarily produces the unexpected, the unrecognized, the unrecognizable. There is no commercial art; it is a meaningless phrase. (p.51)

Hollywood attempts to thwart this distinction through marketing. Consider *Deadpool* (2016), a traditional superhero movie that was marketed as “the most unconventional anti-hero” movie by Twentieth Century Fox, which wanted the public, who may be fed up with superheroes, to see this new meta-film as a possible new direction for a washed-up genre. Critic Mike LaSalle (2016), however, sees through the false distinction, pointing to the “fake-clever awfulness that might be [and not in a good way] cinema’s future.” Apart from one almost-human sequence in which the protagonist falls in love and almost settles down, the movie, says LaSalle features “scenes of *Deadpool* either getting tortured, planning to kill somebody or actually killing somebody.” LaSalle sums up his criticism with this:

Deadpool is supposed to be the funny superhero, but really, what’s so funny about a character acknowledging that he is in a movie? What’s so clever about little references to other superhero movies? It’s the easiest thing in the world. You know what’s hard? A good story. A well-composed shot.

In other words, the postmodern meta has been exploited to its death in cinema. David Edelstein (2016), who ultimately recommends the movie, questions its subversiveness, saying “it’s meant to elasticize and enhance the superhero genre, to flatter the audience for being hip enough to get all of those in-jokes.” Even the critic for *BuzzFeed*, never an arbiter of taste, nearly condemns the movie, saying “It’s fun for a while, and then it all becomes deeply disheartening, because calling attention to the more businesslike

mechanics of superheroics isn't subversive when you're also playing right into them."

The movie is a commercial enterprise, meant to draw crowds, to make money, and not a creative enterprise. Slavoj Žižek has taken up this issue as his life's work. He ignores the boundaries between high and low culture, which he sees as arbitrary, saying that being aware of cliché and representational thinking doesn't make us much better at avoiding them. In fact, it may be the reason we accept it numbly (see *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology*, Fiennes, 2012). Ideology amounts to the glasses we wear, he says, and the critique of ideology amounts to the removal of the glasses. But the problem is that we don't want to remove the glasses. Removing them is painful. This is what pushed art education's jan jagodzinski (2008) to write a "mondofesto" on what he calls "designer capitalism": "the *freedom* of movement and the ability of *free* choice," he says, "have become illusionary democratic privileges" (p.147). Robert Hughes tells us in *The Shock of the New* (1991) that the avant-garde is long gone, destroyed by the art market in the 1980s and the museumification of modern art, which rendered it safe, throughout the 20th century (p.365-367). Thus the "commercial" has expanded to cover some of what was previously thought to be the creative. The ground shifts beneath us. Some of the blame Hughes places on the MOMA, which taught the public "to take anything from artists simply because they *were* artists" (p.369). Arthur Danto, too, famously coined Andy Warhol's *Brillo Box* as the beginning of "the end of art" because it, more than anything to that point, eschewed art history, i.e., did not have to bend at the knee for its predecessors (Barrett, 2012, p.71). Without "rules" from which to diverge, the avant-garde died off, yet its wisdom remains in the ether.

But overcoming the cliché is not a matter of radical divergence. A poet, for instance, cannot simply say, “Goodbye sense, language doesn’t matter!” because in the end language does matter²², symbols do matter. Young (2010) writes that “purposelessness is not meaninglessness. I wasn’t put on this planet to explain myself” (p. 30), but reminds us, too, that “clarity results from the intensity of choice” (p.91). Too much meaning is just as lifeless as too little. “Choice is most powerful,” he adds, “when it is both made to seem inevitable, fated... and somehow conveys the explosive anarchy of the universe” (p.91). This is why, upon being handed a student’s assignment that was a series of blank pages, nothing to do with the prompt, an attempt that had already been done by the anarchists and nihilists writing well before the 21st century, Young could not fail the student but also could not commend him. The worst thing that can happen to an artwork is that its fire is replaced with a lava lamp (p.8), commodified, readied to sell at market, a plum next to a plum. There’s a reason Dali’s later work was parody, not art. The trick is to learn when to make choices and when to remove the urge to make choices. Writing a poem is engaging with materials and nothing else, but still choice is involved.

²² Ann Hamilton’s *stylus* (2012) is one example of an artwork that shows just how much language matters, etymology matters, and how it infiltrates even the visual. Struck by the one pillar rising through each floor of the Pulitzer, and knowing, from her readings, that “stylos” is Greek for “pillar,” Hamilton began devising ways to both incorporate the pillar and the various connotations of the word—a *writing implement*, a *turntable’s needle*, and, of course, the *pillar that all but anchored each floor of the show*. Language was the root of the show and the building.

“If the poet does not have the chutzpah to jeopardize habituated assumptions and practices,” Young writes,

what will be produced will be sleep without dream, a copy of a copy of a copy.

The poem always intends otherwise. At every moment, the poet must be ready to abandon prior intention in welcome expectation of what the poem is

beginning to signal. More than intending, the poet ATTENDS. (p.8)

This is for poets and all artists who subscribe to Recklessness. “I never do a model,” says sculptor Ursula von Rydingsvard; “I never do drawings because they close me in, because they limit my options... You have to have surprises all of the place” (Ortega, 2007). There are rules, of course. There is a history, of course. There are boundaries. Without them, it would prove difficult to establish if any one piece was “successful.” A pear makes a tasty snack but a terrible poem. Greenberg reminded us that the avant-garde were artists’ artists—they were admired by their contemporaries for excelling within the medium or media. The trick is to think anew despite the odds, which are laughably stacked against us. Young drew, among others, on T.S. Eliot who famously said “the bad poet is usually unconscious where he ought to be conscious and conscious where he ought to be unconscious” (qtd. in Young, 2010, p.90). Welcome to the monkey house. Recklessness, despite what may first be thought upon hearing its name, is not meaninglessness, is not chaos for chaos’ sake. In fact, Young is arguing for “getting better at not knowing what one is doing” (p.89), for embracing chaos and chance and errors but not against artistic choice. “Experimental poetry’s fetishization of the new,” he writes, “leads to the depthlessness of novelty” and “convention is not necessarily

conventional” (p.155). He admires John Cage’s spirit—“I have nothing to say and I am saying it and that is poetry”—but he wants more, “the personal presence, smudge that it can be... is how art companions us” (p.163). We must be aggressively anti-allegiance, even if that means quoting Dr. Seuss, word for word, or laughing in iambic pentameter, which is not, but thank you for saying so, dad, dead.

Young’s theory grows out of and maturely extends such 20th-century art experiments as Dadaism and Surrealism because they liberated the artist and struck out for new heights. Young was aware, and says so, that such aesthetic movements indirectly create their own demise “be it through the impossibilities of their aims or the ruination brought about by their success” (p.7). In particular, Dadaism failed because it “made central to itself not only its own failure but the failure of any other artistic position and expression”; and Surrealism failed because it “posited a utopic position that was not interested in the production of literary artifacts... but rather the use of poetic/artistic processes to accomplish the ruination of a shackled intellect and the liberation of another kind of mind” (p.7-8). Artaud, says Deleuze (1985/1989), too, saw Surrealism and its obsession with the dream as “an interesting approximation, inadequate... the dream is too easy a solution to the ‘problem’ of thought” (p.165). Young’s argument is perhaps best summed up by this analogy:

In the case of art that defines itself as resistance, its continued effectiveness is dependent upon the continued health of that which it resists, just as the vitality of a virus depends upon the continued survival of its host. (Viruses, as we

know, may be ingenious but they're rather dumb and often polish off their hosts, the definition of a bad houseguest.) (p.8)

After these aesthetic movements "polish off their hosts," as in a kind of civil war, they gain control of the territory. The language poets forgot that they dealt in language. I bleed in language, yes, yet also physically, but how would you know unless I *said* so? The worst thing that can happen to the radicals is control because then they must appeal to the masses who have become their charge. Young calls this the quaintness that results from being "defanged, domesticated, no longer combative" (p.8). Breton, as we now know, was a bit of a control freak, always trying to excommunicate any artist he deemed unfit for surrealist service, including his once-buddy de Chirico whom, he said, "took on a candied, mock-classical flavour" (Hughes, 1991, p.221). Eventually, the leader runs out of followers to "remove," or the followers greatly outnumber the leader, creating fertile ground for a coup, even if just the slow kind that comes with any ancillary aesthetic movements that presently hold the fort. If we study their time in the fort, though, we can learn much about what made them so original; and we can deduce some characteristics of original thinking. These were formidable movements for a reason. "Punk goes corporate," as Young says, but still we have much to learn from the pre-corporate punk.

V. Noo-ology/New-ology

Deleuze (1998) says that the term *auteur* is misused because "People who say 'there are no more auteurs today' assume that they would have been capable of recognizing yesterday's, at the time when they weren't yet known" (p.52). Opposed to the commercial enterprise is the artwork, which "is supposed to make gush forth the

problems and questions which grip us rather than give us answers” (p.52). Deleuze agrees with Kundera about kitsch, saying “in creative works there is a multiplication of emotion, a liberation of emotion, the invention of new emotions, which distinguish themselves from the *prefabricated emotive models* of commerce” (p.52, emphasis mine). In *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, Deleuze (1986) calls our attention to

the anonymous clichés, which circulate in the external world, but which also penetrate each one of us and constitute his internal world, so that everyone possesses only psychic clichés by which he thinks and feels, is thought and is felt, being himself a cliché among the others in the world which surrounds him. (p.208-209)

Harsh but true, truer even in 2016 given the speed of cliché, which has increased many-fold following the advent of the Internet and its social media and Netflix and Amazon “originals.” In fact, *Variety* reports that over half of Netflix’s offerings will soon be originals, paid for by the company, turning them from a purveyor of interesting, one-of-a-kind shows (e.g., *House of Cards*) into just another “television” network²³ (i.e., CBS,

²³ Netflix “original” programming includes such un-original (i.e., borrowed, extended) programs as *Arrested Development* (from Fox), *Wet Hot American Summer* (a series adapted from a cult movie), *Gilmore Girls* (from the The WB and The CW), and several Marvel superhero series (including *Daredevil*, *Jessica Jones*, *Luke Cage*, and *Iron Fist*). The company is hedging its bets with a mixture of actual originals, too. According to the newest projections,

NBC, ABC) that must pump out tens of *new* shows per year to increase the chances for profit (Spangler, 2016). And we know what kind of fodder is doffed by networks, with shows written as they are by executives and their “notes”. Writing about Francis Bacon, Deleuze (1981/2003) said that “It is a mistake to think that the painter works on a white surface” because “Clichés are already on the canvas” (p.71-72). The canvas is covered with everything that has come before the painter, both seen and heard, and everything that has been accepted as good, ready to manipulate the painter. The central problem of painting, for Deleuze, was this: the painter cannot simply act “to transform the cliché, to deform or mutilate it, to manipulate it in every possible way” because “this reaction is

Netflix plans to launch more than 600 hours of original programming in 2016, up from 450 hours in 2015, including new seasons of 30 or so original series, eight original feature films, 35 new seasons of original series for kids, a dozen documentaries and nine stand-up comedy specials. Projected cost: \$6 billion, with investment steadily shifting toward originals and away from acquisitions. (Lafayette, 2016, p.4)

Wall Street has taken notice, as Netflix appears on point for a double-digit return in the first quarter of 2017. But Netflix is only one part of a growing trend—online purveyors of other people’s content turning into online creators. The list includes Hulu (owned by Fox) and Amazon, who also will be upping their original productions in 2017, both spending billions, in addition to HBO (through HBO NOW), FX, and others. The year 2017 will see roughly 500 new shows (Albinak, 2016, p.8).

still too intellectual” (p.72). Such a childish *acting out* “allows the cliché to rise again from the ashes; it leaves the painter within the milieu of the cliché, or else gives him or her no other consolation than parody” (p.27). Recall, for example, Dean Young’s student’s blank essay.

Deleuze’s study of Bacon shows us one way an artist can overcome the cliché. Before the first brushstroke of any new painting, Deleuze says, Bacon did not “have to cover a blank surface” (the surface being un-blank) “but rather would have to empty it out, clear it, clean it” in order to remove the “figurative givens” (p.71). Among other examples, Deleuze refers to Cezanne, who, according to D.H. Lawrence, “had to fight the hydra-headed cliché” before finally “knowing an apple” (qtd., p.72). It took him years, and Lawrence says it was the only thing Cezanne ever accomplished, but it was “real appleyness... and you can’t imitate it” (qtd., p.73). This struggle against the hydra-headed cliché caused Bacon (and Cezanne before him) to destroy many of his paintings, calling some of his most popular—the popes, the bullfights, etc.—“very silly” (qtd., p.73). For Deleuze, “the painter must enter into the canvas before beginning” because “he knows what he wants to do, but what saves him is the fact that *he does not know how to get there*” (p.78)²⁴. The painter Robert Ryman once said “I know what I’m doing even

²⁴ Ann Hamilton begins every project by going inside and thus, as Deleuze says, enters “into the cliché, and into probability.” “When I make a site visit,” she has said, “I try to go without expectations, to be blank, to allow every hair on my body to be an antenna. I pay attention to what floats up into thought because it is in the experience of being in the space that the

piece will emerge” (Enright, 2000, p.21). In *myein*, for instance, Hamilton’s 1999 installation for the 48th Venice Biennale, Hamilton, along with the curators, traveled to Venice to get a look and feel for the space, where she noted the “stately mien and thus ties to American social and Jeffersonian philosophies” (Dobrzynski, 1999). The neo-classical architecture of the United States Pavilion building in which she was to construct her piece, an installation, an immersion, had been likened to Jefferson’s Monticello. So she traveled to Monticello, too. So ingrained was the space on the project, Hamilton described it “as an idealized image projected onto civic space” that

led her to engage the neo-classical building of the United States pavilion as both subject and object of the project. It was a meditation on aspects of American social history that, like weather, are present and pervasive in effect but which remain invisible or unspoken. Her self-given task was to make a place in which this absence could be palpably felt and to create a space simultaneously empty and full.

(Hamilton, n.d.)

What is clear from this description, taken from Hamilton’s website (and surely written after the fact), and from the fact that Hamilton visited the space several times before even coming up with the idea that would be executed (in fact, she said, people were baffled that she waited so long to make a decision about what exactly would be her project), is that Hamilton is aware that the canvas is not blank. The canvas—in this case, a building—comes with generations of baggage, one part of which has a lot to do with invisible aspects of American history. Deleuze: an artist must make the invisible visible. Steve: Ann Hamilton must make

though I don't know what I'm doing" (Ortega, 2007). "He will get there," however, as Deleuze said of Bacon, but "only by getting out of the canvas" (p.78). "If the tension starts going off into place that feels more exciting," says Ursula von Rydingsvard, then "that's what I go with" (Ortega, 2007). She is getting out. That process of getting out, of overcoming the cliché, is one of charging in and clawing your way out, the latter act of which Deleuze calls "the diagram" (p.81). Every artist has his or her own brand of diagram. One look at the history of the avant-garde, from Cezanne to Warhol, say, reveals a history of diagrams, of one supplanting another. "Cezanne takes you backstage," writes critic Robert Hughes (1991), whereas before him it was the final form that mattered (p.18); and Picasso and Braque who, although they admired Cezanne for "sweeping painting clear of the idea of mastery" (qtd., p.27), took painting one step further. "I paint forms as I think them," said Picasso, "not as I see them" (qtd., p.32). Cezanne painted them as he saw them, struggling to do so: "I cannot attain the intensity that is unfolded before my senses," he wrote. "I do not have the magnificent richness of colouring that animates" (qtd., p.18). And so on. For Bacon the diagram necessitated zones of clarity—"to scrub, sweep, wipe the canvas in order to clear out locales" he said, adding "it is as if the Sahara, a zone of the Sahara, were suddenly inserted into the

the building a building again. She knew that she must enter the canvas because she understood that she was already in the canvas (as Americans we all are in *that* canvas), but she must fight her way out, she must make something original. Deleuze: "he *knows what he wants to do*, but what saves him is the fact that he *does not know how to get there*." What saves *her*.

head... a piece of rhinoceros skin... stretched over it... two halves of the head were split open by an ocean” (qtd., p.81-82). The result is “the emergence of another world” (p.82), but, it must be emphasized, not just any world—this is Bacon’s world²⁵. Deleuze says the

²⁵ A similar argument could be made about Wes Anderson’s films, or the sets for his films, such as *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2002), in which New York becomes “New York.” Anderson scrubs away the real setting, replacing it with aspects of his vision, to create a kind of sur-reality. The 375th Street Y does not exist, yet it *feels* as if it does exist because the city is chock-full of blank-street Ys. The same could be said of the Lindbergh Palace Hotel, which is the Waldorf-Astoria, and the hotel’s elevator attendant, a long-extinct career. Every setting in and after *The Royal Tenenbaums* has his fingerprints all over it. In his first two films, *Bottle Rocket* (1996) and *Rushmore* (1999), the stories take place within the “real” world: a wealthy suburb, a country club, a roadside motel. With the release of 2002’s *The Royal Tenenbaums*, however, Anderson gained a reputation for setting his stories with a kind of diorama that he created to resemble a “real” world, though not *this* one. The 375th Street Y and the Gypsy Cab Co. are recognizably a New York. He stripped away the New York in favor of a New York that fits *this* story, *these* characters, complete with lots of pink, something his set designer recalled years later in an interview. In fact, in the scene that takes place at Battery Park, which would be in view of the Statue of Liberty, Anderson asked actor Gene Hackman to block out the statue during the shot so as to preserve the setting as *something like NYC* but not *the NYC*. Hackman thought this to be blasphemous—Anderson knew it to be *true* to this story. What Anderson wants is the in-between—not New York but not a fantasy city either. It must be recognizable but unrepresentative.

way out of “the optical organization of representation” of the “blank” canvas is with “a catastrophe, a chaos” brought on by “irrational, involuntary, accidental, free, random, a-signifying marks” that are at once manual—my hand moving—and disembodied (p.81). Getting better at not knowing what we are doing. Attending. Recklessness. Any overdetermination, says Deleuze, “can spoil the diagram, botch it” (p.82). Any overdetermination means the work is no longer *this* artist’s but any artist’s. The diagram is “suggestive,” not dogmatic, “to introduce to possibilities of fact” but not fact itself in all its baggage (p.83). This is what allowed Van Gogh to create a diagram from “straight and curved hatch marks that raise and lower the ground, twist the trees, make the sky palpitate” (p.83). The diagram is thus indistinguishable from the *moves* that distinguish a Van Gogh as a Van Gogh or a Bacon as a Bacon. Such is why, says Deleuze, we can identify the exact date, the exact artwork, in which the artist found her diagram—“a moment when the painter confronts it most directly” (p.83). Van Gogh found his diagram, says Deleuze, in 1888, a fact critic Robert Hughes (1991) seconded, saying Van Gogh changed the art world between 1886 and 1890 during his period of “terrible lucidity” (p.276 and p.269). Hughes has pointed out that Dali found his motif—“that realism, pressed to an extreme of detail, could subvert one’s sense of reality”—in 1926, although he didn’t perfect it until 1929 (p.237).

When Deleuze was writing about Bacon, in the 1970s, the art market (recall Hughes, 1991) was beginning its rapid decline toward the commodification of the radical that would crash and burn in the 1980s. Deleuze argued that the “situation had hardly improved since Cezanne” because “Not only has there been a multiplication of images of

every kind, around us and in our heads, but even the reactions against clichés are creating clichés” (p.27). How right he was and how prescient, I think now, among a culture that has all-but-elected a reality-TV star to lead the nation. Plus memes. In the introduction to Deleuze’s *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, Smith (1981) writes that for Deleuze “the cliché is precisely what prevents the genesis of thought,” adding that for Deleuze a fundamental question was “What are the conditions for the production of the new (an image, a thought)?” (p.xxiii). Voila! We have reached the *raison d’être* of my dissertation: How do artists raze the cliché in order to raise the original? And how can we (including but not exclusive to art educators) harness their strategies to educate toward the raising? Perhaps Recklessness holds the key? Paul Klee said “Genius is an error in the system” because there is a system—its form is the dogmatic image of thought. The system breaks at intervals. Cezanne’s *Mont Ste-Victoire* (1904-1906) to Braque’s *Houses at L’Estaque* (1908) to Picasso’s *The Factory, Horta de Ebro* (1909) to Duchamp’s *Nude Descending a Staircase No. 2* (1912). The Impressionists to the Cubists to the Futurists to the Surrealists and so on. Each piece of modernism advanced the puzzle further, adjusting the questions when they ran into impasses (Cezanne’s “painting what I see” gives way to Picasso’s “painting what I think” gives way to Duchamp’s “painting what I know to be true,” e.g., movement of a body down stairs). Flawed as it may be, Kuhn’s ideas shed light on the questions of artists, which give way to new, sometimes unexpected answers (i.e., “original” artworks).

Thinking requires a momentary lapse in the flow of representational thought, which is why Deleuze coined it “thinking within thought.” Deleuze spent his life on this

task. No other philosopher has devoted so much time and space (in books) to the image of thought. In fact, he invented “noo-ology,” the study of images of thought, which, he said, runs through his oeuvre:

It’s what *Difference and Repetition* is really about... the image of thought. And the questions runs right through *The Logic of Sense*... I come back to it in *Proust and Signs*... then I come to it again, with Felix, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, because the rhizome’s the image of thought. (1990/1995, p.149)

Deleuze wanted to find the “new ‘undogmatic’ ways of doing philosophy” so that he could practice, as a career, “‘thinking in his own right,’ which he says above all reading Nietzsche inspired in him” (Rajchman, 2000, p.34-47). According to Smith, who wrote the introduction to *Francis Bacon*, this “thinking in his own right” was the basis of all Deleuze’s undertakings, and which “is at one and the same time the condition for the destruction of the cliché” (2003, p.xxiii). Thinking in my own right is the basis of this dissertation.

According to Michael Hardt (in the foreword to *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 2006), Deleuze did not “claim to be comprehensive,” but rather focused “on what interests him most, what is active and living in each philosopher...taking what he wants and ignoring the rest” (p.xxi), and I wish to do the same. Hardt, who not coincidentally wrote the foreword, thought that in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* “readers can discover together with Deleuze many of the concepts” that would find their way into his oeuvre (p.ix). This is essentially a book about stupidity, a stupidity that persists uninterrogated as “true” and “right,” and the important role philosophy plays in overturning that stupidity. Essentially,

the dogmatic image of thought, says Deleuze, possesses three tenets: that “the thinker wants and loves truth” and “that thought possesses or formally contains truth”; that “we are ‘diverted’ from the truth” by error and “take falsehood to be truth”; and that we need a “method” to think, a method that would apply “for all times and places” (1962/2006, p.103). The history of writing on thinking has been obsessed with truth, much like the current temper, which ousts an author’s reputation based on presumed falsifications, e.g., James Frey. On the contrary, says Deleuze, truth is not “an abstract universal” but entirely concrete, determined by “the established order and current values” (p.104), and error has been entirely mishandled by philosophers, treated as if it meant “the state of thought separated from truth” and as if truth meant right and a diversion therefrom meant wrong (p.105). There is no truth except for the one you will. “Stupidity is not error,” he writes, because “There are imbecile thoughts, imbecile discourses, that are made up entirely of truths; but these truths are base, they are those of a base, heavy and leaden soul” (p.105). Philosophy is what saves us from the imbeciles, what saves us from the *will to truth*, the fear of error. “When someone asks ‘what is the use of philosophy?’,” writes Deleuze, “the reply must be aggressive, since the question tries to be ironic and caustic... The use of philosophy is to sadden. A philosophy that saddens no one, that annoys no one, is not philosophy” (p.106). Philosophy exists to overturn “all forms of baseness of thought” and “for turning stupidity into something shameful” (p.106)²⁶.

²⁶ Art Education has a philosopher of its own in Jan Jagodzinski, who has devoted much of his career to overturning the baseness of thought in the field*. In fact, as I write this,

jagodzinski has just published an article in *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* titled “A Response to: ‘Deconstructing Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus* for Music Education.’” The title underplays the article’s true purpose, which is to lay bare the stupidity in an article written by Estelle Jorgensen and Iris M. Yob, a stupidity that lies not within the writers themselves but within their superficial reading of *A Thousand Plateaus*. jagodzinski takes it upon himself to write a critique of their misreading, saying reading their article “has been a very painful experience, ‘painful’ in the sense the way their text ‘screams’ at them for their outright poetic mystifications, which many scholars have relished but which certainly causes them great consternation” (2016, p.101). For some reason, Jorgensen and Yob feel threatened by Deleuze and Guattari’s tome instead of, as was intended by the authors themselves, affirmed and freed in a sense toward new possibilities, toward a kind of thinking unencumbered by the cliché machine. jagodzinski also takes issue with *how* the two authors present their critique, which they describe bafflingly as an attempt “to preserve what is helpful in their work” (qtd., p.101). jagodzinski’s retort is “thank heavens there are those who will ‘rescue Deleuze | Guattari from themselves and ‘preserve’ what is most useful for music education!” (p.101). Although the authors claim to assess Deleuze and Guattari’s contribution to music education and the implications for future contributions, they, per jagodzinski, do no such thing, leaving him to ask “whether they have indeed ‘read’ Deleuze | Guattari at all, for they present such a crude reading of this work, more as a play with the book’s *index* rather than engaging directly with any of the concepts that are offered in any significant way other than as farcical dismissals” (p.102). What he says next is

especially important and relevant for the field of art education, whose practitioners should understand theories before trying to put them to work in journal articles: “Their essay is a sad reminder that such essays are published on the pretense that academics, and now academic music educators, do not have to engage with such difficult reading material” (p.102). This reminds me of a colleague who recently said that she will teach summaries of Kant’s texts to her undergraduates instead of the texts in themselves, to which I politely replied: the point is not to understand Kant but the hard work of trying to understand Kant. That is precisely the point of learning, wherein the brain fails miserably to comprehend what Kant means about the faculties, landing somewhere in the vicinity of “getting” his point, and thus being able to talk and possibly write about those difficult ideas concretely in relation to landscapes and artworks in the reader’s current world. By dismissing Deleuze and Guattari, jagodzinski seems to be saying, Jorgensen and Yob are basically saying they don’t have to engage with Deleuze and Guattari. In a way, this is a brilliant strategy, and the same strategy to which my colleague subscribes, because it basically means *I don’t have to try to understand them because what they say is nonsense*. They put the blame squarely on Deleuze and Guattari, thus removing their own onus.

jagodzinski’s other “big” public critique that has been useful to me is one that he wrote with Jason Wallin called *Arts-Based Research: A Critique and a Proposal* (2013), which I will discuss at length in section “IX: The Future?”. For starters, here is how Charles Garoian, summarizes their text:

jagodzinski and Wallin make a compelling argument for blurring the boundaries of arts-based research in the field of art education. The authors contend that the radical ideas of leading scholars in the field are not radical enough due to their reliance on existing research ontologies and those that end in epistemological representations. In contrast, they propose arts-based research as the event of ontological immanence, an incipient, machinic process of becoming- research through arts practice that enables seeing and thinking in irreducible ways while resisting normalization and subsumption under existing modes of address. As such, arts practice, as research-in-the making, constitutes a betrayal of prevailing cultural assumptions, according to the authors, an interminable renouncement of normalized research representations in favor of the contingent problematic that emerges during arts practice. (p.vii)

Perhaps more of us should follow, for nothing new, original, will happen if the cliché is not publicly discouraged. I learned this first from one of my mentors, the poet Mark Halliday, whose 2008 review of Joshua Clover's *Totality for Kids* is in my opinion an exemplar of the necessary review. He begins with: "My gentle friends say that a bad book of poems by a new or emerging poet should be ignored rather than slammed in print. But what if the emerging poet comes with classy intellectual hype, and epitomizes an influential vogue in contemporary poetics?," answering the question: "Then, I say, a responsible attack on the new book is warranted" (p.156). And an attack it is. About one poem Halliday says "what Clover is doing is pretty clear: he's writing about 'The Individual and Society. We wrote papers about that in high school'" (p.156-157). Halliday goes at specific lines, as he does here:

Let me be frank: I think “the brutal red dream / Of the collective” is pompous writing. I think our poet—his speaker, sure, but the poet too—is self-righteous and self-admiring when he places himself “humming there behind the parade / Of the ideal citizen”—the parade being an easily contemptuous reference to the dominant culture. (p.157)

Halliday compares Clover to Dean Young, saying that the difference is Dean Young cares; and he criticizes Clover’s use—sprinkling throughout—of French words to no apparent end, saying “French words are fun!” Ultimately, Halliday criticizes Clover for apparently not wanting to connect with anyone, including the reader, unless she already shares his in-crowd, language poetry coolness. Halliday refers to Ashbery who once said poetry should erect pavilions amid the chaos and to Frost who said poetry is a momentary stay against confusion. Clover wants no pavilions, no stays—he thinks chaos is too cool.

But Halliday’s review is more than a review and that is what makes it remarkable here—it’s an insightful criticism of criticism. He considers that reviews like his may amount to nothing:

Now that I’ve written about Joshua Clover, I half-want him to succeed as famous poet, though I’ve explained why I think he shouldn’t. If he remains only the clown-hero of a tiny coterie, a busy witty culture scout, if by 2018 his poetry is forgotten even by most of the avant guards, then my review of

Totality (two years after its publication in 2006) will seem to have been unnecessary—worse than unnecessary, an overexertion of hostility, incommensurate with its target, hammering a mosquito. (p.175)

There's even a note of resignation, melancholy: "Anyway, do I want my criticism to be noticed enough to inspire counterattack? Not especially. I've hummed along for decades in po-world, I've published several (but not enough) harsh reviews, and no one has ever seriously struck back. (Or maybe I haven't Googled myself enough to know?)" (p.176). But in the end Halliday's review is an astute critique, which he all-but-concludes (it's not the final paragraph, but perhaps should be) with this:

Will Clover or his admirers respond to my review? Probably not, though they blog constantly. Why should they respond? I'm on the other team (the lyrical and/or narrative mainstreamy team). We grant tenure to our players, they grant tenure to theirs; mostly we avoid shootouts. Ignoring is incredibly easy in our literary culture. Someone should write a big essay on literary ignoring. (But most readers wouldn't pay attention to it!) We just ignore what irritates us, and everybody can keep on harvesting the fruits of polymorphous academia (while we all go on detesting Republicans and mega-corporations, of course); we don't have to respond when baloney wins awards, because there are so many other awards—and what really matters? What matters, if the twenty-first century is bound for hell and we're all lost in the supermarket? (p.176)

These ideas came to Deleuze as a direct result of his close study of Nietzsche, who wrote that the philosopher's task is "an active critique of stupidity and baseness" (qtd., p.107). In response to the three tenets of thinking that had been laid down by philosophers before Nietzsche, and with which he took great issue, Deleuze says:

Thinking is never the natural exercise of a faculty. Thought never thinks alone and by itself; moreover it is never simply disturbed by forces which remain external to it. Thinking depends on forces which take hold of thought. Insofar as our thinking is controlled by reactive forces, insofar as it finds its sense in the reactive forces, we must admit that we are not yet thinking. Thinking means the activity of thought. We are awaiting the forces capable of making thought something active, absolutely active, the power capable of making it an affirmation. (p.108)

Surprisingly, one of Clover's good friends, and a graduate of the creative writing program at which Halliday teaches, a poet named John Gallaher, did actually *blog* about Halliday's response. Regardless of what you might think of either Clover or Halliday, he says, Halliday's call-to-action should be noticed:

think about what art is supposed to do, and how, possibly, we're called upon to care for it and about it. If art is a world, then we should care what happens to it and where it's going. Then, perhaps, we should treat bad books like an oil spill. We should say this is a world, and we should tell the polluters what they're doing and how they're doing it. Maybe they'll stop?

Thinking for both Deleuze and Nietzsche before him meant being thrown into a “becoming-active,” which, according to Hardt, is the key that Deleuze took from Nietzsche: “multiplicity and becoming” (p.ix). Both Deleuze and Nietzsche embrace affirmation, joy, becoming, difference. Over a century ago, Nietzsche (1889/2003) said “Learning to *think*: our schools no longer have any idea what this means. Even in our universities, even among students of philosophy themselves” (p.76). The dogmatic image has a hold on us. In *Difference and Repetition* (1968/1994), Deleuze says “men think rarely, and more often under the impulse of shock than in the excitement of a taste for thinking” (p.132). On the other hand, men excel in recognitions (p.133). Late in life, Deleuze criticized *Difference and Repetition* for being too academic, saying “I like some passages... That’s as far as it went, but it was a beginning” (1990, p.7). Part of the reason for his stance on *Difference and Repetition* possibly comes from its subject—one of criticism, not affirmation. He later said that if he ever “stopped liking and admiring people and (some) things,” he would “feel dead, deadened” (p.4). Regardless, it was a beginning, in no small part because it defined, quite verbosely, the dogmatic image that the rest of his liking and admiring worked to outrun. *Difference and Repetition*, more than any other of his books, betrays his belief that the history of philosophy is repressive, which he mocked by saying “you can’t seriously consider saying what you yourself think until you’ve read this and that, and that on this, and this on that” (p.5). *Difference and Repetition* characterizes the dogmatic image of thought as that which “crushed thought under an image which is that of the Same and the Similar” (p.167). The history of philosophy is obsessed with recognition couched inside “the two halves of the *doxa*”:

common sense and good sense (p.134), wherein “good sense” refers to the ability of the faculties to collaborate and “common sense” refers to every person’s ability to apply the faculties and see “the Same” (p.134). This model of thinking, says Deleuze, based entirely upon recognition “elevated to the rational level... will never inspire anything but conformities” (p.134). The cliché has been institutionalized. Similarly, John Dewey (1934/1980) writes that “to see, to perceive, is more than to recognize. It does not identify something present in terms of a past disconnected from it. The past is carried into the present so as to expand and deepen the content of the latter” (p.24). On the other hand, says Deleuze, the new “calls forth forces in thought which are not the forces of recognition” (p.136). The new image of thought is thus characterized by “trespass and violence” and “contingency” and is “the enemy” to representation and recognition (p.139). For Deleuze, creation and critique are one: they raze the dogmatic image of thought and raise “the genesis of the act of thinking in thought itself” (p.139).

Deleuze believed that Proust the poet, outsider to philosophy, was perfectly situated to criticize “what is most essential in a classical philosophy of the rationalist type: the presuppositions” of philosophy (1964/2000, p.159). Proust brought Deleuze one step further, allowing him to “set up an image of thought in opposition to philosophy” (p.159). Deleuze saw Proust’s work as a critique of communication. Friends “communicate to each other only the conventional,” which means that they conceive “only the possible” (p.160). Proust was more interested in the violence that leads to thinking, i.e., getting at the unthought, the *heretofore impossible*. “More important than thought,” writes Deleuze, “is ‘what leads to thought’,” which are “impressions which

force us to look, encounters which force us to interpret, expressions which force us to think” (p.161). For Proust, this meant what “life has communicated to us *in spite of ourselves*” (qtd., p.161), and he animated the concept in the scenario of the trip:

I had not gone looking for the two cobblestones of the courtyard where I had stumbled. But precisely the fortuitous, inevitable way in which the sensation had been *encountered* governed the truth of the past which it resuscitated, of the images which it released, since we feel its effort to rise toward the light, since we feel the joy of reality regained. (qtd. in Deleuze, p.161)

The cobblestones represent, for Proust, the power of signs to deliver violences. The sign, says Deleuze, is what forces us to think, is “the object of an encounter; but it is precisely the *contingency* of the encounter which guarantees the necessity of what leads it to think” (p.162). The work of art, being a sign, and object, says Deleuze, is perfectly situated to both deliver encounters (in a viewer) and generate them (in the artist) (p.163), which led him to say that creation “is the act of thinking within thought itself,” helping us see how thinking (active) differs from thought (passive) (p.162). In great literature, says Proust, “all our mistranslations result in Beauty” (qtd. in Deleuze and Parnett, p.5). Deleuze adds this caveat: “always provided that they do not consist in interpretations, but relate to the use of the book” (p.5). Godard famously said “not a just image, just an image” and called blood in films “just some red,” two comments that Deleuze reportedly loved. “Philosophy,” says Deleuze, “is nothing compared with the secret pressures of the work of art” (p.163). The secret pressures are essences that “dwell in dark regions,” far from the “temperate zones of the clear and distinct” (where we can imagine the friends

gathering to communicate representations) (p.165). This goes back to Plato who conceived two kinds of thought: the active and the inactive, objects of force and objects of recognition (p.166). Thinking within thought thus requires vigilance. We must be ready to encounter the sign. We must train ourselves toward the involuntary, toward what Dean Young called “getting better at not knowing what we are doing.” The fundamental encounter is precisely that which unhinges common sense and good sense, displaces the model of recognition to make way for the heretofore unthought, which is what jagodzinski and Wallin call for in their critique arts-bases research. The encounter forces creation. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze calls this intensity. What we encounter, he says, is not the gods but “the demons... powers of the leap, the interval, the intensive and the instant” and the contingency that forces the faculties to miscommunicate, to realize their own difference (p.143-146). The new image of thought “requires the explosion of the clear and distinct” (p.146). For Deleuze, this kind of thinking within thought, this new image of thought, was epitomized by Artaud, who said that the problem (for him) was not to orientate his thought, or to perfect the expression of what he thought, or to acquire application and method for his poems, but simply to manage to think something... to bring into being that which does not yet exist (there is no other word, all the rest is arbitrary mere decoration). To think is to create—there is no other creation—but to create is first of all to engender “thinking” in thought. (p.147, emphasis mine)

Deleuze’s “transcendental empiricism” owes much to Artaud, who replaced the concept of innateness with the concept of creation, i.e., genitivity (p.148). Thus would Deleuze’s

concept of thinking become “thinking within thought” and its practice in art be what Jan Jagodzinski (2008) calls “a *process of becoming* where the somantic experience of self-reflexivity is *encountered* that disturbs the habitualized self of desire and its responses to the world as framed by dominant forms of screen representations that have shackled the organ of the eye” (p.154). For Jagodzinski, “art becomes a way to explore what is unsayable, unthinkable, and invisible” and “artistic becoming demands an *encounter* of the art process as an *event*” (p.154). Art education can then help by becoming one site for the “*ruin of representation*” (p.154) that moves us, or at least some of us, toward originality.

VI. The Image of Thought

In *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980/1987) Deleuze, this time with Guattari, finally gave shape to the new image of thought. They called the new image “the rhizome.” “Thought is not arborescent, and the brain is not a rooted or ramified matter,” they write by way of introduction (p.15). The tree can at best produce “a sad image of thought that is forever imitating the multiple on the basis of a centered or segmented higher unity” (p.16). The tree system has taken root within us, within our society, and created totally accepted systems of hierarchy. The rhizome, on the other hand, is an apt visual representation of a non-hierarchical, anti-organizational, multi-directional proliferation, like a pack of rats with no master. This is not an image at all, says Artaud (and seconded by Deleuze and Guattari) but an anti-image, thought’s greatest ability: “it lives solely by its own incapacity to take form” (qtd., p.378), which is the “*central breakdown*” (qtd., p.378). In this breakdown thought takes on not what is inside (the well-organized brain

drawn inside textbooks) but what is outside. Not fixed points but lines. The rhizome is best characterized not by a form but by attributes: irreducible “directions in motion”; “a middle (*milieu*) from which it grows and which it overflows”; “made only of lines”; “variation, expansion, conquest, offshoots, all manner of becomings” (p.21). In this scheme, the middle is not the “average” but intensity—“where things pick up speed” (p.25). Dean Young once said that poetry is beginnings and ends—“you want middles, read novels” (2010, p.86). What he means is what Deleuze and Guattari mean—intensity, starts and stops, lines and movement, and genitality are in direct conflict with the static, with the mean, with standing still. What we mean here are “intensive” (not “extensive”), which “have the potential to disturb sensorimotor habits, thereby forcing thinking to happen” (jagodzinski, 2016, p.103). Intensive terms harness, Deleuze writes in *Logic of Sense*, “all the powers of the unconscious, or all the powers of nonsense in the unconscious” (qtd. in jagodzinski, 2016, p.101). With Guattari’s help, Deleuze arrived at the thought without image.

But let us not fall into the either/or. Some artists reach creation: thinking within thought. Other artists display cliché. Some artists display moments of brilliance brought on by the intensive and thus prove to access thinking within thought, however temporarily. Other artists display moments of cliché within otherwise intensive stretches. Like Deleuze said, one cannot simply set out to make an art that directly opposes the cliché—the result is a different kind of cliché. The answer is the AND. Recklessness. Force and creation. “The self does not undergo modifications,” writes Deleuze (1994), because “it is itself a modification” (p.79). This is not a dichotomy—the cliché versus the

new. Let us imagine that the rhizome/thinking within thought gives us the image of the new and the cliché/arborescent gives us the image of the dogmatic. These are two ends of a spectrum. Making a piece of art means moving along the spectrum, back and forth, sometimes being in two places at one time. We are many. Writing about Godard, Deleuze (1990/1995) says “the key thing is Godard’s use of AND” because AND “brings in all relations, there are as many relations as ANDS, AND doesn’t just upset all relations, it upsets being, the verb... and so on, ‘and... and... and...’ is precisely a creative stammering” (p.44). As Semetsky and Ramey (2012) write, “learning is, on Deleuze’s account, a matter of indexing all possible conjunctions, i.e. a body in conjunction with a wave: a body *and* wave” (p.67), referring to what Deleuze says in *Difference and Repetition* about learning to swim—not by watching someone ape the movements but by being thrown in, by becoming wave. Watching someone paint a portrait does not teach me anything about painting a portrait. Learning to paint, in fact, includes learning to see up close what others can see only from a distance; learning not to paint a face but learning to paint *this* spot right now; etc. Seeing that perhaps a dot *is* a face. Dean Young values intensity but he values contradiction. Walt Whitman wrote, in a now-famous passage of *Song of Myself*, “Do I contradict myself? / Very well then I contradict myself. / (I am large, I contain multitudes.)” Way before Deleuze and Young, Whitman had hit upon a key to multiplicity and becoming—the AND. Change the way you think about contradiction. Like Keats said, or at least implied, find yourself lost and do not desire a compass. You are lost. Now listen. Recklessness is a way of working that harnesses the rhizome, that maximizes chances for overcoming the cliché, that masters Negative

Capability, and that is what Deleuze with Guattari says of thinking: “a perpendicular direction, a transversal moment that sweeps one way *and* the other” (1987, p.25). A desire to join and a desire to stand off from the herd. Recklessness is “a hunger, a revolt, a drive, a mash note, a fright, a tantrum, a grief, a hoax, a debacle, an application, an affect” (Young, 2010, p.156). The rhizome becomes a tree—no problem. The rhizome is both the rhizome and the tree—no problem. The goal is not to avoid the tree but to overcome the desire to be mastered by the tree. Boxing with baseball gloves. Sneaking hugs within tackles on the football field. D.H. Lawrence: “Man fixes some wonderful erection of his own between himself and the wild chaos... Then comes a poet, enemy of convention, and makes a slit in the umbrella, and lo! the glimpse of chaos is a vision” (1998, p.234). Recklessness is both the man who erects the shield and the man who tears it open²⁷. This is not sabotage but genitality.

²⁷ Dean Young’s work is case in point. According to poet and critic Tony Hoagland (2009), Dean Young “has refined and honed a poetic mode of thought distinctly his own” even though “influences are clearly visible” (including John Ashbery, Kenneth Koch, and French Surrealism) (p.29). Hoagland’s article, titled “The Dean Young Effect,” argues that “Young’s own aesthetic influence on young poets is widespread” because “his work brings into focus certain values and habits of our poetry era—speed, dissemblment, parody, romantic irony” while also highlighting “some of the shortcomings of his emulators” (p.29)—mainly, they don’t have Young’s depth. A Dean Young poem is “an unstable and, in fact, violent place, always changing texture or ripping itself apart, unraveling and reassembling into beautiful

and horrible shapes” (p.29). Hoagland describes the narrator as “veering between ecstasy and anxiety,” a strategy to “camouflage the dread and tragedy... through bad news and good” (p.29). To provide context, Hoagland presents snippets of such Young poems as “Learning to Live with Bliss” (“... who doesn’t like tipping stuff over? / See those tots stacking blocks / just so they can knock them down? / They’re in training. / They’re working up to kissing a rose.”); “I Can Hardly Be Considered a Reliable Witness” (“... I was trying to write The Indomitability / of the Human Spirit to impress you but / it kept coming out The Undomesticated / Human Spigot, a blowhard stoned opera.”); and “Colophon” (“More than the beetles turned russet, / sunset, dragging their shields, more than / the crickets who think it’s evening all afternoon, / it’s the bees I love this time of year.”) (qtd., p.29-30).

Rookie poets—especially the hyper-ironic, hipster poets graduating annually from MFA programs during which they read contemporary poets that all steal from the same zeitgeistian well—try to mimic “the breathless acceleration, the wisecracking asides, the spiraling out and in, the disjointness of development, the Crackerjack quality of the imagery, which combines beauty, smart-aleckness, irony, vulnerability, and kookiness” (p.29). But these young poets do not capture the other qualities of a Dean Young poem—clarity, for instance, and “essential earnestness” (p.29). That is Hoagland’s point. “The New Poetry, called sometimes ‘ellipticism,’” he says, “can be generally characterized as stylistically high-spirited and technically intensive, intellectually interested in various forms of gamesmanship, in craft and ‘procedure,’ acutely aware of poetry as language ‘system’” (p.30). jan jagodzinski

(2012) has written that the neoliberal forces within visual culture, which obsess over representational thinking, are just as constricting as critical theory in that they each strive toward categorization, thus doing away with difference in itself, or singularity (p.85). Hoagland's point is that no one is suited to be Dean Young except Dean Young. His work, while surely informed by the New York School and the French Surrealists, resists those old forms, thus inventing a new style. Young's style is marked by a big heart to counteract all that supposed irony; an inability to mock the world for too long lest he forget love. "Young's more facile imitators can achieve a texture that is manic, turbo-charged by zigzag and ellipses, but ultimately many of these poems turn out to be less intellectually complete, and more passive than their models" (p.31) because they forget—or simply cannot achieve—the "breakthroughs of vision" (p.31). Hoagland says that it is this very skill—"passionate sincerity"—that they are unable to "fabricate" (p.31).

But Hoagland is talking about Young's later work[§]. As Adam Plunkett (2013) in the *New Republic* nicely articulates, Young's selected poems collection *Bender* shows his maturation. Some of the poems from *Design with X*, his first book, did not possess that characteristic Youngian range—that easy movement from wit to heartache. Instead, says Plunkett, it is only in the past few years that Young began to realize his potential: "Caprice became urgent, whimsy became wit." He goes on:

Everything is more direct. Images and scenes are sustained and even earnestly lyrical. His abstractions evoke what they describe more vividly than concrete terms plausibly could. Even a phrase as straightforward as "the delicate downward yearning of

snow” shows us both the scene and the terms in which we may tend to feel it,

thereby evoking both a perceptual field and an act of perceiving.

Plunkett says that as Young’s work became “more direct, personal, lyrical, more able to take what is serious seriously” making it “easier to feel the contradictions in his work and with that easier to see how his conflicts call for the forms he expresses them in.” In other words, Young’s slipperiness, his agility, his shapeshifting from the sacred to the profane and back again, were toward *an end* instead of, as Hoagland says of the imitators, toward no end at all. Cleverness is cleverness alone but tossed in with heartfelt, genuine gratitude for life and beauty, becomes Keatsian Beauty. What we have in Young is a great ability for Negative Capability. Plunkett says that it’s the doubt in Young’s later work that finally reveals its mastery. He doubts himself. The poems’ speakers doubt what they say, although they feel it quite strongly, whatever that it may be.

*One of the poems cited by Hoagland is “Patriot Acts” by Mark Yakich, which he says embodies the “toxicity of ironic mannerism”:

Your finer senses are protected the eye

By bone socket, the vagina by tampon, etc.

A man who neglects the perceptions of a woman lies.

After awhile he ceases to act and merely cheats.

There is no use in telling this to a person who enjoys

Eating a banana in bed without loss of decorum.

Beware, I may have ripped that banana off of someone else.

Artists get over excited about such things.

Long before they actually depart,

I hear birds migrating out of the country.

The more diseased the tree, the happier the woodpecker.

I cannot deny it. Antiques are not armor in the offing. (qtd., p.32)

Younger poets like Yakich, so goes the criticism, have been mastered by the tree.

Their poems take on a form—that of the hipster monologue—thus keeping themselves from the central breakdown. Remember that thinking is the presentation of the unconscious, which is to say above and beyond (or rather *below?*) the conscious, not the representation of the conscious, which is a merely a mirror held up to everything heretofore sensed in the world—the cliché. Poems like Yakich's mistake chaos for poetry the way reality television mistakes hair-pulling for drama. We haven't heard this particular monologue before, but the character sounds like something. Ellipticism can hide an underlying fear—perhaps the fear of being vulnerable or admitting a mistake—but there must be something visible creeping up beneath the surface. If not, the result is that ellipticism is ellipticism, perhaps a kind of juke move to get the reader to overlook the fact that the writer has nothing to say.

§ Dean Young's diagram arrived with the book *Skid* (2002). Starting with the table of contents, in which the poems' titles are laid out in two columns, smashed up against one another, the poet had already marked the space. The TOC's visual juxtaposition—a kind of smashing that creates such lines—when one reads across—as Bright Window Wale Watch. One might read the table of contents as innocuous, just a decision by the publisher, but surely more is at stake. Dean Young's poems are not about *a topic* the way another poet's might be—that desk over there, for example. Instead Dean Young's poems are about multiple threads pulling the reader over to their side, trying to steal away the reader's attention, a rat race, a competition of testaments, a ball of thread wrapped around a flamethrower. Dean Young's earlier poems were more narrative, such as “Germination” from his second book, *Beloved Infidel* (1992):

I love sitting here by the screens
as on the porch she tells a friend
how to choose a baby's sex: diet, bath temps,
ways to lie...
...
I'll wait for her to come up from the garden
with cucumbers that have pulsed from seed
free with a bag of Bar-B-Que Fritos,

from an ordinary hole in the ground.

As far as narrative poems go, this is an effective narrative poem. The language is interesting enough, removed enough from prose, to warrant lineation. And the narrative moves off point here and there so as to keep the reader engaged. Ultimately, though, the poem is nothing more than a narrative with some metaphoric (not shown above) flourishes. Compare this with just the first sentence of “Hammer,” a poem from *Skid* (2002), a poem that is still *more* narrative than his later work, but which possesses his now-characteristic drawn-and-quartered quality:

Every Wednesday when I went to the shared office
before the class on the comma, etc.,
there was on the desk, among
the notes from students aggrieved and belly-up
and memos about lack of funding
and the quixotic feasibility memos
and labyrinthine parking memos
and quizzes pecked by red ink
and once orange peels,
a claw hammer.

In just this one sentence we have a clear narrative (i.e., the old Dean Young) but glimpses of violence (e.g., “the quixotic feasibility memos”). As the poem

VII. Limitation

In *Deleuze from A to Z* (2011), hours of interviews with Claire Parnett, Deleuze says that he never wanted to be associated with a “school” because schools, like Surrealism, falter under their own manifestoes. Dean Young says a similar thing in *The Art of Recklessness*, asserting that schools of art deliver the inevitable—their own demise—once they become popularized. They wished to be the other; now they are the

progresses, it becomes *more* Dean Young. About the hammer, the speaker says “It already knew how to structure an argument. / It already knew that it was all an illusion / that everything hadn’t blown apart / because of its proximity to oblivion, / having so recently come from oblivion itself.” Here the poem is no longer about the hammer, though perhaps—and this is a compliment to Young’s style—it never was. The poems from this book on become marked by lines of flight. In this one, the speaker doesn’t even want the hammer (“I didn’t think much of stealing it”) but is captivated by the hammer. It ends with this pithy realization:

It cannot be refused, the hammer
You take the handle, test its balance
then lift it over your head.

The poem leaves us with a sense of impending doom—not about what happened but about what at any moment could happen. The narrative emerges and recedes, making way for something larger.

the. Doubtless Deleuze had this very idea in mind when he made those remarks and when he said that the Dadaists, on the other hand, were a *movement* and movements last. Deleuze says that he could see himself in a movement, but not in a school. Whether he knew it or not, Deleuze was building on Leibniz (1679/1989), who, in an impassioned letter to a friend about Cartesianism, writes

First, all those who completely surrender themselves to the opinions of any author become enslaved and raise suspicions of error in themselves... this kind of attachment belongs only to those who themselves do not have the strength or the leisure to meditate, or who do not wish to take the trouble to do so... I have recognized from experience that those who are completely Cartesian are not capable of discovery; they merely undertake the job of interpreting or commenting upon their master, as the Scholastics did with Aristotle. There have been many beautiful discoveries since Descartes, but, as far as I know not one of them has come from a true Cartesian.... Descartes himself had a rather limited mind... he discovered nothing useful in the practice of the arts. (p.241)

Eventually I must turn away from my masters—Deleuze and Young—and strike out on my own to make some sense and use of what I have read, learned, and possess. I can say with a fair amount of certainty that the crux of my discussion lands squarely on the essay as both a space for talking about originality—vis-à-vis thinking and Recklessness—and for making an original contribution to the field (e.g., this dissertation). The big risk is the big limitation is that I will remain too fixed on their ideas. The reward, though, for overcoming such a limitation is a real presence in my scholarly field. In 30 years or so we

will know if I succeeded or failed, if “failed” is even the correct word (which of course it is not).

VIII. The Essay

At a recent conference in upstate New York, I presented on my dissertation research. I was dipping my toe in the water. I tried to *show*—with a video (instead of the recommended Power Point) and a reading—what I have been “up to” with my research. The reaction was mixed. One commentator said that at first he was frustrated because he couldn’t listen to my voice and watch the silent video—a compilation of scenes cut from movies and video interviews—but that that frustration eventually gave way to acceptance and then a sort of *fuck it*-attitude in which he went back and forth as he pleased. *This was precisely my hope*. Another commentator, however, accused me of pulling from too many white, male sources, calling my research “threatening” to her and her colleagues. Confusing as that was—and still is, given that if she had bothered to ask or look closely, she would see a variety of sources—I “get” her criticism. I get it because I have studied criticism. I get it because I have taught writing and facilitated workshops. She was asking me to fall within the boundaries of her research and was unwilling to step outside to see that what I was doing was just that—what *I* was and am doing. Another questioner asked about the “validity” of my research given that I was using, among other sources, especially philosophical texts—and I am calling them “texts” à la Barthes because I will do with them what I please—interviews. “Do you think,” she asked, “people are telling the truth in interviews?” The short answer is no. The longer answer is “I don’t care.” Much more interesting than the truth is complexity. Do away with such binary

oppositions as true/false. Pull me in every direction. Draw and quarter me. Give me not the academic article but the essay.

John D'Agata (2014a) is *the* contemporary champion of the essay form²⁸—with all its slippery truthiness and questioning. “For me,” says D'Agata, “a ‘lie’ is something that feels incorrect on the page.” Ignoring others’ definitions of truth and fiction, D'Agata says that “if I can move through a text without wondering whether or not what I’m reading is ‘real,’ then that text has done its job of capturing the truthfulness of whatever it is that it’s exploring. And that’s what I’m looking for when I’m immersed in a literary experience.” On the other hand, he says, opposite the essay, are news articles and textbooks and instructions, which do not offer—and the reader does not expect—a literary experience. “I want every fact in those texts to have been verified multiple times²⁹,” he says, adding that “we do the literary essay a disservice, however, when we

²⁸ Is “form” the right word? Maybe *force*. The essay force. jagodzinski and Wallin (2013) write that an arts-based research for a people yet to come could “overturn a culture of consensus born from an overdose of common sense,” replacing that with “a way of thinking art that does not begin with form, but rather, with force” (p.8). The five-paragraph high-school essay is a form; the scholarship essay could be a force.

²⁹ It must be added—although I would prefer not to have had to make this addition—that I am talking about artists, not governments. We can instill an essayistic Recklessness in young artists that will allow them to navigate the complexities of “truth” and doubt in artmaking,

and to build flexibility, openness to the world around them, affirmation, etc. Citizens and officials have a different purpose from artists. Donald Trump, who is supposedly the president of the United States, did not have a “tremendous victory, one of the greatest victories ever” in the election, nor did he receive “the biggest standing ovation since Peyton Manning had won the Super Bowl” when he briefed the CIA. In fact, the President of the United States must direct the audience to sit. The audience members must wait for such an order before they can sit down. Such is the respect granted wholesale to any sitting president, who is expected to grant the audience members a degree of respect, too, by allowing them to be “at ease.” Trump did not direct them to sit down. Thus they stood throughout the whole speech. There were 400 staffers at Trump’s CIA speech and 71,000 at Manning’s most Super Bowl championship. The staffers attended a mandatory meeting while, as far as I could know, the 71,000 fans *chose* to be at the Super Bowl. Oh, I’m sorry, are you upset that I am speaking about current events in my 2017 dissertation, or that I am criticizing the president? Remember *Network* (1976)? “I’m as mad as hell, and I’m not gonna take this anymore!” Here’s the whole speech, with several sentences and phrases removed to create a more relevant, timely effect:

I don’t have to tell you things are bad. Everybody knows things are bad... We know things are bad—worse than bad. They’re crazy. It’s like everything everywhere is going crazy, so we don’t go out anymore. We sit in the house, and slowly the world we are living in is getting smaller, and all we say is, “Please, at least leave us alone in our living rooms. Let me have my toaster and my TV and my steel-belted radials and

expect from it the same kind of verifiability as we would from a medical text book.”

Despite the trouble of labels, D’Agata (2014b) re-co-opted “the beautiful gangly breadth of this unnameable literary form,” noting that “nomenclature, while often limiting, polarizing, inadequate, and always stupid, can also be the thing that opens up our genre to new possibilities and new paths of inquiry, helping us to shape our experiences in the

I won’t say anything. Just leave us alone.” Well, I’m not gonna leave you alone. I want you to get mad! I don’t want you to protest. I don’t want you to riot—I don’t want you to write to your congressman because I wouldn’t know what to tell you to write. I don’t know what to do about the depression and the inflation and the Russians and the crime in the street. All I know is that first you’ve got to get mad. You’ve got to say, “I’m a HUMAN BEING, God damn it! My life has VALUE!” So I want you to get up now. I want all of you to get up out of your chairs. I want you to get up right now and go to the window. Open it, and stick your head out, and yell, “I’M AS MAD AS HELL, AND I’M NOT GOING TO TAKE THIS ANYMORE!” I want you to get up right now, sit up, go to your windows, open them and stick your head out and yell—“I’m as mad as hell and I’m not going to take this anymore!” Things have got to change. But first, you’ve gotta get mad!... You’ve got to say, “I’m as mad as hell, and I’m not going to take this anymore!” Then we’ll figure out what to do about the depression and the inflation and the oil crisis. But first get up out of your chairs, open the window, stick your head out, and yell, and say it: “I’M AS MAD AS HELL, AND I’M NOT GOING TO TAKE THIS ANYMORE!”

world in ways we have not yet imagined” (p.9-10). In a sense, he is talking about the Deleuzian AND. The essay could be the AND tool for scholarship. Recall that Deleuze himself says that he can write only on the boundary between knowing and non-knowing—“it is there that one must settle in order to have something to say” (qtd. in Boutang, 2011).

The written essay has a long history. Most contemporary essayists trace the form back to Michel de Montaigne, who used the Middle French “essai”—“to test, to attempt, to experiment”—to describe his writings (D’Agata, 2014a). In the introduction to *The Next American Essay*, D’Agata (2003), the editor, begs readers: “please do not consider these ‘nonfictions’” (p.1). Instead, he says, “I want you preoccupied with art in this book, not with facts for the sake of facts” (p.1). He goes on to dispel the myths about the word fact, which derives from the Latin word *factum*—“literally ‘a thing done’” (p.1). D’Agata reminds us that the words “artifice” and “counterfeit,” among others, also come from the same root (p.1). For good measure, he then quotes Emerson: “There are no facts, only art.” For D’Agata (2014a), the essay is “an art form that tracks the evolution of consciousness as it rolls over the folds of a new idea, memory, or emotion.” Such definition is what led him to write the highly controversial *The Lifespan of a Fact* (2012), a mixture of “real” essay (which was originally published in *The Believer*) and a fabricated e-mail conversation between the essay’s author (“John”) and its fact-checker (“Jim”). Within the book, the essay takes up the middle square of each page. The e-mail conversation adorns each page in the margins, slipping around and over, on the right, left, top, and bottom, referring to questions about authenticity and the public’s obsession with

facts. John's character argues over and over that what he is doing is creative nonfiction, *not* journalism³⁰. What he is doing is *essaying*. By challenging and then re-defining what

³⁰ One exemplar* is David Foster Wallace's (2004) creative nonfiction/journalism (the AND) essay "Consider the Lobster," because the title best captures what the essay *does*: it *considers*; in this case, it considers the lobster. The framing device is the Maine Lobster Festival, to which DFW has been sent to write a magazine article for *Gourmet*. The essay, like all good essays, is not about the festival, so much as it is about questions raised by and at the festival. He says as much in the third paragraph: "For practical purposes, everyone knows what a lobster is. As usual, though, there's much more to know than most of us care about." The next piece of that sentence goes like this: "it's all a matter of what your interests are." To his credit, he pursues *every* interest to see what turns up. He begins with what we can find "right there in the encyclopedia":

Taxonomically speaking, a lobster is a marine crustacean of the family Homaridae, characterized by five pairs of jointed legs, the first pair terminating in large pincerish claws used for subduing prey. Like many other species of benthic carnivore, lobsters are both hunters and scavengers. They have stalked eyes, gills on their legs, and antennae. There are dozens of different kinds worldwide, of which the relevant species here is the Maine lobster, *Homarus americanus*. The name "lobster" comes from the Old English *loppestre*, which is thought to be a corrupt form of the Latin word for locust combined with the Old English *loppe*, which meant spider. (p.55)

Eventually, after long descriptions of the festival grounds and the lobster *in general*, such as that it used to be an inexpensive food that mostly fed the poor, David Foster Wallace reaches this line: “A detail so obvious that recipes don’t even bother to mention it is that the lobster is supposed to be boiled alive when you put it in the kettle” (p.56). This statement raises several questions that he sets up: “Is it all right to boil a sentient creature alive just for our gustatory pleasure? A related set of concerns: Is the previous question irksomely PC or sentimental? What does ‘all right’ even mean in this context? Is it all just a matter of personal choice?” (p.60). The next four pages of the magazine address the questions, raising others, such as should a cook stay in the room and watch? DFW discusses ethics and neurology and the plain simple question that goes something like this: Does all this talk about boiling them alive take away from the sheer joy of eating them? Like most personal essays, DFW is a character in the story—he is the *I* who travels to the festival and records his first-person observations; and he is the *I* who has a mind that pursues questions until they fall apart, showing us that essays are not so much about the answer as they are about the journey *toward* an answer. Essays are about the process of not knowing. What is revealed when we admit that we know very little and begin anew, reveling in what we find along the way.

* All of David Foster Wallace’s essays could be considered exemplars of the *essai*. I chose to discuss “Consider the Lobster” because its title was chosen to signal that it was indeed an essay in the sense that I discuss herein. One of DFW’s most famous

is the essay, D'Agata has singlehandedly assembled its canon. Called *A New History of the Essay*, and spanning three volumes, this new canon includes Heraclitus, Plutarch, Seneca, Basho, Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud, Virginia Woolf, Natalia Ginzburg, Samuel Beckett, Anne Bradstreet, Washington Irving, Thoreau, Melville, Whitman, James Baldwin, Gay Talese, Susan Steinberg, Sherman Alexie, and Susan Sontag (who was upset upon initially hearing that her short story "Unguided Tour" was being included in *The Next American Essay*), among others. His list includes what many others would call

essays is called "A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again," a piece that was originally written as a travel piece for *Harper's* under the terrible misnomer "Shipping Out," a title that was subsequently righted in Wallace's 1997 book of essays. By either title the essay is about Wallace's first and last cruise experience. Wallace uses the form of the essay to amplify the major undercurrent of his trip—that of being overwhelmed. He employs footnotes—in the way that I have borrowed in this dissertation—to add detail to detail. He also employs footnotes *within* footnotes to further specify the terror through which he daily ventures. The effect is that you, dear reader, get lost in the asides upon asides. The "thesis" no longer matters, or rather there is no thesis. There is a research question: What is a cruise experience like for DFW? He answers that by giving us as much detail as possible about the whole experience, including a passage in which he measures the size of his cabin with his sneakers, having, of course, no tape measure with him on the boat.

novelists and poets, not essayists, but categorization, he says, fails by genre. The essay is the in-between. Adorno's "The Essay as Form" (1958/1991) is another commonly cited text on the literary essay that provides an introduction to its history and definitions. In general, says Adorno, the essay "does not let its domain be prescribed for it" (p.4). Unlike other forms that have strict rules, the essayist stops writing not when "there is nothing to say" but "when it feels finished" (p.4). "The essay," he says, "does not play by the rules" (p.10), challenging inducible certainty" (p.14). The essay "proceeds, so to speak, methodically unmethodically" (p.13). The essay can be art and be about art (p.5). The essay is marked by violence (p.7) and nontraditional ideas of truth (p.11). The essay "allows for the consciousness of nonidentity, without expressing it directly; it is radical in its non-radicalism, in refraining from any reduction to a principle, in its accentuation of the partial against the total, in its fragmentary character" (p.9). Along with Adorno, Lukas, too, defined the essay "as indeterminate, open, and, ultimately, indefinable" (Rascaroli, 2008, p.25).

Another package for the essay force is film³¹, or cinema. Deleuze (1985/1989) argues that cinema, overall, is dying, and that the cinema of representation leads us into

³¹ I will admit that the language here does get confusing. Some people conflate the essay film with the video essay, or refer to artists such as Jones as video essayists. I will try to stay consistent, though, and define the "video essay"* as a critical tool and the "film essay" as an art tool. Thus the critic can use the video essay to remark upon a film or film culture, etc., but not the film essay, which is reserved for artists making artworks. ABER has the potential

to straddle the line, given that researchers, as Eisner said and as Sanders III said of other artforms, learn how to use the proper technologies as artists.

* With the proliferation of such sites as YouTube and Vimeo, and such streaming sites as Fandor and Filmstruck, comes a new kind of review and criticism, which takes its form as a video. These aren't films because the critic uses footage from the movies in question to make a critical point or points. The critic's tool for scholarship about film is the video essay. *Filmmaker Magazine* recently published an article, "What is a Video Essay? Creators Grapple with a Definition," which argues "we can all agree that a video essay is a short online video which cuts together footage from one or more films in order to reveal new insights about them" (Bernstein, 2016). The author asks "are there any ground rules? And how much (if at all) should video essayist concern themselves with the original filmmaker's intent?" (Bernstein, 2016). The fact that the field of art education has not yet employed video essays, given so much consideration of moving images, is surprising, and I think an oversight. The video essay is perfectly situated to reveal insights of the 21st century. *Filmmaker's* Paula Bernstein (2016) invited leading video essayists—Arielle Bernstein (professor at American University), Kevin B. Lee (chief video essayists for Fandor's *Key Frame*), Max Winter (Editor-in-Chief at *IndieWire's* Press Play), and V. Renee (NoFilmSchool)—to comment on the definition for the emerging form³¹. Arielle

Bernstein calls them “thesis-driven” arguments in which “images are used along with text in order to persuade the viewer to read and interpret these images in a certain way.” Professor Bernstein sees her video essay scholarship as “creating this kind of analytic framework for the viewer and reader to re-interpret or re-imagine original images.” Fandor’s Lee sees them as “one strain of the essay film whose defining characteristic is the articulation of thought in audiovisual form,” adding that it’s “such an exciting new form, because now we have to combine the criteria by which we measure good critical thinking with good filmmaking.” Because of its infancy, Winter sees the form as gleefully rule-less, saying “video essayists tend to make up the rules as they go along” although video essays must address something “crucially true about the filmmaker...that you watch it, and you think, *yes exactly, I’d never quite thought about that, but—how true...* Another ‘goal’ these pieces could be said to have is explosiveness: instant immersion in the work of a filmmaker... They make us watch more carefully—and what higher goal of any form of criticism could there be?” V. Renee anticipates the criticisms about lack of rigor, the very one leveled by Derrida against his student who submitted a video in place of an essay, asking “do we hold these video essays up to the same standards of written academic essays?” The short answer is yes—“a supercut set to classical music without any narration probably wouldn’t qualify”—but the form is as yet undefined. These video essayists call for going beyond the “super cut” (just clips) toward scholarship (and new understandings). This is happening, as evidenced by The Criterion Collection edition

“blood-red arbitrariness” (p.164). Like Artaud, following Artaud, he argues for avoiding two pitfalls: “abstract experimental cinema” and “commercial figurative cinema” (p.167). Essentially, experimental cinema indirectly argues that we can think the new; and commercial cinema indirectly argues for the copy, the representation; but the true power of cinema, says Deleuze, lies in its ability to show us our inability to think—“impower” (p.166). Artaud and Deleuze think the “innermost reality [of the brain] is not the Whole, but on the contrary a fissure, a crack” that introduces “a ‘dissociative force’ which would introduce a ‘figure of nothingness’, a ‘hole in appearances’” (p.167). Godard has always thought that the world is bad cinema; and cinema can overturn it. The essay film has been a force for nearly a century, but has recently been noticed for what it is—for forcing us to confront the powerlessness of thought, thought’s inability to make Whole what is in the world not Whole to begin with. In a 2013 article about the essay film, which coincided

of the movie *Two Days, One Night* (2014), a Dardenne Brothers films, which includes a so-called “video essay” by Kent Jones, a filmmaker and longstanding critic, as one of the extra features. Jones’s essay consists of scenes from the Dardenne’s movies, including *Two Days, One Night*, with his voiceover commentary. The question he tries to answer is “What is a cinema of hope?” In the end, fittingly, he is unable to provide a pithy answer. The clips stand in for something like an answer, or answers. A little digging shows that Jones made other video essays for Criterion, too, such as *Revolutions per Second* (2012), made for the release of Godard’s *Weekend* (1967), and which is itself a hefty video, running 23 minutes.

with the cinema season “Thought in Action: The Art of the Essay Film” at BFI in London, Andrew Tracy cited Andre Bazin’s definition of the form, which focused on “its ability to make the image but also its ability to interrogate it, to dispel the illusion of its sovereignty and see it as part of a matrix of meaning that extends beyond the screen.” “No less than were the montagists,” says Tracy, “the film-essayists seek the motive forces of modern society not by crystallising eternal verities in powerful images but by investigating that ever-shifting, kaleidoscopic relationship between our regime of images and the realities it both reveals and occludes.” William E. Jones, whose films have been praised as “personal but also scholarly, calm but deeply felt, logical in its arguments but taking unexpected detours,” which is one of the defining tropes of the genre (Horrigan, 2013), credits Chris Marker with the advent of the essay film and as a profound influence on his own work. Yet, says Jones (2013), “people in the United States have a somewhat distorted version of [Marker’s] body of work, because it is enormous” and because the individual films (especially *Grin Without a Cat* (1977), Jones’ favorite) are demanding. Marker plays with time and the notion of “documentary,” if ever a thing can be documented. Timothy Corrigan (2011), who recently wrote a book about the history of the essay film, points also to Marker (along with fellow “Left Bank” filmmakers Alain

Resnais³² and Agnès Varda³³) as the founder of the movement. Corrigan follows the line of essays from Montaigne (the birth of the written essay) to Marker³⁴ (the birth of the

³² Though not the inventor of the essay film, Resnais surely did the most to advance it.

Resnais started out by making documentary films about artists. His short documentary about Van Gogh won a 1949 Academy Award. He went from there to make films on Gauguin (1950), *Guernica* (1951), and Goya (as part of a longer, collaborative project). In the 50s he began to shift his focus from biographical documentaries to searching documentaries, finding his footing with the 1953 Chris Marker collaboration *Statues Also Die*, a film that was banned for its explicit commentary on the West's appropriation of African culture. The censors' job was made difficult, though, because the sound and image track proved impossible to detach without completely erasing the film's aesthetic (Chamarette, 2009). Thus they couldn't censor parts of the film; they had to ban the whole thing. And this intertwining of image and music and voiceover is precisely the key to Resnais's essay films.

Resnais's questing hasn't gone unnoticed by contemporary filmmakers, who wear his influence on their shirtsleeves. When interviewed about *Night and Fog* (1955), a great influence on him, documentarian Joshua Oppenheimer (2016), best known for *The Act of Killing* (2012), focused not on the unasked questions that he called "a crucial feature of all essay films." "The things that the film doesn't ask create questions that haunt the film," he says, adding "there's things that you address explicitly, and there are questions that you let hang, and you allow the audience to contemplate by deliberately avoiding them." The title *Night and Fog* takes its title from the Nazi directive ("Nacht und Nebel") to bring enemies to

face trial and sentencing under the obscurity of darkness, i.e., without it being known, which is itself a reference to Goethe who coined the term for less terrible—i.e., purely fictional—reasons. Furthermore, the title is a code for what the film is doing—obscuring any thesis beneath seemingly unmotivated sequence of images of concentration camps then (pre-1945) and now (1955). Essayists Phillip Lopate (1992) recalls seeing *Night and Fog* for the first time in college:

My first glimpse of the centaur—the essay-film—was Alain Resnais’s *Night and Fog* (1955). While watching it in college I became aware of an elegance in Jean Cayrol’s screenplay language that was intriguingly at odds with the usual sledgehammer treatment of the Holocaust. “Sometimes a message flutters down, is picked up. Death makes its first pick, chooses again in the night and fog. Today, on the same track, the sun shines. Go slowly along with it... looking for what? Traces of the bodies that fell to the ground.” The voice on the soundtrack was worldly, tired, weighted down with the need to make fresh those horrors that had so quickly turned stale. It was a self-interrogatory voice, like a true essayist’s, dubious, ironical, wheeling and searching for the heart of its subject matter. Meanwhile Resnais’s refined tracking shots formed a visual analogue of this patient searching for historical meaning, in sites now emptied of their infamous activity. (p.19)

Lopate (2003) calls *Night and Fog* an “anti-documentary” because “we cannot ‘document’ this particular reality, it is too heinous, we would be defeated in advance.” What Resnais could and did do, says Lopate, was to “reflect, ask questions, examine the record, and interrogate

our own responses. In short, offer up an essay.” Truffaut, who named it the best film of the year, says that it “makes every other film look trivial.”

Part of what set Resnais apart was his unique* take on the craft. Resnais did not rely on screenwriters. In fact, he worked with poets (Chris Marker for *Statues Also Die* and Jean Cayrol for *Night and Fog*) and avant-garde writers (Marguerite Duras for *Hiroshima mon amour* and Alain Robbe-Grillet for *Last Year at Marienbad*). The result is a hybrid—not a fiction, not a documentary, but a new kind of essay film that uses elements of *all* in order to think through the topic[§]. Deleuze (1985/1989) says that *Marienbad* and films like it are different: “since it *replaces* its own object, on the one hand it erases or *destroys* its reality which passes into the imaginary, but on the other hand it powerfully brings out all the reality which the imaginary or the mental *create*” (p.7). Such is the essayistic film. In *Night and Fog*, for instance, as Deleuze argues, flashback is not flashback but the impossibility of flashback, a “sum” of all the ways flashback has and will and would, in the case of the Holocaust, fail us (1985/1989, p.122). For Deleuze, *Night and Fog* performs “pure recollection,” which is virtual, not “the recollection image,” which is forever tied to the present moment (p.122). Using present-day tracking shots over the landscape where the camps were built, juxtaposed with historical footage of the camps in operation, and using a depersonalized voiceover in the present of the past, a past that is very much impossible to depersonalize, Resnais has shattered time. The sheets overlay each other. The past and the present are one. Resnais, like Deleuze, is interested in the brain, in the thinking mechanism, which must be turned on by the irreconcilable. Writing about Duras, one of Resnais’s collaborators, and other

filmmakers, including Resnais, Deleuze (1985/1989) defines “the tear” wherein the visual and the sound do not reconstitute a whole,” the whole or Whole being impossible, “but enter into an ‘irrational’ relation according to two dissymmetrical trajectories” creating “a *fusion* of the tear” (p.268).

Famously, Eric Rohmer of *Cahiers du Cinema* said “I think that in a few years, in ten, in twenty, or thirty years, we shall know whether *Hiroshima mon amour* was the most important film since the war, the first modern film of sound cinema” (qtd. in Jones, 2015). One of the first American reviews calls it “a brilliant, trying picture, at once sensitive and blunt, tender and savage, fleshy and spiritual, pacifist and politically realistic” (Holland, 1960, p.593), which is to say it is everything and “has something for everybody.” Holland points to “some important new techniques of flashback” but really is talking about Resnais’s new way of presenting old ideas. *Hiroshima mon amour* is, after all, a film about the world after the second world war. The film is about Hiroshima after the bomb. The film was originally financed as a short documentary about the effects of a savage war, to be much like—hoped the producers—*Night and Fog* in its approach and product. Resnais said “I came to see that all you could do was *suggest* the horror, that if you tried to show something very real on screen, the horror disappeared; so I had to use every means possible to set the viewer’s imagination in motion.”

* Again we are presented with a problem—what is “unique,” and who decides?

Writing in *The New Republic*, Stanley Kauffmann (1962) revealed his perplexity that after *Last Year at Marienbad* (1961) Resnais was being “hailed everywhere as an innovator, a daring experimentalist, an avant-gardien” even though Resnais “made no such claim to be an innovator” (p.27). In fact, thought Kauffmann, *Marienbad* was a throwback to the “free French films of the twenties—Delluc, Dulac, Jean, Epstein, early Rene Clair, Cocteau” (p.27). But this definition fits quite well with the definition of originality, and Recklessness, that way of working toward originality. A work of Recklessness must look back as it simultaneously tries to slip the hold of mother and father. Recall Dean Young’s pronouncement that originality is not the denial of origins but rather “the acknowledgement of them, the exploration of that trace of history... while being in cantankerous, maybe competitive, objection and declaration otherwise.” To rebel against cliché—to embrace binary logic, for instance, wherein the opposite of cliché is success—is itself a cliché. A recent example from cinema is the short-lived “mumblecore” movement whose practitioners sought to depict real life verbatim. This “movement” (with quotation marks from critic Amy Taubin to represent the questionable title) “that never was more than a flurry of festival hype and blogosphere branding” began in 2005 and died shortly thereafter (Taubin, 2007). The title has been traced back to a sound mixer on some of these films who purportedly could not hear the dialogue given the low quality of sound capture and later attributed to the nonprofessional actors “who

tend to swallow their words (particularly at the end of their sentences) because they are uncomfortable speaking on camera” (Taubin). The result is not charm; the result is vapidness, what filmmaker Kenneth Lonergan once attributed to the lack of subtext, a lack of emotional depth that insults the viewers’ intelligence.

§ One enduring element is the voiceover, which would be picked up and perfected again, for new audiences, by Terrence Malick, with such films as *Days of Heaven* (1978), *The Thin Red Line* (1998), and *The Tree of Life*[†] (2011). “I always ask the screenwriter to tape-record all the dialogue,” Resnais admitted to the Criterion Collection (2014), “without indicating the names of the characters. That helps me get the shot breakdown. It’s quite simple.” He then lies down on the sofa. “I put the tape in the tape recorder,” he continued, “and listen. That helps the images come to me and it’s much easier after that with that memory in mind to quickly draw up a shot breakdown.” The voices in *Hiroshima mon amour* are as Lopate says “worldly, tired, weighted down with the need to make fresh those horrors” of WWII—not only what happened in Germany but what happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The voices are also “dubious, ironical, wheeling and searching for the heart of the subject matter.” In fact, most of the exchanges between the two protagonists—a French woman and a Japanese man—seem to be more about searching than communicating, making it more akin to poetry than dialogue. The goal does not

seem to be communication. The writer, Marguerite Duras, says the film it is “Impossible to talk about Hiroshima. All one can do is talk about the impossibility of talking about Hiroshima” (1961, p.9). Dean Young says that on one end of poetry is song and on the other end is communication, and that the poet’s job is to find a way back and forth without ever being one. In other words, poetry is about becoming, not being, and certainly not communicating, with all its necessary concretism. Deleuze (1985/1989) says that films such as *Hiroshima mon amour* bring the supposed poles—objective/subjective; real/imaginary; physical/mental—“into continual contact,” which leads to a “point of indiscernibility (and not of confusion)” (p.9). In *Hiroshima mon amour*, says Lopate, “Resnais’s tracking shots formed a visual analogue of this patient searching for historical meaning, in sites now emptied of their infamous activity.” Resnais lies down on the sofa and lets the images come to him. The words do not dictate the images but rather evoke them. The French woman is an actress who has come to Hiroshima to make a film on peace. The Japanese man is an architect who lives in Hiroshima. His life has nothing to do with war. Her life has nothing to do with war. Yet the two are haunted by the war, by their inability to get past it. They are both in the war and after it, experiencing it (the real) and imagining it, and the two are not opposites but identical, with indiscernible borders. *Hiroshima mon amour* may be more capable of being essayistic than Resnais’s previous films because of its additional element—something Resnais did not have in *Night and Fog*—fiction. He took this one step further in *Last Year at Marienbad* (1961). The

screenwriter, novelist Alain Robbe-Grillet, writes that the film is about creating reality by constructing a “purely mental space and time... without worrying too much about the traditional relations of cause and effect” (p.8-9). He points to the collaboration between Resnais, the director, and himself, the writer (p.4). “What novelist worthy of the name would be satisfied,” he writes, “to hand his story over to a ‘phraseologist’ who would write out the final version of the text for the reader?” (p.4) On the other hand, what director would ask a writer to plan each scene. Robbe-Grillet praises Resnais’s ability to assemble a story in a new way—not in a linear fashion like the cinema of the “all-too-expected” (p.9) but something that captures the mind’s unpredictable, inconsistent speed—“much faster—or somethings slower” (p.9). They captured “mental time with its peculiarities, its gaps, its obsessions, its obscure areas... Since it is the tempo of our lives” (p.9). Unlike other, more cautious filmmakers, then, they forego exposition; they “decided to trust the spectator, to allow him, from start to finish, to come to terms with pure subjectivities” (p.14). The spectator, then, must give himself to the film to let himself be carried along by the extraordinary images in front of him, by the actors’ voices, by the sound track, by the music, by the rhythm of the cutting, by the passion of the characters... and to this spectator the film will seem the ‘easiest’ he has ever seen... (p.14)

The two were reintroducing Negative Capability—doubt, mystery. The characters in *Marienbad* may or may not have met before; they may be able to pause time; they may not exist at all. The film is about the impossibility of remembering anything at all, much like

Resnais's other films, and much like what Duras said of Hiroshima: it's impossible to talk about; all we can do is talk about the impossibility of talking about Hiroshima. It is impossible to recall the past; all we can do is talk about the impossibility of recalling the past, which is damn near exactly what Deleuze picks up in *Cinema II: The Time-Image*. The result, says Robbe-Grillet,

will seem the most realistic, the truest, the one that best corresponds to his daily emotional life, as soon as he agrees to abandon readymade ideas, psychological analysis, more or less clumsy systems of interpretation which machine made fiction or films grind out for him ad-naseum, and which are the worst kind of abstractions (p.14).

† With *Tree of Life*, Malick moved completely into Resnais territory. The first thirty minutes of the film, on the surface, have nothing to do with what follows. The first thirty minutes or so depict the world's creation. We see footage of the universe blooming and dinosaurs, as if through an epiphany, acquiring empathy. And then, as if the director changes genre mid-production, the film turns on a family in what appears to be Texas in the 60s. This is a true hybrid. Malick has no trouble putting these two seemingly disparate elements in the same film, for he knows that the first speaks to the second, and vice versa. The viewer must follow the director's essay to see

what links are revealed. Fox Searchlight billed the picture as a drama and a fantasy, two genres that mostly do not intersect in the film (although they do in the final scene). What is most striking perhaps, and what Malick takes from his previous film and extends with *Tree of Life*, is the use of voiceover. The characters speak to each other rarely; the inner dialogue becomes the primary means of communication between the characters *and* us, making us seemingly more knowledgeable about the story than the characters. This makes for an interesting dynamic. In *The Thin Red Line*⁷ (1998), a three-hour epic about the Vietnam war, Malick's characters speak in voiceover, too, but also to each other. In his most recent films, Malick privileges the inner voices, going so far as to muffle the mouth-to-ear character dialogue at times. He also uses the interior monologue to provide extra tension, as he does when Nick Nolte's character Lt. Col. Gordon Tall speaks to John Travolta's character Brig. Gen. Quintard on the deck of a battleship nearing enemy land. Tall is older than Quintard but lower in the military hierarchy. The scene begins with Tall's voiceover, as Quintard moves deliberately around the ship. The images cut back and forth between the two characters—Tall's eyes on Quintard, Quintard none-the-wiser. "I worked my ass off. Brown-nosed the generals," starts Tall. He continues: "Degraded myself... for him... for my family... my home." We see shots of the other passengers, soldiers all, going about their duties. Then Quintard turns to Tall: "I admire you,

Colonel,” he says. “I do. Most men your age would have retired by now.” Quintard gives a look of sympathy, pats Tall on the chest, then adds: “It’s okay. We need general officers with maturity and character like you.” By using the voiceover to establish Tall’s seething hatred for his position and Quintard, Malick grew the tension without exposition. If the Marker montage is “horizontal” (as Andre Bazin once said) and the voiceover is “omnidirectional” (as poet Susan Howe once said), then Malick and all the other voiceover-focused film essayists are the omnidirectional horizontalists.

π Later, while tracking down one of my sources that I had forgotten to record, I found a list of the “Essay Film Candidates” on the *Sight & Sound*’s greatest films of all time poll. That list included *The Thin Red Line* (#183), along with *Man with a Movie Camera* (#8), *Histoire(s) du cinema* (#49), *Sans Soleil* (#69), and *Hiroshima mon amour* (#127), further solidifying my belief that the essay film is not a genre—documentary or fiction, for example—but a way of working that is all about the search, all about lines instead of points (which would exclude any Michael Moore documentary), all about connections, not equivalences. The *Thin Red Line* manages to transcend the epic war movie genre (e.g., *Saving Private Ryan*), because it is more interested in

collision, not coercion. The tension is in the very fact that the characters are people, which is to say they do not simply follow orders to fulfil the military directive, but rather they grapple with the incomprehensible, irreconcilable beauty and betrayal of their situation, both the past and present, the lushness of the landscape. Here is how Gavin Smith (1999) of *Film Comment* describes a pivotal scene:

Ordered to advance up a long hill towards concealed Japanese positions in broad daylight, a callow Infantry lieutenant, a kid really, signals to his two scouts to advance, then, when they don't move, signals again, more forcefully. The two GIs trade looks, and are up and running. From above, the first shots of this battle erupt: two brief bursts drop both men and silence falls again. The long grass ripples in the breeze and then magnificent sunlight unfolds across the landscape, as if a signal from the heavens. The lieutenant sounds the charge and he and his men rise up and rush forwards to be decimated by the machine-gun nests and mortars lying in wait for them. That glorious epiphany of radiance and the terrible carnage that ensues together form

one breathtaking movement, and encapsulate one of the main principles at work in Terrence Malick's *The Thin Red Line*. And what a glorious radiance it is. The main principle about which Smith speaks is a guiding principle of Malick's work from *Days of Heaven* on: "a kind of lyric epic poem about the way men are transformed for good by the experience of war, carefully balancing romanticism and dispassion, action and introspection." Smith calls *Saving Private Ryan* "mythopoeic" because it tries to erase history with cinema. With *The Thin Red Line*, on the other hand, Malick tries to return history to the individuals within it, not to us, those in the theater or at home in front of our HDTVs, and that is to say: to contradiction. Malick does this by ignoring the standards of act structure and character development. As Smith points out, Malick's approach is anti-Spielberg: "more leisurely and oblique" and not obsessed with any one character—"Malick keeps directing your attention to somebody you've never seen before and may never see again, which presents minor problems of emphasis when recognizable actors like Woody Harrelson briefly pass through."

³³ Varda, the only female associated with the French New Wave (and one of the three Left Bank auteurs), is still (late in her career) making significant contributions to experimental

essay films, such as *The Beaches of Agnès* (2008), a memoir told through recollections of movies and people. Varda became associated with the French New Wave in part due to the success of her feature, *Cleo from Five to Seven* (1962). In fact, though, her films have much more in common with Chris Marker and Alain Resnais, both film essayists. While Marker questioned reality and Resnais with memory, Varda questioned the self and the impossibility of ever knowing other people. But Varda should not be dismissed in favor of the other two Left Bankers. Varda's first film, *La Pointe Courte* (1954), released one year before Resnais's *Night and Fog* (and edited by Resnais), blended documentary realism with narrative fiction. She described her work as "cinécriture," meaning "writing with film." Cinécriture shows up as her role, next to director, in the credits to her 1985 film *Vagabond*. French film critic Alain Bergala calls her films "essay" in the true French sense of the word—meaning to attempt, to try (ctd. in Darke, 2008, p.23). Part of the trick, says Varda, is to do away with subjects in favor of questions. For *The Gleaners and I* (2001), for instance, she wanted to pursue the questions "Who is eating my leftovers?" which led to the question "why will those people live and eat what we throw away, and can I meet them, can I speak to them?" (qtd., Rigg, 2005, p.183). In the middle of the project, though, she realized that the film was half about her: "My God," she thinks, "I'm ageing, I'm still a gleaner, I'm still a filmmaker" (p.184). The film becomes about her, the gleaner of images, the one who lives off the land of images, who lives off other people by taking their likenesses. Overall, though, Varda's career as an essayist is best captured in her short films. Chris Darke (2008) points out that Varda has made fewer than 20 feature films but over 30 short films, many of them in the essay

tradition (p.22). Varda herself, in addition to coining a word for *writing film*, once called the short film format “a completely free form of filmic writing,” which holds “the capacity to move quickly between the moment of desire to make a film and its realization” (qtd., Darke, p.23). Darke calls attention to Varda’s eye and voice, some of which she borrowed from Resnais, e.g., the tracking shots that frame “disembodied expressions of curiosity” and “that work so well with voiceover commentaries” (p.23). “I’ve always been working on the border,” says Varda (qtd. in Anderson, 2001, p.27). “What I’m trying to do—what I’ve been trying to do all along—is to bridge the border of these two genres, documentary and fiction” (p.27). She sees film writing like jazz—“a woman working with her intuition and trying to be intelligent... joy of discovering things. Finding beauty where it’s maybe not” (Meyer, 2013, p.201).

³⁴ Most people know him, if they know him at all, from his 1962 short film *La Jetée*, which many consider to be the greatest short film ever made, and which was remade as *12 Monkeys* (1995) by Terry Gilliam. The main reason Marker is little known is because he wanted it that way. He could never sit still in a genre long enough to be known as a purveyor of *something*. He went ahead of the curve, inventing the essay film (with the “generous, confident opening of his work to quotation and citation,” says Gross, 2012, p.13), wowing critics with *La Jetée*, and then making one of the first CD-ROM artworks in the 90s. But he didn’t leave behind the essay film. In fact, he created what many people consider to be the greatest essay film (a lot of superlatives here), *Sans Soleil* (1983), in which he left his own

essay *film*), with a few precedents (e.g., Eisenstein) and many contemporary takes (e.g., Agnès Varda's *The Gleaners and I* or most films by Errol Morris). Corrigan wishes to uncover "where the essayistic indicates a kind of encounter³⁵ between the self and the public domain, an encounter that measures the limits and possibilities of each as a conceptual activity" and "renegotiates assumptions about documentary objectivity, narrative epistemology, and authorial expressivity" (p.6). Others point to Mark Rappaport as the founder of the essay film, though Rappaport points to Godard, who once called cinema the "form that thinks" (qtd. in Rascaroli, 2014, p.22) and also that to describe with the camera "is to observe mutations" (Deleuze, 1985/1989, p.19). Everybody points to everybody else. What we have here are connections instead of a lineage. In the introduction to *The Personal Camera: Subjective Cinema and the Essay Film*, Laura Rascaroli (2009) says the essay film is "sited at the intersection of documentary, art film

obsession (time) to consider Resnais's obsession (memory). (The two would reunite in the 60s to collaborate with Godard and others on *Far from Vietnam* (1967).) According to Gross (2012), the film "boldly explicated the logic of Marker's whole oeuvre, what had been and what was to come, in proclaiming that the problem of History could not be defined or expressed apart from the problem of memory" (p.12). Gross goes further to say that anyone working today is working on the problems raised by Marker (p.13).

³⁵ My best guess is that yes, Corrigan means this in the Deleuzian sense. In fact, though, it doesn't quite matter. I am *using* it here to mean the Deleuzian encounter.

and avant-garde practices” (p.1). She calls attention to the term’s use, saying it shows up in scholarly and non-scholarly writing (e.g., reviews) alike, with various meanings, causing considerable consternation for anyone trying to write about the essay film (p.1). Contrary to the documentary, though, which has a thesis, the essay film offers “an experience that is as incontrovertible as it is hazy and difficult to locate” (p.1). Rascaroli turns her attention toward the problem of categorization. Why, she asks, do “we the audience feel that we are viewing an essay, quite the cinematic version of a literary one, as opposed to a documentary,” when we view such films as *Night and Fog* (dir. Alain Resnais, 1955), *Letter From Siberia* (dir. Chris Marker), *Histoire(s) du Cinema* (dir. Jean-Luc Godard), and *Los Angeles Plays Itself* (dir. Thom Andersen), among others (p.2). At the end of her investigation, Rascaroli concludes that the “domain of the essayistic” is “a cinema in the first person, a cinema of thought, of investigation, of intellectual searching and self-reflection” (p.189). Rascaroli nods to the history of the essay, which begins with Montaigne and has reappeared (after shrugging off the chains of representation and “truth”) through such tireless advocates as John D’Agata and Philip Lopate.

Regardless of the “correct” definition—which there cannot be—, the essay film does more than communicate—it asks questions, it muses, considers, it pulls us in several directions at once, it jukes the thesis statement. Like Adorno, who describes the essay as those “discrete elements set off against one another come together to form a readable context” (p.13), many scholars (Astruc, 1999; Corrigan, 1995; Montero, 2012; etc.) see the literary essay as a springboard to the essay film. The essay film, according to

Catherine Lupton, is a “setting out to depict the process of thinking around a given subject, with all its attendant messiness, hesitations, and sudden insights intact” (qtd. in Rascaroli, p.8). The essay film “tracks a person’s thoughts as he or she tries to work out some mental knot, however various its strands. An essay is a search to find out what one thinks about something” (Lopate, 1992, p.19). The possibilities thus extend well beyond what was possible with the written essay. Experiments in the essay film extend as far back (arguably) as D.W. Griffith’s *A Corner in Wheat* (1909), “a sharp social commentary on the commodity wheat trade” and Sergei Eisenstein’s 1920s projects (Corrigan, 2011, p.3), preceding Adorno’s essay, but was not widely embraced until the 1950s, particularly in France. In fact, during the making of *Capital* (1927), Eisenstein wrote in his notebook about “a new form of cinematographic work—a collection of ‘Essays’” (Rascaroli, 2008, p.27). He was searching for a way to show the search. Rascaroli (2008) traces the first critical mention of the essay film to the 1940 essay “Der Filmessay, Eine neue Form des Dokumentarfilms” by Hans Richter. “In his article,” says Rascaroli, he “announces a new type of intellectual but also emotional cinema, able to provide ‘images for mental notions’” that is ““can employ an incomparably greater reservoir of expressive means than can the pure documentary film”” (qtd., p.27).

Although some recent scholarship has been aimed at seeing the history of the essay film beyond Europe (Biemann, 2003; Papazian and Eades, 2016), most scholars

point to France³⁶ in general and, most notably, to the “Rive Gauche auteurs” (Left Bank auteurs)—the aforementioned Chris Marker, Alain Resnais, and Agnès Varda—as the

³⁶ Jean Vigo was *the* French precursor to the essay film from whom the Left Bank Auteurs descended. He turned cinéma vérité on its head before it had a head to stand on; and he played with what counts as documentary “truth” way before Errol Morris and Reality TV came along. Sadly, though, Vigo died at the tender age of 29 of tuberculosis, effectively ending his “social documentary” that would find its uptake in *Night and Fog* (1955) and then in the fictions of Resnais’s *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959), Truffaut’s *The 400 Blows* (1959), and Agnès Varda’s *Chloe from 5 to 7* (1962), among others. According to Vigo, the “aim of the social documentary³⁶,” which was the style of his first film, *A propos de Nice*, “is achieved when it succeeds in revealing the hidden meaning of a gesture, when it shows up the hidden beauty or the grotesqueness of an ordinary-looking individual... And it must do this so forcefully that the world we once looked at with such indifference now appears to us in its essence, stripped of its falsehoods. The social documentary must rip the blinkers from our eyes” (qtd. in Polito, 2011, p.24). Vigo meant this in the broadest possible sense, because his first film *was* a documentary (though experimental, complete with a woman’s disappearing outfit and a man’s disappearing shoe) but others of his films were fictions. Vigo reportedly called Dali and Bunuel’s *Un Chien Andalou* (1929) “true social cinema... a very important work... a marvelous confrontation between the rational world and the subconscious” (qtd. in Polito, p.20). The way that Vigo achieved his original style—which was in part shaped by co-director and cinematographer Boris Kaufman (who would later DP such Hollywood

successes as *12 Angry Men* and *On the Waterfront*)—was a mix of premeditation and improvisation further enhanced by the editing process, which allowed for “parallel montage,” as for example when the statue of the mother tearing at her hair in the cemetery is juxtaposed with the living on the Promenades d’Anglais. Vigo died too young to continue his experimentations in the documentary, but he did make one 9-minute biographical film about the French swimmer Jean Tàris called simply *Tàris* (1931) in which he pushed the boundaries for what counted as documentary footage. In one shot, the camera appears to be underwater, though in reality Vigo was filming through a porthole window in the side of the tank. In another, Vigo plays with time, showing Tàris dive into the water and then reverse out along the same arc. The film becomes not about Tàris but about the filmmaker’s trying to capture something about swimming—mainly movement, water, etc. In *Cinema II*, Deleuze puts a lot of meaning in time, or the post-silent filmmaker’s ability to manipulate time, to show time as virtual Real. In *Tàris*, Vigo does his best to erase time’s hold on the cinema of his time. Documentaries—especially documentaries *about* people—rely on time to establish meaning: when did she do X; when did she do Y. We learn nothing about Tàris in *Tàris* except what he looks like when he swims, dives, smiles. Vigo instead calls attention to the camera and editing, the tropes of cinema, not the time of Tàris’s life or routine. The editor can reverse a shot; the cinematographer can capture an underwater shot (without telling you how, which only intensifies the this-is-not-what-I-am-used-to feeling in the viewer).

If the juxtapositions were straight out of then-recent “city symphonies” (such as Kaufman’s brother’s *Man with a Movie Camera*, 1929), the presentation—as a documentary,

most active purveyors. Catherine Lupton points to the proliferation of postwar documentary shorts—that pulled heavily on Surrealism—of Resnais and Franju in which “the boundaries between documentary and fiction (as well as art film) were fluid, and the filmmaker’s personal style in the approach to reality was valued” (ctd. in Rascaroli, 2008, p.30). Philip Lopate, more a contrarian, coming as he does from the lyric essay tradition, refuses the label for filmmakers like Stan Brakhage, Jansco, or Tarkovsky, preferring instead a more stringent definition that includes Marker but excludes many that others have added to the list. It is for this reason I defer to him. Lopate says an essay is a one’s search “to find out what one thinks about something” (p.19) but adds that it must be interesting: “an essayist who produces magisterial and smoothly ordered arguments but is unable to surprise³⁷ himself in the process of writing will end up boring us” (p.19). To

though not at all a documentary (i.e., the in-between)—is completely new. A direct line runs from Vigo to Resnais in this respect.

³⁷ We are talking not about shock, which is often associated with “shock value,” but surprise, which is often associated with delight. In a conversation published in *The Believer* (2008), Werner Herzog and Errol Morris discuss this very point in regards to their work. Morris points to Herzog’s work as an exemplar of documentary, which happens “by the element of the unpredictable.” Without prepping, says Morris, “the movie emerges.” “I feel that the element of spontaneity... of the uncontrolled, of the unrehearsed, the unplanned, in every single film he’s made,” he says. That element of spontaneity is also what engages Morris

make an essay—either written or filmic— is to ask questions, but not necessarily to answer them (p.19). According to Lopate (1992), the essay film (in his definition) must have five qualities: words; “a single voice”; “the speaker’s attempt to work out some reasoned line of discourse on a problem”; an essayistic, not journalistic, “personal point of view” that is “more than information”³⁸; and “eloquent, well-written, and interesting” language (p.19).

about his own films. “The element of spontaneity is not knowing what someone is going to say to me in front of the camera,” he says, “having really no idea, of being surprised. I know that there’s this moment in all of the interviews that I’ve loved where something happens.”

³⁸ Here we are again with the dreaded word “information,” kin to “communication” and foe of art. Lopate certainly holds the essay up as art. The most powerful examples of this eloquent, non-journalistic, personal point of view a-informational essay films come from Alain Resnais. Poetry offers a similar a-informational take on subjects (when it has a subject at all). Consider “The Diameter of the Bomb,” a poem by Yehuda Amichai:

The diameter of the bomb was thirty centimeters
and the diameter of its effective range about seven meters,
with four dead and eleven wounded.
And around these, in a larger circle
of pain and time, two hospitals are scattered
and one graveyard. But the young woman

In fact, a thinking scholarship in art education, which I think has its future in the essay, will eventually have to move into the image—the video, the film. “I wasn’t naive enough to want to do a philosophy of cinema,” Deleuze (2006) says, “but what made an impression of me was a certain intersection or encounter: the philosophical authors I preferred were those who demanded the movement be introduced into thought, ‘real’ movement... I just went straight from philosophy to cinema and back again, from cinema

who was buried in the city she came from,
at a distance of more than a hundred kilometers,
enlarges the circle considerably,
and the solitary man mourning her death
at the distant shores of a country far across the sea
includes the entire world in the circle.

And I won't even mention the howl of orphans
that reaches up to the throne of God and
beyond, making

a circle with no end and no God. (2013, p.118)

This poem reads as a description of the bomb and its impact. On closer inspection, though, the poem is about more—the diameter of the bomb grows to include the diameter of the bomb’s effects, and grows to include questions about the meaning of life. Amichai doesn’t say “there is no God!” but rather provides a description of that growing circle that, if it grows *beyond* God, must mean that there is indeed *more* than God, rendering God null, rendering God, like us, specks among the gathering dust.

to philosophy” (p.282-283). There are no boundaries and “cinematic criticism is at its worst when it limits itself to cinema as though it were a ghetto” (p.284). We can reach from within our own discipline (e.g., art education) out to another (e.g., cinema, installation art, poetry) when our questions can be addressed there (p.284-285). Deleuze was onto this in *Cinema II: The Time-Image*, in which he points to Resnais (with Duras) and Welles as the filmmakers who “no longer rely on world or subject” (Tomlinson and Galeta, 1985/1989, p.xvi). The essay film/video essay is the perfect force for modern scholarship because the modern image has no totality, no whole, but instead poles from which reality is in continual passage. The essay film is thinking because it jams or breaks film’s normal (pre-war) sensory-motor schema, effectively tearing the image from the cliché, which is what Deleuze says about the time-image in *Cinema II*. The essay film does away with direct linkages between what is shown and what is meant, or leaves gaps, creates tears. Deleuze says that the cliché-image is what we see because we see what we want to see. If the cinema doesn’t force us to think by disallowing perfect linkages then we will see only clichés, only those things that are easy to follow. The essay film calls attention to the missing links, forcing us from our stupor. Deleuze (1985/1989) says time is shattered from the inside (p.40) in modern cinema but so too is meaning shattered from the inside. Deleuze saw that the confrontation causes thinking, which is why after the war he began to watch movies again. He noticed that the pre-war cinema obsessed over continuity, over what he calls the sensory-motor image (1985/1989, p.1) but that post-war cinema turned its attention toward “the new image... purely optical and sound situation which takes place at the faltering sensory-motor situations” (p.3). What Deleuze says of

post-war cinema, of the time-image, is what could be said (and what I am saying here) about the essay film (although the essay film takes it further): “we no longer know what is imaginary or real, physical or mental... The imaginary and the real become indiscernible” (p.7). This is not because we are confused but because categories are shattered. Deleuze calls this “the point of indiscernibility” (p.9). The essay introduces lines of indiscernibility, wherein multiple meanings are stacked atop one another until the overall meaning is no longer defined—the overall meaning becomes a number, a line drawn through the stack, connections not theses. Not surprising, Deleuze wrote a lot about the essayistic cinema of his time. Of Alain Resnais, for example, Deleuze (2006) says “his image is entirely founded in the coexistence of heterogeneous durations” (p.291). About *Hiroshima mon amour*, Resnais admitted as much. The film was conceived as a documentary called *Picadon* (meaning “flash”) “about the bomb and its impact on Daiei Studios” (Jones, 2015.). The first 10 minutes of the film are remarkable, not in the least because they consist almost entirely of documentary footage of Hiroshima in the aftermath of the bomb. When he changed his mind—when he decided it must be fiction—Resnais did so because the story had to be about the past and the present; it had to be in two tenses: “The present and the past coexist, but the past shouldn’t be in flashback . . . You might even imagine that everything the Emmanuelle Riva character narrated was false; there’s no proof that the story she recites really happened. On a formal level, I found that ambiguity interesting” (qtd. in Jones, 2015). After viewing the film, producer Anatole Dauman told Resnais that he had seen it all before, particularly in *Citizen Kane*, “a film which breaks chronology and reverses the flow of time” to which

Resnais replied “Yes, but in my film time is shattered” (qtd. in Macaulay, 2014). Even the one flashback in the film—which takes us via a story, a recollection, to Nevers, France—is not so much a flashback as a co-existent time. Deleuze often refers to Resnais’s conception of time as “sheets” that can overlay, which is to say the present Hiroshima, in which the two characters sit and reminisce, is not removed from the backstory of Nevers, about which one character speaks. On the contrary, the two are overlaid like to sheets of paper on a desk. Time becomes the AND. Plus we don’t know if the woman is telling a true story, but, as Deleuze says about the shattering of the object/subject binary, we no longer stand in a place from which to ask such questions. They don’t even occur to us.

Without using the term, *Cinema II: The Time-Image* is in a sense *about* the essay film, or the essayistic, the AND. The essay film is virtuality in cinema. In the translator’s introduction, Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (1989) call attention to split nature of the modern image, which “cannot be integrated into a totality” and is “connected through ‘irrational cuts’ between the non-linked” in which “a confrontation takes place between ‘outside’ and ‘inside’” (p.xvi). This, they say, is where thought/thinking appears. According to Deleuze’s writings, they say, post-war cinema begins to explore “thought outside itself and an unthought within thought” (p.xvi). For Deleuze, cinema after the war begins to become a brain. The distinction between the subjective and objective begins “to lose its importance” in favor of “a principle of indeterminability, of indiscernibility: we no longer know what is imaginary or real, physical or mental, in the situation, not because they are confused, but because we do know have to know and there is no longer

even a place from which to ask” (p.7). Deleuze was drawn to the essayistic auteurs of his time. “Originality,” says Deleuze (2006), “is the sole criterion of a work. If you don’t feel you have seen something new, or have something new to say, why write, why paint, why shoot a film?” (p. 217). He goes on:

There are two dangers: 1) repeating what has been said or done a thousand times already; and 2) seeking out the new for itself, for the mere pleasure of novelty, in an empty way. In both cases, you are copying. You are copying the old or whatever is in fashion... the new is always unexpected, but it is also what becomes immediately eternal and necessary. (p.217)

He adds: “My argument is simple: the great auteurs of film are thinking, thought exists in their work, and making a film is creative, living thought” (p.220). What may be most important about the essay film is its flexibility. The essay film has branched out into other genres—from the documentary to the narrative—and thus is not itself a genre but a collection of “distinguishing features” (Rascaroli, p.3). They are “metalinguistic, autobiographical and reflective, they all posit a well-defined, extra-textual authorial figure as their point of origin and of constant reference; they strongly articulate a subjective, personal point of view; and they set up a particular communicative structure, largely based, as I will argue, on the address to the spectator” (p.3). All of this plus the French word *essayer*, or to experiment, to try, creates space for the essay film across genres, and allows Rascaroli to discuss, among others, Godard, who once wrote:

As a critic, I thought of myself as a filmmaker. Today I still think of myself as a critic, and in a sense I am, more than ever before. Instead of writing criticism, I

make film, but the critical dimension is subsumed. I think of myself as an essayist, producing essays in novel form, or novels in essay form: only instead of writing, I film them. Were the cinema to disappear, I would simply accept the inevitable and turn to television; were television to disappear, I would revert to pencil and paper. (qtd. in Rascaroli, p.89)

So what we are looking for, in a sense, is the planned unplanned³⁹. And this gets us back to the question of originality, of the central breakdown, of something that cannot be

³⁹ As much as I hate to admit it, this phrase—“the planned unplanned”—is an indirect reference to something said by former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. In a press conference Rumsfeld defined the “unknown knowns” as “things that you think you know that it turns out you did not” (qtd. in Morris, 2014). In trying to cover his tracks, Rumsfeld hit upon one of the most interesting public displays of rhetoric of the Bush administration. Here is his entire response to the reporter’s question, which was “In regard to Iraq weapons of mass destruction and terrorists, is there any evidence to indicate that Iraq has attempted to or is willing to supply terrorists with weapons of mass destruction?”:

Reports that say that something hasn’t happened are always interesting to me, because as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns — the ones we don’t know we don’t know. And if one looks throughout the history of our country and other free countries, it is the latter category that tend to be the difficult ones. (qtd. in Morris, 2014)

reduced to anything but itself. Deleuze (1985/1989), following Bergson, says “we do not perceive the thing or the image in its entirety, we always perceive less of it, we perceive only what we are interested in perceiving, or rather what it is in our interest to perceive, by virtue of our economic interests, ideological beliefs and psychological demands. We therefore normally perceive only clichés” (p.20). To get beyond the cliché, which is synonymous with our interests, “our sensory-motor schemata [must] jam or break” (p.20). The result is not a metaphor but the thing itself. We finally see it for what it is: “a

Rumsfeld later said that he learned about that distinction from William Graham in the 1990s, but actually he was pulling on a much longer legacy, a legacy attached to none other than John Keats, the man who coined the term Negative Capability, and who set the stage, without quite knowing it, for this dissertation on the cliché and the original, a conversation that is really about the truth and facts, about the search, about essaying. Keats, in *Endymion*, writes “O known unknown! from whom my being sips / such darling essence...” (qtd. in Morris, 2014). Fifty years later, Robert Browning wrote “our known unknown, our God revealed to man?” (qtd. in Morris, 2014). As Morris points out, Rumsfeld, unlike these poets, was talking about what did or did not match his agenda, his *preconceived notions* of what he was supposed to find within the evidence, which is to say the known knowns to him might just as well be *that to which I subscribe*. Unlike Keats, who wished to stay within mysteries and doubts, Rumsfeld wished to have a *knowledge* right now that he could put to work toward his and his President’s agenda; whether or not it turned out that his “knowledge” was true or false was irrelevant.

pure optical-sound image, the whole image without metaphor, brings out the thing in itself, literally, in its excess of horror or beauty, in its radical or unjustifiable character, because it no longer has to be ‘justified’, for better or for worse” (p.20). Deleuze uses the example of a factory that, we finally *see*, is a prison—not a metaphor for prison, a nod to imprisonment, but *the prison itself*. *Hiroshima mon amour*’s greatest achievement might be that memory and forgetting are one. Postwar Hiroshima is memory, is forgetting, is forever American and European and Japanese. Essayists achieve this by getting better at not knowing what they are doing in their time and place. Deleuze obsesses over the time-image in *Cinema II*, which allows him to understand memory in Resnais and other post-war filmmakers. What perhaps needs some exploring, though, is not time but meaning. He talks about sheets of time—the multiple pasts, the virtual pasts, all stacked, any ready to be pulled out and actualized in a recollection, pushed to the present, which is itself chronologically unmoored. The essay film does play with time but plays more with meaning—layers of meaning—wherein the meanings like wires (or “circuits” in Deleuze’s nomenclature) are connected and forked. The essay is not thus a school like Surrealism or Dadaism, is not a theory like Modernism or Postmodernism; it is rather an ever-evolving force that harnesses the AND. Essayists now (e.g., Morris and Persons) must use different techniques than essayists of the 60s (e.g. Resnais and Varda), but they all use the fork, a concept he attributes to American filmmaker Joseph L. Mankiewicz, director of *The Philadelphia Story* (1940) and *All About Eve* (1950), among dozens of others. Deleuze calls Mankiewicz “the greatest flashback author” (p.48), that rare filmmaker who harnesses time the way Borges describes it: a “web of time which

approaches, forks, is cut off or unacknowledged for centuries, embracing every possibility” (p.49). In Mankiewicz, says Deleuze, the flashback finds “new meaning” in the “multiplicity of circuits” opened and connected “at each point where time forks” (p.49). The flashback no longer belongs to one individual but to multiple (three in *The Barefoot Contessa* and *A Letter to Three Wives*, Deleuze tells us, and two in *All About Eve*). Each person’s recollection diverges, forks, creating new circuits, new possibilities, until what happened grows blurry. The forks in the flashbacks are compounded by the forks in the present-day narrative, creating a series of circuits that have the potential to create endless possibilities, endless maybes. Each deviation creates doubt. Mankiewicz uses Keats’s Negative Capability, managing to keep the picture within mysteries and doubts without defining the “true” and “right” path. Each fork, occurring in the recollections of characters, creates more doubt about what happened in the past—more virtualities—and about what then is happening in the present—because if the past is not clear, the present cannot be either. We begin to doubt our own ability to choose which road to follow. Some of the doubt can be attributed to another of Deleuze’s concepts—the actual/virtual Reals. The virtual and actual Reals travel together throughout time, but the actual is what we see as present, and the virtual is what we saw as the possible but the unrealized. At any moment, though, the virtual could become actualized, thus looking to us as the current-real, and the actual could become clear-as-figment, throwing it back into the virtual, as in the case of the hall of mirrors in Orson Welles’s *The Lady from Shanghai* (1947). Which likeness is the actual and which are the virtual? At any one moment, they could be both, only to be one once the flesh is presented as actualized, here

and now. Welles uses a bit of Negative Capability, but must in the end resolve the problem: present one likeness as *the* likeness, as the actual real person. Mankiewicz, too, must resolve the problem, if only narratively, giving us actual real narrative to privilege over the others. But what does Negative Capability look like when carried to its natural end? Abbas Kiarostami's 2010 *Certified Copy* is an excellent example. The story hinges on one fork, which takes place at the halfway mark. The couple, strangers who are getting to know each other, are mistaken for a married couple by a café proprietor. From that point forward in the story, although never directly alluded to, the strangers become a couple. They have been married for fifteen years. Nothing changes except those fifteen years—of tension, of regret, of anger. The story *is about* the fork. But unlike other films that resolve the doubt for narrative closure, *Certified Copy* uses that doubt as a wedge to keep open the actual/virtual circuit. The present is never actualized but rather the actual and virtual circuits, both open and alive, allow the electricity to pass back and forth between them. The loop never closes. We cannot know what is happening (the present) because we cannot know for certain what has happened (the past). We cannot even be sure there will be a future (after the film ends) because we cannot be sure the end of the movie is the present. They argue as if they were an actual real married couple, but the first half of the movie contradicts that fact. We don't know which half is the actual and which the virtual—thus the film manages to be both, to be un-actualized, to be an open actual/virtual circuit. Kiarostami (2012) says that the film takes place over 15 years—the first half is the couple getting to know each other; and the second half is about those irreconcilable differences that have grown over the marriage's 15 years. Yet the film

takes place in one afternoon. Time is shattered, yes, but meaning is fractured, torn, forked.

Recall that Dean Young says that making the new is just trying to copy but failing miserably. “If everything was planned,” says filmmaker Errol Morris to Werner Herzog (2008), “it would be dreadful. If everything was unplanned, it would be equally dreadful. Cinema exists because there are elements of both in everything.” For Morris, this includes documentary⁴⁰ and feature filmmaking. “It’s what makes,” he says,

⁴⁰ Errol Morris is indeed one contemporary American filmmaker who is making essay films that, as *The Believer* magazine (Poppy, 2004) says “are so marvelously strange, and so strangely alluring, they hardly deserve the D-word tag, with its faint-praise whiff of well-intentioned public television and the Discovery Channel.” Roger Ebert once said “I haven’t found another filmmaker who intrigues me more,” comparing Morris to a magician and “as great a filmmaker as Hitchcock or Fellini” (qtd. in Morris, n.d.). The documentary has become conflated with reality television, with sensationalism and poorly written “real” life scenes. Morris is doing something else, as he doubtless knows, telling *The Believer*: “I don’t think that anybody really makes films quite like mine... I like to think that I have invented a different style of documentary.” Morris works in the in-between. Morris is working within the field, of course, and he knows it, saying

when we speak about documentary, it should be clear that we’re talking about many things. We’re talking about different styles, from *vérité* to the collage films of Chris

Marker and Dziga Vertov*. Even *vérité*, itself, is diverse... It's not one thing, it's many, many, many things. (2004)

Morris's "documentary" style captures, says Poppy, "the workings of the mind—idiosyncratic personal philosophies, irrational rationalizations, private obsessions—as if some kind of cinematic truth serum were at work." Plus "Morris pairs this talk with the kinds of images we are not accustomed to seeing in 'nonfiction' film: reenactments, visual puns, objects floating in space. What emerges is almost always addictively compelling, and surprising, and odd." For Morris, as for most film essayists, "finding truth involves some kind of activity." His friend and near-collaborator—they nearly exhumed the body of a famous serial killer's mother on one cold Minnesota night—Werner Herzog has expressed similar sentiments. In a 1999 proclamation nicknamed the "Minnesota Manifesto" by Morris, Herzog lays out 12 "lessons of darkness," including "1. By dint of declaration the so-called Cinema Verité is devoid of vérité. It reaches a merely superficial truth, the truth of accountants"; "3. Cinema Verité confounds fact and truth, and thus plows only stones"; "4. Fact creates norms, and truth illumination"; "5. There are deeper strata of truth in cinema, and there is such a thing as poetic, ecstatic truth. It is mysterious and elusive, and can be reached only through fabrication and imagination and stylization"⁵; and number nine, which says it all: "The gauntlet is hereby thrown down." In that same 2004 interview with *The Believer*, Morris expresses a similar sentiment, saying "truth isn't handed to you on a platter. It's not something that you get at a cafeteria, where they just put it on your plate. It's a search, a quest, an investigation, a continual process of looking at and looking for evidence,

trying to figure out what the evidence means.” Truth is found by essaying. This is the hard work that during the filming of *The Thin Blue Line* (1988) led Morris incidentally onto evidence that led to the release of Randall Adam, who had been wrongfully convicted of murdering a police officer. Like his predecessors, the French Left Bank auteurs, Morris provides the *slant*[†]. In *The Thin Blue Line*, Morris uses reenactments to *show* what interviewees say. He was aware, however, that what people *say* is not necessarily “truth”: “They’re illustrations of what people claimed had happened but which *didn’t* happen,” he says adding, “they’re ironic. They make you think about the relationship of images to the world. About the nature of seeing and believing. About our capacity for belief, for credulity, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.”

* In 1926 Vertov documented his aesthetic as “Film-Factory of Facts,” which includes and basically *is* this list:

- the FACTORY OF FACTS
- Filming facts. Sorting facts. Disseminating facts. Agitating with facts.
Propaganda with Facts. Fists made of facts.
- Lightning flashes of facts.
- Mountain of facts.
- Hurricane of facts.
- And individual little factlets.

-
- Against film-sorcery.
 - Against film-mystification. (1926/1978, p.112-113)

Not surprisingly, Guy Maddin is among Vertov's fans, some may say progeny. For the 2011 Dziga Vertov retrospective at the MoMA, Maddin was one of the filmmakers to offer a contemporary perspective on the kino-eye (the non-actor film). Also not surprising, also a connection, a line of flight, is the fact that poet and essayist Susan Howe, having nothing to do with film culture, wrote a 2012 essay on Chris Marker. Howe was asked to write the essay for an issue of *Frameworks*, and did so, she says, because of her "wish to find a way to document" her late husband's life and work (p.380). And that she does. Her husband, David, becomes one part of a braided (multi-topic, criss-cross) essay; other parts are Dziga Vertov, poet Vladimir Mayakovsky (who either committed suicide or lost a game of Russian roulette, depending on whom you ask), Chris Marker (the supposed subject, although an essay has multiple subjects, including, always, the I writing it), Jean-Luc Godard, and Walt Whitman, among others. The FACTORY OF FACTS against film-sorcery! Chris Marker "was a poet first," she says (p.382). "We who work in documentary poetic film," wrote Vertov once, "are dying for work" (qtd., p.384). "Some of my earliest memories are confused with facts," she writes (p.392). Film essayists all have the same goal: to substitute the appearance of reality for reality; and vice versa.

§ I would argue that some contemporary “fiction” filmmakers fit the bill as “essayists.” Defying categorization is among my points, my lines. Among them I would name the Swede Roy Andersson, who is not fond of making stories. On the contrary, he says in an interview on the DVD release of *You, the Living* (2007), he prefers to make scenes. “So many other directors and filmmakers make stories... I find that the storymaking is... too predictable... I want to be surprising and not predictable.” He creates situations—some short and some long—and strings them together to make a film. The finished products feel like vignettes that together, as he has said, “will give you a more rich picture of the image of life, the existence.” Without meaning to, without knowing it, he nicely captures what the essay film *is*. Like an essay, Andersson’s films take an idea and think about it, though he has images and writers have only words.

† This is a reference to Emily Dickinson’s “Tell all the truth but tell it slant”, which goes like this:

Tell all the truth but tell it slant —

Success in Circuit lies

Too bright for our infirm Delight

The Truth's superb surprise

As Lightning to the Children eased

With explanation kind

The Truth must dazzle gradually

Or every man be blind — (1868/1961, p.506-507)

In just eight lines, Dickinson encapsulates the entire philosophy behind the essay (although it must be added that she does not herself *practice* the essay). Emily Dickinson perhaps more than any poet, because of the way she lived, up in that one room, invites the encounter, and that this goes against what we think as violence. She sat still. By sitting still, though, she was allowing the world to act on her. Her life was the intensive, the cognitive, which, as jagodzinski tells us, does not shock us into thinking. The extensive, the sensual, the thing of violence, would thus have to come from without—what people say, what they do, in her presence, or what she hears about what they say or do. Or from her garden, where she was wont to walk for leisure. I have been there. It's a beautiful garden, but even a beautiful garden cannot present the intensive *more than once*. If she walked the same grounds daily, sat in the same room daily, she was never presented with opportunities for thinking. However, her poetry provides opportunities for thinking for the reader—the kind of encounters that Deleuze said he was “on the lookout” for when he visited galleries and read books and watched movies. This is an interesting complexity. Emily Dickinson's work cannot be reduced to anything but her work. Her brief, titleless poems do not resemble anyone's before her. In fact, it is clear that she was developing a new meter, for many of her poems were written on the scraps of ripped

“photography and filmmaking of interest. Despite all our efforts to control something, the world is much, much more powerful than us, and more deranged even than us.”

IX. The Future?

My “original” contribution to the field is about scholarship, then, not, as I had originally assumed, about pedagogy. If in the end I could turn this dissertation back to pedagogy, it would be a pedagogy of the indiscernible, a “Godardian pedagogy” wherein

and discarded envelopes, sometimes the triangular lid-piece, the poems forced into the shape of the tapered paper. Apollinaire would pick up this trope half a century later without quite knowing that he was working within her shadow. What is Surrealism, though, but a surrender to the unconscious, collective or not.

Dickinson’s poems seem more inventive than Apollinaire’s, though, given that she was forging, like a blacksmith with only so much iron, a poem from a shape. He had all the shapes, all the space to work with, but invented the image with words each time. She worked and worked until it fit. In a sense, Dickinson was a nomad in the Deleuze and Guattarian (1980/1987) sense:

We can say of the nomads, following Toynbee’s suggestion: *they do not move*.

They are nomads by dint of not moving, not migrating, of holding a smooth space that they refuse to leave, that they leave only in order to conquer and die. Voyage in place: that is the name of all intensities, even if they also develop in extension. To think is to voyage; (p.482)

information is “a debasement” and “[i]t is necessary to go beyond” information (Deleuze, 1985/1989, p.269). Is there any reason why the avant-garde without authority shouldn’t be scholars? How could I have known on page one? This aspires to the *essay*, not the *I say*. In a way, this dissertation is a response and hopefully *an* (not *the*) answer to part of jagodzinski and Wallin’s proposal for the future of Arts-Based Educational Research (ABER⁴¹), called aptly “Arts-Based Research: A Critique and a Proposal.” Charles

⁴¹ What is ABER? This question is tricky in 2017 because it now means many things, and ABER personalities go to great lengths to distinguish their method from other methods, which is what forced me to put this information here in a footnote, not in the body. I cannot contribute to all the method-making, all the jockeying for position. The great purpose, in my opinion, is still the use—is it useful, is it mind-enlarging? Affirmation. ABER goes by many names, including *arts based research* (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Barone, 2006; Eisner, 1993; Eisner, 1996), *arts-informed research* (Cole, Nielson, Knowles & Luciani, 2007), *A/r/tography* (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004), and *practice-based research* (Candlin, 2000). Beneath these ABER methodologies—and they are separate methodologies, each advocating slightly different methods (ways of proceeding), and each pulling from slightly different literature (from Dewey to Deleuze)—is a belief about knowledge. Eisner (2008) suggests knowing over knowledge because it’s a verb, it implies action (p.4), and it embraces the “fact” that we may never nail down the “truth” but instead raise new questions and possibilities (p.7). It should go without saying, but I’ll say it, that I stand firmly with this view. At other times, though, Eisner is conservative, choosing literal over nonliteral forms (p.9). There again is this idea

that the art created must be able to say something (make a proposition), a literal something, must communicate (one of the criticisms leveled by jagodzinski and Wallin, and now Morrow). Sullivan (2010) sums up the strands like this:

Arts-based researchers... are generally interested in improving our understanding of schooling and how the arts can reveal important insights about learning and teaching. Arts-informed researchers, Artographers, and the like have similar interest in schools, but their focus is on developing the practitioner-researcher who is capable of imaginative and insightful inquiry. Practice-based researcher (also known as *practice-led research*) is a term more commonly used in visual arts programs in higher education where studio art practice is being reconceptualized as questions about degree programs beyond the MFA are addressed. (p.20-21)

Eisner's (1993) call to action supports Sullivan's statement that arts-based research is about schooling. "The major aim, we must not forget," wrote Eisner then, "has to do with the African American children with whom I worked on Chicago's West Side at the beginning of my career. It has to do with the improvement of educational practice so that the lives of those who teach and learn are themselves enhanced" (p.10). I, on the other hand, think that it could be about education in a broader sense.

Irwin's (2004) introduction to *A/r/tography* supports Sullivan's claims that a/r/tography is about the self of the researcher. The subtitle of the book and the movement, after all, is "Rendering self through arts-based living inquiry." "A/r/tography," wrote Irwin, "is a living practice of art, research, and teaching: a living metissage; a life-writing, life-

creating experience... Through attention to memory, identity, reflection, meditation, storytelling, interpretation, and representation, the artists/writers/teachers...are searching for new ways to understand their practices as artists, researchers, and teachers” (Irwin, 2004, p.34). Candlin (2000) wrote about practice-based doctorates—and blurring the boundaries between researcher and artist—which supports Sullivan’s definition of practice-led research, and which places it firmly within conversations of the studio-based PhD. Sullivan also noted the geographic differences. Practice-led research, for instance, is found among conversations in the UK, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand, whereas the others are found (or at least *founded*) primarily in North America (p.21).

Overall, though, Sullivan (2010) said that the visual turn of art education research entails two main threads: arts-based research and arts-informed research and a/r/tography, the latter two being lumped together and seriously practiced in Canada. For Sullivan, arts-based research, developed by Barone and Eisner, is “a loose, collective term” applied to “educational inquiry that is grounded in the aesthetics of art and language, as hybrid and artistic practices, and as an embodied cultural practice” (p.55). Eisner’s original idea, coming out the ‘70s, was akin to anthropologist Clifford Geertz’s (1973) “thick description,” privileging the researcher’s senses— “seeing and sensing is basis for compiling thematic patterns of evidence from which meaning is made vivid” (Sullivan, p.56). Eisner with Barone, Sullivan writes, later envisioned ABER as “the multiplicity of ways of encountering and representing experience through the arts and the use of forms of expression and representation that effectively communicate research outcomes in new ways” (p.56). They,

like me, have defined “research” flexibly, to mean “to return again and again in order to shed light on some phenomena of interest” (2012, p.54). And they define the “art” of arts based research to include stories and images and films “that will enable percipients... to raise important questions about the conditions under which human beings live” (p.52). In speaking about a specific arts based research project, they are quick to point out that there’s “a very specific purpose” that is “not simply to delight, as important as that might be, but to produce a disequilibrium in the reader or viewer—that is, to enable someone to ‘get a feel’ for a set of phenomena that calls into question previously held perceptions and understandings of that phenomena” (p.51), implying perhaps the essay as a natural way to ABER?

Patricia Leavy (2015) provides a nice if informal introduction to ABER, too, with her book *Method Meets Art, Second Edition: Arts-Based Research Practice*. She notes what the other writers have noted, too: the “enormous growth in ABR over the past several years alone,” which has caused a plethora of different terms that mean the same thing (p.5). To solve the language problem, Leavy used “the umbrella category” of arts-based research (p.5). “Arts-based research practices,” she wrote,

are a set of methodological tools used by researchers across the disciplines during all phases of social research, including data generation, analysis, interpretation, and representation. These emerging tools adapt the tenets of the creative arts in order to address social research questions in holistic and engaged ways in which theory and

practice are intertwined. Arts based research draws on literary writing, music, dance, performance, visual art, film, and other mediums. (p.4)

The other thread within the visual turn is what comes out of Canada: arts-informed research and a/r/tography. Arts-informed research projects “take their cues from what artists do” (Sullivan, p.58). A/r/tography was introduced by Rita Irwin et al. in 2001 but expanded in her book (edited with de Cosson) *a/r/tography: Rendering Self Through Arts-Based Living Inquiry*. In the foreword, William F. Pinar described a/r/tography as the space where “knowing, doing, and making merge.” Irwin (n.d.) has defined the practice as this:

a/r/tography means to inquire in the world through an ongoing process of art making in any artform and writing not separate or illustrative of each other but interconnected and woven through each other to create additional and/or enhanced meanings. A/r/tographical work are often rendered through the methodological concepts of contiguity, living inquiry, openings, metaphor/metonymy, reverberations and excess which are enacted and presented/performed when a relational aesthetic inquiry condition is envisioned as embodied understandings and exchanges between art and text, and between and among the broadly conceived identities of artist/researcher/teacher.

Irwin (2004) writes that “[t]o live the life of an artist who is also a researcher and teacher is to live a life of awareness, a life that permits openness to complexity around us, a life that intentionally set out to perceive things differently” (p.33), which is all well and good, but then she links this kind of living inquiry with action research, which jagodzinski confirms in

his follow-up critique of a/r/tography (2016, p.273). She sees theory, like I do, broadly: it “includes textual discussions and analyses set within and/or alongside visual imagery of educational phenomena and/or performance” (p.32). The basic tenet (perhaps the place from which she started, though the movement has taken off) is what she said in that last line: the identities of artist, researcher, and teacher are interconnected, and thus cannot be separated. A/r/tography is the way Irwin et al. see the world, see their lives. Irwin and Springgay (2008) said that a/r/tography is a methodology built on the Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizome—“an assemblage that moves and flows in dynamic momentum...by variation, perverse mutation, and flows of intensities that penetrate meaning, opening it to what Jacques Derrida (1978) called the ‘as yet unnamable which begins to proclaim itself’” (p.xx). They wish to take theory back from the theorists and put it back where it belongs—with practice (p.xx). To the a/r/tographers, “theory is understood as a critical exchange that is reflective, responsive, relational, which is continuously in a state of reconstruction and becoming something else altogether” (p.xx). Instead of calling it arts-based research, they called it “practice-based research” (p.xxi) that is “informed by feminist, post-structuralist, hermeneutic and other postmodern theories that understand the production of knowledge as difference thereby producing different ways of living in the world” (p.xxi). They cited Ellsworth (2005), who wrote about new ways of knowing that invite us to “acknowledge the existence of forms of knowing that escape the efforts of language to reference a ‘consensual’, ‘literal’, ‘real’ world” (qtd. in Irwin and Springgay, 2008, p.xxii). They cite Graeme Sullivan’s (2005) call for research that moved “beyond probability and plausibility to *possibility*” (qtd. in

Irwin and Springgay, 2008, p.xxiii). To explain a/r/tography, Irwin and Springgay defines its six concepts (“renderings”): contiguity (overlapping, folding, writing, artmaking, the in-between), living inquiry (ongoing, iterative), metaphor/metonymy (to make sense of the world anew), openings (as opposed to informing others), reverberations (shifting understanding of the artographers and audience), and excess (the “as yet unnamable”) (p.xxix-xxx).

According to Knowles and Cole (2008), “Arts-informed research is a mode and form of qualitative research in the social sciences that is influenced by, but not based in, the arts broadly conceived. The central purposes of arts-informed research are to enhance understanding of the human condition through alternative (to conventional) processes and representational forms of inquiry, and to reach multiple audiences by making scholarship more accessible” (p.59, emphasis mine). The arts-informed methodology combines the following elements: a commitment to a particular artform; a methodological integrity; a creative inquiry process; a presence of the researcher; a strong reflexive quality (but the researcher is *not* the focus); and a broad audience (p.61). In other words, the researcher uses one art (that s/he knows well) to investigate a phenomenon that they will report to an audience beyond academia. But the focus is on the phenomenon, not on the research. Arts-informed research is linked to practice-based research, for which Smith and Dean (2009) advocate because of its becoming, its “bi-directional focus” that can be written as “practice-led research” or “research-led practice” (p.1). They also pay attention to what I have paid attention to: “what is knowledge, what is research and how can we understand the creative

process?” (p.1). They advocate for research that “needs to be treated, not monolithically, but as an activity which can appear in a variety of guises across the spectrum of practice and research” (p.3). They see ways in which research may be conducted independent of the creative process but later applied to it (without knowing, of course, whilst conducting the research, how or even if the research will bear fruit); research undertaken for the specific purpose of “shaping an artwork”; or research on the other end: “the documentation, theorisation and conceptualisation of an artwork—and the process of making it” (p.3).

Smith and Dean (2009) make two arguments: “that creative work in itself is a form of research and generates detectable research outputs” and “that creative practice—the training and specialised knowledge that creative practitioners have and the processes they engage in when they are making art—can lead to specialised research insights, conceptualisation and theorisation which can arise when artists reflect on and document their own creative practice” (p.5). What they really *get*, too, is that each is undertaken with its own purpose. Writing a novel, for instance, even though it may require extensive research and synthesis of information, some of which may be contradictory, ultimately does not wish to say something social or political or the like. This is not to say that it *cannot* say those things, for clearly it can (think of the novels by James Baldwin or William Faulkner). This is just to say that the goal is not to say those things. The goal, first and foremost, is to write a novel—is to engage language in such a way as to tell a well-written and developed story with style and grace. For me, this basic underlying philosophy of practice-led research (or research-led practice), then, sets it on much firmer ground than a/r/tography (which leans

toward social justice and self-actualization) and arts-based research (which leans toward arguments about the schoolroom), wherein the boundary is slippery—although they are all speaking my language about *essai*, violences and encounters that have the potential (energy) to shift us from one into another without making one into the other. Barbara Bolt said that out of the making process can arise “a very specific kind of knowing, a knowing that arises through handling materials in practice” (qtd. in Smith and Dean, p.6). She calls this “praxical knowledge”—“its insights, she argues, can induce a ‘shift in thought’” (qtd. in Smith in Dean, p.6). Bolt, like Smith and Dean, like many ABERs, allows us to envision a dissertation that combines the creative and the critical, a dissertation that allows for “two different ways of working... a process driven one, and a goal-oriented one”—although “these two ways of working are by no means entirely separate from each other and often interact” (p.23).

Jane Goodall (2009) is most articulate about the difference between writer and researcher, about how the goals differ, about how her novelist-self is not her-academic self. Not surprisingly, she is a successful novelist outside the academy. She quotes Norman Mailer who lamented that one of his novels was being controlled by his research, not by his creative self. “I had been strangling the life of my novel,” he wrote (qtd., p.205). Goodall says that the plethora of variables at work in good fiction make it impervious to the normal research-led approach of the creative process that others advocate (p.205). The same is true for poetry, as Dean Young attests. When Mailer finally let go of the research, he wrote “The book had come alive in my brain” (qtd. in Goodall, p.205). Goodall says “if research has taught me anything about the creative process itself... it is that fiction writing requires a

Garoian, in an endorsement that serves as the introduction or abstract to the book, provides this perfectly succinct summary:

jagodzinski and Wallin make a compelling argument for blurring the boundaries of arts-based research in the field of art education. The authors contend that the radical ideas of leading scholars in the field are not radical enough due to their reliance on existing research ontologies and those that end in epistemological

finely calibrated balance between conscious planning and improvisatory caprice” (p.205-206). Recall Dean Young (2010): “Prescription and intention are traps. Any intention in the writing of poetry other than to engage the materials SHOULD be disappointed” (p.4). Like Dean and Smith, Goodall notices a shaky boundary between practice-led and research-led works. But she also sees that creative work is first and foremost about the creative work. At any moment, the writer must be ready to abandon prior intention in favor of what the artwork is beginning to signal. Goodall’s fiction is based on historical research—and it is the same kind of historical research that she does in her academic post—but the goals are different. Incompatible. “I’ve been learning,” she writes, “that the spooky art of fiction writing involves a commitment to improvisation and randomness, a submission to the erasure of authorial design, a readiness to be mesmerised by place and possessed by psychological energies from competing directions” (p.207). Although research is necessary—for “there’s a need to know about the work of others and to build up a density of such knowledge” and research “can actually serve to calibrate awareness of the psychological displacements required to keep the work alive and manage its energies” (p.207)—it is a different kind of research. She cheekily calls it “research lite” (p.201) to draw the distinction.

representations. In contrast, they propose arts-based research as the event of ontological immanence, an incipient, machinic process of becoming-research through arts practice that enables seeing and thinking in irreducible ways while resisting normalization and subsumption under existing modes of address. As such, arts practice, as research-in-the making, constitutes a betrayal of prevailing cultural assumptions, according to the authors, an interminable renouncement of normalized research representations in favor of the contingent problematic that emerges during arts practice. (p.vii)

Perhaps more of us should follow their lead, for nothing new, original, will happen if the cliché is not publicly discouraged and something new enacted—or an attempt toward something new—in its place. Jagodzinski and Wallin criticize ABER because they love ABER, because “another direction is required to continue to make its promises possible” (p.2). One of their main goals is “to develop the line of flight for arts-based research that builds on the performative machinic understanding of the arts, incorporating the view that art should not be theorized as an object but re-theorized as an *event* that first emerged with the avant-garde but remains suppressed” (p.3). “Our quarrel with a/r/tography,” they write, “is not that it isn’t radical in relation to the state of the field of arts-based research, but that it is not radical enough” (p.76). One problem with arts-based research, they say, is that it embodies the image of thought criticized by Deleuze “that effectively *stops people from thinking*” (p.4). The image in arts-based research is rooted in friendship—“under the banner of *mutual goodwill*” (p.4). The authors say that Deleuze (2000)—borrowing this idea from Proust—lamented the “order of thought... that would assure

agreement between minds” (qtd., p.4). In other words, “the goodwill shared between friends is insufficient to apprehend a radical ‘outside thought’ that *forces* us to think” (p.4), a phenomenon that anyone who has been to an NAEA convention has witnessed. On the other side of this thought-blockage is *violence*. Recall that Deleuze wrote: “thought is nothing without something that forces and does violence to it” (qtd., p.5). jagodzinski and Wallin see their book as a kind of betrayal, but a positive betrayal in the style of affirmation—a necessary betrayal that will shock the system away from complacency and perhaps towards thinking. They quote Deleuze: “The truth is [never] revealed... it is betrayed” (p.5). The authors wish to shock the “representational lethargy” from which arts-based research suffers (p.5) in order to find

something radically other than the voluntary movement of memory (reflection), the application of representational matrices (transcendence), or the deployment of laws known prior to that which they apply (morality). It is via the act of the necessity of thinking that founds truth so that it may be unleashed from that which we have already discovered, given ourselves, or derived from an image set out in advance. (p.5)

jagodzinski and Wallin suggest that we must double-cross common sense in order to create the new image (p.7). For ABERs such as myself, if indeed this is a form/force of ABER, the betrayal “would entail shuttering the conventions of the field in such a way as to make strange the very prospect of what arts-based research might be capable of *doing*” (emphasis on the *-ing*), so that “arts-based research might become a place for the fabulation of *a-people-yet-to-come*, or rather, a people for which there exists no prior

image, narrative, or transcendent organizing myth” (p.7). When it breaks away from common sense, “art assumes its most non-representational force” (p.7). When it breaks from non-representational forces, as they say Matthew Barney does in the *Cremaster* (2003) cycle, art eviscerates contemporary myths and tropes on its way to someplace new. So too, art as such—and arts-based researchers who practice in this vein—has the capacity to break from communication, one of the problems of the contemporary moment (p.9), to “will a belief capable of unleashing the potentials of a life” (p.9), of force, not representation, which is static (i.e., death). The curse of communication and representation “effectively limit what *might* be thought and what might yet become” (p.9). Borrowing from Deleuze, they write that the artist (and arts-based researcher) must overcome a belief in this world in favor of “new images capable of releasing potentials in the world without necessitating that they conform to an image of the world as it is *given*” (p.10). Regarding art, the authors point to Todd Haynes, who has rewritten *what is* with his anti-genealogical films *I’m Not There* (2007), in which Bob Dylan is created through several historical personae, including Woodie Guthrie (played by a young African American boy) and the sell-out folksinger Jude Quinn (played by the actress Cate Blanchett), and *Velvet Goldmine* (1998), in which the protagonist both is and is not David Bowie. The authors theorize this for ABER as “new questions, kinds of expression, or terms of subjectivity” (p.13) that cannot be found in auto-ethnography (fixated on the personal, fixed, “real” self) and other representational research. By stressing becoming over being, effectively doing away with the subject/object binary (e.g., obsessed with the question “What is acting on what?”), arts-based researchers could potentially enter a

post-human space in which they are “one ‘object’ among many” (p.17) and—what jagodzinski and Wallin keep returning to—*monumental* in Deleuze|Guattari’s terms, i.e., above and beyond but within, both/and. The authors via Simondon remind us that “[e]very individual that emerges is an event” (p.24), the individual is not, as constructivists say, pre-specified. Simondon introduced “preindividual singularity” in which the individual is not produced by someone or something but rather *produces itself* by a series of connections with the physical, biological, technical, and social, “forming ‘milieu’ within the individual itself as an *event*” (p.24), which is the best way to describe art education for *a people yet to come*. In this respect, the individual *is* creation. In this respect, ABER could create an event that always differs from itself, forming a series of connections with the world in which it is becoming, an encounter, which is “a field of effects from which the creation of something new and unforeseen has yet to be determined” (p.35). Art and its education, they add, “thought in this way, as encounter that is the event of becoming, and hence of ‘learning,’ emphasizes ‘doing’ rather than ‘knowing.’ Art research as ‘doing’” (p.41). In addition to addressing some of what jagodzinski and Wallin propose, I hope this dissertation addresses O’Donoghue’s (2009) questions about ABER. In “Are We Asking the Wrong Questions in Arts-Based Research?”⁴², he asks us to shift our focus from philosophers to artists because the “proliferation and celebration of these theories/philosophies...limit the way art is imagined” (p.353). He poses three questions:

⁴² Yes.

- 1. How do arts-based research processes, products, and theoretical orientations connect with those in the professional fields of the arts?*
- 2. How might a close, critical, and deeply contextual analysis of the work and work practices of artists advance, develop, and enhance understandings, theories, and practices of arts-based research?*
- 3. What types of questions, challenges, and concerns might such an analysis of artists' work and their work practices raise for arts-based researchers? (p.353)*

My answer to O'Donoghue is the AND. To have it one way *and* the other. There has been much talk of philosophers, true; and there has been much talk of artists, true; but, as jagodzinski and Wallin say, there has not yet been enough *doing*.

Afterword (with Implications)

I

For all the ABERs' talk about art, and of reaching wide audiences, I have yet to see an artwork within the movement rival artworks outside the movement⁴³, one reason why jagodzinski and Wallin discuss three artists not at all associated with the Academy (Bilal, Orlan, and Sterlac), and one reason why I decided to write this particular dissertation. Case in point, Barone and Eisner (2012) name several artists, including writers Dave Eggers and Truman Capote, filmmakers Steven Spielberg and Guillermo del Toro, and playwrights Tony Kushner and Arthur Miller, whose work they say represents "qualitative research texts that are *useful* in the same way that all good art can be" (p.56), but they fail to mention an academics on the list. Whether outside or inside the academy, whether called this or that, they say "each is an example of good arts based research that 'makes new worlds'" (p.56). If not entirely unacceptable, invoking "certified fresh" artists who have nothing to do with arts based research as exemplars of arts based research should be frowned upon. They miss the point. They make a categorical error. I agree that great art, even good art, does not have to be "fact" (a slippery term at best) to ring "true" (another slippery term), which is why novels and films hold great appeal. We

⁴³ This is suggestion/implication number one: a challenge to the quality of ABER. I hope that my dissertation has put forth both a critique and a proposal in this vein, both with its ~~form~~ *forve*(work) and with its content.

can learn about humanity through fiction and often identify with fictional characters.

Werner Herzog (1999) once said “there are deeper strata of truth in [art], and there is such a thing as poetic, ecstatic truth. It is mysterious and elusive, and can be reached only through fabrication and imagination and stylization.” Not surprisingly, though, and importantly, Barone and Eisner do not list arts-based researchers on that list. They might turn their attention to Harvard University’s Sensory Ethnography Lab (SEL), which has been producing the kind of high-quality art/scholarship to which ABER scholars should aspire⁴⁴. These are works that stand on their own as art but that also have the academic

⁴⁴ I aspire toward the SEL’s high-class product*. In fact, for this dissertation I wished at first to make an essay film. Time constraints have forced me to forgo that product in favor of the theorization of such a product. No matter the form it takes, the essay must penetrate art education. I am not exactly inventing a new kind of dissertation. A precedent is not to be found in ABER, though, but rather in other PhD programs*, such as those for studio art or creative writing for which students “produce both a long written essay—albeit half the length required for the history and theory emphasis—and a substantial body of practical [art]work” with assessment spread equally across both portions (Burgin, 2014, p.96). In such a dissertation, the creative work is art and the critical work is scholarship—the two are separate because the art has no other purpose than to be art. An ABER essay film could be uncategorizable as either, confusingly on the border, and while not art in the way SELs work is art, *toward* art. The Sensory Ethnography Lab is the highest achievement of academic anthropological work in the nation. The products emerging from the lab are artworks *in their*

own right (i.e., not just academic treatises), winning recognition at film festivals across the world, including in Berlin (at Berlinale), Cannes, Copenhagen (at CPH:DOX), and New York (at NYFF), among other places, and exhibited at the Centre Pompidou, London's Institute of Contemporary Arts, the Berlin Kunsthalle, MoMA, Tate Museum, etc. So, too, the films from the SEL have been on countless "best of the year" lists, which is to say they are reaching a wide audience. This is a PhD program in "media anthropology," for which students are trained in media (filmmaking or sound) and anthropology. The film is the ideal vehicle to capture ethnography. The SEL is the first program to see its full potential. If ABER is to succeed, it must find the ideal vehicle for delivering what it wishes to deliver. The artwork is *not* ideal because the artwork, in my definition, cannot communicate, which is what scholarship must do. Perhaps the essay—the in-between—is a way forward, if not the ideal vehicle.

* For some time, I thought this would be my path. I earned a master's in creative writing; the next step would have been a PhD in creative writing—a critical work accompanied by a creative work. This model is the same as the new studio-art PhDs, which are on the rise, mostly abroad. Elkins (2014) predicted there would be 127 programs in North America by 2012, but by 2014 there were only 12 (p.xvi). Burgin (2014) defines the coursework for the "PhD (practice emphasis)" as "both a long written essay—albeit half the length required for the history and theory emphasis—

and a substantial body of practical [art]work” with assessment spread equally across the writing and creative work (p.96). This idea from Burgin was drawn from Derrida, the professor, who refused to accept a student’s film in place of a written essay, not because it was a film—for he quite liked the idea—but because it didn’t live up to the rigour required by the assignment. “It has to be encouraged,” he said,

but provided that it does not come at too high a price, provided that rigour, differentiation, refinement do not suffer too much as a result... That is what I said to them... when I explained: “If your film had been accompanied—or articulated with—a discourse refined according to the norms that matter to me, then I would have been more receptive, but this was not the case, what you are proposing to me is coming in the place of discourse but does not adequately replace it.” (qtd., p.93)

Around the world, this kind of PhD is growing. In Australia, for example, the requirements for creative PhDs are “creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture, and society, and the use of this stock knowledge to devise new applications” (Mottram, p.2014, p.39). According to Macleod and Holdridge (2006), “evidence has demonstrated that the making/writing issue has gone far beyond a simple binary argument” and that “The relationship between the two can be extremely productive” because “It’s about the tension between them” (p.157). I am trying to situate myself *between the two*, with one hand on each—putting some doubt back into the PhD. This

rigor of their discipline's (anthropology's) research. This dissertation is not ABER and yet it is, or at least it moves toward ABER. This dissertation argues for a kind of SEL to crash into arts education scholarship. The SEL is perfect for anthropology because film has the capacity to capture "members' methods" (that evasive thing ethnography is after)

is not art because its scholarship; but this is not scholarship in the traditional sense; this is the essay. The above researchers have found that "the evidence of PhD completions and the experience of the artist/researchers show that the two forms are integral" (p.157). Here we have the Deleuzian AND. But the two are in conversation via concepts and questions. I agree with the "viva voce" model practiced at some UK institutions in which the dissertation is deemed suitable if it answers these questions: "Can you circumscribe the field? Who or what is your addressee? Name the interlocutors, texts or thinkers or artists you're speaking with when you do your research. In what way is your PhD an original contribution to the field?" (Dronsfield, 2012, p.118). Even Derrida saw the advantage of such work. When a student submitted a film in place of a written essay, Derrida, the professor, despite being intrigued, refused to accept it. "It has to be encouraged," he said, "but provided that it does not come at too high a price, provided that rigour, differentiation, refinement do not suffer too much as a result" (qtd. in Burgin, p.93). Derrida added: "If your film had been accompanied—or articulated with—a discourse refined according to the norms that matter to me, then I would have been more receptive" (p.93). The essay paves a way for this kind of Derrida-ian dissertation.

better than the written word alone. I wish to move beyond ABER whose primary use, as Finley (2008) says, lies “in addressing social inequities” and “postmodern ethics of participative, action-oriented, and politically situated perspectives... to facilitate critical race, indigenous, queer, feminist, and border theories and research methodologies” (p.72). I don’t see my work as directly political in *those* ways. The poet Russell Edson (1975) says nothing is more terrible than a self-serious poet

whose poems are gradually decaying into sermons of righteous anger; no longer able to tell the difference between the external abstraction and the inner desperation; the inner life is no longer lived or explored, but converted into public anger... Beware of serious people, for their reality is flat; and they have come to think of themselves as merely flat paste-ons. Their rage at the flatness of their lives knows no end; and they keep all their little imitators scared to death.... And they are meddlers, they try to create others in their own image because theirs is failing. (p.39)

The a/r/tographic work I’ve seen/read⁴⁵ does not excite me (perhaps because it is too concerned with “teaching,” or the self, not educations and selves). Life is a clearing we walk through. A watery meal on a flat plate. Everything is getting into everything else anyway. Barone and Eisner (2012) say that this is the time “to provide methodological

⁴⁵ Rita Irwin has collected a list (with links) of a/r/tographic PhD dissertations here: http://artography.edcp.educ.ubc.ca/?page_id=117 and an ABER bibliography here: http://artography.edcp.educ.ubc.ca/?page_id=123

permission for people to innovate with the methods they use” (p.2). With this dissertation—the beginning of what I hope will be a long career of critique and affirmation through *essai*—I have accepted their challenge.

II

After finalizing a draft of this dissertation and working through several revisions, a new book was published and brought to my attention. Among other worthy contributions in that book—titled *What is Art Education? After Deleuze and Guattari*—is one by jan jagodzinski: “Betraying Further: Arts-Based Education at the ‘End of the World.’” jagodzinski, this time alone, revisits his critique of ABER, adding some new gems to sift through⁴⁶. He begins by calling his and Wallin’s original challenge “*forcework*” (p.267), a term that aptly describes what I tried to *do* in this dissertation. jagodzinski responds to notable retorts from the a/r/tography crowd—one from Adrienne Boulton-Funke, a prominent practitioner of the “method,” and one from Carl Leggo, an academic and self-styled “poet” who practices within the school; and other general additions from the group’s co-founder, Rita Irwin. jagodzinski’s goal is to respond to those retorts. jagodzinski says that his and Wallin’s main goal was to claim that ABER is “representational and anthropocentric” (p.268). jagodzinski says that they want not to

⁴⁶ And this is suggestion/implication number two: the critique and discussion must continue. With this dissertation I enter the conversation. I plan to keep at it (the way jagodzinski has kept at it, even though, as he says, the two sides may become further entrenched with all this open opposition).

rethink the “subject” but to disintegrate it “by a field of forces where identity no longer survives” (p.269), a Deleuzian practice articulated, he says, in *Negotiations* (but also remember one of the keys of *Difference and Repetition*). “Becoming is always a deterritorialization, an un-becoming,” says jagodzinski, “the undoing givenness of the given” (p.269). jagodzinski believes that a/r/tography, despite all the rhetoric, could be situated comfortably within ethnography, as a form of action research (which I too have argued in the body of my dissertation), tied to representation (p.270). He calls their work “democratically conservative and pluralist” (p.270) in part because of what “this research actually does” (p.271) (as opposed to what it *claims* to do). A/r/tographers misinterpret Deleuze|Guattari’s AND. They use the term “contiguous”—touching multiple points along shared corridors—when in fact they should use the AND—that *transversal movement* Deleuze |Guattari call “sweeping one way and another” (qtd., p.270). In other words, the a/r/tographers mistake /conflate bulbous with singularity. They mistakenly define “in-between” as a physicality (an object?) situated between other physicalities when in fact it means the AND. In addition, says jagodzinski, a/r/tographic research remains obsessed with the *self* who operates within a *community* of practitioners that use *reflection/reflexion* as a major method of understanding, which remains tied, if indirectly, to phenomenology. The filmmakers and essayists to whom I refer in the body of my dissertation privilege the *event* and *force*. Without seeking to be, they are more aligned with Deleuze|Guattari than many a/r/tographers. “The event,” says jagodzinski, “always offers the unthought as its arrival; time is always out of joint, offering the glimpse of the third synthesis of time: the eternal return of renewal” (p.290). Perhaps no other medium

but cinema is best suited to enact the “cracked” *I*, the multiple which is also (but how?) the singular. Perhaps a/r/tography, because it situates itself firmly within the Academy and wishes to “say something,” which means *communicating* with *friends*, clear distinctions between subjects and objects (with special emphasis on art as object), will be stuck in perpetuity within forms instead of forces, homework instead of *forcework*. We must, as John Cage (1981) once said, climb out of the fetishism of aestheticism. Writing about music, he says it “imposes nothing” and “can effectively change our manner of seeing, making us view everything around us as art. But that is not the goal. Sounds have no goal! They are, and that’s all. They live” (p.87). Let us return to the living.

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