

# TABOO

Volume 19, Number 5, Fall 2020

Theme:

The Messy Affect(s) of Writing in the Academy

**Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education**  
Volume 19, Number 5, Fall 2020

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**Publisher:**

Alan H. Jones, Caddo Gap Press  
3145 Geary Boulevard, PMB 275  
San Francisco, California 94118 USA  
415-666-3012  
alanhjones@caddogap.com  
www.caddogap.com

ISSN 1080-5400

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## Introduction

### The Messy Affect(s) of Writing in the Academy

David Lee Carlson & Kenny Varner

#### Introduction

Edna St. Vincent Millay writes in her rather pithy sonnet, “I will chaos in to 14 lines” and in the end, she proclaims that she will make her writing “good.” Her sonnet reflects many writers’ feelings about the writing process. Of all of the tasks that academics have to complete, writing is perhaps the most important, the one that consumes the most time, and it’s the one that is least talked about among academics. Philosophers and writers have commented on the ontology of writing (e.g. Foucault) the relationship between the body and writing (e.g. Cixous) and composition scholars trace the history of writing in schools. Writing is perhaps the *sine quo non* of being an academic. The editors of this special issue accepted pieces that trace the messiness of writing inside and outside the academy; or to evoke Millay, the process or the struggle of putting chaos into fourteen lines.

For this issue, we received a diverse range of manuscripts from traditional academic articles, to poems, art, and rants, and/or a combination of these forms. We accepted manuscripts that push beyond the traditional academic article and potentially forced readers to think differently about writing and about various modalities of writing. The editors of this special issue were interested in articles that showcased the messiness and the affective aspects of writing in the academy and outside academic spaces. For manuscripts submitted we not only wanted novel

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and taboo articulations of content, but we also want to see the approaches taken in the writing of the pieces to draw upon similarly novel and taboo forms.

The submissions for this special issue did not disappoint, in fact they surprised us in their creativity, their thoughtfulness, and most importantly how they engendered a sense of play with and through writing. This special issue will not only be fruitful for scholars interested in the writing process, but who are also entrenched in theoretical considerations of writing production, theoretical considerations necessary in the writing process, and in the more-than-human aspects of articulation. The editors were overjoyed with the brilliant articles in this special issue and are quite proud of it. Anyone of the articles could be the lead article and thus they are arranged in no particular order. The issue read in full is a series of provocations that should be pleasing in its unsettling.

### **Queer Librettist; or, Notes on the Composition of “Fox: An Opera-Comique”**

Benjamin Arnberg, Auburn University

My article is a writing process narrative for social justice scholars. Arguments seem apropos, considering the academic genre in which I write. For clarity's sake, I shall list these arguments, then spend the article demonstrating (through practice) how my arguments hold. (1) There is no universally accessible and effective process for writing to/for contemporary academics, so (2) If anyone gives you tips, read said tips with skepticism and open-mindedness, because (3) Academe needs to reduce the amount of stylistic and onto-epistemological similarity, which yields banal and esoteric (white-hetero-patriarchal) products, that (4) No damn body wants to read, for (5) How useful is our work if no damn body wants to read it, learn from it, and apply it in “everyday” life?

### **Manuscript Rejection and Shame Resilience in Early Career Faculty of Color:**

#### **Vignettes on Coping and Overcoming**

Rene O. Guillaume, New Mexico State University

Jesús Cisneros, University of Texas at El Paso

Edna Martinez, University of Texas at El Paso

Central to the role of the professoriate is the concept of scholarship, with a major hallmark of the profession consisting of peer-reviewed manuscripts as an expectation for promotion and tenure as well as annual review. A common occurrence for faculty submitting manuscripts as part of the peer-review process is manuscript rejection. The implications associated with manuscript rejection for early career faculty range from negative annual reviews to not earning promotion and tenure. The purpose of this study, utilizing Shame Resilience Theory (Brown, 2006), was to explore our experiences as early career Faculty of Color to bet-

ter understand the ways in which we coped and overcame the shame associated with the rejection process associated with peer-reviewed scholarship. The nine first-person portrait vignettes presented in this manuscript are centered on three overarching themes: (1) recognizing vulnerability, (b) tempering rejection, and (c) negotiating and reconciling rejection. As these vignettes reflect our lived experiences, we maintained first-person narration.

### **Chopped to Pieces, I Write Myself Together**

James P. Burns, Florida International University

In this paper, the author reflects on being a writer in the academy in dialogue with writers who have been instrumental in the author's academic work: James Baldwin, George Orwell, Eduardo Galeano, and Michel Foucault. The author first contextualizes the paper in the current historical moment, characterized by resurgent authoritarianism, the COVID-19 pandemic, and mass non-violent protests in response to the police murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor to reiterate the importance of academic writers as public intellectuals. The author then reflects on the messy affects of writing in the academy, particularly as a pre-tenure faculty member, through four purposes, proposed by Orwell, that motivate most writers: sheer egoism, an aesthetic enthusiasm, historical impulse, and political purpose. The author concludes that academic writing comprises an aesthetics and ethics of the self as well as a political project of self-cultivation, the embodiment of truth, and care for the world.

### **Expanding Academic Writing:**

#### **A Multilayered Exploration of What it Means to Belong**

Sara K. Sterner, Humboldt State University

Lee C. Fisher, Minnesota Writing Project, University of Minnesota

In this article, we explore the impact of rigid boundaries of what counts as academic writing and what it means to belong through the construction of a multilayered text that draws on the work of Patti Lather. Our layered writing engages with and documents the complexity of the writing *process and the struggle of putting chaos* into a static format that cohesively considers the multiplicity of knowing. This alternative format productively disrupts the status quo and honors an engagement with writing we would like to see embraced in the academy.

### **We Will Chaos into Three(lines):**

#### **Be(com)ing Writers of Three Through (Re)etymologizing "Write"**

Rebecca C. Christ, Florida International University

Tara Gutshall Rucker, Columbia Public Schools, Columbia, Missouri

Candace R. Kuby, University of Missouri

In this manuscript, we take up the invitation by the editors of this special issue *and* Deleuze to expose, explore, and expand Deleuze's triple definition of writing. We will chaos into three(lines). We become writers of three. We ask questions without definite answers: How do we write a piece that is never finished? Is writing supposed to be clear? What if writing is supposed to be listened to? Experienced? What does it provoke? And in an attempt to write that which is not supposed to be on paper, we write. Sketch. Drag. Produce a mess. Struggle. Resist. Create. Map. Sustain.

**Affective Writing as a Promise of “Yet-To-Become”:  
Unearthing the Meaning of Writing through the Voices  
of Tenure-Track Assistant Professors**

Jeong-Hee Kim, Texas Tech University

Joshua Cruz, Texas Tech University

Rebecca Hite, Texas Tech University

In this article, we collectively explore our shared experience of the act of writing in academia. Drawing upon the voices of tenure-track assistant professors in a research university and using the lens of affect theory, we inquire into what it is like to write in the modern academy increasingly influenced by the institution's neoliberal agenda. Our experiences are shared in multiple poems, created by the cut-up method. It is our hope that the affect of writing or affective writing would flow from body to body, cutting across our personal feelings, reaching far to those who are in a situation similar to ours existing in the space outside of our reality.

**Mucous Bodies, Messy Affects, and Leaky-writing in Academia**

Teija Rantala, University of Turku, Finland

Taru Leppanen, University of Turku, Finland

Mirka Koro, Arizona State University

In this article, we conceptualize and exemplify how we, as academics, might write with our always-already gendered (leaky) bodies. We form assemblages of writing by following Erin Manning's (2013) theorization of leaky bodies and leaky-writing. Here, the mucosity and the leakiness of our storylines, narratives of affects and processes, work as an anchor through which we process our differentiating materialized bodily realities in academia. Therefore, the focus is on the materialized narrative intensities, which, through academic writing practices, the movement of affects in academia fold into acts of writing, hand-pens, and thinking-feelings. Our aim is to offer fresh academic narratives by following what happens to storytelling in this composition of various kinds of lines. These narratives do not fold neatly into chapters because they stem from storylines of vitality, materiality, and molar and molecular lines. They leak into one another, creating lines out of utterings, expressions, and words—as well as visual, moving, and

troubling experiences. The writing academic mind-bodies leak emotions, materialities, fluids, and uncertainties to the neo-liberalist outcome-orientated academic writing-machines (see Massumi, 2017). They contest the idea of academia as a molar structure that works on rational logic by allowing vitality, porosity, and leakiness to transform academic writing practices.

### **The Frankenpaper:**

#### **One or Many Essays on Writing and Frankenstein and Deleuze and...**

Joshua Cruz, Texas Tech University

Holly Corkill, Texas Tech University

This paper (or papers?) makes explicit the “Franken-” qualities of writing. Rather than a linear process, writing is an assembling of ideas, sometimes disparate but always overlapping. We have cobbled together something like a paper on writing, although it is also a reflection on Deleuze, Frankenstein, Frankenstein, Shelley, anxiety, composition as a field, composition as a practice... the list goes on. This paper, we believe, takes on and insistently exhibits monstrous and un-identifiable qualities. It is poorly sutured; the seams show glaringly; and we, the authors, realized around the time of completion that it was probably a bad idea to send this thing into the world. Still, the deed is done, and the paper now exerts its own agency upon those that chance to read it. We can only hope that writing of this nature does not come back to kill us (or our careers) in the long run.

### **Academic Joyrides: Uncreative Reading and Writing**

Susan Canon, Mercer University

Teri Holbrook, Georgia State University

With this article, we invite you into our experiment with uncreative reading and writing drawing on the work of Kenneth Goldsmith (2011) and the Situationist International. In particular, we take up two situationist concepts, *dérive* (drift) and *détournement* (rerouting or hijacking). We experimented with these concepts through a series of invitations to see how they might work on our writing and thinking. The concepts are meant to take participants out of their predisposed and unnoticed practices to encourage new ways of thinking and being that work against restrictive forces. In this case, we desired to push back against the pervasive notions of efficiency and productivity in academic reading and writing to attend to other things of value.

## Queer Librettist; Or, Notes on the Composition of “Fox: An Opera Comique”

*Benjamin Arnberg*

### Abstract

My article is a writing process narrative for social justice scholars. Arguments seem apropos, considering the academic genre in which I write. For clarity's sake, I shall list these arguments, then spend the article demonstrating (through practice) how my arguments hold. (1) There is no universally accessible and effective process for writing to/for contemporary academics, so (2) If anyone gives you tips, read said tips with skepticism and open-mindedness, because (3) Academe needs to reduce the amount of stylistic and onto-epistemological similarity, which yields banal and esoteric (white-hetero-patriarchal) products, that (4) No damn body wants to read, for (5) How useful is our work if no damn body wants to read it, learn from it, and apply it in “everyday” life?

### Introduction

Arguments seem apropos, considering the academic genre in which I write. For clarity's sake, I shall list these arguments, then spend the subsequent space demonstrating (through practice) how my arguments hold. (1) There is no universally accessible and effective process for writing to/for contemporary academics, so (2) If anyone gives you tips, read said tips with skepticism and open-mindedness, because (3) Academe needs to reduce the amount of stylistic and onto-epistemological similarity, which yields banal and esoteric (white-hetero-patriarchal<sup>1</sup>) products, that (4) No damn body wants to read, for (5) How useful is our work if no damn body wants to read it, learn from it, and apply it in “everyday” life?

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I am not here to give tips, so you need not immediately read this document with skepticism, which I know is what I told you to do in Argument #2. Instead, this document is a narrative of how I wrote the opening chapter of my dissertation (now monograph) despite having no models, no timeline, and (almost) no encouragement from my peer group at-large. You can decide whether the product was a success; your opinion on its efficacy is really not my concern. Rather, I hope you read this and discover that meandering, discombobulated, ass-dragging, emotionally-energating, stumbling across a due date with god knows what in your document is part of getting shit done. Anyone who tells you drafting can be simple if you follow a model or a streamlined process\* is lying or privileged or both (\*My statistics professor insisted all writing take the exact same form for each study: “To what extent is there a statistically significant difference...etc.”).

I spent two years writing my dissertation (now monograph): *Pink Lemonade: An Autoethnographic Fantasia on Queer Campus Themes* (the monograph had a title change of *Queer Campus Climate: An Ethnographic Fantasia* as insisted upon by Routledge). Two years is misleading. I started interviewing gay men at my institution two years prior to completing the first draft. I started making observations and notes thirteen years ago. My B.A. and M.A. are in English Literature; I aspired to some literary career, hence I kept copious observation notes and character sketches of friends/acquaintances for future inspiration for my fiction opus. (Hint: Never came). Even after the dissertation and monograph left for review, I conducted further interviews while my IRB was fresh. The subsequent interviews\* yielded my first victim of ex-gay therapy, my first sero-positive participant, and my first fraternity president. (\*Check out the sequel to *Pink Lemonade/Queer Campus Climate* within my lifetime; it’ll be a macabre, irreverent pipeline of laughs and tears, complete with a “Scholar Strikes Back” agenda aimed at all my critics and skeptics, one of whom suggested rejecting publication because I did not cite a publication that never existed in the first place.<sup>2</sup> A preview: Lucas, recently sero-positive, described it being easy to remain sober in college, “Booze costs; the dick is free.” Thus, there is much for me to curate regarding the experiences of out gay and queer\* men on my Bible-belt campus. (\*I use the term queer as shorthand for gender and sexual non-hetero-conforming students, or any intersection of gender and sexual non-conformity. I acknowledge that, semantically, queer’s opposite is “normal,” and that usage may connote a problematic binary. I do not intend “queer” to connote such a binary. I use it primarily as shorthand and as a reclamation. When a participant refers to themselves through specific terminology, i.e. “gay,” I honor their usage. While we’re on the subject of semantics, queer writers who read this, I recently received a scathing review of my work wherein the reviewer criticized my use of queer claiming that an “ongoing argument” exists in the field about its acceptability and that I should cite a source supporting my usage. First, a queer person should not have to cite a source supporting their own usage of “queer” (I am queer, and I use the term because I use the term). Second,

if there is an “ongoing argument,” then a single source is not enough to solve the argument anyway. Use the terms your participants use for themselves. Move on.<sup>3</sup>).

I began reporting my curated data through conventional means (validating data and presenting “sterile” and “reliable” results in findings and discussion sections, bookended by a literature review and a conclusion). When I provided drafts to the men I interviewed (member-checking to serve the “Eight Big-Tent Criteria”<sup>4</sup> I felt beholden to kowtow before), these men were disappointed. The resulting drafts did not fully immerse a reader into a multi-sensory experience of their lives.<sup>5</sup> How could I call the work a *fantasia*? Where was the *magic*? Why did it read so *hetero*? Drag queens, in particular, lamented the lack of information about the costumes they wore, the music they danced to, the wigs they teased, or, in one case, how it felt to have a wig snatched off by a ceiling fan mid-performance (it landed in a pitcher of daiquiris across the room, which rested on the table of a bewildered group of self-proclaimed “diesel dykes.”). I revisited the data, by which I mean I looked at transcripts, photos, videos, and notes. A few weeks following, I came across MacLure’s<sup>6</sup> post-qualitative treatise on the importance of “sense” and “glow” and the “frisson” that comes when the research context generates a bodily reaction, not just an intellectual one. Soon after, I came across Daza and Gershon’s<sup>7</sup> call to move “beyond ocular inquiry” through sonic cartography; within their call, they asked us to consider sound data rather than visual data. Finally, I revisited Jones and Adams’s<sup>8</sup> foundational piece on queer autoethnography wherein the researcher captures “fragments of lived experience [that] collide and realign with one another, breaking and remaking histories” to “create good stories.”<sup>9</sup> I reconsidered what constitutes “good stories” (I was expert at evaluating stories, as a B.A. and M.A. in English Literature; known to some in my circle as “professionally unemployed” but rather well-read) rather than “good research.”<sup>10</sup> I selected autoethnography to disrupt conventional qualitative inquiry into queer lives; I selected autoethnography\* to provide a liberating intellectual space in which marginalized voices could be heard without over interference from researcher (or disciplinary) interpretation. (\*It may not be readily clear how autoethnography provides a “liberating intellectual space” without “over interference from researcher interpretation.” My simplest response: Autoethnography makes the researcher a participant; thus, the researcher’s life, not intellectual tradition, becomes part of the project.<sup>11</sup> The researcher is in the experience rather than interpreting the experience. Curated data are selected because they were personally resonant rather than epistemologically verifiable and reliable).

I revised my initial chapters into sonic cartographies built around musical genres that suited the context, the content, and the pattern of speaking for each participant (and bystander). The last component was built on Deavere Smith’s<sup>12</sup> indication that people speak in organic poems; I extended that idea to lyrics. One chapter became a transcript from a space ship built upon lyrics from David Bowie’s “Space Oddity” (documenting the experience of interviewing Hamp,

a “twink” with ADD who spent the whole interview moving around the room, drinking my latte, and hacking my phone to send his phone number to my best friend on whom he had a crush). I felt like Ground Control calling Major Hamp back down to Earth, at first; then I just let him act himself, and I recorded the result. Another chapter became an opera-comique based upon the experiences of a man named Fox who spoke in arias. Long-winded, impassioned, melodramatic. He sometimes began to sing within his speeches; he called himself a tenor, even. He was a former show choir member and university mascot. He narrated his time serving an organization whose adviser became infamous in the 90s for revoking the charter of the campus’s Gay/Straight Alliance, with the help of the state legislature (an event that was covered by *The New York Times*). He spoke of working in an office in which his boss, upon hearing Fox was gay, called him into his office to let Fox know that he and his wife would pray for Fox. He spoke of gay sex shame. He spoke of finding a community of role models in the Washington Gay Men’s Chorus. He spoke of being a sausage salesperson (literal sausage, folks; that is not a euphemism for whore). I paired his experiences with ones I shared (we worked with many of the same people and attended undergrad at the same time) and transformed our shared story (and its counter-transference, under Langer’s<sup>13</sup> adapted definition) into opera-comique form, incorporating arias from Wagner, Puccini, and Purcell (oddly enough, not composers of opera-comiques) alongside songs from contemporary rock operas like *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and *Tommy*. The resulting text did two things: it disrupted standard reporting methods (resting on curation of multiple forms of data rather than analysis/validation of “brute” data;<sup>14</sup> it (hopefully) generated a frisson of multiple senses, since the incorporation of opera texts evoked sound. Indeed, I suggested opera recordings to play as accompaniment to reading (such as Waltraud Meier’s “Mild und leise” from Wagner’s *Tristan and Isolde*, performed in Berlin, 1995). The frisson was essential for rendering the “research” resonant and immersive.

### Fox

“I’m Fox, and Van says you’re thinking about taking my old job.”

I confirmed, and Fox swept me away to the Starbucks, one floor up, to offer me career advice. Ostensibly. Really, it was more like a lunch break with the only other gay man on campus his age that he could find. A relationship was born of our impromptu kiki.<sup>15</sup> Fox acquiesced to participate in my dissertation project.

Rendering Fox’s story was the most convoluted task of the whole project. First, I needed to capture Fox, the man. The man who took me to Bear Pride at Atlanta’s The Heretic (I am not a Bear, let me make that clear; if I am anything, it’s a Secretary Bird). The man who consented to be part of a promotional shoot for The Heretic, which included dancing shirtless on the stage with a Bear head on while bumping and grinding\* among a group of Brazilian (*Papaizinhos?*) Bears

(*Ursos?*)<sup>16</sup> up for Pride from Rio. (\*I have pictures of this event, but have been explicitly forbidden from publishing them, research or no research). The man who offered to take me to a bathhouse only to rescind the offer en route, since he was not prepared for me to see him gang banged in a public swing. The man who sang while going down the corridors of campus buildings, which enabled me to register his pending appearance in my office. The man who insisted that I document the sole glory hole on campus, to immortalize it in a work of scholarship.

Second, I needed to capture the context in which Fox lived. Fox graduated undergrad from our institution in 2006 (for reference, I attended from 2005-2009). He was in a prominent fraternity, he was a university ambassador, he was a mascot, he schtupped his fraternity's president in the house\* (\*A dry house, at least when it came to liquor). He interacted with ever major administrator, donor, alum, and campus guest for over a decade. Thus, he, more than any other man I interviewed, represented a generational window into the campus climate for gay/queer men at our institution. I decided to eject the dissertation format\* common among my peers (\*Introduction, Literature Review, Methods, Findings, Discussion); that was too passé and confining for a queer project, especially for a swing-schtupped, sausage-selling Bear.<sup>17</sup> As a result, Fox's chapter would serve multiple purposes. The chapter would provide: (1) Narrative of Fox's personal experiences based on his interview(s), (2) Historical overview of the campus climate for gay/queer men in our context since 2002 (his freshman year), (3) Auxiliary autoethnographic narratives of my own, which complemented and/or expanded Fox's accounts, and (4) Methodological explanations for Fox's chapter and the dissertation as a whole. All this in addition to being a "hook" through which to enthrall readers and compel them further into the depths of my study.<sup>18</sup> I had no model to follow. Even the autoethnographies and queer narratives available to me (i.e. Adams<sup>19</sup> whose work I admired, although it followed a more straightforward mode of inquiry and dissemination; although I had some inspiration from Callier<sup>20</sup> and Edmonds<sup>21</sup> for article-length post-qualitative riffs on queer experience).

These purposes were to be supported by approximately twenty pages of single-spaced interview transcripts, a one-hundred(+) page reflection and audit journal, dozens of pages of observation notes, photographs (including six photographs of a glory hole), scads of institutional documents, news articles covering on-campus events, and my own thirteen-year corresponding narrative.

Suggested chapter length? Thirty pages.

Yeah, sure.

I began drafting while at the National Association for Student Personnel Administrators Summer Symposium in Orlando, summer 2017. I identified the pieces of data that were essential. I placed them in a Word document. The document was 200 pages. I went to Epcot, drank around the world, got overwhelmed, gave up.

I resumed drafting during the summer of 2018. I was in the midst of reading Richardson's *Fields of Play: Constructing an Academic Life*<sup>22</sup> and Saunders's *Lin-*

*coln in the Bardo*.<sup>23</sup> I immersed myself in alternative ways to: (1) Write research, and (2) Write ensemble narratives. As an aspiring methodologist, I delved deep into an idea I had, based on a new materialist paradigm, of curation-as-analysis.<sup>24</sup> EXPAND HERE.<sup>25</sup> My initial approach to curating Fox's chapter resembled an epistolary novel, such as *Dracula*,<sup>26</sup> wherein the narrative is told through carefully ordered placement of documents. The cumulative impact is a sense of authenticity at having reviewed a case file documenting a specific real, sensational tale that could only be felt authentic if readers read the *original*, unfiltered documents. One problem arose instantly: including *original* documents meant revealing identities. Even redacting names from documents could not prevent readers from Googling excerpts and locating online versions, thus putting pieces together and identifying the gay/queer men and their networks. A second problem arose soon after: including *original* documents as a means to generate *authenticity* was at odds with a queer theoretical commitment to disrupt conventional onto-epistemological conceptions of truth and reality. Gay/queer men spent such extended periods of time being the victims of varying "truths," I was reluctant to generate a text that contributed to that victimizing impulse by using individual participants to articulate monolithic conclusions.<sup>27</sup>

Aside from these ethical and paradigmatic concerns, the text was dull (non-immersive, non-accessible). The text's arc was tenuously constructed. The text did not do any of the things I advocated research should do: be non-ocular, engage multiple temporalities, register viscerally. Here's what I mean (excerpted from a summer 2018 draft):

July 26, 2005. Office of the President. The university convened its inaugural Strategic Diversity Plan Committee and reported its findings and suggestions. The membership included some student representatives; two were white, straight, Christian men who presided over the most racially and socioeconomically exclusive organizations on campus at the time.

2015. Strategic Diversity Plan Revisions Committee. The university convened its second Strategic Diversity Plan Committee to revise the plan and report on progress. The new membership included Circe, who would go on to fire a black man and a gay man in the same year that she promoted two straight, white, Christian men who met their girlfriend and wife (respectively) while serving as the women's direct supervisors. Circe<sup>28</sup> also disciplined an organization adviser for attempting to introduce a diversity component to the training curriculum. Circe's stated mentor is Helios,<sup>29</sup> who was responsible for revoking the Gay/Straight Alliance Charter.

June 12, 2016. Orlando, FL. Pulse Nightclub was the scene of a mass shooting, which killed nearly fifty gay men.

June 13, 2016. The university president issued a two-sentence statement expressing remorse for the Pulse shooting. He did not reference the gay community. The

statement was removed shortly thereafter and replaced by one from the Provost. Circe's department made no statement at all, despite being a student life department. Circe did not attend the subsequent vigil. Notably, Circe made time to attend the speech given by Milo Yiannopoulos,<sup>30</sup> who visited the campus as part of his "Dangerous Faggots" tour. Circe told her graduate assistants, "He made some good points."

August 2016. Circe's Corner Office in the Student Union. Benjamin reports a philandering adviser<sup>31</sup> who has also made racist comments to (and about) a student. Circe discredited Benjamin as exhibiting the "melodrama" common of his "kind" and for exaggerating circumstances. According to Circe, said adviser had a strong track record of inclusion. This track record included sexual discrimination, an affair with an undergraduate student, blocking the nomination of a Trans\* student to the Senate, removing two African American students from executive office for GPA violations (without removing White students guilty of the same offense), outing a gay officer through the campus newspaper as a publicity stunt, leading an organization-wide discussion asking the question "Why isn't there a White Student Union?", and lecturing Benjamin that academic diversity was more important than demographic diversity.

April 2017. Circe's corner office. Circe removes Benjamin from his job for "budgetary reasons" despite Benjamin raising more money than any other staff member in his department.

If this looks like an ornate grocery list to you, well spotted. Though this report provides some impression of the campus climate, it comes across as personally vindictive and mean-spirited.<sup>32</sup> Not to mention lifeless. In addition: Where is Fox? Fox did not appear until page sixteen of thirty-three. What leading man makes his appearance halfway through the text? When Fox does appear, he does so in a rather lackluster fashion. I asked him to identify five words to describe himself. He answers:

Witty. Anxious. Friendly. Loving. And deceptively sad. I accomplished all these things that were really exciting and represented ambition, but all the while...I was turning away from some really important growing opportunities. I feared who I always wanted to be. That euphoria could not be sustained. I think that I worked so hard to keep that going for so long that by the time that it stopped, I was just tired. The recession prevented me from being able to find jobs that would give me the prestige and fuel that unhealthy place of self-worth. Choosing to live in a liberal city, in Nashville, allowed me to be a little more anonymous. I found myself in my first relationship ever. After nine months, when that relationship failed, that exposed wounds. I think we allow ourselves to use accomplishments to plug holes in ourselves. We use people, especially romantic relationships, to love parts of us that we don't truly love ourselves. Not having the jobs, being in my first relationship, and it ending, revealed to me that I was a pretty unhealthy person, and I've never been able to fully pull myself out of that depressing discovery and space. I look back on my life with a mixed bag of

emotions. It's pride and happiness but also a lot of sadness because I feel like I was tricked. A lot of tricking myself.

Curating this speech first introduced readers to a common trope in social-science research: the tragic queer. One who is depressed, suicidal, regretful, engaged in risky behavior.<sup>33</sup> Though Fox could express feelings of depression and regret, those feelings were not central to his being. One could not get a grasp of Fox's *joie de vivre*, his wit, or his sing-song way of speaking. In addition, one could not get a sense that the dissertation as a whole would counter tragic-queer narratives in order to provide a positive account of queer life.

In the midst of Fox's transcripts and my month-by-month reporting of anti-queer activity, I attempted to show how queer men became associated with melodrama through a series of curated cultural artifacts in which, well, prominent queer men were melodramatic. Interspersed in all of these data bits were chunks of paradigmatic concepts articulated by scholars of queer theory and methodological theory, namely Laurel Richardson and David Halperin. I closed with a series of news reports about LGBT centers being shut down or vandalized. For example:

May 20, 2016. *Knox News*: "The University of Tennessee has disbanded its Office of Diversity, including eliminating four staff positions and a \$131,356 operating budget. Meanwhile, Donna Braquet, director of the UT Pride Center, will resume her full-time position as an associate professor in the University Libraries. On Friday, she wrote on the center's Facebook page that she would no longer head up the Pride Center. 'We provided a brave space for students who are the most marginalized on campus to be their true authentic selves with our space, our programs, our resources, and our events.'"

Why bother with my dissertation at all? Why not just read the original documents for yourself?

I presented the work to my dissertation co-chair. She liked individual data points, although she did not care for a scene in which Fox's cock ring fell out in Starbucks\* (\*That scene will be in the sequel).<sup>34</sup> She suggested looking back into Richardson as well as at a piece we read titled "Befriending Snow."<sup>35</sup> I also expanded my reading (including begrudgingly listening to reviewer suggestions, such as reading Kohn's work on screenplays). In December 2018, I traveled to Sydney, Australia to present my work-in-progress at the Australian Association for Research in Education. While there, I met a man from India who took me for drinks at a private club, followed by shots at Arq, and...Hold up, not the point\* (\*The point will be in the sequel). Midway through my trip, I saw Vivica Genaux in *Artaserse* at City Recital Hall. Midway through the performance, I realized: Fox spoke in arias. He was melodramatic. He knew how to walk in Louboutins (like Genaux). He was gay. He *was* opera.

I selected an opera-comique<sup>36</sup> format, since I am not a composer and did not want to expend too much effort making Fox's transcripts map onto existing

musical compositions. Data would accompany musical scores and musical scores would complement the emotional tenor<sup>37</sup> of the data. The range of emotions would include deep sadness all the way to irreverent silliness (hence, the inclusion of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, *Tommy*, and *Jesus Christ Superstar*). An opera-comique would also enable me to summon varied data sources (memories, senses, sounds, clothes, music); one instance included translating my memories into a ghost named Longitude (so named because Longitude gave a longitudinal account of my experiences and attitudinal changes). In addition, any scholarship that was *necessary* would be included as if the scholar was a character in the text. Formal documents took the form of newsboys (like *Newsies*) standing on street corners, announcing their headlines to the public.

Fox liked the idea. He confirmed his vocal range was tenor and offered to perform excerpts on the promotional tour\* (\*Academic books do not generally receive promotional tours). I gave him an alto and a soprano aria, to reduce the likelihood of his publicly performing the opera-comique.

In the opera, we are introduced to Fox in the Dramatis Personae as “A member of the administration; self-described cub; tenor.” I am introduced in the Dramatis Personae as “A student and teacher; alto (or a soprano, if he’s had some vodka and a few ibuprofen to relax his vocal chords.” The third primary character is Longitude, introduced in the Dramatis Personae as “A spirit of Alistair Hall; sometimes tenor, sometimes alto, sometimes soprano, sometimes mute; he is the ghost of Benjamin’s straight identity who still sometimes haunts Benjamin to remind him of his previous worldview.”

The scene:

**SCENE:**

*(Persimmon University.<sup>6238</sup> A semi-rural campus in the American South. Oft referred to as a Bible-belt campus; rated conservative, politically. The campus rests on a plain, shaded by a canopy of oaks, crepe myrtles, and magnolias; designated a “Tree Campus” by the Arbor Day Foundation. Buildings are predominantly Georgian, made of red brick with white detailing; a few buildings are antebellum. The campus is a “pedestrian” campus, on which there are no roads for vehicles. Students dress in athletic casual, mostly; however, Wednesdays are known as collar and dress days, since Greek life organizations meet in the evenings and expect members to wear “preppy” attire.*

*Benjamin’s office is in the tallest building on campus, and in the county: Alistair Hall; it is a ten-story brutally minimal structure that is allegedly causing ocular cancer due to its hazardous material construction. His office contains one iMac computer and a series of small stacks of books spread across a gray desk. It is the room in which Benjamin first meets Fox.)*

FOX: There’s a glory hole on campus.

BENJAMIN: New?

FOX: I guess?

BENJAMIN: Found it mincing about, did you?\

FOX: Heard about it on Grindr. Want to go see if we can find it?\

BENJAMIN: Don't you have work?

FOX: I'm taking a minute. Came out to my boss. He said he and his wife would pray for me.

BENJAMIN: It'll take the prayers of millions.

FOX: This is sort of work; the glory hole needs to be documented for your dissertation.

BENJAMIN: I could hear you before I could see you, by the way. Your tenor floated down the hallway. I tried to hide.

FOX: (*pointing at Benjamin's shoes*) Look at you, honey. She splurged. She's high trash, today.

BENJAMIN: Thanks. Gucci. Alessandro's first collection. And what is that on your tee?

FOX: Two bears humping.

BENJAMIN: You wear that to work?

FOX: I told you: I'm taking the afternoon off.

BENJAMIN: Where is this glory hole?

FOX: Grove Hall.

BENJAMIN: Let's move.

LONGITUDE: (*mimicking the one drag queen she ever saw as Benjamin and Fox exit an exterior doorway onto the campus green*) Enema? Party of two. Enema? Party of two.

BENJAMIN: (*to Longitude*) Pardon?

LONGITUDE: Once heard a drag queen restaurant hostess yell Enema, party of two, to a crowd before correcting herself. Emily, party of two. With you two heading to a glory hole, it's for sure Enema, party of two.

#### SCENE:

(*A gritty, emerald-green mosaic tiled men's bathroom. Large: four urinals in a row precede a string of four stalls. Across the walkway is a series of sinks and a large mirror. The bathroom's tiles echo sounds of leaks and drips in perpetuity, despite Grove Hall being the home of many engineering courses*)

BENJAMIN: Which stall?

FOX: Third. Take a look at the poetry etched above it.

BENJAMIN: (*reading from within*) I got a blumpkin right where you're sitting.

FOX: She took elocution lessons.

BENJAMIN: Well, I do try to read poetry clearly and elegantly. (*photographing the hole*) Of course a glory hole survives in Grove Hall; the building is slated for demolition.

FOX: (*sitting on a sink*) Well, shit. Then Persimmon will destroy its only resource for gay students!

BENJAMIN: I'm kind of surprised it's here. Were it not for impending doom, the glory hole would probably go the way of the sodomy drawings, racist commentary, and pro-Trump Nazi propaganda that usually gets plastered and painted over.

FOX: Watch out for that black mold growing behind the toilet.

BENJAMIN: I can't believe I'm wearing Gucci where someone got a blumpkin.

FOX: It's kind of fitting it's in Grove Hall. It was built in the seventies...

BENJAMIN: (*interrupting*) Your era?

FOX: Yeah, right after your swinging sixties. Anyway, this building was built during the gay liberation. Just prior to the trauma and re-closeting of the AIDS epidemic of the eighties.

BENJAMIN: Have you used it?

FOX: No. But not because I'm shy. I'm into well-endowed daddies. Not college twinks.

BENJAMIN: A man of taste.

FOX: Anyway, I'm not trying to violate human resources policy by sleeping with students. Lance was fired for his tryst with an intern. Fired the same day he was outed.

BENJAMIN: Meanwhile, Acontius lives large. (*exiting the stall*) Is this a meeting spot? Had anyone invited you here as a rendezvous point? Is that how you heard?

FOX: I haven't been here for a clandestine sword-sheathing. Maybe you should linger here a few hours a day over the coming week to determine just how widely known the hole is.

BENJAMIN: I'm not doing a mixed methods study.

FOX: Come again?

BENJAMIN: You're suggesting I count the number of times used. That's quantitative. I'm strictly qualitative. Although, at this point, an opera-comique with a scene in a glory-holed bathroom stall, I'm not so sure I still can call myself a researcher...

FOX: This is research. You're examining the one safe zone that we have on this campus.

BENJAMIN: My foot is stuck to the floor.

This scene enabled me to provide a capsule of the campus climate (one in which the only queer resource was a non-plastered glory hole in a dilapidated, soon-to-be-demolished building). Fox also comes across as a multi-dimensional person rather than a stereotypical tragic-queer. The scene itself is somewhat tragic, when accounting for the undertone: Fox's boss said he'd pray for him for being gay; Fox and Benjamin live on a campus with no dedicated resources for queer faculty, staff and students; A queer staff member was fired for flirting with a student, while straight men were promoted; The only available option for social and/or sexual networking is an app, and even then, the context dictates extreme discretion among the people using the app. Yet, the scene is comic and high-spirited. The two men are self-aware, witty, and able to rise above an otherwise bleak situation; most important, they are able to bond over a common experience of otherness.

I wanted to build on Fox's verve to demonstrate how queer individuals can overcome tragic and oppressive circumstances. I also wanted to have his experiences counterbalance my own. Fox was a sexual extrovert, while I was a sexual introvert. How can the same context produce two opposing results? An analysis of this question risked taking on a clinical tone; moreover, there is no "valid" way to conclusively answer the question. I found it better instead to depict the two of us operating sex lives in tandem.

#### SCENE:

*(Benjamin sits on the patio of a local deli, well bar, situated in a shack-like building just across from campus. The patio contains dozens of iron outdoor furniture, a few television sets play ESPN. Multi-colored lights hover above the setting)*

LONGITUDE: Fox likes to talk sex, doesn't he?

BENJAMIN: I think he views himself as my sex mentor.

LONGITUDE: You need one.

BENJAMIN: I'm celibate by everyone else's choice. Not my own.

LONGITUDE: When you had insomnia and visited the doctor, he told you, quote: The bed is for sleeping and sex. And how did you respond?

BENJAMIN: Could you prescribe the sex so I can go to Walgreen's and get some?

LONGITUDE: Pathetic. I've had more sex than you.

BENJAMIN: With women.

LONGITUDE: Nevertheless.

BENJAMIN: I'm a lady. I don't care for people touching my handbag, much less my body.

FOX: (*approaching from behind, his favorite direction, and sitting; pouring Benjamin a cup of beer from his pitcher*) It's internalized homophobia, I think. Drilled into you through years of hell fire dogma that painted sodomy as the reason the world ended.

BENJAMIN: I mean, sodomy is just unappealing anyway.

FOX: I don't get you guys who get prissy about anal. Like, given the circumstance, not to mention the sexual preference, sometimes there's going to be a little shit.

BENJAMIN: I suppose we could say the same about life.

DAVID<sup>39</sup>: (*from behind a nearby azalea; almost a serenade*) Sodomy, that utterly confused category, was applied historically to masturbation, oral sex, anal sex, and same-sex sexual relations, among other things. I use the term active sodomy specifically to denominate a certain model or structure of male homosexual relations for which there is no single proper name.

FOX: When was the last time for you?

BENJAMIN: The last time? Well, this one guy on Grindr asked me a few weeks ago what kind of freaky shit I'm into. I responded, quote: I have an abandonment complex fueled by masochism and low sense of self-worth, so if you could leave your Rolex and wallet on the coffee table and leave me here by myself, that would really turn me on.

FOX: What?

BENJAMIN: One guy was trying to explain how to get to his house over the phone. He asked, "Masc?" I thought he meant masking tape. I looked in my drawer. Found none. Replied: No, but I could stop by the Home Depot on the way over and pick some up.

FOX: Why don't you come with me to Atlanta tomorrow? I have to give a fundraiser. After, I'll take you to Swinging Richard's.

BENJAMIN: What in God's name?

FOX: What's short for Richard?

BENJAMIN: Rich.

FOX: Get your mind off Givenchy for a minute, sister. Richard. Dick. Swinging Richard's...

BENJAMIN: Swinging Dicks? Sounds classy.

FOX: All nude. All male. We'll go to Blake's, then Swinging Richard's, then Fort Troff...

BENJAMIN: I don't go anywhere with a trough...

FOX: Troff. T. R. O. F. F. It's like a bath, kind of.

BENJAMIN: Absolutely not.

FOX: On second thought, I'm not prepared for you to see me in that environment...

BENJAMIN: I don't even walk around my bedroom nude.

FOX: The Heretic, then. It's got a leather shop and blacked-out sex room.

BENJAMIN: Someone might try to steal my jewelry.

FOX: Those people don't know the difference between Claire's and Tiffany.

BENJAMIN: How dare you? This is Cartier.

FOX: Not the point.

**SCENE:**

*(Benjamin sits outside Joe's on Juniper in midtown Atlanta watching Kamala Harris give her first nationally televised interview since becoming a Senator. Benjamin's table is dotted by the five or six Sophia Petrillo cocktails he's drunk. Fox enters and sits beside him, orders a Red Bull and Vodka)*

FOX: Why are you in a nude tank? Are you dancing in a ballet later?

BENJAMIN: I spilled a latte on my Rag & Bone henley. This was underneath. New topic. How is your relationship with Todd?

FOX: Complicated.

BENJAMIN: Why?

FOX: My prolonged period of closetedness and coming out in my mid-twenties, it, well, caused a type of a relationship disorder. I mean, I didn't have my first full sexual encounter with a man until my mid-twenties. Hadn't had a real relationship until then either. I spent so much time denying sexual impulses that when I came out, I started having sex so frequently and with so many different partners that I started to strip away emotional reactions to sex partners.

MARY MAGDALENE: *(singing from a karaoke machine on the patio of Joe's)*  
*I don't know how to love him*  
*What to do, how to move him*  
*I've been changed, yes really changed*  
*In these past few days, when I've seen myself*  
*I seem like someone else*

FOX: *(joining)*  
*I don't know how to take this*

BENJAMIN: Don't you take poppers?

FOX:  
*I don't see why he moves me*  
*He's a man. He's just a man*  
*And I've had so many men before*  
*In very many ways*

BENJAMIN: You're just a whore.

MARY MAGDALENE:  
*Should I bring him down?*  
*Should I scream and shout?*  
*Should I speak of love?*  
*Let my feelings out?*

FOX:  
*I never thought I'd come to this*  
*What's it all about?*  
*Yet, if he said he loved me*  
*I'd be lost*  
*I'd be frightened*  
*I couldn't cope, just couldn't cope*

MARY MAGDALENE:  
*I'd turn my head*  
*I'd back away*  
*I wouldn't want to know*

FOX:  
*He scares me so*  
*I want him so*  
*I love him so*

FOX: *(to Benjamin)* Do you have that problem?

BENJAMIN: Yes. My emotional reaction is: Get away from me and don't touch my jewelry.

FOX: I find it difficult to sustain long-term relationships with men with whom I slept. I'm accustomed to using men as sexual partners only. Not as potential life partners.

MADAME ARMFELDT: *(singing from her Mercedes, which is stopped at a traffic light on Juniper Street)*  
*Too many people muddle sex with mere desire*  
*And when emotion intervenes, the nets descend*  
*It should on no account perplex, or worse, inspire*  
*It's but a pleasurable means to a measurable end*  
*Why does no one comprehend?*

FOX: I identify as gay. But I can envision myself marrying a woman.

BENJAMIN: Because female companionship seems more plausible than male companionship?

FOX: I could be married to a woman, start a family with a woman, and use men only to extinguish same-sex urges.

**SCENE:**

*(Benjamin reapplies his YSL Shade 10 lipstick in the mirror of Swinging Richard's bathroom. The walls are a gold color with a faux marble finish. The fixtures are brass. The light overhead, combined with Benjamin's nude tank, makes Benjamin appear as much an apparition as Longitude)*

BENJAMIN: *(reflecting on Fox's earlier comments)* Isn't that a more evolved form of being closeted?

LONGITUDE: Maybe? Does it matter? You're no further along.

BENJAMIN: I am at the opposite end of the same spectrum.

LONGITUDE: Are you though? You don't sustain relationships with men.

BENJAMIN: I do not try to establish them either.

LONGITUDE: Proving my point.

BENJAMIN: My mind is poisoned against men.

LONGITUDE: I was indoctrinated to believe gay men were promiscuous, diseased, sexual deviants.

BENJAMIN: I internalized that homophobia. Believed that any partner would be interested in me only as a sex object.

LONGITUDE: I never sought companionship among gay men; I assumed such a thing was impossible.

BENJAMIN: My only prior attempt includes a two-month period with a peer in my Master's program.

LONGITUDE: The one who's life story is now a major motion picture starring Nicole Kidman.

BENJAMIN: You were watching?

LONGITUDE: It was me.

BENJAMIN: Oh, yeah. That's right.

LONGITUDE: He was older.

BENJAMIN: But a year behind me in the degree program.

LONGITUDE: He grabbed me by the rib cage and asked . . .

BENJAMIN: Who do you think you're kidding with this straight boy act?

LONGITUDE: I eventually acquiesced to his advances.

BENJAMIN: We'd spend time making out in my living room with the door dead-bolted to prevent my roommate from a surprise entry.

LONGITUDE: Then he'd disappear for days to work on his memoir.

BENJAMIN: I still haven't read it.

LONGITUDE: Our relationship ended at an impasse. I wouldn't come out.

BENJAMIN: He wouldn't be in a closeted relationship.

LONGITUDE: We kissed goodbye in the parking lot.

BENJAMIN: Right after I touched his penis.

LONGITUDE: Way to turn this moment into something crude.

BENJAMIN: You died that night.

LONGITUDE: But you were born.

DESIREE ARMFELDT: *(singing from a bathroom stall)*

*Isn't it rich?*

*Are we a pair?*

*Me here at last on the ground*

*You in midair*

*Send in the clowns*

BENJAMIN: *(singing from an adjacent bathroom stall)*

*Isn't it bliss?*

*Don't you approve?*

*One who keeps tearing around*

LONGITUDE: *(singing from atop the paper towel dispenser)*

*One who can't move*

DESIREE ARMFELDT:

*Send in the clowns?*

*There ought to be clowns*

BENJAMIN:

*Don't bother*

*They're here*

BENJAMIN: While Fox feasts grandly on sexual experience, I abstain out of a desire not to be outed or cast aside.

LONGITUDE: See? You are also in an evolved closet.

BENJAMIN: I can say: I am gay. But only to one person at a time, and I can never imagine possessing a companionable partner of the same sex.

FOX: *(entering the bathroom with his hands full of cocktails, which he places on*

*the counter*) Enter Xanax. Enter a bottle of Ketel One. Enter Quincy.

BENJAMIN: Quincy?

FOX: The name of the BBC<sup>40</sup> that you just purchased a private dance from.

BENJAMIN: Jeezuss.

FOX: I think it was therapeutic for you. In a way. Quincy came on stage, singled you out, flirted. Well, by flirt, I mean he took off your Ferragamo sandal, slid it between his thong and thigh. You freaked and climbed on stage to fetch it. You crawled a few yards with your Givenchy sunglasses on. The more you crawled, the more Quincy receded into the heart of the room.

BENJAMIN: There was no room for skittishness when four-hundred dollars of Italian leather hung in the balance.

FOX: Oh, it was hung in the balance. For sure. You stood, walked, stuck your hand in his package, plucked out the shoe, and returned to your seat.

BENJAMIN: I recall you vibrating with glee. Didn't you give me a tip when I hopped off stage?

FOX: Well, it was money you gave me as my allowance. I slid it back into your nude tank and said: She works hard for her money.

*(The scene shifts back in time by thirty minutes, as Fox narrates Benjamin's encounter with Quincy. Benjamin and Fox sit at a two-person cocktail table adjacent to the catwalk. A tall, muscular man does a handstand in front of Benjamin. Benjamin delicately offers a dollar. The man, Quincy, accepts, does a back handspring, walks back to Benjamin, squats and says)*

QUINCY: You've got style.

BENJAMIN: I know.

FOX: *(narrating as Benjamin and Quincy reenact next to him)* You threw money at him. He followed you back to the table. He prodded. Rubbed. Poked. Pinched. He liked tugging your chest hair.

QUINCY: I'm forced to shave mine.

FOX: You were intrigued by his hustle. You bought a half hour with him in a VIP suite at the back of the bar.

*(Benjamin and Quincy leave the table, walk a few yards, pass the catwalk, enter a private room complete with red leather sofa and a coffee table complete with a pole)*

LONGITUDE: *(narrating the action from the VIP suite, since Fox could not see it)* You talked. You sat. You fidgeted with your jewelry. Looked any which way but straight.

FOX: Not the first time she looked anything but straight.

QUINCY: Why are you so nervous?

BENJAMIN: I need a Ketel One and Cranberry.

QUINCY: What is that? (*nodding his head toward Benjamin's hands*)

BENJAMIN: Xanax. (*taking the pill and chugging his cocktail, to wash it down*)

LONGITUDE: You took the whole glass in one gulp.

QUINCY: Give me your hands.

LONGITUDE: He pinned you to the wall. Gave compliments. Kissed. Stroked. Hugged you to him.

FOX: He said it was his last night on the pole.

BENJAMIN: Me too.

QUINCY: I start a job as a fork lift operator next week.

BENJAMIN: Good for you.

FOX: You came back without your sunglasses.

BENJAMIN: I think he dick-slapped them off.

FOX: You got carried away by Quincy.

BENJAMIN: (*returning to the table with Fox*) I think I settled into it because he was a stranger. He wasn't in my social network. There were no witnesses. It was a mutual hustle. He was into me because I paid him.

FOX: You were also the only man in there, besides me, under the age of sixty.

LONGITUDE: Hot by default.

BENJAMIN: I was into him because I knew that I could have the moment and move on. No need to worry about being cast off, unloved, deviant, unattractive, found out, unworthy of something more than...

FOX: Whack, bang, wiggle wiggle.

DAVID: (*speaking from an adjacent table to Troye Sivan, who is in town for a concert*) The male sexual penetration of a subordinate male certainly represented a perverse act, but it might not in every case signify a perversion of the sexual instinct, a mental illness affecting the whole personality: it might indicate a morally vicious character rather than a pathological condition. Implicit in this doctrine was the premise that there was not necessarily anything sexually or psychologically abnormal in itself about the male sexual penetration of a subordinate male. If the man who played an active sexual role in sexual intercourse with other males was conventionally masculine in both his appearance and his manner

of feeling and acting, if he did not seek to be penetrated by other men, and/or if he also had sexual relations with women, he might not be sick but immoral, not perverted but merely perverse. His penetration of a subordinate male, reprehensible and abominable though it might be, could be reckoned a manifestation of his excessive but otherwise normal male sexual appetite. Like the somewhat earlier, aristocratic figure of the libertine or rake or roué, such a man perversely refused to limit his sexual options to pleasures supposedly prescribed by nature and instead sought out more unusual, unlawful, sophisticated, or elaborate sexual experiences to gratify his jaded sexual tastes. In the case of such men, pederasty or sodomy was a sign of an immoral character but not of a personality disorder, moral insanity, or psychological abnormality.

Earlier, I mentioned that I wanted to demonstrate how queer men are culturally stereotyped as melodramatic. A supervisor in my department brushed aside my report that a colleague was making racially derogatory comments to and about his students; she said that I was probably exaggerating since my kind are always melodramatic. I wanted a way to depict the cultural context that justified, to people like her, believing that “my kind” were melodramatic, and thus untrustworthy.

#### SCENE:

*(The tube. A Samsung with an AppleTV. Benjamin appears on screen. He enters a mad tea party as if he stepped through the looking glass.)*

BENJAMIN: *(Eating a flapjack cupcake from Baked and Wired, a bakery in Georgetown, DC.)* I became notorious like my girl Ruth Bader Ginsburg. I’ll take it, I guess. Notorious for melodrama. Typecast in the role. But how did melodrama become our type?

LUCILLE BLUTH: *(Yelling from her yacht nearby)* Everything homosexuals do is so dramatic and flamboyant. It makes me want to set myself on fire.

LAUREL RICHARDSON: *(Sipping a tea)* The cultural story is told from the point of view of the ruling interests and the normative order and bears a narrative kinship to functionalism. Since, for example, the central character is a patriarchal system is the male, a cultural story of adultery is about the normative status of marriage and how an other woman tries to ruin a family by stealing a man from his wife. The central character in this story is the husband, and the story line blames the minor characters, the women: the wife for her deficiencies in sex, love, and understanding; the other woman for her deficient morality. This particular cultural story, in the United States, transcends race and class lines, making it seem true and giving it a hold on the imaginations of men and women. Cultural stories, thus, help maintain the status quo.

STANFORD BLATCH: *(Stopping at the other end of the table, where Carrie Bradshaw sits with Oliver Spencer)* If it isn’t Mr. and Mrs. Down Under.

CARRIE BRADSHAW: *(in an aside to the audience)* I was so preoccupied with my gay boyfriend, I kept forgetting about my gay husband. *(to Stanford and Oliver)* You remember Stanford? From brunch?

STANFORD: Apparently, it was more than just brunch. Don't fall for him; he's just another pretty face. He doesn't love you like I do. I knew this woman when she took the subway and wore Candies.

OLIVER: (*laughing*) Candies?

CARRIE: I assure you, I never wore Candies.

STANFORD: You wore pink suede Candies, and I adored you anyway. (*to Oliver*) And how dare you try to steal her away with your dreamy eyes and your probably fake accent?

ZANDRA: Oh look, the crying fag!

BENJAMIN: (*Discussing methodology with a disinterested Lily Tomlin, who's busy speaking into a microphone narrating The Celluloid Closet for the table's entertainment*) I once interviewed a drag queen. I asked what he'd have me do if I wanted to get a taste of what it was like living as a drag queen and genderfucker on our campus. He told me to wear makeup and get nails done and walk around campus for a day. I wore Steel Waters Run Deep by OPI, Clinique Matte Bisque powder, and YSL Shade 10 lipstick to Circe's office the day I reported Acontius. She stared at my nails the whole time. If my hand moved up, so too did her attention. Each time she challenged my report, she looked at my nails.

JACK MCFARLAND: (*wrapping his arms around Karen Walker*) Before language, people communicated through intricate choreography, costume changes, and lighting. Language was only invented when unattractive people were born and needed to be commented on. My grandfather was one of the first ballerinas to land on the beach at Normandy. Fact: D-Day stands for Dance Day! Now, let's start with a simple box step. It is called that because we lead with our box.

BERNADETTE: (*chastising a woman who mocked her hair*) Now listen here, you mullet. Why don't you just light your tampon and blow your box apart? Because it's the only bang you're ever gonna get, sweetheart.

ALBERT: (*standing from the table with such force that Benjamin's mimosa top-ples*) Don't give me that tone! That sarcastic contemptuous tone that means you know everything because you're a man, and I know nothing because I'm a woman.

ARMAND: (*placing a palm over his face*) You're not a woman.

ALBERT: You bastard!

BLAZING SADDLES DANCERS: (*singing behind Lily Tomlin*)

*Throw out your hands*

*Stick out your tush*

*Hands on your hips*

*Give 'em a push*

*You'll be surprised*

*You're doing the French Mistake*

*(stopping due to a burst from stage left and the entry of a horde of rowdy cow-boys who begin rumbling with the dancers)*

CHOREOGRAPHER: Not on the face!

COWBOY: *(punches him)*

DANCER ONE: *(squeals)* Come on, girls!

DANCER TWO: *(squealing)* You brute, you brute, you brute, you vicious brute!  
*(collapses)*

BENJAMIN: *(facing outward as if talking to the TV viewing audience at home)*  
I worked for three years in Persimmon's Department of Student Affairs. In that time, I was called: petty, catty, sassy, queen, melodramatic, storyteller, trifler, shit stirrer, sarcastic, cynical, a bad influence, alcoholic, crazy, paranoid, foul-mouthed, tactless, blunt rude, critical. Twice, I was granted interviews for promotions. In one, I was asked, quote, Will you be able to develop tact and diplomacy so you can better represent our office to external stakeholders? end quote. In another, as you know, I was asked, quote, How will you maintain professional boundaries with your students? end quote. In both interviews, I was asked, quote, How do you inspire trust in others and build relationships with people who are different from you?

FOX: *(entering Benjamin's office, finding Benjamin slumped over his computer's keyboard, dozing, while Absolutely Fabulous plays on the screen)* What are you watching over there, girl?

LONGITUDE: *(painting her nails Steel Waters Run Deep, based on a recommendation she recently heard about it)* Girl, she's over there trying to demonstrate how media portrayals of gay men caused him to be fired.

FOX: That's a stretch.

BENJAMIN: Shut the fuck up, both of you. Haven't you ever seen The Celluloid Closet.

FOX: I mean, those questions you were saying you were asked, I can add to those. And I can add feedback I received. We're looking for a service leader. Or, We're not the multicultural affairs office. Or, We're looking for someone who will fit in with our team. According to my friend in human resources, the line, We're looking for someone who will fit in with our team, is a maneuver to dance around discrimination by claiming that the gay candidate's personality does not jibe with the office.

BENJAMIN: The way they perceive of my personality is largely influenced by the gay personalities these people see in the media.

FOX: Didn't I see you take a day off work to drive to Saks in Atlanta to exchange a pair of Gucci loafers that were shipped in the wrong color?

BENJAMIN: I needed them for a wedding reception the next day, and I was going to be photographed.

LONGITUDE: Yep. It's all the media's fault

BENJAMIN: Fox, while you're here. I want you to tell me five words describing yourself. It's for my campus climate study on gay men's experiences on this campus. I'm trying to describe you in my opera on the dramatis personae page.

FOX: Opera's aren't melodramatic?

BENJAMIN: Word one: Bitch.

FOX: I'll tell you this. That's always been my hang up. Like, who am I? And who do I perceive myself to be? And what do I prefer others to see myself as? Right? Those three people have always been present and they always look and feel different. Who am I?

PAUL: *(singing)*  
*Who am I anyway*  
*Am I my resume*  
*That is a picture*  
*Of a person I don't know*  
*What does he want from me*  
*What should I try to be*  
*So many faces all around*  
*And here we go*  
*I need this job*  
*Oh, God*  
*I need this show*

LONGITUDE: Does anyone else hear that singing? Or is it just me hearing shit in purgatory that you live ones can't?

BENJAMIN: What is most important to you in the moment? One of Nora Ephron's, whom I stole this exercise from, in the middle of her life was divorced. And then later it was mother. Independent of what you think anyone else thinks of you, what is you?

FOX: Witty. Anxious. Friendly. Loving. And deceptively sad.

EXPAND HERE.<sup>41</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> I spent a year as a graduate assistant in my institution's Office of University Writing, and I have taught English Composition at the collegiate level for many years. As a result, I'm about to throw some writing pedagogy your way to help demonstrate the pervasiveness of white-hetero-patriarchy in academic writing/discourse. It's annoying as fuck. I'll start with Laura Greenfield, who notes that, "'Standard English,' ultimately, is invoked as that ideal, superior language. The assumption that 'Standard English' is superior to other English varieties is also prevalent among language educators in the United States...the language varieties deemed inferior in the United States (so much so that they are often dismissed not simply as inferior varieties but not as varieties at all—just as conglomerations of slang, street talk, or poor English) tend to be the languages whose origins can be

traced to periods in American history when communities of racially oppressed people used these languages to enact agency. It is no coincidence that the languages spoken by racially oppressed people are considered to be inferior in every respect to the languages spoken predominantly by those who wield systemic power: namely, middle- and upper-class white people” (p. 36). See Laura Greenfield, 2016, “The ‘Standard English’ Fairytale: A Rhetorical Analysis of Racist Pedagogies and Commonplace Assumptions about Language Diversity,” In *Writing Centers and the New Racism: A Call for Sustainable Dialogue and Chance*, ed. Laura Greenfield and Karen Rowan (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press): 33-60. I must acknowledge that I am a privileged white person, with advanced language training; thus, I cannot claim to be a victim of exclusionary language practices based on my racial and economic background. However, many of my participants communicate through conglomerations of slang, street talk, and ancestral dialects. Often, our academy pressures scholars to sanitize this communication for consumption by a racially and economically elite community. In my work, my participants also speak in a community-based language that intersects race, gender, and sexuality: queer speak. Queer speak is derided as crass and vulgar, since much of it was developed as code/euphemisms for sexual activity; moreover, large swaths of queer speak emerged from communities dominated by queer people of color (for example: “kiki” is a commonly used queer term that originated among queer people of color, and it is immortalized (and white-washed) in the 2012 song “Let’s Have a Kiki” by the Scissor Sisters. I could go on and on about queer slang, but that’s not the point of this extensive footnote. The point is that the dominant discourse in academic publishing does not provide space for “Non-Standard” English; if space is provided, it’s only for directly quoting participant transcripts. Researchers are not (usually) permitted to participate in the “Non-Standard” language communities to which they might belong. A recent reviewer of my work, for example, criticized my “personal tone,” which exhibited itself in an autoethnographic project wherein I spoke in an irreverent, assertive, even sassy tone that was laden with slang and abstract queer references. Harry Denny writes that scholars, teachers, and administrators who oppose the racist standardizing forces of academic discourse are often derided and relegated to/as institutional backwaters, whose work is taken less seriously (I mean, really, how many of you humanities scholars out there doing social justice scholarship have been condescended to by a “hard scientist”?). “Like queer people, writing center professionals continually confront our marginality: we daily encounter students and faculty alike who approach our spaces with uneasiness. Though some might understand writing centers as ‘safe harbors’ of progressive politics and pedagogy, our spaces are also liminal zones, transitory arenas always both privileged and illegitimate. Writing centers are known as cutting-edge and institutional backwaters; they are celebrated and denounced; they are noisy and silent/ed; they are spaces where much organic, lasting learning happens, but spaces where often no record of achievement or assessment gets granted. Writing centers are places overflowing with structuring binaries: directive/non-directive, editing/tutoring, expert/novice, teacher/student, graduate student/undergraduate, professional/peer, women/men, ‘American’/ESL, advanced/basic, faculty/administrator, administrator/secretary, faculty/lecturer, lecturer/teaching assistant, teaching assistant/tutor, white/people of color, black/Asian, Latino/black, straight/gay, etc. These binaries and their negotiations of which side is privileged and which is illegitimate are ubiquitous in sessions” (p. 97). See Harry Denny, “Queering the Writing Center,” *The Writing Center Journal*, 30 no. 1 (2010): 39-62. I find that one way “Non-Standard” communication is encouraged out of scholarly discourse is the *insistence* that researchers speak on behalf of their participants through in-

terpretation, representation, conclusion, and dissemination. In addition, researchers themselves are often shuttled out of the conversation through reviewers who *insist* on citational inclusions of privileged scholars who may or may not have had any impact on the development of the project/methods nor on the composition of results. In writing and sharing “Fox: An Opera-Comique” (and subsequent chapters) the most common criticism is that I do not provide enough interpretation(s) of Fox’s story, nor do I provide discrete conclusions about Fox’s story to inform policy decisions at an institutional level. If Fox had given me discrete conclusions about policy decisions, I would have shared them with the audience. He does not. Who am I to say, on his behalf (as a privileged researcher), what should be done for gay/queer men like him? That question becomes even more complicated when one considers that I interviewed a Latino/Native American drag queen, a Cuban/Puerto Rican gay man, a survivor of fourteen months of ex-gay therapy, a lesbian woman, and a trans\* woman. After all this talk, I do not know the essence of what I am trying to tell you, other than writing on behalf of your participants is tricky, especially when you’re supposed to be translating these marginalized people into the language of their oppressors so that their stories may be taken seriously. For additional information on how white-hetero-patriarchy pervades the academy and collegiate pedagogy, see: Frankie Condon and Bobbi Olson, “Building a House for Linguistic Diversity: Writing Centers, English-Language Teaching and Learning, and Social Justice,” in *Tutoring Second Language Writers*, ed. Shanti Bruce and Ben Raforth (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2016): 27-52.

<sup>2</sup> The reviewer also wrote: “It reads as if the researcher found postqualitative research and thought that it was really neat and added it in, to be quite honest.” Only a straight man would write something this condescending, especially right after admitting he knew nothing about queer theory and right after suggesting I cite a scholar of colonial-era navigational practices (for a contemporary queer research project). Seems legit.

<sup>3</sup> A transwoman, who consults the Department of Defense on gender inclusion, once told me to teach my students to simply: Ask our names; Call us by our names; Refer to us as we wish to be called. Is actually legit.

<sup>4</sup> Sarah J. Tracy, “Qualitative Quality: Eight ‘Big-Tent’ Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research,” *Qualitative Inquiry* 16, no. 10 (2010): 837-851.

<sup>5</sup> One way I wanted to create an immersive, multi-sensory experience of their lives was by allowing their words to dominate the project. In my “Prologue” to *Pink Lemonade*, I wrote that the body of the project was composed near exclusively by data (interviews, observations, notes, reflections, memories, sounds); scholarly commentary took place in footnotes, which served as scholarly “live tweets” accompanying the fantasia going on above. Within the footnotes, I attempted to preserve a queer spirit through code-meshing, as defined by Vershawn Ashanti Young. Young is foundational to my work in countering “standard language ideology” and academic elitism, which forces marginalized scholars to assimilate into white-hetero-patriarchal writing and research styles. Young writes, “standard language ideology insist sthat minority people will never become an Ivy League English department chair or president of Harvard University if they don’t perfect they mastery of standard English [don’t believe him...take a look at the Cornel West/Larry Summers dispute at Harvard University]. At the same time the ideology instruct that white men will gain such positions, even with a questionable handle of standard grammar and rhetoric (Didn’t George W. get to be president for eight years, while all kinds of folks characterized his grammar as bad and his rhetorical style as poor? And hasn’t former vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin made up words like *refudiate* for repudiate and *lamestream media* to

poke fun at mainstream media? Just askin...[Stanley Fish] must don't like [this information]. He say we should have student to translate the way they talk into standard English on a chalk board. He say, leave the way they say it to momma on the board and put the standard way on paper. This is wrongly called code switching. And many teachers be doin' this with they students. And it don't work. Why? Cuz most teachers of code switching don't know what they be talkin bout. Code switching, from a linguistic perspective, is not translatin one dialect into another one. It's blendin two or mo dialects, languages, or rhetorical forms into one sentence, one utterance, one paper...But since so many teachers be jackin up code switching with they 'speak this way at school and a different way at home,' we need a new term. I call it CODE MESHING! ...it's multidialectalism and plurallingualism in one speech act, in one paper" (p. 66-67). See, Vershawn Ashanti Young, "Should Writer's Use They Own English?" *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies*, no. 12 (2010): 110-117. I bet you \$5.00 that someone is going to take issue with my minor code-meshing in this paper as well as my cavalier bending of *Chicago Style* by having jacked up, extended footnotes (since *Chicago Style* recommends footnotes be brief complements to the body, not a forum for ongoing scholarly conversation). Fuck that.

<sup>6</sup> Maggie MacLure, "Researching Without Representation? Language and Materiality in Post-Qualitative Methodology," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 26, no. 6 (2013): 658-667.

<sup>7</sup> Stephanie Daza and Walter S. Gershon, "Beyond Ocular Inquiry: Sound, Silence, and Sonification," *Qualitative Inquiry* 21, no. 7 (2015): 639-644.

<sup>8</sup> Tony E. Adams, *Narrating the Closet: An Autoethnography of Same-Sex Attraction* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> One good, semi-autobiographical story that I attempt to emulate (though I most assuredly fail at) is Ocean Vuong's *On Earth We Are Briefly Gorgeous* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2019)

<sup>10</sup> Here are some examples of "good research" according to my field, which intersects queer theory with higher education administration. Thomas Ylloja, Gerald Cochran, Michael R. Woodford, and Kristen A. Renn, "Frequent Experience of LGBQ Microaggression on Campus Associated with Smoking Among Sexual Minority College Students," *Nicotine & Tobacco Research* (2018): 340-346; Michael R. Woodford, Perry Silverschanz, Eric Swank, Kristin S. Scherrer, and Lisa Raiz, "Predictors of Heterosexual College Students' Attitudes Toward LGBT People," *Journal of LGBT Youth* 9, no. 4 (2012): 297-320; Perry Silverschanz, Lilia M. Cortina, Julie Konik, and Vicki J. Magley, "Slurs, Snubs, and Queer Jokes: Incidence and Impact of Heterosexist Harassment in Academia," *Sex Roles* 58 (2008): 179-191; Jill M. Chonody, Michael R. Woodford, David J. Brennan, Bernie Newman, and Donna Wang, "Attitudes Toward Gay Men and Lesbian Women Among Heterosexual Social Work Faculty," *Journal of Social Work Education* 50 (2014): 136-152; Michael R. Woodford, Jill M. Chonody, Alex Kulick, David J. Brennan, and Kristen Renn, "The LGBQ Microaggressions on Campus Scale: A Scale Development and Validation Study," *Journal of Homosexuality* 62, no. 12 (2015): 1660-1687; Susan R. Rankin, "Campus Climates for Sexual Minorities," *New Directions for Student Services* 111 (2005): 17-23; Susan Rankin and Jason C. Garvey, "Identifying, Quantifying, and Operationalizing Queer-Spectrum and Trans-Spectrum Students: Assessment and Research in Student Affairs," *New Directions for Student Services* 152 (2015): 73-84; Jodi L. Linley, David Nguyen, G. Blue Brazelton, Brianna Becker, Kristen Renn, and Michael Woodford, "Faculty as Sources of Support for LGBTQ College Students," *College Teaching* 64, no. 2 (2016): 55-63; Jason C. Garvey, Dian D. Squire, Brett Stachler, and Susan Rankin, "The

Impact of Campus Climate on Queer-Spectrum Student Academic Success,” *Journal of LGBT Youth* 15, no. 2 (2018): 89-105; Martin A. Swanbrow Becker, Stacey F. Nemeth Roberts, Sam M. Ritts, William Tyler Branagan, Alia R. Warner, and Sheri L. Clark, “Supporting Transgender College Students: Implications for Clinical Intervention and Campus Prevention,” *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy* 31, no. 2 (2017): 155-176; Jason C. Garvey, Susan Rankin, Genny Beemyn, and Shane Windmeyer, “Improving the Campus Climate for LGBTQ Students Using the Campus Pride Index,” *New Directions for Student Services* 159 (2017): 61-70; Jason C. Garvey, Laura A. Sanders, and Maureen A. Flint, “Generational Perceptions of Campus Climate Among LGBTQ Undergraduates,” *Journal of College Student Development* 58, no. 6 (2017): 795-817; Kimberly F. Balsam, Yamile Molina, Blair Beadnell, Jane Simoni, and Karma Walters, “Measuring Multiple Minority Stress: The LGBT People of Color Microaggressions Scale,” *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology* 17, no. 2 (2011): 163-174; Robert D. Brown and Valerie J. Gortmaker, “Assessing Campus Climates for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Students: Methodological and Political Issues,” *Journal of LGBT Youth* 6, no. 4 (2009): 416-435; and Matthew J. Mayhew, Alyssa N. Rockenbach, Nicholas A. Bowman, Tricia A. Seifert, Gregory C. Wolniak, Ernest T. Pascarella, and Patrick T. Terenzini, *How College Affects Students: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Evidence That Higher Education Works*, Volume 3 (San Francisco, CA: Wiley: 2016).

<sup>11</sup> I primarily incorporate evocative autoethnography, as described by Arthur P. Bochner and Carolyn Ellis in *Evocative Autoethnography: Writing Lives and Telling Stories* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016). I also mesh autoethnography and queer theory, as theorized by Stacy Holman Jones and Tony Adams, “Autoethnography is a Queer Method,” in *Queer Methods and Methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research*, ed. Kath Browne and Catherine J. Nash (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010): 195-214.

<sup>12</sup> Anna Deavere Smith frequently refers to “organic poetry” in interviews and speaking engagements. However, her most concise rendering of the concept occurred in her 2007 TED Talk “Four American Characters,” available on *YouTube*.

<sup>13</sup> Phil C. Langer, “The Research Vignette: Reflexive Writing as Interpretive Representation of Qualitative Inquiry—A Methodological Proposition,” *Qualitative Inquiry*, 22, no. 9: 735-744.

<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre, “The Appearance of Data,” *Cultural Studies: Critical Methodologies*, 13, no. 4, 2013: 223-227. See also: Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre, “Haecceity: Laying Out a Plane for Post Qualitative Inquiry,” *Qualitative Inquiry* 23, no. 9 (2017): 686-698.

<sup>15</sup> An example of code-meshing. In queer subculture, “kiki” refers to social gatherings, largely for queer people of color, to dance and socialize (and, presumably share gossip). Adolfo, one of my participants, seems to use it to underscore the insular nature of kikis, in which participants develop inside jokes and tastes.

<sup>16</sup> More code-meshing!

<sup>17</sup> More code-meshing!

<sup>18</sup> A reviewer, previously mentioned, suggested rejecting my monograph for omitting the work, on scriptwriting, of Nathaniel Kohn. So here it is: Nathaniel Kohn, “The Screenplay as Postmodern Literary Exemplar: Authorial Distraction, Disappearance, Dis-solution,” *Qualitative Inquiry*, 6, no. 4, 2000: 489-510.

<sup>19</sup> Adams, 2016.

<sup>20</sup> Durell M. Callier, “Living in C Minor: Reflections on the Melodies of Blackness, Queerness, and Masculinity,” *Qualitative Inquiry* 22, no. 10 (2016): 790-794.

<sup>21</sup> Shaun E. Edmonds, “Connected to Orlando: An Autoethnography in Three(ish) Acts,” *Qualitative Inquiry* 23, no. 7 (2017): 519-526

<sup>22</sup> Laurel Richardson, *Fields of Play: Constructing an Academic Life* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997).

<sup>23</sup> George Saunders, *Lincoln in the Bardo* (New York, NY: Random House, 2018).

<sup>24</sup> A paper I co-wrote for this very journal discusses a curation-as-analysis approach. Benjamin Arnberg, Hannah C. Baggett, and Carey E. Andrzejewski, “[...] Resurrecting Dead Data,” *Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education* 19, no. 3 2020: 43-61.

<sup>25</sup> I told you I was going to model an imperfect writing process. Well, here you go. I planned to “EXPAND HERE,” but it seems easier to just point you to another source that is yet to be published. See, Arnberg, et al. “[...] Resurrecting Dead Data.” I seriously cannot explain it anymore.

<sup>26</sup> Bram Stoker’s, obviously.

<sup>27</sup> For additional reading on how queer subjects have been characterized through untruths, see Patrick A. Wilson, Pamela Valera, Alexander J. Martos, Natalie M. Wittlin, Miguel A. Munoz-Laboy, and Richard G. Parker, “Contributions of Qualitative Research in Informing HIV/AIDS Interventions Targeting Black MSM in the United States.” *Journal of Sex Research* 53, no. 6, 2016: 642-654; Tamara de Szegheo Lang, “The Demand to Progress: Critical Nostalgia in LGBTQ Cultural Memory.” *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 19 (2015): 230-248; Sara Ahmed, “Queer Feelings,” in *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*, ed. Donald E. Hall, Annamarie Jagose, Andrea Bebell, and Susan Potter (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013): 422-441; Jose Esteban Munoz, “Feeling Brown, Feeling Down: Latina Affect, The Performativity of Race, and The Depressive Position,” in *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*, ed. Donald E. Hall, Annamarie Jagose, Andrea Bebell, and Susan Potter (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013): 412-421; Tim Dean, *Unlimited Intimacy: Reflections on the Subculture of Barebacking* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Jose Esteban-Munoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2009); Judith Butler, “Critically Queer,” *GLQ*, no. 1 (1993): 17-32.

<sup>28</sup> An alias for an administrator in my department.

<sup>29</sup> An alias for an administrator on my campus.

<sup>30</sup> Not an alias, because this gasbag deserves all the criticism he gets.

<sup>31</sup> He was caught having an affair with his student in his former fraternity house; another student turned him in. He was subsequently promoted; in the same time frame, a queer man of color was fired for the same offense.

<sup>32</sup> I try to limit my pettiness to five acts per day.

<sup>33</sup> Dean, 2009.

<sup>34</sup> More code-meshing! Well, code-bouncing.

<sup>35</sup> Pauliina Rautio and Anna Vladimirova, “Befriending Snow: On Data as an Ontologically Significant Research Companion,” in *Disrupting Data in Qualitative Inquiry: Entanglements with the Post-Critical and Post-Anthropocentric*, ed. Mirka Koro-Ljungberg, Teija Loytonen, and Marek Tesar (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2017): 23-33.

<sup>36</sup> I refer to opera comique the genre, not the opera company in France. According to Allison Latham, *The Oxford Companion to Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), “the use of spoken dialogue remained a distinctive characteristic” of the genre,

despite “traditional requirements” of French opera requiring all acts be sung through. I adopted the genre of opera comique to accommodate spoken data. My opera comique does not contain original music and lyrics, nor does it contain references to classic works of opera comique (such as Bizet’s *Carmen*); it does, however, contain arias from classical operas as well as contemporary rock operas.

<sup>37</sup> OMG, a pun!

<sup>38</sup> I used footnotes to provide additional insight and information in the libretto so that it remained free from distracting scholarly intervention. In addition, I didn’t want to mesh the irreverent tone of the libretto with the serious tone of the scholar.

<sup>39</sup> As in David M. Halperin, “How to do the History of Male Homosexuality,” *GLQ* 6, no. 1: 87-124, 2000. Quote from page 92. Here is an example of where I included scholarship as a character. Dr. Halperin is no personal acquaintance of mine, and, as of yet, has not agreed to appear in any productions in a cameo.

<sup>40</sup> BBC is slang for “big black cock” and is common parlance in gay discourse. However, the acronym is culturally problematic, since it simultaneously stereotypes and fetishizes black men’s bodies. I was first made aware of the problems of fetishizing black gay men when reading Donovan Trott, “An Open Letter to Gay, White Men: No, You’re Not Allowed to Have a Racial Preference,” *Huffington Post*, June 19, 2017, [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/an-open-letter-to-gay-white-men-no-youre-not-allowed\\_us\\_5947f0ffe4b0f7875b83e459](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/an-open-letter-to-gay-white-men-no-youre-not-allowed_us_5947f0ffe4b0f7875b83e459)

<sup>41</sup> A last bit of imperfect process. I intended to conclude, but the August 1, 2019 deadline snuck up on me. That’s life. That’s writing. If you need an expansion, just email me at [benjamin.arnberg@auburn.edu](mailto:benjamin.arnberg@auburn.edu). Let’s chat soon. XOXO.

## Manuscript Rejection and Shame Resilience in Early Career Faculty of Color Vignettes on Coping and Overcoming

*Rene O. Guillaume, Jesús Cisneros, & Edna Martinez*

### Abstract

Central to the role of the professoriate is the concept of scholarship, with a major hallmark of the profession consisting of peer-reviewed manuscripts as an expectation for promotion and tenure as well as annual review. A common occurrence for faculty submitting manuscripts as part of the peer-review process is manuscript rejection. The implications associated with manuscript rejection for early career faculty range from negative annual reviews to not earning promotion and tenure. The purpose of this study, utilizing Shame Resilience Theory (Brown, 2006), was to explore our experiences as early career Faculty of Color to better understand the ways in which we coped and overcame the shame associated with the rejection process associated with peer-reviewed scholarship. The nine first-person portrait vignettes presented in this manuscript are centered on three overarching themes: (a) recognizing vulnerability, (b) tempering rejection, and (c) negotiating and reconciling rejection. As these vignettes reflect our lived experiences, we maintained first-person narration.

Keywords: *Manuscript Rejection, Early Career, Faculty of Color, Shame Resilience Theory*

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### Introduction

While our path toward obtaining tenure-track positions did not happen suddenly or by sheer luck, there was a hint of serendipity associated with our individual journeys. Knowingly and unknowingly at times, we created for ourselves, with tremendous support from several others, experiences during graduate school that lent themselves toward strong consideration for tenure-track positions. While as a group we feel we entered the academy with eyes wide open, we learned quickly, and are still reminded almost daily, that the complex details of the academy for early career faculty are never fully understood. For us, we simply did not know what we did not know. We understood, or so we thought, the emphasis on peer-reviewed scholarship for the purposes of promotion and tenure. Contributing to the body of knowledge in our respective field is something that we fully embraced as we transitioned into roles, even though our previous orientation as student affairs professionals pulled us at times more toward the student service-related activities of the professoriate, those being teaching and service. What we were not fully prepared for was the rejection, and subsequent feelings of shame associated when our contributions to the field by way of scholarship were met with rejection and, at times, harsh criticism.

The peer-review process consists of subjecting an author's scholarly work to the scrutiny of other experts in the same field to validate its merits and evaluate its suitability for publication (De Vries, Marschall, & Stein, 2009; Hartley, 2008). While on its face the concept of publish or perish seems straightforward, the publish component of this statement is far more complex. For many, us included, the issue is not failing to produce, but rather getting past rejection. Research has shown that embedded within how manuscript decisions are made is bias and chance (Starbuck, 2003). As we transitioned into our roles, the goal was to publish in accordance to the standards set forth by the culture of our respective institutions; yet, an unexpected barrier was the culture of peer-reviewed journals, which we were not fully prepared to contend with. At times, the rejection felt like a personal assault on our self, with our identities intimately connected to our scholarship. Often, we found ourselves questioning whether the rejections were made on the basis of quality, or content, recognizing the difficulty Scholars of Color have in publishing scholarship from a social justice standpoint. As we further processed our rejections, they were never for reasons associated with adhering to the journal's guidelines, with our work submitted within the aims and scopes of the journal. The rejection, for us, often came associated with reasons associated with "fit."

The literature on scholarship as part of faculty life and culture in the area of manuscript rejection and the mental and psychological impact these experiences have on early career faculty is in its infancy. Hence, as early career scholars coming from collectivist cultures, we gravitated toward each other for support in navigating a very common component of the professoriate, rejection. This man-

uscript attempts to engage socially, surrounding manuscript rejection for three early career Faculty of Color. Utilizing Shame Resilience Theory (Brown, 2006) via first-person portrait vignettes, we aimed to explore our experiences as early career Faculty of Color to better understand the ways in which we coped and overcame the shame associated with the rejection process within peer-reviewed scholarship. Shame Resilience Theory (SRT) is a potentially useful theory for understanding the role and impact shame resilience can play in addressing the ways in which Faculty of Color engage with manuscript rejection. Our experiences with the publishing processes assists in filling a void in an area that is severely understudied, rejection. We suggest our actions can help support a community of scholars through our dialogue on rejection in hopes of normalizing this part of the writing process.

### Shame Resilience Theory

Brown (2006) advanced SRT to help explain, “why and how women experience shame, how shame impacts women, and the various processes and strategies women...” use to cope with shame (p. 43). SRT has since been used to understand the impact of shame and shame resilience among others, such as students (Dayal, Weaver, & Domene, 2015) and men (Brown, 2008). For the purpose of this study, we applied SRT to explore shame resilience among early career Faculty of Color in relation to manuscript rejection.

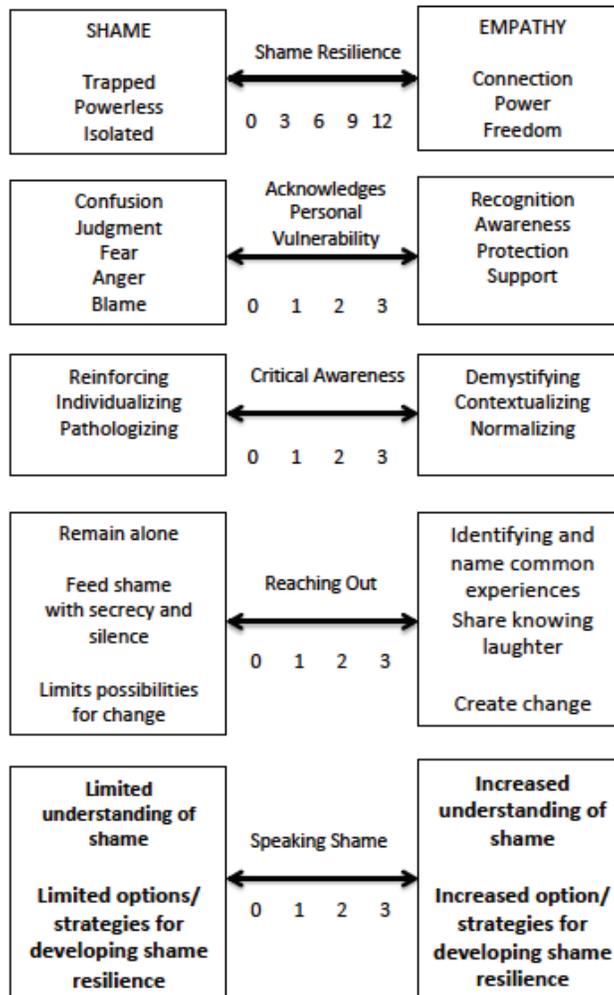
Shame is an emotion faculty experience that is rarely discussed (Alleman, Nelson, & Cliburn Allen, 2019; Brown, 2008; Moore, 2018). Various experiences, such as scholarly or academic “violence” (Lee & Leonard, 2001, p. 169; Tompkins, 1988, p. 589), elicit feelings of shame (Bouson, 2005). Violence occurs during the tenure and promotion process (Lee & Leonard, 2001). Furthermore, as Tompkins (1988) noted, “Violence takes place in the conference room, at scholarly meetings, and in the pages of professional journals...” (p. 589). Also, it occurs during the blind peer-review process (Stanley, 2007), which in turn leads to decreased creativity, productivity, and professional satisfaction (Day, 2011). Indeed, these systemic experiences are often gendered (Turner, Gonzalez, & Wong, 2011) and racialized (Lee & Leonard, 2001; Matthew, 2016).

Brown (2006) defined shame as “An intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed and therefore unworthy of acceptance and belonging” (p. 45). Brown (2006) expanded narrow conceptualizations of shame and explained shame as a psycho-social-cultural construct. According to Brown (2006), the psychological element emphasizes “emotions, thoughts, and behaviors of self” (p. 45). The social component focuses on interpersonal aspects, including relationships and connections. Meanwhile, the cultural element emphasizes cultural expectations and shame associated with failure—whether actual or supposed—to meet those cultural expectations. At the center of this study is the faculty cul-

tural expectation to not only publish (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006), but to publish within particular outlets—those with more perceived prestige (Gonzales & Nuñez, 2014).

Brown (2006) suggested shame is related to feeling trapped, powerless, and isolated. Feeling trapped is related to numerous competing and unrealistic expectations and few options to meet those expectations (Brown, 2006). Powerlessness relates to difficulty to act to challenge or offset shame. As Brown (2006) explained, “shame often produces overwhelming and painful feelings of confu-

Figure 1



sion, fear, anger, judgment, and/or the need to hide” (p. 46). Feeling trapped and powerless, in turn, leads to isolation (Brown, 2006).

Shame resiliency is developed as feelings of being trapped, powerless, and isolated are reduced. Shame resilience is achieved by experiencing empathy, which entails connection, power, and freedom (Brown, 2006). Empathy, defined as “the ability to perceive a situation from the other person’s perspective – to see, hear, and feel the unique world of the other” (Brown, 2006, p. 47), is most impactful when it was received from others. According to Brown (2006), “experiencing an empathetic response to their shame experience, their sense of connection and power was often increased, restored and/or sometimes strengthened” (p. 47).

According to Brown (2006), SRT suggests that shame resilience, as denoted by position on the shame resilience continuum, is the sum of: “(a) the ability to recognize and accept personal vulnerability; (b) the level of critical awareness regarding social/cultural expectations on the shame web; (c) the ability to form mutually empathetic relationships that facilitate reaching out to others; and (d) the ability to ‘speak shame’ or possess the language and emotional competence to discuss and deconstruct shame” (p. 48). Shame Resilience Theory can be captured across four continuums: (1) the vulnerability continuum; (2) the critical awareness continuum; (3) the reaching out continuum; and (4) the speaking shame continuum (Brown 2004, 2006). Figure 1 highlights each of the continuums.

## Biographical Sketches

### *Rene*

I am a mixed-race fifth-year tenure-track assistant professor at a Hispanic Serving, Land-Grant institution designated as a research university (higher research activity). My institution can be categorized as striving, with a renewed emphasis on scholarship. I self-identify as Black and Latino and worked as an administrator in higher education for roughly 10 years prior to making the transition into the professoriate. I entered the professoriate with a strong want and willingness to teach, yet understood a core function of the professoriate is writing for publication. Knowing the importance of scholarship in the academy, in my first year as a tenure-track faculty member there was still a high amount of naiveté on my part regarding its true value and importance specific to tenure and promotion. As a graduate student, I was not fully socialized to the ways of the professoriate. At the time, preparing students for the faculty ranks was not a major point of emphasis in my doctoral program, the overwhelming majority of the students in my cohort worked full-time as educational administrators. Supporting faculty research as part of a graduate assistantship was an opportunity that I lacked. I was, however, able to capitalize on opportunities to prepare for the professoriate in the area of teaching, completing internships with the Teaching Academy at my institution. In hindsight, my time and effort via the required internships embedded

within my doctoral program might have been better spent involved in research—I would have understood manuscript rejection. I could have been more proactive in reaching out to faculty for the purposes of writing for publication, as well. The first rejection I received was given to me in my first year on the tenure track.

### *Jesus*

I am a queer, first-generation, Mexican immigrant. I am in my fifth year at a Hispanic serving, tier one research university. I worked as a higher education and student affairs professional for about five years prior to transitioning to the professoriate. While in graduate school, I served as a research assistant for several faculty who were very productive and on the tenure track. As a research assistant, I served as the managing editor for the *Association of Mexican American Educators Journal*. This experience provided me a behind-the-scenes look at the manuscript publication process. With the mentorship of faculty, I was also able to engage in several research projects and co-author three manuscripts prior to completing my doctorate. During none of these experiences, however, did I serve as the lead or corresponding author. The faculty I worked with took the leadership role. Each of the co-authored manuscripts was invited for a revise and resubmit and, eventually, accepted for publication. I did not experience manuscript rejection until I engaged the publication process on my own, during my first year on the tenure track.

### *Edna*

I am a working-class Latina and the first in my immediate and extended family to earn a Ph.D. I was recently awarded early tenure and promotion at a striving comprehensive university. Teaching and working with students are the most enjoyable aspects of my work. Candidly, I have a love-hate relationship with the research and publication process, which is perhaps one of the reasons I chose to teach/work at a comprehensive university. During graduate school I had two incredible mentors: Dr. James Satterfield and Leslie D. Gonzales. They are still my mentors and friends. They adequately prepared me for the publication arena. Dr. Satterfield afforded me the opportunity to serve as co-managing editor for the *Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in Education*. I learned a lot, as co-managing editor. It was an invaluable experience. I gained unique insights into the publication process (including the rejection aspect), which have been helpful for me as a faculty member. Meanwhile, Dr. Gonzales invited me to write and publish with her. We co-published two articles. She knew I would need to have a couple publications on my CV to be considered for a tenure-track position. I published a couple more articles with my peers too. These pieces were revise and resubmits. I cannot recall receiving a rejection during graduate school. If I did receive them, I assume they were not traumatic. Otherwise, I would remember.

## Vignettes

Vignettes can be drawn from various sources such as previous research findings (Hughes, 1998) or real-life histories (Rhaman, 1996). They can be used to collect data (Hughes & Huby, 2002) or present data (Blodgett, Schinke, Smith, Peltier, & Pheasant, 2011; Ely, Vinz, Downing, & Anzul, 1997). The following vignettes are based on our own real-life histories as university professors. The vignettes were generated from our individual responses to a seven-question prompt and an in-depth subsequent conversation. The questions encouraged us to reflect on our own lived experiences as early career Faculty of Color and the ways in which we have dealt with the shame associated with manuscript rejection. During the conversation, we probed each other to think more deeply about how we felt about and coped with manuscript rejection. The nine portrait vignettes are centered on three overarching themes: (a) recognizing vulnerability, (b) tempering rejection, and (c) negotiating and reconciling rejection.<sup>1</sup> As these vignettes reflect our lived experiences, we maintained first-person narration.

### Recognizing Vulnerability

#### *It Was Devastating (Rene)*

Initially, rejection was devastating. My intrinsic motivation was severely impacted by the rejection component of the peer-review process. What drives me to engage in my work is a genuine want to learn and to hear other peoples' stories, never to have my work validated through the peer-review process. The scholarship I engage in has close connections to "me-search." I write and research from a scholarship standpoint to better understand myself. As a qualitative researcher, I recognize what an honor it is to have someone share with you their experiences for the purposes of adding to the body of literature. Often, my internal want to resubmit upon being rejected was impacted. I felt a sense of failure, as if I was failing to show editors and reviewers the importance of what the participants had shared with me. I received my first rejection early in the second semester of my first year on the tenure track. I was crushed, I did not take it well at all. I felt embarrassment. I felt shame. I felt anger mixed with some fear, after all, I recognized early in my first semester the importance of peer-reviewed scholarship for the purposes of promotion and tenure. I felt feelings of fraudulence. I felt unprepared. The rejection was far from soft—the reviewers were overly critical. Internally, I asked myself if I had made the right career choice. Up to that point, from a professional standpoint, I had never experienced rejection or received overly critical feedback. I received that rejection in February and did not return to that manuscript again until November. As an early career faculty member working at a striving institution, I failed to realize in my first two years just how valuable the time I lost really was. The fact of the matter was that I was not prepared to receive

that rejection. My first two-and-a-half years on the tenure track, I was a complete and utter wreck upon receiving manuscript rejection. I failed to compartmentalize it. The rejection would seep into other areas of my work life, often making me question whether or not I was failing in the areas of teaching and service as well. I lacked any semblance of success with the peer-review process for three years. By that point, I had amassed 10 rejections on the various manuscripts that I had submitted, 14 to date. To say the least, the first manuscript I ever submitted was rejected four times—one of which received a desk reject—before it found a home in a tier one journal almost four years to the date that I received the initial rejection.

#### *It Feels Very Personal (Edna)*

Who I am drives my scholarship—the kinds of questions I ask and explore in my work, and the way I see and experience the world. There is no separating the two. So, when your work is rejected, it feels very personal. My second year on the tenure track I submitted a paper that I was really excited to see published. Actually, it wasn't a rejection. It was a major revise and resubmit, but it felt like a rejection. Reviewer one was harsh. He actually started off his review with “my overall comments may seem harsh, but I do think that there is merit to your investigation.” I am pretty sure it was a he. It was one of those cases where the reviewer felt they personally weren't cited enough so they take it out on you. I read the feedback, got discouraged, and stepped away from the manuscript for over a year! In part, I was discouraged because it reinforced aspects about my writing that I am aware of—I don't consider myself a strong writer. I felt judged. That's always something I worry about when I open myself up and put my work out there. Also, it highlighted how certain research is privileged over others. Of course, I questioned whether or not I belonged in the academy and quite frankly whether or not I wanted to belong.

#### *I Felt Demoralized (Jesus)*

I felt demoralized by my first rejection. My research is tightly intertwined with my identity as a queer immigrant of color. I can personally relate with the experiences of many participants in my research. This is the reason why rejection can feel so personal. My research, to a certain extent, represents me, my family, and my community. I consider it an absolute accomplishment to have been able to break into the academic ivory tower. Where I am today is a direct result of years of community support. Hence, a rejection from top tier journals feels like another microaggression, contesting my sense of belonging and devaluing the research that closely represents who I am and where I come from. With that being said, I experienced manuscript rejection fresh out of graduate school, during my first semester on the tenure track. Honestly, I internalized the rejection as something inherently “unworthy” about my research topic and agenda—a reminder

that these spaces were not created for people like me. Though I felt confident about my writing, I received a desk reject from one of the top journals in my field. The editor did not feel that it was a good fit, which may have been true, but it made me wonder whether my research topic would ever be “a good fit” within the top higher education journals, which I felt pressured to publish in. I felt that my research topic was significantly innovative and new to the field; however, the editor described how my topic would be more relevant within a “different” journal. Given the pressure to publish, administrators’ preference for top-tier journals, and the high rates at which these journals reject manuscripts, I felt demoralized about my ability to succeed.

### Tempering Rejection

#### *Understanding and Acceptance (Rene)*

It was not until my third year on the tenure track before I had a peer-reviewed manuscript get published, which was around the same time when my understanding of just how variable the peer-review publication process really is. I came to better understand this by reaching out to my trusted network of peers, also early career Faculty of Color. I was able to manage my feelings by simply sharing with others my thoughts, worries, and fears. I engaged with others who knew full well what I was going through. It was through this community that I grew as a scholar, developed thicker skin, and better understood the game of peer review. The first five to ten rejections, or so, were difficult and grew more painful as I received them. But through community, and support provided to me by my personal and professional community, I learned to accept rejection as a hallmark of the profession. Through community, I was able to overcome feelings that were associated with tying my worth as a faculty member to manuscript rejection. I text message the same three people once I get a manuscript rejected, but for different purposes now than when I first began on the tenure track. Initially I sought counseling, massive amounts of support, and reassurance that my work is, in fact, worth publishing. Now, I simply send a message that I got another rejection, simply as an FYI—no longer feeling crushed or devastated. Often, I find that individuals will never discuss manuscript rejection, but are quick to share manuscript acceptance on listservs and social media. In the professoriate, I am more likely to get an answer on taboo subjects such as one’s weight, amount of funds in bank accounts, even who they voted for in the most recent presidential election before they’ll answer questions regarding peer-reviewed rejection. I have been fortunate to forge relationships with a handful of faculty that are as open and honest with me as I am with them regarding some of the trials and tribulations associated with the peer-reviewed publication process.

*Asking for Help (Edna)*

I've reached out to Dr. G. She is the only person I feel comfortable asking to read my work prior to submission. I've asked her to do it once. She offers all the time, but I don't want to be a burden. I asked her to help me process reviewer comments for the paper I referenced above because it was a tough one to swallow. She agreed the reviewer was an asshole. That helped me feel better and temper some of the shame I experienced. It wasn't about my work or me. Asking for help from folks you trust or folks you know have similar experiences helps. Asking for help makes me feel vulnerable, you know. As I mentioned earlier, I do not consider myself to be a strong writer, so I do not let a lot of people read my work and when it is out there I feel kind of anxious about it, but I remind myself that it has gone through the peer-review process and that it is good work.

*Community Matters (Jesus)*

In order to not feel imprisoned by fear and shame, I like to work collaboratively with other emerging and aspiring Faculty of Color. Community matters! Individuals in my support network often share a similar positionality and social justice orientation. Working collaboratively certainly helps temper the ways in which rejection is felt and experienced. For example, together we can acknowledge rejection and bounce back, which can feel daunting, at times. But I think most important is the way that working with community makes me feel not as alone. It becomes an enjoyable process of authentic collaboration on a topic that is both personal and meaningful for us, collectively.

### Negotiating and Reconciling Rejection

*Sharing Failures with Others (Rene)*

In my first year, I failed to share my rejections, keeping them to myself so as to not let others know how I failed to succeed once again. Feelings of shame, fear, and imposter syndrome were ever-present. Part of not sharing my failures in getting published also boiled down to culture—this topic simply was not one that was ever actively discussed. It was not until I actively began sharing my failures with others that I began to realize just how commonplace this occurrence is in the academy. Now, I informally mentor early career faculty in my college and discuss my experiences with rejection actively. I have built these relationships and expanded the community with whom I share my manuscript rejections with for a variety of reasons, mainly to normalize the process and begin a much-needed shift in the peer-review culture.

***Oh, Well (Edna)***

I think I care less and less. I do not keep count of my rejections. Sometimes it is like, “oh well, whatever.” Of course, I am speaking from a position of privilege as someone who just recently became tenured. Also, I am at a comprehensive/teaching institution, which makes a difference. Maybe I’d feel more stressed about publishing and rejections if I worked at a research institution. However, I was intentional in my job search. I did not want to be at a Research 1 institution. I saw the pressure my mentors were under to publish, and I was like “no thanks.” Plus, I enjoy teaching more. That’s how I feel about the whole publication process sometimes, which is probably why rejections don’t get to me all that much. Especially if the feedback is not constructive—I am like whatever. I’ve had some great reviewers and discussants at conferences. That’s the feedback I pay attention to and put my energy towards addressing. Given some of my negative experiences, I am very mindful about the feedback I offer when I am reviewing papers. “Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you.”

***Self-Validation (Jesus)***

Having that first experience with rejection definitely prompted a defense mechanism—or perhaps even a survival mechanism—for dealing with rejection. For example, I no-longer strive to publish within the top journals in the field. For me, the feeling of rejection (and the time wasted during the review process) is not worth the potential benefits of being published there. The composition of editorial boards certainly plays a factor as to where I submit manuscripts for publication. I do not want to be told that my research is not worthy—because that’s what it feels like. Instead, I have sought outlets that publish similar types of research and share an appreciation for the work. It’s certainly sad to think about the ways in which rejection (and the fear of rejection) has ultimately shaped where I publish and the level of “impact” my research can have within the field. But then again, I have to remind myself that I did not enter the professoriate to obtain external validation from publication outlets. My mission and purpose remain with my community. Reminding myself of this is important for validating myself as a scholar activist and practitioner.

**Intersection of the Literature and Our Vignettes**

The acceptance of peer-reviewed scholarship plays a critical role in the evaluative process of tenure and promotion for early career faculty. Professional failure in the area of manuscript rejection is experienced recurrently by scholars in the academy and is accompanied by social and psychological consequences (Horn, 2016). When a manuscript rejection is received, emotional distress may occur for some scholars, which may impact productivity (Day, 2011). Of key importance to

this study was the reality that “the typical academic culture does not provide adequate support systems for dealing with rejection” (Day, 2011, p. 710). As evidenced within this study, this reality is particularly relevant for Faculty of Color, whose writing is often attached and connected to one’s personal, professional, and communal identities (Delgado-Bernal, 2007). The findings for this study serve to support Day’s (2011) assessment that the academy fails to address the emotional response that is accompanied by manuscript rejection, to include possible consequences.

The first set of vignettes organized around the theme of Recognizing Vulnerability, which regarded the ways in which we identified internalized fear, shame, and self-consciousness as a result of our personal, educational, and professional socialization as members of minoritized communities. Consistent with the literature on SRT, this study found the definition of shame (Brown, 2006) is in line with the feelings described within our vignettes, in particular feelings associated with feeling unworthy and not accepted both as a person and as a scholar, given how deeply connected our scholarship is to self. As supported by Day (2011), rejection impacts sense of belonging in the academy, doubts in one’s abilities, and silence that keeps the stigma invisible. Manuscript rejection serves to compound the stress and emotional angst experienced by Faculty of Color, particularly, on the tenure track.

We navigated vulnerability by tempering rejection—the second theme organized around our collective vignettes—in ways that helped us persist and support each other through the process of rejection. The current study found the importance of peer-support; specifically, other early career Faculty of Color. We turned to each other, often to eliminate what Gray (2000) identified as the negative self-talk that all writers unsurprisingly engage in. Sharing feelings surrounding negative self-talk was helpful in overcoming the negative outlook we had regarding the peer-review process. This finding falls in line with the work of McGrail, Rickard, and Jones (2006), who found that writing support groups were the most effective means of increasing higher rates of publications because of their emphasis on encouragement and psychosocial support.

In negotiating and reconciling rejection—the third theme comprised of our collective vignettes—we utilized reframing strategies to validate our own work and affirm our belongingness. We did not remain silent, a trend in the academy surrounding publication, where scholars fail to talk about the challenges they have encountered. Belcher (2009) wrote how talking about the struggles associated with academic writing can be what she deemed as freeing. It is silence in the realm of academic writing that has led to dysfunction in academia (Belcher, 2009). Such findings further support the idea of developing a social network so as to reinforce the case that all scholars receive rejection, as one example of a healthy coping mechanism associated with handling manuscript rejections (Day, 2011). As stated by Belcher (2009), writing is simply filled with rejection. Academics writing for publication receive rejections given the high rates at which

journals reject manuscripts (Day, 2011). Yet, rejection for some scholars can be difficult and emotional, possibly impacting both productivity and satisfaction. The lack of dialogue regarding a very common occurrence, hence, may impact motivation and performance.

As early-career Faculty of Color, coming from collectivist cultures, we engaged with each other and others as a means of support through rejection. Our writing is more social in nature now, no longer working in solitary conditions (Belcher, 2009). Our approach is, indeed, in stark contrast to the current culture of academia. As early-career Faculty of Color, we draw on our cultural values and use those as a guide toward how and in what ways we engage with the scholarship component of the professoriate. Brown (2006) suggests shame is related to feeling trapped, powerless, and isolated. Feeling trapped is related to numerous competing and unrealistic expectations and few options to meet those expectations (Brown, 2006). Powerlessness relates to difficulty to act, to challenge, or offset shame. As Brown (2006) explained “shame often produces overwhelming and painful feelings of confusion, fear, anger, judgment, and/or the need to hide” (p. 46). Day (2011), in castigating the academic community, wrote just how significant the lack of conversation surrounding manuscript rejection is, given the negative outcomes associated to well-being and productivity, and given the high number of rejections awarded via manuscript publishing. While we approach the professoriate in a holistic manner, placing a high level of emphasis and importance on teaching and research along with scholarship, we recognize the value decision makers place on peer-reviewed scholarship. Productivity from a scholarly standpoint is usually measured by peer-reviewed articles accepted, with a preference to those in top-tier journals (Gray & Birch, 2000). We recognize the preference for top-tier journals among administrators, and how the decisions we make regarding where we choose to publish is impacted by rankings.

### **Calls for Change in the Academy**

Our vignettes point to the need for how scholars engage in rejection, in particular the need to create community as part of reconciling the manuscript rejection process. Isolation is where we sought solace from the pain associated with manuscript rejection. What we know now, as Faculty of Color who have either recently been promoted and tenured or on the cusp of submitting our dossier, is that isolating behaviors associated with manuscript rejection have no place in the academy. We recognize just how powerless we are in the peer-review process. In order to break away from feeling imprisoned by fear and shame, we turned to each other. It was through the dialogue, sharing more so what has occurred with our previously submitted manuscripts, that we were able to cope with a very common occurrence in the academy. The approach we have taken in supporting each other through the manuscript rejection process is akin to what transpires through writ-

ing retreats, mainly the creation of an environment where one can be supported and encouraged by peers (MacLeod, Steckley, & Murray, 2012).

Our vignettes were also grounded in scholars whose line of inquiry is intimately tied to their identity. For Scholars of Color whose line of inquiry intersects with their personal identity, a need to dissociate the rejection from a personal attack on one's own value and worth, not just as a scholar but also as an individual, is key. Writing for publication can be vulnerable, one that is exacerbated by rejection. With our methodological approaches grounded in qualitative research, and our scholarship agendas embedding concepts of our own race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientations, a rejected manuscript feels like a rejection of self. We remind ourselves and implore others to persist, focusing on healthy coping mechanisms and identifying peer support groups. Finding community may serve as an important reminder of why we do the work that we do and for whom.

Finally, faculty development programs and mentors must focus their attention on manuscript rejection as a salient part of the peer-review process. Whether it was through supportive mentors or professional development, we engaged in the writing process with and through others early in graduate school or within the first year of being on the tenure-track. In supporting early career faculty, faculty development programs and mentors can share rejected reviews for the purposes of normalizing this component of the writing process. Workshops and sessions geared toward scholarship should have woven into them content on manuscript rejection, a concept that our vignettes point out would have been helpful to us. The emphasis in the academy has been on the number of peer-reviewed manuscripts accepted, often not disclosing the number of times an accepted peer-reviewed manuscript was rejected or underwent the revise and resubmit process. Discussing scholarship in its entirety is what mentors and faculty developers should strive to do to support early career scholars in combating the shame of rejection.

## Conclusion

Scholarship for tenure-track faculty, in particular peer-reviewed manuscript writing, is an essential part of faculty work life and forms the basis for promotion and tenure at research universities as well as striving comprehensives. Although we have enjoyed success in the academy specific to peer-reviewed manuscript acceptance, it was not without rejection and accompanying feelings of shame, both impacting our experiences as early career faculty. The rejection process has stirred up feelings of fraudulence within us that have been brought on by fear. The fear and shame we have encountered has made us question components of our profession such as what tier of journals we should even attempt to publish in and whether or not publishing is something that we even value. We have persisted, in large part, due to the community that we have sought out, or has sought us out, assisting us in reconceptualizing how we view ourselves and our work. And while

we may not fully agree with the processes associated with the arbitrary manner in which some peer-reviewed journals operate, we recognize that we have consciously chosen to remain in a profession that values peer-reviewed scholarship, and will continue to seek community to address feelings of shame for no other reason at this point in our careers than to remind ourselves that our work matters and has value.

### Note

<sup>1</sup> Themes were developed from our written responses and our audio-recorded conversation. In addition to deductive coding, based on Shame Resilience Theory (Brown, 2006), we engaged in Affective Coding, Emotion Coding, and Values Coding (Saldaña, 2016). To ensure trustworthiness, we shared our analytic memos and compared/contrasted as it pertains to coding and theming. Secondly, preliminary findings were shared with a critical friend (Gordon, 2006).

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## Chopped to Pieces, I Write Myself Together

*James P. Burns*

### Abstract

In this paper, the author reflects on being a writer in the academy in dialogue with writers who have been instrumental in the author's academic work: James Baldwin, George Orwell, Eduardo Galeano, and Michel Foucault. The author first contextualizes the paper in the current historical moment, characterized by resurgent authoritarianism, the COVID-19 pandemic, and mass non-violent protests in response to the police murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor to reiterate the importance of academic writers as public intellectuals. The author then reflects on the messy affects of writing in the academy, particularly as a pre-tenure faculty member, through four purposes, proposed by Orwell, that motivate most writers: sheer egoism, an aesthetic enthusiasm, historical impulse, and political purpose. The author concludes that academic writing comprises an aesthetics and ethics of the self as well as a political project of self-cultivation, the embodiment of truth, and care for the world.

*Keywords:* academic writing; technologies of the self; *parrhēsia*; aesthetics; art of living

### Introduction

Why does one write, if not to put one's pieces together? From the moment we enter school or church, education chops us into pieces: it teaches us to divorce soul from body and mind from heart. The fishermen of the Columbian coast must be

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learned doctors of ethics and morality, for they invented the word *sentipensante*, feeling-thinking, to define language that speaks the truth. (Galeano, 1992, p. 121)

When I submitted the first draft of this article in the late summer of 2019, the world seemed different. Discourses of temporal difference, may, however, obfuscate or disavow the underlying conditions of possibility of the present. One year later, the systemic shock of the COVID-19 pandemic and mass protests sparked by the police murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor have rendered a myriad of preexisting historic injustices even more grotesquely visible. My hope in these times, perhaps best expressed by Baldwin (1965/1998) through his prophetic writings on U.S. race relations, is that the crises we confront will illuminate the history on which many white people find themselves “impaled...incapable of seeing or changing themselves, or the world” (p. 723). In terms of education, specifically academic writing, the historicization of oneself and the world in a stubbornly ahistoric socio-political milieu (Pinar, 2012) resonates with a fundamental tenet of curriculum theory: self and social reconstruction.

Academics currently live, work, teach, and write in, and against, an era characterized by resurgent authoritarianism, economic precarity, a cult of irrationalism and hypermasculine violence, and impending environmental collapse. Globally, I see Eco’s (2001) *Ur-Fascism*,<sup>1</sup> an ever-present set of characteristics, around any one of which a “Fascist nebula will begin to coagulate” (p. 78), in operation. From post-truth propaganda to intolerance of dissent and academic inquiry—for example, attacks on gender studies (American Association of University Professors, 2018)—the academy faces some significant, perhaps existential challenges in the United States and globally.

Considering the importance of academic writing to the health of intellectual life, itself precarious in a society historically suspicious of intellectuals and driven by the practical social engineering demands of the business-minded (Hofstadter, 1962; Pinar, 2006), the question of what it means to be a writer in the academy, while always important, assumes greater urgency. Much as the COVID pandemic has magnified numerous institutional disparities, the responses of many universities to COVID have illuminated the academy’s complicity with the neoliberal project. What might a disaster capitalist (Klein, 2007) response by university administrators and governing boards to the COVID pandemic mean for writing as an expression of humanist inquiry and the embodiment of ethics of justice? As a pre-tenure faculty member, I often struggle with the tensions inherent in the technocratic obsession with metrics that purport to assign a market value to my scholarly worth. I fear that the increasingly gigified nature of the material conditions of academic work is further eroding already weakened principles of academic freedom, shared governance, and what remains of institutional commitments to writing as a political practice using, as Galeano (1992) suggests, language that speaks the truth.

In this essay, I engage with the messy affects of writing in the academy by grappling with a fundamental question: why and for whom do I write? I structure

my inquiry around four general motives—sheer egoism, aesthetic enthusiasm, historical impulse, and political purpose—which Orwell (1946/2005) suggests drive all writers in varying degrees according to the times in which they live. Framing this essay in Orwell’s (1946/2005) analysis of writers’ purposes and motivations, I place myself in dialogue with Orwell, James Baldwin, and Michel Foucault. These writers, each in their own way, discuss writing as a political, aesthetic, and moral practice, a way of being in the world deeply entangled with the subjective and the social, and an ethical commitment to seek and embody truth. Based on my engagement with Orwell, Baldwin, and Foucault, whose work has influenced my own, I understand writing as an art of self-cultivation in relationship with others through which I situate myself historically, socially, and politically and act on my emerging self-understanding toward reconstruction of the social world. I begin with Orwell’s (1946/2005) first motive, sheer egoism.

### Sheer Egoism

Writers, Baldwin (1993) notes, “are said to be extremely egotistical and demanding” and their work, while they remain alive, “fatally entangled” with their personal fortunes and misfortunes, personalities, and the “social facts and attitudes” of their time (p. 182). For Baldwin (1993), the social facts and attitudes that inhere in his work revolve around “the question of color,” which, in the United States, “operates to hide the graver questions of the self” (p. xiii). Orwell (1946/2005) attributes writers’ egoism to their “desire to seem clever, to be talked about, and to be remembered after death,” and he dismissed as “humbug” any pretension that egoism isn’t a strong motivation to write (p. 4). He also suggests that serious writers comprise a “minority of gifted, willful people who are determined to live their own lives to the end” whereas many people tend to “abandon individual ambition” and succumb to the drudgery of living for others (Orwell, 1946/2005, p. 5). Both Baldwin (1993) and Orwell (1946/2005) imply that writers live in an egoistic paradox, which emerges from several conflicting, and perhaps generative, desires: to be immersed in their own subjectivities; to be affirmed by others; to attain immortality through being discussed, remembered, and even studied by others long after death; to live their own lives; and to embody truth as a moral practice.

The tensions and contradictions inherent in the writer’s egoistic paradox flourish in the academy, which deftly plays to the professorial ego using both enticements and “subtle tactics of the sanction” (Foucault, 2015, p. 6)—promotion, tenure, merit pay, statistical hierarchization and differentiation—to leverage the production of specific scholarly subjectivities. I also sense a contradiction between the pretense of the academic pursuit of truth and post-truth discourses that resemble “Newspeak” (Orwell, 1949), the goal of which is to “limit the instruments available to complex and critical reasoning” (Eco, 2001, p. 86). Con-

sidering those contradictions, my integrity as a writer must, as Pinar (2006) suggests, include introspection into myself and principled critique of the institutions through which I move and of my own academic field.

Which brings me to the other side of the egoistic paradox: the importance of subjectivity to my ontology of writing. Interiority is a crucial thread through Baldwin's work, which he characterizes as a "state of being alone" (1962/1998, p. 669). For a writer, the state of being alone is "not meant to bring to mind merely a rustic musing beside some silver lake" (Baldwin, 1962/1998, p. 669). Rather, the aloneness of a writer is a state in which one contemplates truly existential questions:

The aloneness of which I speak is much more like the fearful aloneness of birth or death.... The states of birth, suffering, love, and death are extreme states: extreme, universal, and inescapable. We all know this, but we would rather not know it. The artist is present to correct the delusions to which we fall prey in our attempts to avoid this knowledge. (Baldwin, 1962/1998, p. 669)

As a writer in the academy, I feel great resonance with the state of aloneness described by Baldwin (1962/1998) as a politics of writing that troubles the intransigence of common sense, which so often reinscribes the injustices of the past onto the present.

Indeed, Foucault (2005) characterizes self-care as a conversion to self, a form of return that he explains through the metaphor of navigation, or a journey. The cultivation of self-knowledge is a technology of the self, a "privilege-duty, a gift-obligation that ensures our freedom while forcing us to take ourselves as the object of all our diligence" (Foucault, 1984/1988, p. 47). Thus, the ancient art of living associates care of one's body with the care of one's soul through self-examination of the principles inherent in the activities that one embodies, particularly writing. Foucault (quoted in Martin, Gutman, & Hutton, 1988) describes a hermeneutics of technologies of the self, which function in conflict with technologies of production, sign systems, and power, as practices that

permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality. (p. 18)

Writing, therefore, is a constant, complex "activity of speaking and writing in which the work of oneself on oneself and communication with others" are linked into "a true social practice" (Foucault, 1984/1988, p. 51), which forms a "system of reciprocal obligations" (p. 54). During the Hellenistic era, writing became an essential technology of the self that included "taking notes on oneself to be reread, writing treatises and letters to friends to help them, and keeping notebooks in order to reactivate for oneself the truths one needed" (Foucault quoted in Martin et al., 1988, p. 27). Unlike the renunciation of the self that characterized Christian asceticism, classical philosophy privileged "the progressive consideration of the

self, or mastery over oneself, obtained not through the renunciation of reality but through the acquisition and assimilation of truth” (Foucault quoted in Martin et al., 1988, p. 35). For me, academic writing, emerges from an ancient, complex set of practices associated with the art of living through which we care for, cultivate, and come to know ourselves both in solitude and with the guidance of others.

I often wonder if writing as a social practice is in danger of disappearing. It is possible, absent the context of his broad body of work, to misinterpret Orwell’s (1946/2005) suggestion that writers are motivated partially by sheer egoism and dismiss writing, and writers, as the windows through which we see and are seen. Considering the systems of governmentality formed by the “contact between technologies of domination of others and those of the self” (Foucault quoted in Martin et al., 1988, p. 19), I have developed a deeper appreciation for writing as a social practice of self-cultivation based on a system of reciprocal obligations. The complexities of subjectivity connect with Orwell’s (1946/2005) second motive to write, aesthetic enthusiasm, which signifies writing as an artform entangled with an aesthetics of the self.

### Aesthetic Enthusiasm

The return to the self through the act of writing signals writing as an ethics and aesthetics of the self, which transcends superficial contemporary expressions of self-help, authenticity, and “getting back to oneself” (Foucault, 2005, p. 251). The sense of writing as an aesthetic practice was perhaps best exemplified during the Hellenistic Age when “writing prevailed, and real dialectic passed to correspondence,” and care for oneself “became linked to a constant writing activity” (Foucault quoted in Martin et al., 1988, p. 27). It is that sense of writing that Foucault (2005) suggests has remained elusive in the modern era despite efforts to revive it. Part of writing as an aesthetics of the self lies in the pleasure derived from the intimacy of writing as a social practice, particularly the relationship “between the care of the self and philosophical love, or the relation to the master” (Foucault quoted in Martin et al., 1988, p. 26), which revealed the *ars erotica* imbricated with the cultivation of the self through writing. For example, Marcus Aurelius, in a letter from 144-45 CE to his master, Fronto, described his activities, health, mood, and conscience during a rural retreat to put Aurelius “in contact” with himself, and he expressed his love for Fronto in closing (Foucault quoted in Martin et al., 1988, p. 29).

Similarly, Baldwin (1993) discusses the aesthetics of writing as a continuous practice of self-examination:

I still believe that the unexamined life is not worth living: and I know that self-delusion, in the service of no matter what small or lofty cause, is a price no writer can afford. His subject is himself and the world and it requires every ounce of stamina he can summon to attempt to look on himself and the world as they are. (p. xii)

The necessity for a writer to live an examined life resonates with the sense of writing as an aesthetics of the self and Baldwin's (1962/1998) characterization of the writer as "that incorrigible disturber of the peace" (p. 669) with whom all societies have historically battled. Much as Foucault (2008) suggests that civil society is a governmental technology predicated on economic logics, Baldwin (1962/1998) portrays the purpose of society as maintaining order and habituating the people to traditions from which they derive their identity and, thus, governability. The writer's responsibility to society, and writing as an aesthetic act, is to "never cease warring with" society, for society's sake and for the sake of the writer (Baldwin, 1962/1998, p. 670).

Aesthetic enthusiasm, for Orwell (1946/2005), can reflect the "perception of beauty in the external world"; "pleasure in the impact of one sound on another, in the firmness of good prose or the rhythm of a good story"; and the "desire to share an experience which one feels is valuable and ought not to be missed" (Orwell, 1946/2005, p. 5). Importantly, Orwell (1946/2005) expressed the goal of his political writing as the elevation of "political writing into an art form," and he could not write "if it were not also an aesthetic experience" in which he took pleasure (p. 8). Thus, as an aesthetic practice, writing, by seeking a more complex understanding of personal and social history, can reveal the beauty of the world. Foucault (2003) might characterize the revelatory power of writing as genealogical inquiry that can uncover knowledges and traditions that have been eliminated from academic institutions as unsophisticated, non-erudite, and inconvenient to partial, yet totalizing white Western narratives. Baldwin (1962/1998) similarly embodies a politics of writing through which the aesthetic experience of writing helps one discover "that life is tragic, and, *therefore*, unutterably beautiful" (p. 671). Through my own writing, I have learned that beauty can exist in the tragedy of the truth, specifically in the stories of resistance and counter-conduct that we can uncover through our academic work. Further, part of the beauty of writing lies, paradoxically, in the willingness to speak the truth about ourselves, which is typically "at variance with what we wish to be" (Baldwin, 1962/1998, p. 671).

Writing as an aesthetic practice integral to the art of living, thus, forms a "whole field of experience" including detailed introspection and the development of a relationship "between writing and vigilance" in which one pays attention to the "nuances of life" (Foucault quoted in Martin et al., 1988, p. 28). Care of the self and the art of living are intertwined in a relationship to the self that is simultaneously imbricated with the presence of others who help us situate ourselves in the world and provoke us to act ethically (Foucault, 2005). The aesthetic impulse that I seek to cultivate transcends the superficial, commercialized sense of "finding myself" or accumulating a "bucket list" of pleasurable experiences and their associated artifacts. I do not seek to use writing instrumentally to quantify my worth to "the field" as an academic writer. Rather, I am attempting to embody an aesthetics of the self as an ethic of self-care and self-cultivation through a practice

of writing not merely for others, but in relationship with others who can guide me toward ethical action in the world. The practice of writing is an act of vigilance, of attending to myself as an ethics of caring for others and the world, which is entangled with an impulse to situate myself historically, to which I now turn.

### Historical Impulse

To enact an ethics of the self requires an understanding of oneself in the context of history. One of the tragedies associated with times like those in which we currently live is the historic inability to transcend such times. Instead, the discursive lack of historicity often results in the reinscription of the past on the present and the future. For example, present phenomena such as post-truth, authoritarianism, and police violence against persons of color emerge from extensive intersected histories. Yet, an ahistoric presentism often afflicts social, political, and educational discourses, which reduces the complexities of the present to a “flattened never-ending ‘now’” (Pinar, 2012, p. 227). Baldwin (1965/1998) reminds us, however, that history

does not refer merely, or even principally, to the past. On the contrary, the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally *present* in all that we do. It could scarcely be otherwise, since it is to history that we owe our frames of reference, our identities and our aspirations. (p. 723)

Thus, we can see the disavowal of the history white supremacy in discourses from “all lives matter” and “personal responsibility” to the devotion of many to neo-Confederate iconography, which purports that symbols such as the Confederate flag and statues of Confederate leaders are monuments to cultural heritage rather than to slavery and white ethnonationalism. In contrast to historical disavowal, Baldwin (1993) suggests that the aesthetic endeavor of an examined life requires a willingness “to free ourselves of the myth of America” (p. 11), a difficult task in a country that distrusts intellectuals precisely because they threaten to complicate or destroy that myth.

Orwell’s (1946/2005) historical impulse to write, and his political purpose, were contextualized in his experiences with British colonialism, fighting against Fascism in Spain, the aftermath of World War II, and the emerging Cold War. He wrote not to catalog facts and events, but to reconcile his “ingrained likes and dislikes with the essentially public, non-individual activities” that each age forces on all of humanity (p. 9). Orwell (1946/2005) also considered his historical impulse to write imbricated with the “construction of language,” which raised, for him, the “problem of truthfulness” (p. 9). Thus, Orwell’s (1949) “Newspeak” illuminated the danger of post-truth politics more than four decades before playwright Steve Tesich coined the term “post-truth” in 1992.

My scholarly interest in the effects of technologies of institutional power an-

imates my historical impulse to write. Foucault's (2003) method and tactic of genealogy has, therefore, inspired my politics of writing over the years. Genealogy couples "scholarly erudition and local memories, which allows us to constitute a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of that knowledge in contemporary tactics" (Foucault, 2003, p. 8). I have found genealogy crucial to my understanding of the production of knowledges that effect power, and also to excavate local knowledges—"what people know" (Foucault, 2003, p. 8)—which have been institutionally subjugated. The pursuit of writing as an aesthetic genealogical project in search of a more complex, truthful understanding of the present requires, as Baldwin (1993) suggests, questioning tradition. Genealogy as a method and a historical and political project illuminates the conditions of possibility that produce the present, which can help us see, as Orwell (1946/2005) suggests, not only things as they really are, but how the present came to be. Excavating different voices, knowledges, and memories resonates with an aesthetics of the self and may, as Baldwin (1965/1998) concludes, assess how history has subjectively formed us and recreate ourselves "according to a principle more humane and more liberating" (p. 723). Through such a project, which is inherently political, we might, in the language of curriculum theory, reconstruct ourselves and contribute to historical change.

### Political Purpose

We live, as Orwell (1946/2005) described his own time, in a "tumultuous, revolutionary age" (p. 4). At the very least, the current times have the potential to become such an age, hopefully in pursuit of a truly just society. Taken together, Orwell's (1946/2005) four impulses to write, sheer egoism, aesthetic enthusiasm, historical impulse, and political purpose, "must war against one another" and "fluctuate from person to person and from time to time" (p. 6). As a police officer in Burma, Orwell developed a hatred of imperialism; his impoverishment evoked his awareness of class struggle; and the rise of Hitler, participation in the resistance during the Spanish Civil War, and the Soviet counter-revolution illuminated the threat of totalitarianism. The times during which Orwell (1946/2005) lived impelled him to write for a political purpose, and he concluded: "It seems to me nonsense, in a period like our own, to think that one can avoid writing of such subjects" (p. 8). To avoid confronting the existential crises we currently face would be to abdicate my ethical and political responsibility as a public intellectual to others.

Baldwin's vast political project dealt with myriad aspects of race relations, both internationally and in the United States, a particularly interesting aspect of which was the complex relationship between the North and the South. His observation about race as an entanglement of power and sex (Baldwin, 1993), an overt reference to lynching and rape as a technology of domination, are as relevant today as ever. That observation reflects Baldwin's (1993) own genealogical thinking

through which present issues—police terror against communities of color; health, educational, and housing discrimination; economic dispossession; mass incarceration; misogyny; and the epidemic of violence perpetrated against Black Trans Women—emerged through technologies of power, including the persistence of academic discourses that sought to scientifically rationalize racial hierarchies (see Foucault, 1970/1994). Baldwin's (1993) politics of writing further extends to the "extremely dangerous luxury" in which Northern white people indulge: the illusion that "because they fought on the right side during the Civil War, and won, they have earned the right merely to deplore what is going on in the South" (p. 69). That political observation was also expressed by Martin Luther King, Junior's (1963/2000) disappointment with the white moderate "more devoted to 'order' than to justice" (p. 96). That critique remains pertinent today, particularly among elite establishment liberals who continue to deplore police violence and racism but engage in purely performative acts in support of racial justice.

To summarize the politics of writing that inspires me, I return to Foucault (quoted in Martin et al., 1988), who noted the Hellenistic linkage between writing as self-care and political activity. One tension that emerges from writing as a technology of the self and political activity centers on the question: "When is it better to turn away from political activity and concern oneself with oneself?" (Foucault quoted in Martin et al., 1988, p. 26). As a pre-tenure faculty member, I do sometimes struggle to balance my political engagement with the need to return to and care for myself so that I can continue meaningful engagement in the world. Thus, writing for me is both a journey of engagement and a return to myself.

Foucault (2011) also speaks of a *parrhēsiastic* ethics of truth telling as self-care through writing in which "the self is something to write about, a theme or object (subject) of writing activity" (Foucault, quoted in Martin et al., 1988, p. 27). Particularly in the current historical moment, I am concerned about the manipulation of language to obfuscate and dehistoricize rather than reveal truth. To embody the courage of truth as a *parrhēsiastic* practice, one must speak truth "without concealment, reserve, empty manner of speech, or rhetorical ornament which might encode or hide it" (Foucault, 2011, p. 10). One is also bound to the consequences of one's speech, which reflects the risks inherent in speaking and seeking truth, such as angering others, learning that one's beliefs are untrue, and even physical or political death. *Parrhēsia* is, therefore, a "way of being which is akin to a virtue, a mode of action" (Foucault, 2011, p. 25) rather than rhetorical techniques that conceal meaning. As a technology of the self, *parrhēsia* privileges the importance of others as interlocutors who can help guide one toward a better understand oneself, others, and the world. Writing for the political purpose of seeking truth helps situate oneself in and connect with the world, impels one to action, and establishes limits on one's actions (Foucault, 2005). I view my interlocutors in the *parrhēsiastic* "game" as my guides, the ones to whom I write, and the ones who impel me to reckon with myself (Foucault, 2005). Ultimately, I write, as Galeano (1989) suggests, for myself, as a

technology and aesthetics of the self, and a historical and political project through which I write for others as well.

### Concluding Thoughts

The question “What are we today?” introduced Foucault’s (quoted in Martin et al., 1988) emerging line of inquiry into the modern political rationality that seeks to mediate the tensions between increasing individuation and the reinforcement of the totality of the state, between the “social entity and the individual” (p. 153). The political technology of individuals—biopolitics—emerges from the reason of the modern nation-state, the paradox of which lies in the coexistence of “large destructive mechanisms and institutions oriented toward the care of individual life” (Foucault quoted in Martin et al., 1988, p. 147). The biopolitical rationality endemic in the police powers of the modern state focuses solely on the perpetuation of nation-states concerned with individuals only insofar as they have some productive utility. Thus, states aggregate individuals into populations, which is “nothing more than what the state takes care of for its own sake” (Foucault quoted in Martin et al., 1988, p. 160).

How does any of this relate to the messy affect(s) of writing in the academy? Political technologies of individuation function in all the institutions that comprise the modern state through extractive logics that render individuals objects of inquiry to produce knowledges that form useful self-governing subjects. Biopolitics is also a crucial analytical lens for my research, particularly the militarization of the carceral state, creeping fascism, white ethnonationalist violence, and increasingly onerous technologies of surveillance and propaganda. Importantly, I am interested in both sides of the biopolitical coin. The power of the nation-state, and all its institutions, including the academy, to foster life coexists with the power to disallow life, which Foucault (quoted in Martin et al., 1988) calls thanatopolitics. Concerning academic work, the logics of neoliberalism to which academic institutions have largely succumbed operate according to the same biopolitical rationality that concerned Foucault. For example, sophisticated data-driven technologies function as a form of police power to chop individuals into increasingly minute pieces of data and either foster or disallow their existence based on their quantifiable institutional utility. Inherent in the politics of individuals is the politics of life and death, a frightening prospect considering the last century of human history.

On the other hand, I wonder what one of Foucault’s famous strategic reversals might look like in the academy and in a biopolitical society. How might we reverse the biopolitical rationality that forms and fosters a reductive subjectivity based on the utility of individuals to institutions? How might we as writers in the academy embrace writing as an aesthetic practice of self-care animated by a *parrhēsiastic* ethic, which might subvert the extractive logics inherent in the academy, and society? I have no firm answers to those questions, but reflecting

constantly on the politics of writing, I believe, is essential to the work of academics as public intellectuals. Although the authors with whom I engaged in this paper emerged from different subjective positions, they all regarded writing as an aesthetic, ethical, and political act of authoring themselves. Writing, from that perspective, is more than *sine qua non* to the academy. Writing is also *sine qua non* to the art of living.

### Note

<sup>1</sup> Eco's characteristics of Ur-Fascism include: the cult of tradition; a rejection of modernism; irrationalism; intolerance of dissent; fear of difference; authoritarian populist appeals to the frustrated; an obsession with conspiracies, particularly regarding outsiders; a propagandized humiliation at the hands of outsiders; glorification of permanent war; scorn for the weak; the cult of death; transferring the will to power to sexual questions; the rejection of democracy; and the use of "Newspeak" to circumvent critical thought.

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## Expanding Academic Writing

### A Multilayered Exploration of What It Means To Belong

Sara K. Sterner & Lee C. Fisher

#### Abstract

In this article, we explore the impact of rigid boundaries of what counts as academic writing and what it means to belong through the construction of a multilayered text that draws on the work of Patti Lather. Our layered writing engages with and documents the complexity of the writing *process and the struggle of putting chaos* into a static format that cohesively considers the multiplicity of knowing. This alternative format productively disrupts the status quo and honors an engagement with writing we would like to see embraced in the academy.

*Keywords:* academic writing, narrative inquiry, multilayered text, belonging

*Texts that do justice to the complexity of what we know and understand include the tales not told, the words not written or transcribed, the words thought but not uttered, the unconscious: all that gets lost in the telling and the representing.*

—Patti Lather (2007, p. 13)

#### Introduction

In Hall's (2015) children's picture book *Red: A Crayon's Story*, the protagonist struggles to meet the expectations of others. The illustrations depict a waxy, blue stick labeled with a red wrapper. He attempts to draw strawberries, fire engines, and ants while other crayons comment: "Sometimes I wonder if he's really

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red at all,” “Give him time. He’ll get it,” and “Well, I think he’s lazy” (np). The crayon struggles to express himself fully within the literal and conceptual restrictions in which he has been required to work by his peers and mentors. And then, another crayon asks him to draw water. “I can’t. I’m red.” Ignoring the expectations of what was possible, the crayon then encourages Red, “Will you try?” (np). And he does.

In this article, we explore the impact of rigid boundaries of what counts as academic writing through the construction of a multilayered text. Such a writing practice intentionally expands the process of composition to welcome the unknown, while also inviting readers to actively engage meaning making. It also disrupts presentational modes that position arguments as finished and monologic. It makes explicit the dialogic nature of language, not only in a Bakhtinian sense that looks outward, teeming with the socio-historical remnants of past uses and anticipating a future response from an audience real or imagined, but in a Vygotskian sense that looks inward, internalizing information and incorporating it into identities. “Language thus takes on an intrapersonal function in addition to its interpersonal use. When children develop a method of behavior for guiding themselves...they succeed in applying a social attitude to themselves” (1978, p. 27, emphasis in the original).

This alternative format disrupts a status quo within academic writing as a means to acknowledge the multiplicities of how knowledge is constituted. It is our assertion that this writing form—which includes an explicit invitation for collaboration between authors and readers—creates a third space in which writing engages with both the unknown and embodied ways of knowing. By complicating the readers’ interaction with the text, we invite the reader to engage with and through the layers of understanding while navigating decision-making, intertextuality, and an individual’s affective connections to the reading process.

We draw on the work of Patti Lather, who uses assemblage-style writing—with split-pages, endnotes, and endnotes used as narrative and analytical devices—to push the boundaries of knowledge construction that are difficult to capture in a standard formatting. Lather’s writing as productive disruption is most salient in the multilayered prose crafted for *Troubling the Angels: Women Living with HIV/AIDS* (Lather & Smithies, 1997). “The textual and interpretive practices [of creating multilayered texts] work toward a multiplicity and complexity of layers that unfold an event which exceeds our frames of reference, evolving insight into what not knowing means” (Lather, 1997, p. 254). The writing of a multilayered text is iterative—analysis, insights, and a possibility for praxis emerges as the text is constructed across layers. Writing as a form of praxis (Lather, 2007) pushes the writer to reflect on the possibilities for and constraints within language to engage with different ways of knowing. Multilayered writing offers an opportunity to change the filter through which perspectives are represented and to craft a dialogic, poly-vocal text by inviting writers and readers to move between different

spaces on the page. In the in-between spaces, the spaces that exceed our frames of reference, writers—and readers—enter a space inaccessible by single layers of direct quotes, delineated findings, and monologic rhetoric.

As writers, the use of multilayered text allows us to recognize multiple knowledges within our experiences and map those in separate and interconnected locations on the physical page. This form of scholarly writing provides a vehicle for the messy and varied ways of engaging with text which invite questions, contradictions, and multiple constructions of knowledge. So too does this ask readers to become aware of their own embodied knowledge and social interactions that inform *what* they bring to the reading of a text and *how* they read that text. Because “individuals (or subjects to use the post structural term) have been constructed through social and linguistic codes and practices that shape their relationships to texts and how such texts might be defined” (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007, p. 5), authors and readers are never outside of sociocultural forces that inform relationships with text and knowledge.

Power, as we conceptualize it here, is the constitutive force of sociocultural norms that define what has value, and what does not. That which is valued functions as capital, positioning particular language and forms of writing as superior. Power not only acts on writers but through them as they determine what counts as relevant and shape it in ways that suit their onto/epistemological commitments. Multilayered writing invites a more transparent interaction with power and the sociocultural forces that shape expectations around text and how knowledge is constructed through it. These considerations suggest that neither the text nor its reading are neutral but are imbued with “ready-made formulations of social meaning and relations of power” (Enciso, in Lewis et al., 2007, p. 52). Bakhtin’s ventriloquism (as cited in Morris, 1994) underscores that text construction and how it is interpreted is indeed not neutral but is done strategically as if it were a conceptual bricolage (Rolling, 2013), noting the effectiveness of past utterances and the improvisation of joining those utterances with others to make a new and unique statement.<sup>1</sup> This bricolage-like text is not a unitary thing. It is made up of a curated language shaped through, with, and by hegemonic forces. The language equally constitutes the individual as the individual constitutes meaning in the language and, ultimately in the entire text. And yet, for all its possibility, the limitations of available language restricts texts (Enciso in Lewis et al., 2007, p. 53). In order to fully consider power within multilayered texts, it is integral to acknowledge the ways in which language and reading operates to situate writers and their audience in particular ways.

In this article, we take up a form of multilayered writing (Sterner, 2019), inspired by and expanded from the writing of Patti Lather (1997, 2007) and her work with Chris Smithies (1997). In their original book, *Troubling Angels*, Lather and Smithies (1997) use multilayered writing to explore the connections between bodies, text, and social life. Lather’s (1997) discussion of the creation of that

form articulates the experiential possibilities for both writers and readers when engaging in multilayered writing. We draw on Lather's (1997, 2007) analysis of her work with Smithies as foundational to our own exploration of multilayered writing. Here, we take up multilayered writing to explore the politics of writing within the academy. This consideration includes a recognition of how writing and reading work as embodied practices and not the discussion of bodies, text, and social life that is integral to the work of Lather and Smithies with women living with HIV/AIDS. As such, we build on Lather's discussions of multilayered writing and not of the analysis that came out of the intertextual representation that is specific to women living with HIV/AIDS in *Troubling Angels*.

Here the multilayered text exists in three separate but interconnected sections: the central main text, sidebar, and endnotes. Each section has a specific purpose and serves to illuminate the complex and messy realities of the writing process and the generative entanglements that emerge. Readers bring their own knowledges, experiences, and embodied ways of being to their engagement with the layered writing and map an individualized reading path that flows from their chosen interaction with the text. Our writing purposely creates interstitial boundaries in the text that force readers to balance/juggle/shift between each different layer, as the automaticity of the reading transaction takes on a new shape.

To guide readers, we include this textual roadmap, which doesn't delineate a single reading path, but provides information to craft each reading experience. In the main section of the text we employ traditional academic writing to theorize language and writing in a community of practice. We use the sidebar section as a generative space to theorize, enhance, complicate, and question our thinking as we navigate the claims we make. Finally, the endnotes serve as a place for personal observations, connections, and narratives to further complicate and agitate the academic sensibilities of the main text and demonstrate the messiness of the writing process.<sup>2</sup> Through these multiple layers, we highlight the process and struggle of our attempt to capture complexity in one larger, multi-voiced text.

Publisher's Note: Due to printing limitations the footnotes written in the original multilayered text section of this article had to be converted to endnotes. This changes the multilayered approach of the authors' piece, but does not change the focus of their argument. Please see Figure 1 on the next page to view the original layout of their multilayered format.



**Figure 1**  
**Sample of Original Formatting of Multilayered Text**

**Diving In to the Tangle:  
 A Multilayered Consideration of Academic Writing**

In this community:  
 I write: I am a writer/member.  
 I write: I am not a writer/member<sup>3</sup>.

*Systems of Constraint:  
 Beyond Expectations*

*Educators Turned Scholars*

As K-12 educators, we taught and generated writing in many forms. As we transitioned from the K-12 classroom to graduate school, we entered a new professional community which included different norms, something we experienced in publications, coursework, and under the umbrella term of *academic writing*. Implicit norms were explicitly codified in manuscript guidelines, style guides, peer feedback, and program expectations. At times these writerly norms and the tone they engendered felt limiting to our thought processes, and often at odds with the deeply contextual and messy way we believed knowledge to exist. While we recognize the need to engage in the traditional scholarly writing as part of our training to be academics, there were times we noted an ontological tension. This emerged most for us when we were required to demonstrate knowledge in academic spaces where rigid norms limited the format of our writing and thus the knowledge<sup>4</sup> that could be shared.

We wish to point to an important distinction in the ways in which the practice of writing works to draw boundaries of membership and resonates with power. The ways we taught and generated writing as K-12 educators positioned us as members of that community both practically and ontologically. Administrative writing such as emails or lesson plans, and writing instruction in genres such as narrative or expository were tools we successfully used to articulate our knowledge based on experience. And experience was often the basis of knowledge production in these forms of writing. These texts were narrative and evolving as readers or listeners added their own ideas, responding and complicating the text. The general culture of our K-12 educational spaces recognized these authorial practices as

It is also important for us to name the systematic realities of our lived experiences as white heterosexual cisgender scholars. As we write through our experiences of belonging and not belonging, of stretching the bounds of academic writing, of finding paths in and through this work, we acknowledge that we benefit from the privilege that is held in our embodied identities. Similarly we recognize that academic writing, research, and scholarship is deeply steeped in, influenced by and influencing systems of power: white supremacy, patriarchy, and hegemonic discourses that marginalize knowledges and ways of being outside of traditional western educational institutions.

*What Knowledges Are  
 Valued in Academic  
 Spaces?*

As we started to explore our thoughts in footnote 4, we realized that there seemed to be a theory/philosophy vs.

<sup>3</sup> In our writing partnership, we have often pondered what it means to identify as a writer. We both write but we have very different ways of identifying that action. What does it mean to self-identify as a writer? Does that make you a member of a community? Or just a person who writes things and is outside of the community? We make no claims in this piece, either way, but recognize that claiming 'writerness' has a different meaning, impact, and emotional weight for each one of us as we write our way into and through the academy.

<sup>4</sup> We found that the teacher knowledges that had served us as K-12 teachers were no longer valued as intellectual contributions beyond the pragmatic, nor did they feel honored or respected by our new community of practice, especially by some of our doctoral student peers. This was rather surprising to us as our doctoral programs were housed in a college of education. There were certainly exceptions to this, but they were exceptions that underscored the broader expectations of what we came to understand as traditional academic writing.

## Diving In to the Tangle: A Multilayered Consideration of Academic Writing

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or expository were tools we successfully used to articulate our knowledge based on experience. And experience was often the basis of knowledge production in these forms of writing. These texts were narrative and evolving as readers or listeners added their own ideas, responding and complicating the text. The general culture of our K–12 educational spaces recognized these authorial practices as valuable,<sup>5</sup> and we found them as useful guideposts to understand our experiences and share that insight with others.<sup>6</sup> As K–12 educators, our writing practices affirmed our identities as writers and members within the profession.

Writing within the academy requires something else. Instead of finding strength in multiple forms of writing, ideas are often only validated once refracted through a prism of allowable forms.<sup>7</sup> Sent through this prism, traditional academic writing colors ideas in ways that change them or makes them altogether unrecognizable—a form utilized to signal membership or *belonging* to the physical space and the culture within it. The forms within the genre of academic writing are accessible but often feel limiting. In the search for genres that did fit during graduate school, instructors often found well-meaning ways to redirect us towards traditional academic writing.<sup>8</sup> Even in moments when alternative genres and formats were encouraged, the exception further underlined the message that these forms of writing were outside the boundaries. It was in this cultural environment that writing, even successful writing, at times left us feeling as if we were not a writer or member.

As recent graduates in transition from our doctoral studies to our professional scholarly lives as teacher educators, at both the preservice and inservice levels, we continue to navigate the dialogue between writing and membership. Our identification as teacher educators, an often generic term for the work of preparing teachers, is very important to how we see ourselves as academic writers. As Davey notes, “there *are* specific skills and knowledge and abilities involved in being a teacher educator, and to

divide that shaped many of our interactions with peers during class discussions and as we engaged with the course materials. The practical knowledges we brought from our classrooms were not seen as the traditional intellectual fodder of the academy and did not merit the same weight with our peers as the theoretical and philosophical. We recognize this to be our lived experience of the informal spaces of the academy, yet they shaped both how we saw ourselves in our first academic experiences and how we were seen by others. The not-enoughness that we felt in these moments positioned us as outsiders and further perpetuated the knotted tensions of our new identities as doctoral students and emerging scholars. There were times where our formal writing was also positioned as not “good enough” for the academy, not “academic enough” for publication, thus rendering our writing, and us by connection, incapable of passing through this gate into the academy. In an attempt to position new academics to meet the standards of publishing and peer critique and

acknowledge that these attributes are not commensurate with simply being a good schoolteacher *or* with being a competent educational researcher but rather are broader than and includes both” (2013, p.174, emphasis original). In this scholarly community of practice we want to embrace and value both aspects of this complex identity and find pathways for it to live out in our writing and in the writing of the academy.

### *Writing and Identity*

Writing and identity are deeply entwined.<sup>9</sup> This is particularly true when communities use writing as a key practice that signifies part of an individual’s identity within the broader culture.<sup>10</sup> As identities are authored, the metaphor of voice and its physical connotations (e.g., Anzaldúa, 1987, pp. 53–54) evokes questions about the impact of one’s writing on their construction of self. Thus writing becomes an important consideration when exploring the identity politics of joining and becoming a part of a community.

Lensmire (2000) suggests an individual’s voice as a project in which individuals appropriate language that has been used by others, infused with their values and ideologies. Possible audiences and their desires and opinions are also considered. As Giroux (1988) writes,

...language is intimately related to the dynamics of authorship and voice. It is within and through language that individuals in particular historical contexts shape values into particular forms and practices. (p. 59)

In other words, language—and, for our purposes, the way writing shapes it—signifies particular values. These values by extension participate in the construction of a writerly, and scholarly, identity.

Kamler (2001) posits there is more distance between writing and identity by suggesting, “a closer attention to what is written (rather than she who has written)—to the actual text—and contexts

support their scholarly development, unintentional harm<sup>18</sup> can be inflicted by those in the academy wanting to help support newcomers gain this essential access.

### *Constructions of Identity: Framing Our Thinking in Theory*

A post-structural and sociocultural construction of the self foreground our argument that writing and identity are connected. Butler (1990) contends that identity does not exist before its expression: “... identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (p. 33). As an utterance, that performance utilizes past uses of the same signifying vocabulary, the ideologies carried by them, and the possible interpretations by an audience (Bakhtin as cited by Morris, 1994) to construct a possible identity for the self. That performance is then interpreted by a community located in a particular socio-historically situated time and place and given cultural meaning. In turn, an individual internalizes that meaning in the pro-

in which it is produced” (p. 45). Snaza and Lensmire (2006) describe this articulation as attending to representation (the text represents a thing but is not the thing itself), labor (the text is constricted by expectations of production), and analysis (the text requires a critical reading of language use). In this way, Kamler distances the individual from their writing as its own entity apart from the writer.

Writing, and by extension language, have strong metaphorical ties to the body and the conception of self. This self is both an ongoing project and, through writing, captured in a particular moment of expression and analysis. The written artifact constructs a past to which an identity references and builds from. And it is the writing process that helps to construct understandings of the world. It is the practice by which we come to understand ourselves.

### *Community of Practice*

To understand our place in the landscape of academia, we find it valuable to consider how writing for the academy fits into the larger scholarly community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Taking up sociocultural understandings of induction practices in a community provides a vocabulary—however incomplete—with which we can navigate the complex ontologies and epistemologies of academic writing practices. There are clear delineations in this community of practice of the cultural practices, discourses, narratives, and ideologies that “count” as good writing. These delineations mark cultural community practices that work toward access and belonging through what may be qualified as acceptable scholarly writing.

A community of practice centers itself around shared goals and resources to accomplish those goals. Learning occurs within a particular social space and time and is connected tangentially to other social spheres. As newcomers make sense of practices, they engage in legitimate peripheral

cess of mastering the self (Vygotsky, 1991). Thus the sociohistorical echoes of meaning become a conduit through which power acts on individuals by means of the available discourses, the way those discourses are valued, and the intrapersonal impact those social relations have as an individual comes to understand themselves in a community.

### *Limitations and Opportunities: Finding our Writerly Selves in the Academy*

We have felt constrained by the limitations of this writing community. But like Red, the crayon, we have found ways to express ourselves by both writing inside the lines<sup>19</sup> and also finding spaces to belong by writing outside of the lines.

Together we have engaged with narrative inquiry, the use of stories and storied writing, collective memory work (Haug, 1999), and verse/poetic constructions (Kumashiro, 2002) as a means to write slightly outside of the lines in ways that are accepted in some corners of academic writing. Often these opportunities have come in the form of spe-

participation in which learning is the result of participation in a community.<sup>11</sup> Thus communities of practice assume an individual's engagement within a community as they come to understand the cultural practices that define it from other communities.

Tustig (2005) and Barton and Hamilton (2005) build on initial theorizations of communities of practice to acknowledge the role of language and power as a constitutive force. Language, Tustig writes, is key in the negotiation of meaning within communities of practice. Language can signify power outside of the initial old-timer/newcomer relationship. While community experts may utilize power, it is language through which power flows more than the relationship of old-timer and newcomer.

Communities of practice also exist not on their own but in relation to others (Barton & Hamilton, 2005, p.12). This is the case when someone moves to a different city, an individual transitions back and forth from work and home, or a K–12 teacher shifts into graduate school in which communities share different goals and interests. Understanding an individual community becomes murky and challenging as people move from one to another. Negotiation of “objects that congeal this experience into ‘thingness’” (Wenger, as cited by Barton & Hamilton, 2005, p. 26), or the reification of who a community is and what they do, more directly acknowledges the role of power and language.<sup>12</sup>

We must wrestle with the implications of language and power within communities of practice. Language bears the weight of what Bakhtin describes as heteroglossia (as cited in Morris, 1994). “Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life” (p. 293). Thus macro aspects of social structures play out in language, identity, agency, and power—key considerations when reckoning with the construction of an identity, however fluid, as one moves between various communities of practice. As Lave and Wenger (1991) write, “we place...more emphasis on connecting issues of sociocultural transfor-

cial issues that are open to creative academic writing or when professors have encouraged something else (out of the norm) for final papers and projects.

For both of us different writing styles began to resonate and emerge from our experiences as we engaged with the coursework and writing projects for two doctoral research courses we took together: Narrative Inquiry and an Arts-Based Research in Education. Through this coursework and the exposure to academic writing that skirted the edges of what some would consider acceptable, we each discovered a path where we felt our writing could both sing and reflect the commitments we make as scholars, teachers, and teacher educators.

Those pathways led us to crafting multilayered texts and ethnodrama, which became core components of our respective dissertation research. As noted, Sterner has been playing with multilayered texts and expanding on Lather's (1997) form to build her own layering process. It has become a powerful way, as we hope to have demonstrated in

mation with the changing relations between newcomers and old-timers in the context of a changing shared practice” (p. 49). Communities of practice are steeped in systems of power.<sup>13</sup> Those systems become the foundation of the available identities within a community whether intentional or not. Writing, as a practice through which new scholars learn what it means to be a scholar, becomes a reification process in which dominant social structures get acted out and acted on by available identities. As such, we must ask what are the ways traditional academic writing (along with less-traditional forms of writing) reify the very dominant structures we wish to interrogate and how can that process be disrupted.

### *Constraints of Writing Expectations*

Writing in the academy, with its explicit and implicit expectations, contains both the path of access and the barriers of constraint.<sup>14</sup> In many cases, expectations of how one should write define a narrow gap of what is acceptable in the academy. Writing that falls outside of that boundary is marginalized and minimized. Because structure influences the epistemological boundaries, possibilities for understanding and the complexities they bring to bodies of knowledge also get marginalized, minimized, or altogether left out.

In academia, as in K–12 education, writing must follow the norms of a specific field and/or writing genre. These norms are shaped by the chosen style guide of the field. Each style guide holds the discourses, ideologies, and commitments of its origins, whether they are explicitly clear or not. The American Psychological Association (APA), the style guide of our field, came about at the same time as behaviorism and supports many of its values, namely the value of the experiment over the experience of the researcher, writer, and reader<sup>15</sup> (Mueller, 2005). Academic writers must also follow the writing guidelines of their selected research methodologies. While qualitative research offers a variety of

this piece, to acknowledge the complex and entangled multiplicities of understanding. Fisher, whose background includes over a decade of participating in and teaching theater, found ethnodrama (Saldaña, 2005; Smith, 1993) as a writing style that most closely attuned to his epistemological orientations. Ethnodrama attends to the aesthetics of texts and the generation of understandings by considering bodies, space, rhythm, pacing, and silence among the many other available theatrical tools.

While each of these forms of academic writing have found outlets in publications and are accepted as qualitative research, they still exist outside of the mainstream. Each of these writing modes is considered an alternative that is still marginalized or only reserved for recognized scholars, suggesting that some forms are more valuable, or at least more foundational, to others. This leads us to ask why? Who benefits from this? And whose voices are left out?

methodological options (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017; Patton, 2015), writers using these methodologies must still attend to the conventions and norms of the method, options available in a field's publications, and the epistemologies lived out in publishers' requirements for authors.

In our own experiences, we have found that what counts as academic writing is also bounded by the writing that is supported or encouraged by the institutional practices that circulate through a department and college. This is acted out through advice from advisors, the forms of writing allowed and expected by professors, and the suggestions and feedback given by professional mentors.<sup>16</sup> Writing is also taken up, positioned, and considered by fellow graduate students in ways that demonstrate belonging, judgement, writerlyness, and or transgression.

A primary constraining factor, it seems, is the publishing process. Journal publications<sup>17</sup> are lived out performances of being a full member of the academic writing community. They are cultural capital recognized in employment and funding applications. They are the benchmark and bar where style guide, field, and membership expectations merge together as the final gate of inclusion.

At times we can see through the expectations and begin to recognize that academic writing serves as performativity towards belonging. While recognizing the importance of each of these informal and formal regulatory processes, we also must acknowledge that they also work as barriers and gatekeepers to full acceptance in the academic writing community.

### *Acknowledgement of Expanded Notions of Writing*

The writing we are arguing for does exist. In addition to multilayered writing and ethnodrama, other forms are taken up by academic writers.

The work of Clandinin and Connelly (1995; 2000) and other narrative researchers (e.g. Barone, 2001; Casey, 2013) offer narrative as a method and a theory through which to understand the world. Further, the engagement with narrative underscores how “[w]e have helped make the world in which we find ourselves....[W]e are complicit in the world we study” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 61).

Poetic constructions also offer reflexive practices to address the presence of authorial voice in block quotes more generally positioned as unfiltered access to participant Truths (Kumashiro, 2002) and open up additional processes for analysis (Gee, 2008).

This is by no means an exhaustive list but a brief reference to how some scholars have explored the impact of writing forms on their ideas.

## Conclusion

We purposefully move away from the multilayered text back into a more traditionally formatted conclusion to explicitly articulate the questions and concerns that this work offers. Learning the common writing practices of the academy provides access to a cultural form of communication we wish to engage in. It is when conceptions of *common* or *traditional* become synonymous with *natural* or *foundational* that we can lose sight of our own agency as members of a community to define not only what does count, but also what could count. Writing in multiple forms invites us as stakeholders in the academy to consider the politics and possibilities of our writing. What are the affordances of particular guidelines and what might be gained by stretching those bounds? And how might we engage in the purposeful employment of both? Reflecting on forms that stretch the bounds, specifically ethnodrama, Saldaña (2003) writes that it is not a genre to use without reason. A researcher must carefully consider their research questions, the empirical materials, and what the researcher wishes to say about those materials before asking if ethnodrama best matches the goals and requirements for the project under study. We extend that recommendation beyond ethnodrama. Just as we would ask what research methodologies best fit a set of research questions, so too should we ask what forms best support the goals for our writing.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> We recognize that this new statement is still steeped in systems of power and can serve to either reify or disrupt dominant discourses. Multilayered texts are not inherently disruptive or critical. We argue that they simply create opportunities to recognize the sociocultural forces that inform knowledge and knowledge construction, thus allowing for the emergence of the unknown (Lather, 1997) and an engagement beyond traditional academic reading and writing practices.

<sup>2</sup> Please note that we use endnotes in the main text and in the sidebar. The sidebar endnotes will be delineated in two ways: the number will be out of order from the other endnotes and it will be written in Arial font to visually distinguish it from the other endnotes.

<sup>3</sup> In our writing partnership, we have often pondered what it means to identify as a writer. We both write but we have very different ways of identifying that action. What does it mean to self-identify as a writer? Does that make you a member of a community? Or just a person who writes things and is outside of the community? We make no claims in this piece, either way, but recognize that claiming 'writerness' has a different meaning, impact, and emotional weight for each one of us as we write our way into and through the academy.

<sup>4</sup> We found that the teacher knowledges that had served us as K–12 teachers were no longer valued as intellectual contributions beyond the pragmatic, nor did they feel honored or respected by our new community of practice, especially by some of our doctoral student peers. This was rather surprising to us as our doctoral programs were housed in a college of education. There were certainly exceptions to this, but they were exceptions that underscored the broader expectations of what we came to understand as traditional academic writing.

<sup>5</sup> K–12 education culture is not free from its own exclusionary practices (Fisher, 2019; Ngo, 2010; Pollock, 2004; Valenzuela, 1999). Just because we benefited from and felt at home in K–12 epistemologies does not free that exact culture from the problem of ontological

especially those that are not white.

<sup>6</sup> Here, like Haug (1999) we value experience as theory. “It is not only experience, but work with the experience, which is useful as a research method” (Haug, 1999, p. 2). And since experience is constructed through a kaleidoscope of interpretations, we wonder how can published writing act as witness to polyphonic (Bakhtin as cited in Morris, 1994) accounts that construct it?

<sup>7</sup> In the context of this academic writing, we feel compelled to note that K–12 teachers along with many others are successful writers within the academy. This is not an argument in order to broaden what counts as good writing because of individuals who might struggle to write in formal academic ways but because of the ways formal academic writing might struggle to open up all the possibilities for knowing, understanding, and communicating we wish to explore.

<sup>8</sup> Within this community of practice of doctoral studies, we recognize the possibility of this move as supportive instruction in which to ensure our success in the academy. Yet when it is used after we were invited to write in different ways, it functioned as a corrective that reified the boundaries of what counts and is valued as academic writing.

<sup>18</sup> Experiences like this during the first years of our PhD studies were particularly difficult for us to overcome.

<sup>9</sup> As a writing consultant at a university writing center, Fisher (2019) regularly heard undergraduate and graduate student writers share how someone responded to their writing and the ways it made them feel about themselves. This was most often a negative experience both affectively and academically. Fisher (2019) found one of the most successful ways of beginning to address these experiences was not to disqualify the writer’s connection between the quality of their writing and how they saw themselves but to qualify the disturbing response as a singular interpretation and not the final definition of the value of their writing or themselves as writers.

<sup>10</sup> Though this too can be complicated as evidenced by a fellow graduate student in our doctoral classes. They would often speak in ways that impressed and intimidated fellow classmates, creating both a so-called ideal to which many aspired and bristled. This use of language was also tied to the fellow doctoral student’s own insecurities around membership in an education program though they had not taught in a K–12 context.

<sup>18</sup> By employing multiple layers of this text, intermingling the more traditional main body of this text with the additional layers of thinking, we bring an interplay of format/genre/epistemology that engages in a yes, and approach to academic writing. We appreciate the affordances of more traditional academic writing while utilizing and expanding the possibilities of other formats and genres. We do not wish to engage in an argument of irony, excoriating the exclusiveness of one form of writing by replacing it with another line in the sand of valuation. Instead, we wish to open up a conversation between genres and formats in order to more fully explore the various fields of research.

<sup>11</sup> Knowing that communities of practice conceptualize community membership specifically around a labor of production leaves us pondering: If we don’t write, are we academics?

<sup>12</sup> The example of formal academic writing provides an apt example, particularly for graduate students going through the process of induction into the community of the academy. The writing of papers in traditional academic writing several times for each class across several classes each semester effectively constructs a sense of who academics are and what they do in relation to their writing. In other words, it is the writing of academic papers, often positioned as potential spaces for future publications, that “congeal into ‘thingness’” what an academic is, whether or not that actually reflects the lived identities of who an academic wishes to be or how they see themselves.

<sup>13</sup> Discussed in more depth in the first section of the sidebar.

<sup>14</sup> We have paid particular attention throughout this piece in order to name these

constraints as a means to have critical dialogue of academic writing while still recognizing the importance of standards and common cultural practices of writing that allow for the successful and meaningful communication of ideas. We wish to honor this reality while lovingly engaging in a critique in order to continue to explore multiple ways of knowing and expand the boundaries of what it means to write in the academy.

<sup>15</sup> An official constraint on this writing, and the multilayered writing that Sterner (2019) developed, is that APA expressly forbids the use of footnotes for citations, though allows minimal use for additional content. “APA does not recommend the use of footnotes and endnotes because they are often expensive for publishers to reproduce. However, if explanatory notes still prove necessary to your document, APA details the use of two types of footnotes: content and copyright.” (Purdue Online Writing Lab, 2019, para. 1). Yet, this writing style has become a powerful way to engage with the complexities of the phenomenon that Sterner (2019) studies while also reflecting the onto-epistemological commitments that she makes as a qualitative researcher.

<sup>16</sup> See endnote 8.

<sup>17</sup> Sometimes this is further constrained, depending on the promotion and tenure standards of an institution or department, by which pieces make it into the “right” journals or books with the “right” amount of impact.

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## We Will Chaos into Three(lines) Be(com)ing Writers of Three Through (Re)etymologizing “Write”

Rebecca C. Christ, Tara Gutshall Rucker, & Candace R. Kuby

### Abstract

In this manuscript, we take up the invitation by the editors of this special issue *and* Deleuze to expose, explore, and expand Deleuze’s triple definition of writing. We will chaos into three(lines). We become writers of three. We ask questions without definite answers: How do we write a piece that is never finished? Is writing supposed to be clear? What if writing is supposed to be listened to? Experienced? What does it provoke? And in an attempt to write that which is not supposed to be on paper, we write. Sketch. Drag. Produce a mess. Struggle. Resist. Create. Map. Sustain.

*Keywords:* Write, Writing process, Chaos, Chaos-ing, Deleuze and Guattari

### Preface: Entering into the Manuscript<sup>1</sup>

I am going to ask a question without an answer. How do we write a piece that is never finished? If it can be read in any order, then it is never finished. —Becky<sup>2</sup>

That is what kids understand—when they make a game like Candyland.<sup>3</sup> —Tara

Is writing supposed to be clear?<sup>4</sup>

What if writing is supposed to be listened to?<sup>5</sup> Experienced?

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What does it provoke?<sup>6</sup>

Let's make rules...are we going make comment boxes?<sup>7</sup> Write in the document?  
No cheating!<sup>8</sup>

Are we going to read all of it before a discussion? [For example...] We read  
Fragment 1<sup>9</sup> and then talk about that? We read Fragment 2 and then talk? Or do  
we read a section and then write for a certain amount of minutes and then talk?  
Or do we read a section in silence and then talk? —Tara

What if we just see what becomes? —Candace(?)<sup>10</sup>

Excited and terrified at the same time.  
I don't know what to do with myself. —Becky

I'm cool with the chaos. But we need to make rules. —Becky<sup>11</sup>

I'm just going to start reading. I'm going to start reading, and you have to figure  
out where I'm at. —Tara

I'm going to put my cursor down. —Tara  
I found you. —Becky

The chaos into three is not what is written on the page, it's "this."<sup>12</sup>

How do you put that down on paper?  
We are getting better at being messier.  
How do we mess up the order?

This<sup>13</sup> makes me think differently.  
Does this<sup>14</sup> become nothing?  
Chaos is unpredictable.

I'm cool with the messiness as long as we have rules. —Becky

What are the rules for messiness? —Candace

At what point do we know we have choosed<sup>15</sup> into three? —Candace  
Oh, that needs to be written down. —Becky [laughs... writes it down in Google Doc...]  
Is it something we ever reach? —Candace

Reading, as in writing, is not always about being clear.<sup>16</sup>  
Let it wash over you.  
Don't rush to understanding.<sup>17</sup>

Do you think we need to go back and pull this<sup>18</sup> together? Drag<sup>19</sup> this together? —Tara

It goes back to that question; I'm thinking, why are we writing this and who is  
going to be reading this? Does writing...is it about meaning making?

The messy affect(s) of writing. Special issue call for papers.  
 This feels affectual.  
 So, we should just leave it messy. —Candace

### Write |rīt|

**Write** |rīt|<sup>21</sup>

**Verb** (past wrote |rōt| ; past participle written |'ritn| ) [*with object*]

**Origin** Old English *writan* 'score, form (letters) by carving, write,' of Germanic origin; related to German *reissen* 'sketch, drag.'

Becky, assistant professor, teaching and learning

Tara, elementary classroom teacher

Candace, associate professor, learning, teaching, and curriculum

We (be)came to write together; “Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 3). To write: to “mark (letters, words, or other symbols) on a surface, typically paper, with a pen, pencil, or similar implement.” Reading the definition of “write,” we were surprised to find that the origin of write is related to the German *reissen* meaning “sketch, drag.”

Kuby, C.R., & Christ, R.C. (2018).

Kuby, C.R., & Gutshall Rucker, T. (2016).

Writers as two, twos. How do we become writers of three?<sup>22</sup>

Drag<sup>23</sup>: “Pull (someone or something) along forcefully, roughly, or with difficulty” or “take (someone) to or from a place or event, despite their reluctance.” Dragging—although forceful—takes us from a place, potentially to a new place. Candace’s partnership with each of us separately *and* this call for manuscripts, has dragged us together, has pulled us together forcefully as a trio—in order to write about and celebrate the productive, relational, and art-full messiness of writing.

Dragged together to sketch together.

We three meeting for the first time, but having known each other all along  
 through (our) writings.

“We have been aided, inspired, multiplied” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 3).

Drag<sup>24</sup>, interestingly, originates from a word meaning “to draw,” which connects us to the other original meaning of “write”—sketch. Sketch, “a rough or unfinished drawing or painting” is based on the Greek *skhedios* meaning “done extempore” or, in other words, “spoken or done without preparation.” This without preparation insinuates an incomplete mess. This mess or “a dirty or untidy state

of things” is also a “portion of food” creating “a group of people who regularly eat together,” this, we have come to find, is what sustains us. Writing.

Thus, we decided to use this opportunity (the call for papers) to explore how the three of us become writers of three, thinking-with Deleuze’s triple definition of writing: “to write is to struggle and resist; to write is to become; to write is to draw a map: ‘I am a cartographer’” (Deleuze, 1986/1988, p. 44). In pulling from the editors’ call to will chaos<sup>25</sup> into fourteen lines, we will chaos into three(lines).

1. Writing as struggle and resistance;
2. Writing as messiness and a/effect(ive); and
3. Writing as creating and mapping.<sup>26</sup>

In this manuscript, we take up the invitation by the editors *and* Deleuze to expose, explore, and expand the triple definition of writing. We will chaos into three(lines). In an attempt to write that which “I don’t think [...] is supposed to be on paper” (-Becky). We write. Sketch. Drag. Produce a mess. Struggle. Resist. Create. Map. Sustain.

Every time I write, I can’t go back to who I was before. —Tara  
While we co-author manuscripts, we co-author each other,  
becoming-with each other as mess-mates (Haraway, 2008).

If we understood the origin of writing through (re)etymologizing<sup>27</sup> the word as we do in this manuscript, then the triple definition of writing by Deleuze shouldn’t surprise us. Thus, in spirit with the call, we propose—through art-full writing—to explore the ethico-onto-epistemologies (Barad, 2007) of writing (i.e., the doing, be[com]ing, and knowing [of] writing). In doing so, we (attempt to) “articulate the complex, critically engaged, and currently unheard arguments related to the writing.”<sup>28</sup> In thinking of the ethico-onto-epistemologies of writing, we ask, what if it [ideas, feelings, relationships] is not meant to be written, but rather be(come)/produce sketches and draggings that help us “produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently” (St. Pierre, 1997, p. 175) and, therefore, live, be(come), and do—and write—differently.

Disclaimer<sup>29</sup>: While we are intrigued by the questions in the call for papers, we do not know yet what our writing will be(come) nor what the art-fullness will look like until we do the work of willing and writing chaos into three(lines)—portrayed right now by the three-line stanzas on the right margin. By acknowledging that we do not know what will be(come) of the final product,<sup>30</sup> we are perhaps “agitating the academic sensibilities”<sup>31</sup> of writing an abstract. We are open to the ‘final’ manuscript (if invited to do so) art-fully coming into being and (re)presented in a yet-to-be-known way.

I want to be able to write this. —Tara  
 Is an article such as this possible? —Candace  
 Regardless, this is what sustains me (us). —Becky

We will chaos into three(lines).<sup>32</sup>

### Chaos-ings<sup>33</sup>

Into the chaos—into the void—we go...

We (attempt to) engage in “behavior so unpredictable as to appear random, owing to great sensitivity to small changes in conditions” (a definition of chaos) in an effort to “agitate the academic sensibilities” (from the call for papers). In (one story of) Greek mythology, Chaos is the origin of all other beings (see, for example, Hamilton, 1942)... And so, like Greek mythology, we start from a place of chaos. This chaos is productive, yet unpredictable.

So, is it [chaos] really “just” a noun? Can chaos also be a verb? What would it mean to do chaos? ...A chaos-ing... From the chaos-ing comes all other be(com)ings... From the chaos-ing comes all other lines...

**Chaos:** complete disorder and confusion.

**Antonym:** orderliness

“The world has become chaos, but the book remains the image of the world: radicle-chaosmos rather than root-chaosmos. A strange mystification: a book all the more total for being fragmented” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 6).<sup>34</sup>

I can’t believe Deleuze and Guattari wrote about chaos in the rhizome chapter/plateau?!

And in relation to writing!

The book (writing) is all the more for being fragmented.

Fragments, not clarity, coherence, wholeness.

All the more total for being fragmented...

“[T]o write is to struggle and resist; to write is to become; to write is to draw a map: ‘I am a cartographer’” (Deleuze, 1986/1988, p. 44).

So, we fragment writing to be(come) all the more total...<sup>35</sup>

### Fragment 1: Writing as Struggle and Resistance;

I feel stuck.<sup>36</sup> —Candace

We should not talk... we can only respond by writing.<sup>37</sup> —Candace

How do we drag and sketch?

**struggle** |'strəgəl|

**verb** [*no object*]

make forceful or violent efforts to get free of restraint or constriction

**drag** |drag|

**verb** (drags, dragging, dragged)

1 [*with object*] pull (someone or something) along forcefully, roughly,  
or with difficulty  
Is struggling a dragging?

A pulling, sometimes with difficulty, with-others to be(come) writers.

It's difficult for us to find time to write together in the same "space"/time.

I feel like I don't know how to enter this piece of writing.

What is it we are supposed to be doing?

What does it mean to write about writing? And how writing comes to be?

I know how to write a research "empirical" article, but this feels differently.

This makes me think about how writing "formulaic-ly" and "open-ly" can be  
difficult, especially if one or neither, are done often...?

What happens when we escape the lines made for writing?

Do we<sup>38</sup> acknowledge the struggle and resistance? What is writing?

What does it look and sound like? Is it honest? If so, do we acknowledge the  
honest process and the idea that we may not know until it becomes.

Writing in the classroom seemed confined, at least at times,  
by mandates or expectations.<sup>39</sup>

Does it therefore become nothing?

How do writers, of all ages, mingle and combine?<sup>40</sup>

**Permission. We have permission to write with fewer parameters.<sup>41</sup>**  
**No direction is met by uncertainty. So, we write, unsure of meaning**  
**and risk a lack of sense making.<sup>42</sup>**

*Will strain to nothing in the strict confines*

*Of this sweet order, where, in pious rape,*

*I hold his essence and amorphous shape,*

*Till he with Order mingles and combines.<sup>43</sup>*

Oh, what does writing *sound* like?!

How do we order for words to mingle and combine? How might order be sweet?<sup>44</sup>

Struggling is about getting free from constraints. What constrains us as writers?

Is it possible to free ourselves from that? APA, publishing expectations, the  
"right way" to do research, linear steps, coherence, clarity. Struggle is about  
making forceful or violent efforts. Force. Violence.

What will others think?

What are others writing?<sup>45</sup>

I think trust and time or experience or space frees us from this.  
 Some of the same words keep coming to my mind. Is it because it is truly the  
 case, or because we've thought with them for so long.  
 I don't think I would have been comfortable with this  
 exercise eight years ago. Why is that?!<sup>46</sup>

Because we think literacies otherwise?<sup>47</sup> The not yet known. Possibilities.  
 Uncertainties. But are we comfortable with that? What we invite children to do?  
 How does this open invitation to 'go be a writer' feel to us? What is it producing  
 for us? How are we be(com)ing (different) writers?

I was thinking about the invitation "go be a writer" too. For some students it's  
 "freeing" while for others it was "constraining."<sup>48</sup>

We've written about writing for a long time, but always with a plan in mind and  
 'data' to guide us. This is different. This is writing/thinking that feels different.

And so, we struggle... we grapple with what it means to write like this<sup>49</sup> and  
 what it produces, and sometimes we flounder or stumble, but regardless, we stay  
 with the trouble (Haraway, 2016).

What does struggle and resistance produce?

**re·sist·ance**

/rəˈzɪstəns/

**noun**

1. the refusal to accept or comply with something; the attempt to prevent something by action or argument.

"she **put up** no **resistance to** being led away"

2. the ability not to be affected by something, especially adversely.

"some of us have a lower **resistance to** cold than others"

**Synonyms:**

opposition to, hostility to, aversion to, refusal to accept, unwillingness to accept, disinclination to accept, reluctance to accept, lack of enthusiasm for "they displayed a narrow-minded **resistance to** change"

So, what are we refusing to accept or comply with? OR  
 Are we able to not be affected by something? What is that something?

*I will put Chaos into fourteen lines  
 And keep him there; and let him thence escape  
 If he be lucky; let him twist, and ape  
 Flood, fire, and demon—his adroit designs  
 Will strain to nothing in the strict confines*

Straining to nothing—how do these lines work with the notion of struggle and resistance? Strain to nothing? Strict confines?

I totally feel that I am “agitating the academic sensibilities”<sup>51</sup> of writing right now.  
And it makes me smile.

What does it mean to “put” Chaos into fourteen lines as opposed to “willing” it into fourteen lines? We resist the “actual” line in the poem because in the call, we were called to “will chaos” not “put chaos”...<sup>52</sup>

Willing—“ready, eager, or prepared to do something.” Put—“move to or place in a particular position.” So, are we eager (I don’t feel “prepared”) to chaos rather than putting it (words, writing, ideas, feelings?) in a particular position? Chaos-ing feels unpredictable and without intentionality. Willing feels more open to the unknowns of writing, rather than putting words into their place. What does it do to me as a writer to think that words have *a* place? How can I meet uncertainty (of writing) with eagerness?

Now I’m thinking about what I might say or ask children (such as with personal narratives or non-fiction research): How could you share this with others? How might someone use or experience this? Are we limited by alphabetic print?<sup>53</sup>

Why does it matter to acknowledge to write is to struggle and resist?

We smile and laugh as we write in silence... In the struggle and resistance is surprise and also joy. Yet, we also continue to struggle with how to “write” this struggle and resistance as well as the surprise and joy.

I keep thinking about who this is for. I think I usually benefit the most from the struggle and resistance. Who is the writing for? Who reads this publication? For them, the struggle and resistance may not be seen.

#### Fragment 2: Writing as Messiness and A/Effect(ive);

I don’t think we’re supposed to write about this yet<sup>54</sup>... but I’m thinking about the literal messiness. Is there a way to capture the messiness/process of writing this<sup>55</sup>—to not just *write* but to *show* messiness? I’m thinking now we have so much. So how do we “organize”...

There is something affectual going on—I see the faces of us three at the top of my screen—writing/thinking in silence. Yet it is so comfortable. Where did this comfort come from? Forty-five minutes ago, I wasn’t sure where to enter, where to begin. I felt stuck. How did this comfort, joy come to be? This ease in embracing the unknown?

[We literally haven’t spoken for the last forty-five minutes...  
we have only written/become/willed chaos into three...]

Candace's partnership with each of us separately *and* this call for papers, has dragged us together, has pulled us together forcefully as a trio—in order to write about and celebrate the productive, relational, and art-full messiness of writing.<sup>56</sup> And if writing is a becoming...

If chaos is a verb, how does one do “to chaos”? We will chaos... we will (future tense) chaos (verb) into three(lines). We are chaos-ing into ourselves, as three(people), three(lines)?<sup>57</sup> Ourselves and our writing are becoming at the same time...

...Dragged together to sketch together.  
We three meeting for the first time, but having known each other all  
along through (our) writings.  
“We have been aided, inspired, multiplied” (Deleuze & Guattari,  
1980/1987, p. 3).

We are three ... what's the D&G<sup>58</sup> quote... we no longer need to be individual  
because we were already a crowd?

“The two [three] of us wrote *Anti-Oedipus* [this manuscript] together. **Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd.** Here we have made use of everything that came within range, what was closest as well as farthest away. We have assigned clever pseudonyms to prevent recognition. Why have we kept our own names? Out of habit, purely out of habit. **To make ourselves unrecognizable in turn.** To render imperceptible, not ourselves, but **what makes us act, feel, and think.** Also because it's nice to talk like everybody else, to say the sun rises, when everybody knows it's only a manner of speaking. To reach, not the point where one no longer says I, but **the point where it is no longer of any importance whether one says I. We are no longer ourselves.** Each will know his own.<sup>59</sup> We have been **aided, inspired, multiplied.**”  
(Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 3).<sup>60</sup>

So, does anyone know how we might talk about this writing chaosed into this manuscript? I have no idea what just happened over the past hour and a half. What is/was our “method”? ;-) (Can we include emojis?) This is too flat.

### Fragment 3: Writing as Creating and Mapping

And I don't think we are supposed to write about this yet either<sup>61</sup>...but I feel we are creating something in this chaos-ing tonight. Not sure how to say it yet. Or what word to use to label it. Not sure how we'd even go back and map what is unfolding.<sup>62</sup> As I re-read, I sometimes can't remember or figure out who wrote what above. We are chaos-ing into three. Or perhaps willing chaos into...

And where are the threes anymore?  
 Weren't we going to write three lines every so often?  
 What happened to that plan?

...There we did it<sup>63</sup>...

[Laughter, to find a response to questions, just by the moving of lines around]

Yes, our plans take us somewhere else.

“A book has neither object nor subject; it is made of variously formed matters, and very different dates<sup>64</sup> and speeds. To attribute the book to a subject is to overlook this working of matters, and the exteriority of their relations... In a book, as in all things, there... are lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification... As an assemblage, a book has only itself, in connection with other assemblages and in relation to other bodies without organs. We will never ask what a book means, as signified or signifier; we will not look for anything to understand in it. We will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed, and with what bodies without organs it makes its own converge. A book exists only through the outside and on the outside... But when one writes, the only question is which other machine the literary machine can be plugged into, must be plugged into in order to work... but they define writing as always the measure of something else. Writing has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 3-5).

“[C]ontrary to deeply rooted belief, the book is not an image of the world. It forms a rhizome with the world...” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 11).

“Write, form a rhizome, increase your territory by deterritorialization” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 11). YES! YES!! YES!!!<sup>65</sup>

“Make a map, not a tracing...What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real. The map does not reproduce an unconscious closed in upon itself; it constructs the unconscious” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 12).

“We're tired of trees. We should stop believing in trees, roots, and radicles. They've made us suffer too much” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 15).

“Thought is not arborescent, and the brain is not a rooted or ramified matter” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 15).<sup>66</sup>

I would have loved to be in the room when Deleuze and Guattari looked at each other and said (or wrote in silence, as in our case), “let's write this book as a rhizome.”

Seriously?!

How does that come to be?

They must have laughed at each other.

Who would read a book composed of plateaus, rhizomatic in nature?

And yet, we do. We read it over and over and over again.

Each time something new is produced.

How did I miss all this writing in the rhizome chapter/plateaus about writing and

how writing comes to be and what writing (can) do(es)?

“How can the book find an adequate outside with which to assemble in heterogeneity, rather than a world to reproduce?” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 24). **How can our writing assemble to produce difference rather than sameness?**

“[C]oming and going rather than starting and finishing” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 25)...that is what I feel we are doing...coming and going with/in/through as we chaos into three(lines).

And so, we (continue to) will chaos into three(lines)...

What just happened?!

We wrote as a rhizome! It makes sense and nonsense<sup>67</sup> at the same time.

#### Epilogue: xxxxx<sup>68</sup>

I loved the way it flowed last time. But I loved the way we read it this time.<sup>69</sup>

You don't write it. Writing isn't always alphabetic.

Maybe writing isn't about making meaning, but [rather] to become, building relationships. But then how do we get tenure if our writing is about becoming and building relationships? When I have to produce numbers of documents?

Does writing have to be alphabetic print? In kindergarten, children have to identify and write letters. In 5th grade (or sooner), they need to be able to form a paragraph? (Similarly to tenure...)<sup>70</sup>

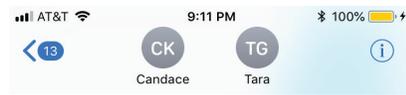
When it's [writing] 'the' thing (that society values), what are we missing or lacking?

Writing is often thought to be about communicating – **Communicate** (definition) → from common – sounds like relationships, being, togetherness (not solely about knowledge – transmitting information).

Common → shared by, coming from, or done by more than one.

- ◆ belonging to, open to, or affecting the whole of a community or the public. “common land”





Tara Gutshall Rucker  
What are the three lines?  
TG I want to know more...  
Candace Kuby  
we have to invent our lines of flight...by drawing them in our lives. ❤️  
CK I got so excited, I didn't read much past that paragraph. haha!  
Candace Kuby  
We are chaos-ing. I love it. We are paused — our thinking taken to another line of flight... 😊



CK No... really?! That's awesome  
Candace Kuby  
CK G would send scribbles to D and it would become Anti O.  
Oh my goodness  
Scribbles  
Sketches, perhaps?  
Drawings  
Candace Kuby  
CK It kinds of makes me think they would have used google docs if it was invited at that time - Tara  
Draggings?!  
Candace Kuby  
draggings

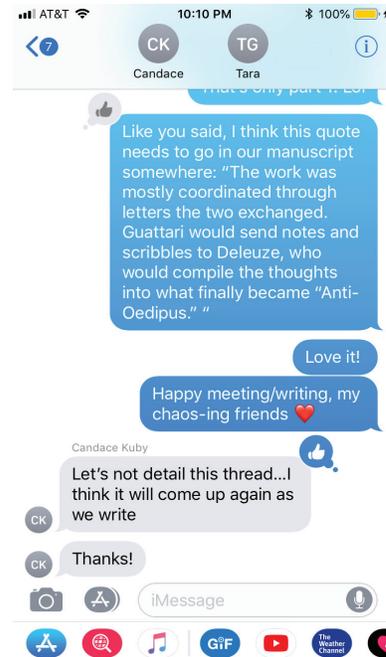


CK Ok, so now to focus...  
Love it  
Candace Kuby  
CK tara is googling pictures of D&G  
CK they look like chill individuals, like friends - Tara  
Awesome!  
HA HA  
Well, they are already our friends, whether they like it or not! Haha  
Candace Kuby  
their work was mostly coordinated by letters...  
CK the two exchanged !!!



CK LOL!  
Definitely!  
Lol  
Yeeesss  
Candace Kuby  
CK \*invented  
This thread alone is giving me so much joy right now  
Candace Kuby  
me too  
tara found 10 things you didn't know about D&G  
13





“[W]e are composed of lines, three kinds of lines” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 202).<sup>76</sup>

## Appendix

### I will put Chaos into fourteen lines

By: Edna St. Vincent Millay

I will put Chaos into fourteen lines  
 And keep him there; and let him thence escape  
 If he be lucky; let him twist, and ape  
 Flood, fire, and demon --- his adroit designs  
 Will strain to nothing in the strict confines  
 Of this sweet order, where, in pious rape,  
 I hold his essence and amorphous shape,  
 Till he with Order mingles and combines.  
 Past are the hours, the years of our duress,  
 His arrogance, our awful servitude:  
 I have him. He is nothing more nor less  
 Than something simple not yet understood;  
 I shall not even force him to confess;  
 Or answer. I will only make him good.

Retrieved on July 25, 2019, from: <https://owlcation.com/humanities/Edna-St-Vincent-Millays-I-will-put-Chaos-into-fourteen-lines>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For us, this manuscript is an assemblage, a multiplicity, a middle—rhizomatically becoming (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987). According to Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987), “As an assemblage, a book [manuscript] has only itself, in connection with other assemblages and in relation to other bodies without organs” (p. 4). Because the assemblage is “necessarily extended by lines of deterritorialization” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 505), we have chosen to follow these lines of deterritorialization into endnotes. Thus, we have chosen to not edit, revise, or ‘clean up’ the manuscript (much), but rather add endnotes as a way to provide some backstory to the reader, additional context, connections to readings, and/or expand on our writing but not ‘break up’ the original version. We want to take care of our readers, but also show the messy a/effects of writing and chaos-ing into three(lines). Readers might choose to read the entire manuscript without the endnotes, or read the endnotes after the manuscript, or pause reading the manuscript each time they come upon an endnote numeral.

<sup>2</sup> This preface primarily came from our Zoom (digital video platform) conversation on May 8, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Tara and Candace think and write together about literacy desiring and how students “go be writers.” In one such time, students became writers by making a board game. When students made board games, like Adam’s modeled after Candyland (Kuby & Gutshall Rucker, 2020), they know there is an order to the narrative/story, a chronological retelling. However, they also know you can play-with the story. In doing so, each time the game/story is played/used, a different story is produced. In essence, the story is never fully finished when becoming-story-with-the-game.

<sup>4</sup> “The assumption is that language not only *is* the truth (data, evidence) but can also *stand in* for the truth (be clear, transparent, objective) in mirroring reality” (St. Pierre, 2017, p. 39). If we don’t ascribe “truth” to language, then does it matter if we are being “clear”?

<sup>5</sup> Rather than *or* perhaps *and* read.

<sup>6</sup> Throughout the original manuscript we used several different fonts: Calibri for the most of the manuscript text (and *italics Calibri for lines of a sonnet*), Arial for the endnotes, New Times Roman for definitions (when separate from other text), and Nanum Pen Script for the lines of three. We chose these purposefully and artistically for each of these parts of the manuscript. (Publisher’s note: In coordination with the usual font styles of *Taboo*, in this published version the main text is in New Times Roman, with italics consistent with the authors’ intention. Times New Roman has also been used for the endnotes. The lines of three are in Gil Sans.) Also, as we composed this manuscript—choas-ed into three—often on Zoom, we found we aligned our text as left, center, and right at various times. We cannot now remember why, when, or who changed them and for what purpose(s). But we leave/left them as is, again to show the messiness, a/effects of writing.

<sup>7</sup> We asked these questions (and made the ‘command’ of “No cheating!”) during our conversation as we were re-reading our initial draft. We were asking each other what we wanted to do to/with the writing.

<sup>8</sup> “[W]rite with slogans: Make the rhizomes, not roots, never plant! Don’t sow, grow offshoots! Don’t be one or multiple, be multiplicities! Run lines, never plot a point!” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 24). As Becky was (re)reading the manuscript, she was also (re)reading Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987), and so, some of these endnotes are

lines of flight connecting between the manuscript and *A Thousand Plateaus*, but we will not always “explain” the connections.

<sup>9</sup> Sub-sections below are titled as fragments. The writing below (the section entitled “Chaos-ing” and the Fragment sections) mainly came from our Zoom session on April 17, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> Notice we are not “sure” who said this line...Also, notice sometimes quotations are “attributed” to a person, and something they are not... Perhaps we have reached “the point where it is no longer of any importance whether one says I” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 3).

<sup>11</sup> Becky is apparently obsessed with following rules (you will see it again later too!)... When she goes looking, she comes across this quotation from Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987): “The assemblage negotiates variables at this or that level of variation, according to this or that degree of deterritorialization, and determines which variables will enter into constant relations or obey obligatory rules and which will serve instead as a fluid matter for variation” (p. 100).

<sup>12</sup> What is the “this” here? The interaction between us? The becoming three(lines)? The writing? The chaos-ing? Does it matter? We have been “trained” to not use such ambiguous language such as “this”—but rather to “qualify” it each time—but what do you do/write when you don’t know what the “this” is? What if the “this” is yet-to-be-named?

<sup>13</sup> Again, what is the “this” here? Is it the same as in the previous endnote? Is it different? Does it matter?

<sup>14</sup> These typed notes are from our Zoom conversation. It seems this time, we “know” what the “this” is.

<sup>15</sup> “The problem of writing: in order to designate something exactly, an exact expressions are utterly unavoidable” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 20). So, sometimes we also make up words; for example: choased, chaos-ing.

<sup>16</sup> Again here, as in endnote #4, we have concerns about clarity.

<sup>17</sup> Inspired by a quotation by St. Pierre (2011): “I advise students to take seriously Lacan’s (as cited in Ulmer, 1985) advice, ‘to read does not obligate one to understand. First it is necessary to read...avoid understanding too quickly’ (p. 196) ... and I advise students to read harder when the text seems too hard to read, to just keep reading, letting the new language wash over them until it becomes familiar” (p. 614).

<sup>18</sup> This becoming manuscript, previous writing or drafts.

<sup>19</sup> See our discussion below on the origins of the word *write*.

<sup>20</sup> This section was our initial abstract for the editors in response to the call for papers for the special issue, which we wrote in November 2018. We have decided to keep it here in the manuscript in its entirety, with very minor edits.

<sup>21</sup> Definitions and word origins used in this manuscript come from the Apple Dictionary tool, which pulls from the *New Oxford American Dictionary*, or occasionally a Google search, which pulls definitions from Oxford Languages. We only keep the portions of the definitions that are pertinent directly to our discussion of the word for ease of reading. We keep the italics as in the original, but sometimes change the bolding for our own emphasis. As dictionary entries may change, please note that all these definitions were pulled on or before July 30, 2019.

<sup>22</sup> Candace and Becky write about pedagogies of qualitative inquiry. Candace and Tara write about literacy desirings or the becoming (of) literacies when young children are invited to ‘go be a writer’ with a range of artistic and digital tools. This is the first manuscript the three of us are writing together.

<sup>23</sup> *Drag* can also have another meaning—that of “to dress in clothing of the opposite sex for the sake of entertainment” (Drag, 2020, n.p.); this additional definition of drag was brought to our attention by our reviewers and the editors of this special issue, for which we are grateful because it produced yet another chaos-ing in asking us to ask “How does one ‘write one’s body’ as chaos etc in terms of drag?” Similar to Alexander (2003), we see and have experienced/performed “pedagogy as drag” where “pedagogy is about what we as teachers reveal and what we conceal in the classroom and why” (p. 418) and where “a carefully crafted teaching persona... is either designed to foreground aspects of the personal or to cover them up. It is about those moments of slippage or detection... when either by accident or intention we reveal our biases or our students detect our biases and articulate their detection through questions of fairness” (p. 429). We can think about our writing similarly—what do we reveal in our writing and what do we conceal and why? And what happens when our students (and/or readers) articulate their detection of our accidental or intentional slippages through questions of fairness (or perhaps, clarity)?

<sup>24</sup> There is yet another drag performance that we often participate in—that of “methodological drag” (Nordstrom & Happel-Parkins, 2016) where “for us to convince others of a certain methodological performance, we must use the discourse of the networks in which that methodology is situated” (p. 150). Similarly, in our writing, to convince others of a certain writing performance (academic writing, for example), we must use the discourse of the networks in which our writing is situated (academic journals, book chapters, alphabetic print). But what if we didn’t have to? What if, instead of having “singular conceptions of qualitative research methodologists [or in this case, writing], methodological drag [or perhaps, *writing (as) drag*] allows for fluid, multiple, and sometimes contradictory conceptions of methodologist [writer]” (Nordstrom & Happel-Parkins, 2016, p. 152)?

<sup>25</sup> In the process of writing our proposal for this special issue, we were drawn strongly to the phrase within the call: “I will chaos into 14 lines,” and we were surprised to find that the poem actually states “I will *put* Chaos into fourteen lines” (Millay, n.d., emphasis our own). We want to thank the editors of the special issue for this poetic license in citing the poem, because had they not done so, our thinking/writing of this entire manuscript might not have occurred.

<sup>26</sup> We made these three “headings” out of the quotation from Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987). But now, we are not exactly sure how *writing as becoming* became *writing as messiness and a/effective...*

<sup>27</sup> As Kuby and Christ (2020) have written elsewhere about what we have come to call (re)etymologizing: “Over the years, and inspired by reading Haraway’s (2008, 2016) work, we have found ourselves looking up words in dictionaries. We often wonder how a word is defined and what its etymology is, how it came to be and how it is used, and what it means and how that meaning has shifted over time. We muse on these definitions and etymologies, not in a quest to find ‘The’ answer but rather it is in the process of searching for definitions and etymologies that our thinking is undone and newness about a concept/word is produced... [I]n short, we are both seeking meaning in words *and* to undo/trouble/refute that meaning at the same time” (p. 12-13).

<sup>28</sup> This quotation is taken directly from the call for papers for this special issue.

<sup>29</sup> This was originally a disclaimer to the editors to let them know that we didn’t know what would be(come) of the manuscript, and we leave it here still as a disclaimer to you, the readers.

<sup>30</sup> As Becky said at the onset of this manuscript, we repeat here, “How do we write a piece that is never finished?”

<sup>31</sup> This quotation is also from the call for papers for this special issue.

<sup>32</sup> We note from our Zoom call on June 24, 2019, that reading the “Preface” and “Write |rit|” (original abstract) sections out loud [Becky read the manuscript text, Tara the endnotes, and Candace the lingering comment boxes in Google docs] that they each produced different e/affects. The original abstract had less notes because the writing had been revised and edited many times before submitting the abstract, and the preface was not “cleaned up” in that same way. And we wonder what these two different writing “styles” next to each other produce? And we wonder about our own comfort levels in “publishing” them. What even are comfort levels [of/about writing]?

<sup>33</sup> Notice our addition of the *-ing* on chaos. In much of our work, we have found it productive to verbify words as they are not only things but also doings (see Kuby & Christ [2018] for more about do/things). As Becky and Candace note elsewhere: “Nouns appear stable; nouns are people, places, things or ideas, but verbifying the word makes it active. We are calling on verbs, calling on *-ing*’s here” (Kuby & Christ, 2020, p. 26). Tara and Candace, in their thinking/writing on literacies and Deleuze’s notion of desire conceptualized the phrase “literacy desiring”—desiring as a do/thing. We are also reminded of Nordstrom and Happel-Parkins’ (2016) idea that “[r]ethinking these terms [in this case, chaos] as verbs serves as a counter discourse to a stable, conventional, and humanist conception of these terms. The verb-oriented counter discourse gestures toward a compositional space in which one knits together a subject position that is always already caught up in networks” (p. 151).

<sup>34</sup> This is where our idea of titling subheadings “Fragments” came from.

<sup>35</sup> As Candace noticed on the June 24, 2019, Zoom call, this section had no endnotes other than the title of the section. The section felt “whole” in the fragments. But we decided to make an endnote about the fact that there were no endnotes... These endnotes are going to be the end of us (-Becky); They are really just the beginning (-Candace).

<sup>36</sup> “[P]eople can simultaneously be stuck and do things, and this is not nothing” (Biehl & Locke, 2017, p. 21).

<sup>37</sup> A suggestion Candace made on Zoom towards the beginning of our April 17, 2019, meeting. We wrote for approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes without talking. Much of this manuscript came from that silent, but lively and affectual meeting.

<sup>38</sup> Who is the “we” here? We, the co-authors? We, the academy? We, the field of education? We, the world?

<sup>39</sup> Tara, in her classroom, provided spaces for traditional learning objectives, such as with narratives, informational and opinion writing, and even the organizational structures (“first, second, then, next, finally” or paragraphing). She discussed with students the normalized expectations of writing. She also provided ample time, space, and materials for students to follow literacy desirings using a range of artistic and digital tools. Tara and students alike felt the disequilibrium of becoming in this both/and, possibly, like we three have felt at times in writing this manuscript.

<sup>40</sup> This is a reference to the stanza from the poem included below. Please see endnote 43 for more information about the poem.

<sup>41</sup> We found the special issue call for papers a lovely invitation to be messy and art-full as writers.

<sup>42</sup> We noted on our June 24, 2019, Zoom call that we have various fonts, sizes, bold words, margins, alignments, and spacing. We wondered why we did that—what was the intention behind those. Then we wondered: do we know the intentions, can we remember? Do we need to remember? It was intentional at one point in time—or maybe it wasn’t—but

we can't represent or explain why now. Do we need to find an order, a rule, a way to make consistency in our writing? Or do we leave it as is?

<sup>43</sup> This stanza comes from the poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay that served as inspiration for the call for papers for this special issue. See the Appendix to our manuscript for the entire sonnet.

<sup>44</sup> Read endnote 43 again.

<sup>45</sup> Perhaps we were wondering what other writers for this special issue might be writing (note from Zoom call, June 24, 2019).

<sup>46</sup> When Candace and Tara began their partnership in 2010, writing was the “elephant in Tara’s lesson plans” because Tara had not spent concentrated time writing or thinking about writing as a writer herself. Since 2010, we have opened spaces for literacy desirings. This has influenced students, but also us. We, along with our writing, are becoming as we give ourselves space, time, materials... and trust/permission.

<sup>47</sup> See Zapata, Kuby, & Thiel (2018) and Kuby & Gutshall Rucker (2016) for discussions of literacies as otherwise and the not-yet-known.

<sup>48</sup> Constrain, according to the Apple Dictionary, comes from Middle English via Old French from Latin *constringere* meaning ‘bind tightly together.’ We find it interesting that binding can be restricting, but is it always bad to be bound together? As Haraway (2016) reminds us, “Nothing is connected to everything; [but] everything is connected to something” (p. 31). Thus, constraining is a both/and. For some students, the invitation to “go be a writer” might be constraining and freeing at the same time.

<sup>49</sup> What is “this”? This writing? How do we use language to represent its it-ness?

<sup>50</sup> This stanza also comes from the poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay that served as inspiration for the call for manuscripts for this special issue.

<sup>51</sup> The phrase “agitating the academic sensibilities” comes directly from the call for papers for this special issue under a section listing characteristics for types of manuscripts they would like to see.

<sup>52</sup> Again, in the process of writing our proposal for this special issue, we were drawn strongly to the phrase within the call: “I will chaos into 14 lines,” and we were surprised to find that the poem actually states “I will *put* Chaos into fourteen lines” (Millay, n.d., emphasis our own). This conversation we are having in the manuscript above is in direct relation to this realization/discovery.

<sup>53</sup> While inviting students to “go be a writer,” Tara has seen writing encompass much more than alphabetic print. When given time, space, materials, along with trust/permission, literacy desirings included a 3D birdhouse and 19-foot giraffe mural (Kuby, Gutshall, & Kirchhofer, 2015), a silent puppet show (Kuby, 2019), a solar system mural designed to scale (Kuby & Crawford, 2018), game boards, cooking demonstrations, fire-safety bracelets and more (Kuby & Gutshall Rucker, 2016).

<sup>54</sup> Our initial plan was to spend one writing session (2-hour Zoom meeting) on each of the three fragments. However, during our April 17, 2019, meeting we found ourselves writing in all three fragments (sections), in silence—but not without struggle and not without mess.

<sup>55</sup> Here is that word again: “This.” What is the “this” we are referring to? We think the “this” here is our attempt to describe our be(com)ing writers/writing.

<sup>56</sup> You might recognize this portion of writing, as you already read it above. We pulled it down into this section during one of our writing sessions, before deciding to keep the original writing from our proposal in our manuscript. We have decided now not to delete

it—but instead to repeat it—because each time the writing is encountered, we/you may be different.

<sup>57</sup> Should we edit this to be “*Are we chaos-ing into ourselves, as three(people), three(lines)?*” so it reads as a question as we have a question mark?

<sup>58</sup> We use “D&G” often as shorthand for “Deleuze and Guattari.”

<sup>59</sup> Except we didn’t always know our own “writing” when we went back and reread this manuscript. Sometimes, we have no idea who wrote the particular “words” we are reading later.

<sup>60</sup> We added the bolding for emphasis.

<sup>61</sup> Again, our initial plan was to spend one writing session (2-hour Zoom meeting) on each of the three fragments. However, during our April 17, 2019, meeting we found ourselves writing in all three fragments (sections), in silence.

<sup>62</sup> Our use of endnotes throughout are in a sense an attempt to “map” what unfolded and continues to unfold.

<sup>63</sup> During our silent writing, one of us was typing the previous three lines into single lines, and another of us put them into a right-margin alignment to repeat the three-line segments we planned in our abstract (i.e., “Write |rit|” section above). And this was the written response.

<sup>64</sup> Hence, we include some of the various dates we Zoomed together and wrote this piece in our endnotes.

<sup>65</sup> One of us (or perhaps more than one of us) apparently got very excited about this quotation! And we (attempt to) increase our territory by deterritorializing into endnotes like this one.

<sup>66</sup> A stream of quotes from Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) written out as Candace re-entered this plateau from *A Thousand Plateaus* and was shocked to see so much about books and writing. During our May 8, 2019, Zoom meeting, we discussed if we should leave this string of quotes as is. We also discussed this fragment seemed “less developed” than the others. But what does it mean to be less developed? And is that okay? So, we left it as it was. You may also consider reading Kuby & Christ’s (2020) discussion about theoretical (un/der)developing.

<sup>67</sup> According to Colombat (1991), Deleuze, in his creation and work with concepts, juxtaposes “two incompatible fields and explanations [which] creates a non-sense, an excess of sense, that puts in motion the intellect and the imagination of the reader” (p. 14). In our writing, we called this non-sense/excess of sense, “sense and unsense at the same time.”

<sup>68</sup> We often use the “x” (often in combinations of 3-5) as a placeholder for future thoughts to be inserted. We leave them here because there is always already more thought-to-come in writing. We leave the x’s as part of our epilogue heading here to show the never-finishedness of writing and the messiness that (can) occur(s) in the moment of writing.

<sup>69</sup> The Epilogue was primarily written during our Zoom call on May 8, 2019. It was written with the Preface as one text as we chaosed into three(lines). We chose to pull these parts to the end, but notice our beginning and end occur at the “same time.” As Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) discuss, “*Aeon*: the indefinite time of the event, the floating line that knows only speed and continually divides that which transpires into an already-there that is at the same time not-yet-here” (p. 262, italics in original).

<sup>70</sup> There are standards/expectations developed by universities and colleges for faculty members to work towards/expectations for tenure and promotion just as there is a standardization of PreK-12 schooling.

<sup>71</sup> Two or more... like maybe three?

<sup>72</sup> Screenshot taken during our May 8, 2019, meeting when we tried to visit the journal's website to learn more about the journal *Taboo*.

<sup>73</sup> A similar thought was shared by Christopher Lehman and quoted on the classroom door of one of Tara's colleagues. She often experiences its honesty when she rereads published pieces of her and Candace's writing and notices parts that they might add to or even revise.

<sup>74</sup> On May 23, 2019, Candace and Tara were Skyping and working on a different manuscript when Becky texted both of them as she was (re)reading Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987). These screenshots show the text exchange that ensued. If readers want to read the text messages in the order they happened, read each "line" (two screen images) left to right and then down to the next line.

<sup>75</sup> The quote included in the text message comes from the article about Deleuze and Guattari that Tara shared (Wolters, 2013). Also, note the typo in the text messages—"detail" should be the word "delete." Perhaps we are actually *detailing* this thread because we are "giv[ing] the full particulars of" (one part of a definition of *detail*) by featuring the entire texting thread in images here.

<sup>76</sup> The quote to end the manuscript comes directly from the reading that Becky shared with Tara and Candace that evening that began the text change—where even Deleuze & Guattari (1980/1987) discuss three kinds of lines.

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## Affective Writing as a Promise of “Yet-To-Become”

Unearthing the Meaning of Writing Through  
the Voices of Tenure-Track Assistant Professors

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### Abstract

In this article, we collectively explore our shared experience of the act of writing in academia. Drawing upon the voices of tenure-track assistant professors in a research university and using the lens of affect theory, we inquire into what it is like to write in the modern academy increasingly influenced by the institution’s neoliberal agenda. Our experiences are shared in multiple poems, created by the cut-up method. It is our hope that the affect of writing or affective writing would flow from body to body, cutting across our personal feelings, reaching far to those who are in a situation similar to ours existing in the space outside of our reality.

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## Introduction

We work in the same department at a public research university.<sup>1</sup> None of us have worked in this department for more than five years. This indicates that there was a reasonably large turnaround in the makeup of faculty in the past five years due to the college’s growth, transition to tier one status, and new initiatives. Being that all of us are new to this environment, we have been struggling to meet growing institutional demands in addition to the huge amount of pressure to excel in the three areas of research, teaching, and service. Moreover, a key part of our departmental strategic plans is to increase faculty productivity, a standard expectation for an R1 institution, despite experiencing unusually heavy service demands and advising loads created by an increasing enrollment situation to meet the higher education’s neoliberal agenda. As we do our due diligence as good academic citizens, we have become increasingly concerned about our emotional well-being, given how difficult it is to take care of ourselves while juggling (what seems like) a million tasks.

In order to address some of these concerns, we developed an academic writing group that met for five hours a week each Thursday. The members included two tenured professors and eight tenure-track assistant professors. The writing group was created as an official place solely dedicated for academic writing, carved out of the demanding work schedule. However, we also found the writing group becoming a place not only for celebrating each other’s academic accomplishments, but also for support during instances of intense feelings of inadequacy, sorrow to the point of tears, petty frustration, mistrust and betrayal. We frequently shared all of these feelings that were felt within the context of our job situations, and they inevitably became integrated into our act of writing.

Within this backdrop, we collectively became interested in our shared experience of the act of writing. Hence, in this article, we explore what it is like to write in the modern academy increasingly influenced by the institution’s neoliberal agenda, drawing upon the voices of tenure-track assistant professors in a research university, using the lens of affect theory. In particular, our inquiry is guided by the following questions:

What does *writing* mean to assistant professors in a research university?

In what ways does an act of writing affect assistant professors in a research university?

In what ways does the writing group affect assistant professors in a research university?

It is our hope that sharing of the affect of writing would not be something isolated in our institution, viewed as merely sharing of our emotion, which is a *contracted affect*—one that is no longer able to flow. Rather, we hope that the affect of writing or affective writing would flow from body to body, cutting across our personal, subjective feelings, reaching far to those who are in a situation similar to ours existing in the space outside of our reality, what Massumi calls, “the virtual realm” (2002, p. 35).

### Affect Theory

Let us first discuss our theoretical framework, affect theory. The history of affect theory can be traced back to Deleuze's lectures on Spinoza, in which he revived the Latin concept of *affectus*. Deleuze defines it as the continual durations that link between the preceding state and the next state, which then lead to variations of perfection to be realized (Deleuze, 1988). That is, the *affectus* (affect) refers to the "passage from one state to another, taking into account the correlative variation of the affecting bodies" (p. 49). For example, an existing state has a certain capacity for being affected by a different mode. When the existing mode encounters another mode that is "good" for it, the existing mode transitions to a greater perfection; but when it encounters another mode that is "bad" for it, the existing mode passes to a lesser perfection. Therefore, the existing mode's power of acting or its force of existing may increase or diminish.

Drawing upon the work of Spinoza and Deleuze, Brian Massumi has been exceptionally influential in the theorization of affect; he sees affect as central to an understanding of our neo-liberal, capitalist times. According to Massumi (2002), there is no cultural-theoretical vocabulary specific to affect as it is generally understood as a synonym for emotion. But in affect theory, emotion and affect need to be distinguished, and in fact, according to Massumi (2002, p. 35), it is *crucial* to theorize the distinction between affect and emotion as they follow different logic and different orders. Emotion, for example, is a subjective feeling, while affect is an "impersonal dynamic principle that cuts across personal feelings and experiences" (Vermeulen, 2014, p. 122). Unlike emotion, affect has intensity with two-sidedness: "one side in the virtual (the autonomy of relation), the other in the actual (functional limitation)" (Massumi, 2002, p. 30). The virtual is a realm of potential that is indicated in incipencies and tendencies. In other words, the virtual is "a lived paradox where what are normally opposites coexist, coalesce, and connect; where what cannot be experienced cannot but be felt—albeit reduced and felt" (p. 30). Binary oppositions or contradictions, such as mind and body, subjectivity and objectivity, passivity and activity, past and future, action and reaction, happiness and sadness, and so on, emerge and come together in their virtual coexistence and interconnection. That is, affect, residing in one's perceptions and cognitions, are "*virtual synesthetic perspectives*" (p. 35, italics in original) that are functionally limited by the actual particular things that embody them. Affect exists in a virtual realm of potentiality and possibility in relation to the actual.

Hence, Massumi (2002) states, "affect is autonomous to the degree to which it escapes confinement in the particular body whose vitality, or potential for interaction, it is" (p. 35). It always maintains an element of its virtual origins. When we isolate affect in an individual and attempt to name it, according to Massumi, this is the end of affect, and it becomes emotion, a contracted affect that is no longer able to flow. It is not until the virtual autonomous realm is called upon by the ac-

tual that an affect forms the synthetic actuality and limitations attributed to itself. Affect is found in those intensities that pass and flow from body to body, which can be human, nonhuman, part-body, or otherwise (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010).

It would make sense, then, to conceive of our writing group as a body without organs (Deleuze, 1990; Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, 1987) through which affects flow. Rather than being an organic organism that exists in a definite structured way, it is a *schizoid* (Deleuze, 1990) of *multiplicity* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987): schizoid because it is fraught with tensions, sustaining multiple, often contradictory views at any given time, and a site of multiplicity because it is assembled at any given time of individuals, each one of whom is many, as “each of us is several” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 3). We believe this body without organs conceptualization is particularly fruitful given our intent in this paper: to highlight the affective valences of a group of assistant professors as they reflect on their writing practices. The body without organs, claimed Deleuze and Guattari, is itself a point of zero intensity, in which intensities may be inscribed. It represents a plane of immanence within which the virtual of affect is able to actualize itself freely, growing and diminishing as they are embodied by various, actual particulars. If we conceive of our group as a point of zero intensity, those who are a part of the group represent and bring with them intensities that manifest and play out within the group. However, the group is never able to become a closed organism, as these intensities establish no stable hierarchy or organizing structure. Frustration, celebration, confusion, toxicity, playfulness, desire - each of these intensities (and others) undulate, glow, and evanesce, replacing one another here and there, just as the individuals within the group come and go, staying for the full meeting time on one day, being wholly absent on another, and changing the plane of immanence wherein affect synthesizes and actualizes. Conceptualizing of the writing group as a body without organs allows us to think of the affective states that we occupy (or that occupy us) during writing as transient, contagious, and often unpredictable. We believe that academia is an area particularly ripe with affective intensities, and the body without organs, as well as affect theory more broadly, allows us to explore these intensities with greater depth and nuance.

### Writing in Academia

But why do we need to explore the affective arena of assistant professors and their writing? What is at stake? One of the assistant professors in our writing group writes a review of the literature on academic writing in the following:

*Imagine that you are playing a game of cards, one that had always been attractive to you because there are seemingly endless combinations and permutations that can evolve from your imagination and intellect. As such, you spend years honing your knowledge and skills to one day have a seat at the table. However, in this game, the dealer has stacked the deck against you, and your*

ability to play this game successfully dictates whether or not you may remain at the table and participate in this game in your future.

Imagine now this game is academe, where the skill is writing and winning hands are publications for promotion and tenure. The stacked deck are the various institutional barriers and pressures you face as a new faculty member: garnering social capital with your new colleagues and institution, balancing home and work, a lack of (a) mentor/ing, or a general lack of infrastructure to support writing and scholarship-based skills (Sonnad et al., 2011). If you are a person of color (Warner et al., 2016) and/or a woman (Freund et al., 2016), you'll note that the dealer is dealing from the bottom of the deck so others get higher value cards; perhaps you receive fewer cards from the dealer than the other players seated at the same table. And, since you are one of the newest players to the table, veteran players may try to peek at or downright steal the cards you do have (Eagan & Garvey, 2015). When it is finally your turn, these other players will try to distract you with other games (grant proposals, advising, teaching, service) and bully other players so they can play their cards instead (Sedivy-Benton et al., 2014). If you play well, these players may try to change the rules mid-game (Lisnic et al., 2019). If you play poorly, these players can blame your inability to understand the basic rules or skills, rather than acknowledging the disparate factors of the game itself. Although these veteran players are not good at the game or even understand the game anymore (perhaps the game has changed since they were a new player), they may remain at the table for as long as they'd like. As spurious as those players are, you are encouraged to somehow collaborate with them, even though playing, much less winning, this game is little of their concern. If you are playing the Research 1 (R1) version of this game, you know that the rules are even more complex; the game is played faster and more competitively among the players as the stakes are higher (Potter et al., 2011). Because it's harder to move from table to table, you know if you lose, it is unlikely you will ever play at the table again.

Considering this analogy, the card game is clearly an unthinkable and unwinnable scenario. Yet, it is an apropos reality, nay, expectation for new and junior faculty (a pejorative term, certainly, but ubiquitous) in academe for writing and publications. That is, if one is 'lucky' enough to obtain a tenure-track, non-adjunct position, especially at an R1, right out of their doctoral program or post-doc. What does it matter what junior faculty members think about writing for publication? First, the 'publish or perish' mantra is alive and well in academe, with h-index and impact factors as vital considerations of one's 'worth' as an academic (Potter et al., 2011). As research (and dollars) become more important to cash-strapped universities, so does scholarly productivity, especially for new faculty. Given the aging of the academic workforce (Blau & Weinberg, 2017), it should matter what new and junior faculty think about their own scholarly productivity. Specifically writing, given the coin of the academic realm are publications. If assistant professors are unable to write and are consequently denied tenure, they must leave. Given this level of pressure, it is understandable assistant professors develop anxiety towards the writing process (Belcher, 2009). This only perpetuates faculty turnover, which "has long been a practical and research concern in higher education due to the costly monetary and academic

*consequences that the institutions have to bear” (Xu, 2008, p. 40). In 2008, faculty turnover cost US public universities 68 million dollars (Figueron, 2015). Academic consequences are equally detrimental, by exacerbating minorities and women leaving academe; citing issues of institutional support for their scholarship (Alire, 2001; Warner et al., 2016). Specifically, a study by Xu (2008) found female faculty reported they were stymied in their scholarship, facilitating their leaving compared to gendered issues (e.g. family care).*

*Clearly, this warrants further exploration of assistant professors’ views on writing, the mechanism of scholarship, to better understand the unique challenges they face as they are inculcated into academe. For example, a study by Sonnad et al (2011) explored the experiences of a writing group specific to female assistant professors in medicine, intended to improve their writing skills for publication. The authors had found that participants were able to publish more, but for reasons beyond ability. Participating women reported their lack of productivity was not a failure of their ability to write, rather the writing group provided information to cultural norms around publishing (e.g. it being okay to publish smaller studies or submit to lower-tiered journals), helping them in “finding collaborators for all aspects of writing, developing, and communicating authorship arrangements, and not allowing manuscripts to “languish” on the desks of coauthors” (p. 814-5). In a research-focused environment that is moving faster, spaces for assistant professors to explore, discuss, and share academic writing culture is a growing imperative.*

On the surface, a simple reason that we should think about writing and assistant professorship is the fact that injustice exists. Assistant professors, especially those who are persons of color and women, are dealt a difficult hand. We see this as one potentially convincing reason to more deeply explore the assistant professor’s relationship with writing. On the other hand, there is something unusual about this writer’s style that we seek to explore, and this can be done in terms of affect. While this literature review on writing and the writing group explores the difficulties that may be present for assistant professors and their scholarship as well as benefits of collaboration, it is just as much an expression of one’s perceived reality as it is an *objective* review of literature. The concepts were spun from a Massumian virtual environment (the empirical literature) and sewn into a tapestry of analogous expression on writing as an assistant professor. As such, this review is a virtual synthesis: a synthesizing of existing material, but also a synthesis that extends from the virtual to the reality of the writer. It might be called an affective review, both a singular and a multiple experience, an actual manifestation of our group member’s thoughts and her personal emotion, but drawing from a virtual environment, constructed from various sites or voices that spoke through her affectively. She speaks her truth as much as she speaks others’ truths, as much as others speak her truth (if read and cited upon publication) in infinite reciprocation. The literature review is an actualization of affect, deriving from the virtual plane of voices that have never actually spoken *to* each other, existing virtually apart, synthesizing into the analogy of the rigged card game. It is, then, one productive way that we might think about affect as

it occurs within (or begets) writing studies, especially with regards to the assistant professor. We wish to explore the possibilities further, and to this end, attempt to see how affect plays out within our body-without-organs group, as we interact with, write together, and affect one another.

### The Cut-up Method & Poems

It was William Burroughs who experimented and adopted the cut-up method in his work inspired by his painter friend Brion Gysin, who cut newspaper articles into sections and rearranged the sections at random, like the collage.<sup>2</sup> This methodology was chosen as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) were also inspired by the cut up method, describing it as:

the folding of one text onto another, which constitutes multiple and even adventitious roots (like a cutting), implies a supplementary dimension to that of the texts under consideration. In this supplementary dimension of folding, unity continues its spiritual labor. That is why the most resolutely fragmented work can also be presented as the Total Work or Magnum Opus. (p. 6)

For Deleuze and Guattari, the cut-up method, albeit fragmented, provides a multiple dimension of folding that constitutes a rhizome which “ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains” (p. 7). These chains allow us to think about the possible ways that affect actualizes in our writing group’s reality, or multiple realities, virtually experienced as a manifestation of our separate emotions and conjoined affects. Hence, the cut-up method is an arrangement of ideas that we share at a particular time of our affective writing.

To collect the participating assistant professors’ thoughts and insights into the questions that we raised earlier, one of the lead authors (tenured faculty member) distributed more specific questions (see the Appendix) to the writing group. The participants’ responses to each question, which were long narratives, were then anonymized by the first author to protect their identity. After that, the responses were analyzed using the cut-up method in collaboration with two other lead authors. The chosen words and passages (direct quotes) from the data made up the poems we share below.

#### Who Am I?

An assistant professor,  
 A step toward being a tenured professor  
 I write, I research, I teach  
 I read, and think, and write, mostly on my terms  
 A self-indulgent exercise  
 I get to think about abstract concepts and play with ideas  
 Paid to focus on scholarship, teaching, and service  
 I feel genuine, straight up gratitude for it almost daily  
 I am new to the University as well as untenured

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I am at the bottom of the hierarchy  
Being aware of the precarious nature of my position  
That requires a lot of work and a major investment of time  
in order to meet a school’s expectations.  
In other words,  
I have to work to survive  
I am a social misfit  
I find myself standing alone in the corner at parties  
But I find myself flourishing when talk involves academia  
Some of my colleagues are cordial, my comrades  
Others indifferent, tepid, just my coworkers  
Still others poor, harassing, a direct adversary

Am I valuable to them?  
I can be  
Insofar as I continue to write and publish  
and write A LOT of grants  
As long as I am mercenary and focused on deliverables  
Bending to the neo-liberal agenda

It’s the numbers game  
Do I feel threatened by it?  
Maybe?  
Maybe not?  
I delay gratification as I work to “publish or perish”  
My next ultimate goal being in getting tenure  
which depends on my ability to produce,  
and to navigate the politics of an R1 institution

As a tenure-track faculty,  
I cannot help comparing myself to others.  
Sometimes, I felt ashamed of my writing because of my limitations – I cannot  
write like “them”  
However,  
I try to forgive myself when I cannot write like others but evolve as a writer  
In other words,  
I have to write to survive

### Writing

Writing is a central part of my job  
It is the currency of academia,  
as I have been repeatedly told  
I carved out a “writing day” to attend to this important part of my work as a scholar

Writing is a critical component of being a researcher  
the most enjoyable part of my job,  
having something to say  
sharing new ideas

helping readers understand a complex text  
infusing the various versions of who I am

There is always a possibility of rewriting, crafting  
a drawn-out, artful dialogue  
Flow is when I am happiest writing – when all of my ideas  
seem to have aligned in an organizational way  
It's almost euphoric  
Excited in a squirmy kind of way

Academic writing is impersonal, positioning the writer as a neutral observer  
It sees itself as the antithesis of a creative idea in a way  
A lot of it seems to be hoop jumping  
I write to meet a deadline  
Write to please co-authors  
Revise to meet the demands of peer reviewers or an editor  
Frustrating, difficult, challenging  
It feels like a game of template-finding  
Which template works well for this journal or that grant agency?  
Being cautious not to be rejected by editors  
I feel a big sense of pride, yet apprehension when I finally submit it for publication,  
Happiness is not a goal for my writing

I always think about how I should be writing  
The “You should be writing” sign is everywhere  
The anxiety builds when I think about all the precious time I am wasting  
The pressure for academics to write is enormous;  
It removes a lot of the joy  
I know my paper will be criticized by reviewers and readers,  
No matter what

But I want more  
I want to push the boundaries of my own writing  
I want to write in a more unconventional style  
I want to take risks  
I want to avoid coldness and disconnection that used to exist in my writing  
Integrating my emotions into an academic piece  
I want to be more creative and artistic with my work

#### **Happy and Sad Memories of Writing**

I enjoy writing most of the time,  
sitting and thinking and developing that argument in my head and on paper  
Writing is one of ways that I can represent my thoughts and ideas  
It is a tool that helps me better understand my thoughts  
It's like weaving –  
Weaving fragmented pieces of knowledge to become integrated  
That makes me happy  
I'm happy when I do the micro-level crafting

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to make sure the flow of the sentence is as good as it can be,  
And that every word is picked for a precise purpose,  
Which sparks my joy of writing  
Happy memories of writing mostly pertain  
When something is accepted and published

And yet,  
Sad memories of writing mostly pertain to being unsuccessful in my writing;  
when I feel as if I am wasting time on a project that is headed nowhere;  
when not given the time or space to write scholarship of my own.  
I am never happy with my writing and am constantly revising sentences repeatedly  
Two hours have passed  
And I've only gotten two paragraphs completed  
I get to be sad  
when looking back on time passed  
and realizing that I did not accomplish what I wanted to accomplish  
The saddest memories are those of rejection,  
Which creates conflict with my position as an assistant professor  
It's hard not to internalize rejection in some particularly negative way  
I need to take care of my emotional wellbeing

### Metaphors for Writing

Writing is not a part of my day job, but a part of my night shift  
It looks like a skeleton and fits together like a jigsaw  
My ideas are woven by sentences to become a paragraph

It is a juggling game, but my stamina is short  
And it is not easy to maintain writing inertia;  
It's like having to eat all your vegetables before having dessert  
And I am running as fast as I can to just barely keep up with my peers

It is an evolution;  
My writing and I grow together  
And there is never an ending point  
to my work day every day  
Even though I have a hard stop!

I am fueled by the desire to share ideas  
But am disconnected from words  
Maybe I'm a remixer  
Capturing something unique,  
Doing something outside the box,  
But I feel like I'm always coming out flat

And then writing becomes toxic,  
A weapon to kill non-tenured faculty  
And in my work there is coldness  
Among tepid coworkers  
So I survive with my writing

And the writing group?  
Feels like a bandage,  
a band-aid  
rather than a structural fix  
Amidst fractured trust,  
Making time for writing in a sea of urgent requests  
While it could be an energy flow:  
everyone's energy of writing flows together  
and creates a writing sea  
Rather than a sea of urgency

#### **I Want/I Wish**

I wish to emulate as a scholar, conducting the compelling research and seeking  
answers to the great questions within my discipline

*But*

I want to push myself in thinking about research as a more creative endeavor

I want to write more like my colleague who is a children's author

I want to push the boundaries of my own writing and write in a more  
unconventional style

I want to take risks and write in more pragmatic ways that are truly meaningful  
to my readers

I want my students to go beyond what is safe and feel that they can take some risks

*And*

I wish that more of the full rank professors in our department joined the writing group

*Because*

I want the writing group to be a genuine and unaffected but supportive emotional group

*Because*

I want it to be a place where we share best practices in writing, discuss our  
challenges experienced with writing in the academy

*Because*

I want to fit in, not to exclude myself from my colleagues

*Because*

I want to show... that I [am] not a person who sought to do harm to others

*Because*

I want to see myself evolving into someone that is better able to carve out time  
for writing

*And*

I want to see these people here because it distracts me from my own emptiness  
and meaninglessness

#### **Coda**

Quiet vigorous typing sounds;  
serious thinking faces;  
funny expressions of faculty that they didn't even realize they were making;  
those are what I want to feel in the room.

### Affect and Writing In-between

As we live in the academic culture of ‘publish or perish’ as noted in one of the poems, we continue to write in-between. Writing is a ‘self-indulgent exercise’ and produces happy moments, but we cannot avoid feeling pressured, threatened while trying to obtain the ‘currency of academia.’ Gregg and Seigworth have identified that affect “arises in the midst of *in-between-ness*” (2010, p. 1, italics in original), and found in those intensities and resonances that pass, flow, and move from body to body (one individual to another in the writing group). As we try to develop a virtual relation between the act of writing and who we are as assistant professors, we see how we affect and are affected by the “force or forces of encounter” (p. 2) that happened in the writing group. Affect is the name we give to those forces, vital forces that move us forward or leave us overwhelmed. Hence, affect is “persistent proof of a body’s never less than ongoing immersion in and among the world’s obstinacies and rhythms, its refusals as much as its invitations” (p. 1). Under the tyranny of publish or perish, with “all the minuscule or the molecular events of the unnoticed” (p. 2) that we experienced in-between, we become *academicwritingmachines*, *universitymachines*, and *publishingmachines*, which weigh down thought and passively lay down the sediment of a state apparatus (Honan, Bright & Riddle, 2018). As such, university agendas still weigh heavily on us, shown in the poetry above. Still, we flirt with these directives, indulging ourselves, attempting to push the bounds of creativity, sometimes even feeling joy. Despite adversity and negativity, we press on.

As we work to achieve tenure and try to win the ‘numbers game,’ we sometimes encounter the passage to a better perfection with the feeling of joy and happiness; other times, we encounter a passage to less power and lesser perfection with sadness of writing. We sometimes find our writing act a ‘toxic, band-aid, a weapon to kill,’ while it is also the ‘desire, flow of energy, a writing sea.’ These affects are caused by external demands and expectations as well as by our own ideas about what writing is and what writing should be. Our bodies have the capacity for emotion (sad or happy in the virtual), fostering a lived paradox in which both happiness and sadness as well as toxicity and desire coexist (Massumi, 2002); affect is thusly born in *in-between-ness* of the actual. Affect then helps us understand that these virtual and actual spaces are muddy and blurry; hence, it is a “gradient of bodily capacity—a supple incrementalism of ever modulating force-relations” (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010, p. 2).

### Affect and Poetry: The Relation

Deleuze and Guattari (1983) describe the need for poetic (and lunatic) variability in language, and their position is particularly appropriate as we discuss the Massumian (2002) affect: the virtual synthetic of possibility and actualization. They stated that such poetic possibility and potentiality in language helps

to bridge the gap between the virtual and the real: “‘Potential’ and ‘virtual’ are not at all in opposition to ‘real’; on the contrary, the reality of the creative, or the placing-in-continuous variation of variables, is in opposition only to the actual determination of their constant relations” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, p. 99). Playing with language, using variations in language forms intentionally against those used by academic writing machines (Honan et al., 2018) becomes a way for us to dive into the virtual, a world not of forms but of formation, where we see affect emerge and thrive. Affect here emerges in the form of poetics, a shifting language due first to its attachment to feeling and sensing rather than cognizing, and second because these particular poems are not expressive of any one individual; they are instead a “[letting] go of the ‘I’ to walk-write the shifting sands” (Henderson, 2018, p. 143) that form our writing group. Here, the ‘I’ is multiple subjectivities, multiple roots, which represent the virtual synthetic of affect that surrounds us. Even if the data stems from individual instances of “I,” each I is multiple, inscribed by the affects that flow through the group. The poetry, then, is suggestive of the affects that inspire the group.

These poems emerge from the multiplicity that we occupy and allow affect to remain unclosed and autonomous, as Massumi (2002) described. In a single voice, we use many voices—while sourced from individual members, they also belong to the group. Once uttered, they exist outside of the speaker and penetrate our body(ies) without organs. The intensity described in each line is not an emotion, but an affect because it has the ability to intertwine with other lines, other thoughts, to extend itself ad infinitum before it sinks back to the virtual. Guttorm (2012) describes writing poetry as a moment “when percepts, affects, and concepts connect the individuating molar self [me] in relation to the milieu of space and time” (p. 596). She further acknowledges poetry “as having the deconstructive, evocative voice, the personal, becoming voice without clear interpretations, without fixed categories, fixed results, fixed outcomes” (p. 597). Here, poetry becomes a means to connect molar self to molar self without having to define those connections outright; a line of intensity is enough to describe connection. That is, the connections exist in the shared experiences and affective currents that ebb and flow within the writing group.

Similarly, Wyatt et al. (2011) reflect on their experiences writing together. They too suggest that “poetry leaves more spaces. Poetry does not seek to tie together and gather up” (p. 733). At the same time, they acknowledge that collaborative writing is an exercise in forgetting oneself, deterritorializing the “I,” giving oneself over to the flows present in the group, forgetting the haecceity that comes with a particular piece or kind of writing that one adopts and uses regularly. Poetry allows for the simultaneous existence of bodies (individual scholars) as well as a subsumption within a collective (e.g., writing group). Given our intent to give voice to the affective flows that exist within our group; use these flows to connect the molar individuals of the group; and allow the affect to continue to exist in an

open ended, impressionistic, non-categorical way, we feel that poetry is the best mode of representation. After all, “poetry is perhaps more Deleuzian than writing prose, if it’s possible to become comparative with Deleuze” (Wyatt et al. p. 733).

### Yet-to-Become Affective Writers: A Coda

The poems created by the cut-up method indicate how writing is an important venue for us to express ideas and our wanting to participate in larger conversations. We understand that writing is the cornerstone of academe. We should write; it’s our weapon against anti-intellectualism and the language we use within our respective fields. Further, these poems are an assemblage of our collective affect of assistant professors’ baggage, celebration, identification, multiplying our issues as assistant professors, as well as a rhizome that ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, unspoken emotions, felt tensions that come from our identities, differences, and multiple subjectivities (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). These poems, albeit fragmented, coming from multiple roots, taken directly from their narratives, such to shatter the neat and tidy unity of collective voice, constituting chaosmos, which is a “composed chaos—neither foreseen nor preconceived” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 204). We can regard these poems a chaosmos that is neither foreseen nor preconceived, drawn from the participants’ felt affects that continue to be oozed out and flow from one person/stage/moment to another.

So, what did we learn about ourselves as writers? What does writing mean to us? For us in academia, the turn to affect may mean to reject the possibility that we are merely treated as a writing machine that causes “academic anxieties” (Probyn, 2010, p. 73) in us; rather, it necessitates a substantive shift to Spinozist *not yet* of affect as a promise. This promise of not yet comes from the acknowledgement that “there are no ultimate or final guarantees—political, ethical, aesthetic, pedagogic, and otherwise” (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010, p. 9) but that “capacities to affect and to be affected will yield an actualized next or new that is somehow better than now” (p. 10). As we can see from the poem, *I want/I wish*, we long for the *yet-to-become*, its futurities, however confined and limited in the actual. Although such a promise can just as readily deliver something worse, we want to note that the *yet-ness* of the affect is not supposed to give us any ultimate resolution to our seemingly deteriorating well-being, but it is what we want to live by as a driving force to write. Writing, thus, could be derived not from an anxiety, but from an intuition, what Manning (2016) refers to as the art that inevitably springs forth from the not-yet. Writing, then, becomes “the intuitive potential to activate the future in the specious present, to make the middling of experience felt where futurity and *presentness* coincide, to invoke the memory not of what was, but of what will be” (p. 47).

The affects that are felt by assistant professors from/of/with writing and the writing group provide insights into how they are “managed” under the pervasive neo-liberal agenda in academia as we know it. For too many, higher education has

become a place where we increasingly feel obligated to meet the demands for increasing enrollments, heavy service, among other bureaucratic business. Coupled with higher standards of research university, these demands also create a nightmare scenario for the untenured to write (create). Although the threat of “publish or perish” in academia may be the “nonexistence of what has not happened” (Massumi, 2010, p. 52), the future of such a threat is felt real now and perhaps virtually forever, encoded in tenure and promotion and community metrics of current and future academic success, respectively.

Hence, we find that affective writing is a necessity as it helps us see how writing is a promise of *yet-to-become*, for better or worse. Affective writing—at once all-powerful and powerless – must be fostered and nurtured into our everyday practice in academia. We hope that affective writing that we shared in this article, particularly in the poems, would flow to those who are assistant professors in different institutions and become the forces to affect and to be affected in deterritorializing the sense of who they are in the academic machine. This is the power of affect, which passes through from us to others, connecting all of us in the virtual realm of *yet-to-become* in relation to the actual situation in which each of us resides.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Please note that one faculty member had left the university and one faculty member had been promoted to Associate Professor by the time this article was published.

<sup>2</sup> See *Minutes to Go* (1968) by William S. Burroughs, Brion Gysin, Gregory Corso, Sinclair Beiles, which resulted from the initial cut-up experiment.

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## Appendix

### On Writing:

1. What does “academic position” mean to you, as you will address the following questions based on your understanding of it?
2. Can you share your personal philosophy about writing, if you have any?
3. Can you share a happy memory (or memories) of writing, if you have any?
4. Can you share a sad memory (or memories) of writing, if you have any?
5. Can you share some challenges/difficulties/struggles of writing, if you have any? How did/do you overcome them? And/Or, how do you live with them?
6. Can you share some of your habits, rituals, or superstitions of writing, if you have any? Why do you keep them?
7. Can you describe yourself as a writer? And, how do you want to see yourself evolving?

### On the Writing Group:

1. Please recount the genesis of our writing group from your own perspective and describe the reasons why you joined the writing group?
2. After experiencing the writing group almost for a year, can you share your feelings about:
  - a. the writing group?
  - b. coming to the writing group every Thursday?
  - c. being in the writing group for 5 hours?
3. How would you describe the “culture” of the writing group so far and how is it affecting your writing and/or how is your writing affected by it?
4. How do you want to see the writing group evolve in the future?

## Mucous Bodies, Messy Affects, and Leaky-Writing in Academia

Teija Rantala, Taru Leppänen, & Mirka Koro

### Abstract

In this article, we conceptualize and exemplify how we, as academics, might write with our always-already gendered (leaky) bodies. We form assemblages of writing by following Erin Manning's (2013) theorization of leaky bodies and leaky-writing. Here, the mucosity and the leakiness of our storylines, narratives of affects and processes, work as an anchor through which we process our differentiating materialized bodily realities in academia. Therefore, the focus is on the materialized narrative intensities, which, through academic writing practices, the movement of affects in academia fold into acts of writing, hand-pens, and thinking-feelings. Our aim is to offer fresh academic narratives by following what happens to storytelling in this composition of various kinds of lines. These narratives do not fold neatly into chapters because they stem from storylines of vitality, materiality, and molar and molecular lines. They leak into one another, creating lines out of utterings, expressions, and words—as well as visual, moving, and troubling experiences. The writing academic mind-bodies leak emotions, materialities, fluids, and uncertainties to the neo-liberalist outcome-orientated academic writing-machines (see Massumi, 2017). They contest the idea of academia as a molar structure that works on rational logic by allowing vitality, porosity, and leakiness to transform academic writing practices.

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### The Leaky Folds of Academic Storylines

Following Erin Manning's (2013) idea of leaky bodies and leaky-writing we exemplify how writing with leaky bodies refuses stable categories, chronologies, and individual stable subjects; it acts as a dynamic form of worlding. Leaky bodies produce messy, leaky-writing, which is "beyond the human, beyond the sense of touch or vision, beyond the object, what emerges in relation" (Manning, 2013, p. 12). For example, mucosity, secreting, and the functions of a female body affects the way we write as academic women; mucosity emerges in the middle of the allegedly organized and settled rational thinking, and it constantly messes up our lives, texts, and thoughts with leaking and open-ended affects, events, and processes. Shifting vital life forces shape inquiry and knowledge production, simultaneously; they also function as aporetic or (im)possible limit-experiences (see Derrida, 1993). However, vital life forces, and their potentiality and illogic, are rarely discussed in academic contexts. In this paper, we elaborate on some of the disturbances and messy affects that vital life forces might produce through their attachments to theories, inquiries, data, methods, texts, writing, and human and non-human bodies. We write about life, affects, sense and non-sensical within messiness that enable nomadism and plurality in the realm of academic writing. In concrete, this means writing to sustain; academically, mentally, emotionally and physically, in other words, writing to exist. For us it is writing for living and living for writing and becoming one with our affective and embodied writing as if the writing produced our existence as much as we produced writing.

Writing for living, living with(in) writing involves flexibility of the writing-bodies and their senses, sensualities and perceptions. The simultaneous existence of consistency and movement are present in mucosity as it actively adjusts to the surrounding circumstances. Mucosity is an action that is never completed because mucous lies within the lips and the uterus: It has no solid permanence and no given form, yet it constitutes the primal material tissue or membrane upon which solidity and permanence ground their form (Irigaray, 1984). Mucosity enables us to think beyond the transparency of the masculine concept of fluidity. That is because mucous can expand and contract it is more fluid than solid, and even though it does not necessarily transform itself in terms of shape or in a quantifiable manner, yet its existence in-between the two is viscous. This capacity makes it a useful concept to generate and exemplify leaky, embodied, and messy writing. *The viscosity makes our corporeality stretchy* and to yield and bend without *breaking*. In its all-encompassing aptitude our corporeality includes and excludes otherness and sameness simultaneously, difference in-me-in-you-and-you-in-me, through and within. Therefore, even if the mucous can be seen to belong to only feminine and female coded bodies, and it can be argued to support strategic molar essentialism and sex and gender binaries, where female and male bodies possess feminine and masculine characteristics, it also manages to include

and embrace the processes of change, becoming, and movement that relate to all kinds of gendered formations, including transgender and non-binary bodies and their processes (Salamon, 2010). This enables writing in itself to become the non-binary movement that is separate within, the tool and the body part of the writing mind/body compositions.

Employed within feminist new materialist thought, mucosity highlights the affirmative molecular, penetrable, and elastic nature of our thinking and writing as academics. New materialist scholarship allows us to perceive the everyday affective materialities without requisite of preconditions and essentialism (Hird, 2004). Consequently, within new materialist approaches, molar structures, categorizations, and identities that guide, restrict, and, sometimes, also enable movements, forces, and becomings, might escape our attention. New materialist approaches tempt to dig into molecular aspects of writing, considering it as creative and transformational flows towards the unknown, which does not follow the logics of identity politics and its restrictive molar categorizations. However, we suggest not getting stuck in fixed and pre-known molar categorizations, because events and molar structures usually also involve flows that leak out of these molar structures, categorizations, and identities. Hence, these messy, mucous, and leaky academic writing practices could be comprehended as simultaneous and continuous movements of molar and molecular forces, which allow for including the experiences of the other into academic text production, even if they emerge beyond conventional conceptions and comprehensions of academic life and writing.

*In our collaboration we witness/ed otherness, we work through otherness and only within otherness. We do not know the difference within ourselves/others. That is the motor, that is the fuel. Constantly working in and toward the unpredictabilities of life. Living within the ethics of the event to come. Our bodies become one, three, and a thousand tiny reading/talking/writing bodies, compositions of screens, books, papers, fingers, pens, timezones, technologies, and languages.*

Here, in particular, the mucosity of reproducing, breastfeeding, caring, menopause, and menstruating bodies also offers something else; they differentiate, add, layer, diversify, and put life to the forefront of (academic) writing. Perhaps, viscosity binds together the multiple desiring, dreaming, connecting, hiding, and breathing bodies of different kind. These enactments, events, and processes become explicit in everything we compose, but especially in our embodied expression, which helps us forget the often requested linearity of time, and cross the hidden borderlines, and explore the dangers of crossing these borders of academic thinking and writing (bodies) (see Cixous, 2013; Tamboukou, 2010; van der Tuin, 2014). This brings bodily felt, sensual, and sensed dynamics into academic writing and enables intimate intra-action with texts and ways of knowing. However, these forces also challenge and work against the idea of the researcher/writer as an individualized and independent entity, and they assist in creating an organic

composition of various kinds of *human-non-human* components: *The hand-finger-keyboard as a writer, a writer as a hand-finger-keyboard.*<sup>1</sup> *Where do the mind-bodies end, and the hand-finger-keyboards begin? Or is the mindfingerkeyboard the author which directs the hand-tool(-table-paper-chair-room-floor-temperature-timezone...) assemblage? Then the mind-hand-finger-keyboard decides how to feel and experience the moment of writing?*

While acknowledging the diversity and simultaneity of genders and life forces that textual and embodied multiplicities entail, it is also important to highlight that messiness and mucosity are vitalizing and productive forces of academic writing in specific ways for those who embody and identify with growing, changing, aging, reproducing, lactating, menopausal, caring, and menstruating bodies. These material-discursive forces accelerate deterritorializations, especially when sex, gender, and sexuality are understood as creative and proliferating elements as well as essentialized and possibly restrictive molar categories. The possible intra-actions between gendered human and non-human leaky bodies multiply and produce affects that are often difficult to anticipate and predict. Messy leaky-writing can extend our possibilities and potentialities; it can also inform and facilitate academic knowledge production and practices.

In this (volatile) collaborative, co-lived, co-constituted writing experiment/article our focus is not on our direct and easily accessible physical writing bodies, or what they are capable of doing. We attempt to attune on the processes and the movements these iterating compositions of becoming produce, the reciprocal movements between our bodies, actions and objects and the events of writing. In these processes, the bodies, actions, and modalities of subjectivity come together as one and many, due to the constant variation in their compositions (Massumi, 2013; Manning, 2013). This variation, this movement, enables us to explore the process of the composition of our actions and our acting-feeling bodies. This becomes possible by letting our spontaneous acts, our thoughts in the act, which compose our lives, but also our work as academics, to take the lead for the moment, and make explicit the multiple variations present in our everyday worlds.

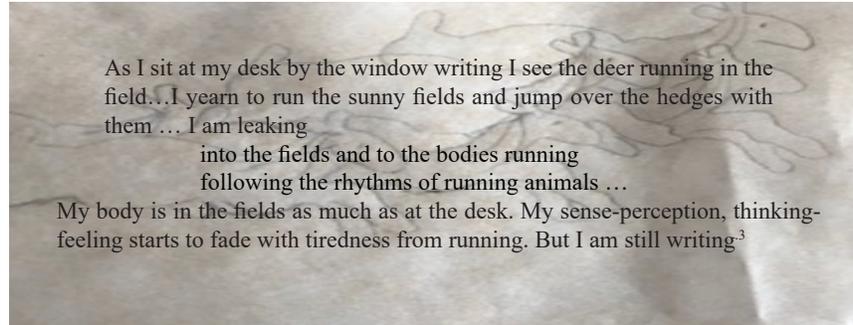
These leaky bodily variations participate in thinking of academic writing as a composition of porous, corporeal, and earthly human and non-human agencies. Leakiness, in its volatile openness, reveals the asymmetrical movements of human and non-human processes, and the forces occupying space within the, sometimes, rigid culture of academia. Therefore, leakiness manages to shake the taken-for-granted ways of thinking and acting. While messy affects and leaking bodies participate in creating the culture of academia, they are not often allowed to take up space and be noticed on the surface; therefore, their movements often go unexamined. These frequently disregarded and rarely demonstrated caring, aging, and breastfeeding bodies are often located even in the midst of academic everyday lives as (too) ordinary academic working bodies, or in the surroundings and thresholds of the official academic professional practices as retirees and on

parental leaves. Nevertheless, these leaky processes are not obedient; hence, they do not solely remain within our bodies, encounters, and actions as they also leak to everything we do, also to the scientific knowledge we produce. Leakiness is important, not just in academic worlds, which are now even more orientated towards strict binaries, quantitative functionality, and productiveness, leaving the qualitative, affective, and leakier part of science aside. In its inbuilt movement leakiness also assists in thinking beyond binaries, such as subjectivity and objectivity, male-female, human-posthuman-nonhuman, and, instead, acknowledge entangled relations and processes, and their connectivity and movements. Therefore, in its movement and processuality, leaky academic writing is not confined to the idea of producing and demonstrating individually possessed knowledge within the techniques of academia; it encompasses corporeal acts of vitality with various kinds of human and more-than-human bodies and the (side-)products of multifold life processes.

### Writing within Vital and Deadly Lines...

*... I died that night. As I laid still, I thought I had already taken the last breath. I was still conscious. Then a big sigh came out and I shuddered ...I felt sensation of relief.<sup>2</sup>*

*Writing of dreaming.* We dream within the spacetime coordinates of everyday life as it emerges but “dreaming alters all dimensions of experience even as it embeds pastness in futurity” (Manning 2012, p. 158–159.) Dreaming is a vital aspect of living as it is a relational response-ability taken seriously. Dreaming holds our experience of past and future in the process of making and therefore it makes us response-able for the affective relations to the outside. Writing down the (re-)experienced is not documentation of the feeling or the moment of the writing as such neither it is the act of confirming our presence as autonomous and self-determined subjects. Still, writing could hold embodied responses to all experiences ever encountered or none. Writing adds: it re-creates events and sensations whenever we are trying to relate to already existing narratives of other times and spaces. Hence, writing does not allow representation, but it enables the act of embodying and expressing the affective world inside out as Braidotti (2010, p. 310) states with reading Deleuze: “Writing is not the self-assertion of a rationally ordained imaginative subject, rather its eviction. It has to do with emptying out the self, opening it up to possible encounters with a number of affective outsides.” Similarly, writing involves dreaming; bringing in the outside, while dreaming leaks out as writing:



The body of writing is not separate from the body of feeling and of its experiences. The hand-finger-keyboard-mind-brain compositions follow the affective lines to the perceptions which are not timewise linear and synchronized. Our writing and embodied perceptions follow Braidotti's thinking-writing with Deleuze:

The writer's eye captures the outside world by becoming receptive to minute and seemingly irrelevant perceptions. During such moments of floating awareness, when rational control releases its hold, 'reality' vigorously rushes through the sensorial/perceptive apparatus. This onslaught of data, information and affectivity simultaneously propels the self out of the black hole of its atomized isolation, dispersing it into a myriad of data-imprints.

OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO ooooooooooooo

Ambushed, the self not only receives affects, it concomitantly recomposes itself around them. A rhizomic bond is thus established that, through the singular geometry of the affects involved and their specific plane of composition, confirms the singularity of the subject produced on a particular plane of immanence (Braidotti, 2010, p. 310).

Embodying the moving lines of the lived moment makes them visible and felt. The moment takes the body to re-new the experience in another assemblage with its affective outsides. This embodied act of writing is far away from the idea in which the autonomous subject's authorized hand writes in order to gain power to define, limit and establish the previously validated truths and knowledge. However, here our experiments with writing aim not to give more power to the dominant, historically legitimized and rationally laden academic writing but through experimenting we aim to "decode [and re-code as we do] the...power of the linguistic signifier." (Braidotti 2010, p. 310). To release the subject and the writing body from this circular movement between signified and signifiers becomes possible by stressing the affective lines and their movement in writing, which animate the subject, and which allow us to follow its transformation. Therefore, even though writing is orientation of coordinates; "it makes visible/thinkable/sayable/hearable forces, passions and affects that were previously unperceived", but "it is

also ethical: it is concerned with where limits can be set and how to sustain altered states and processes of change” (Braidotti, 2010, p. 311). Here these coordinates within which one writes are not understood as static, but as moving points in the affective spaces on the porous limits/ boundaries of the inside and outside of the writer and their altering situations. This movement of events releases the writing from its established coordinates of rational documentation and demonstration of past encounters to create new ways of thinking-feeling and experiencing while writing to enable change and transformation. The realization of the movement and constant change allows developing responsibility for the situated knowledges and ethics that operate on us and await to be taken seriously and as valid.

**.... And Material and Fleshly Lines (and the beat of oral pleasure)**

These academic bodies produce roundness that leaks.

| 123 4 | 1234 | 1 2 34 | | 1 23 4 | 1 2 34 |<sup>4</sup>

**O**

A round, aging body leaks (in)appropriate discourses, (un)excusable acts, (un)ethical care.

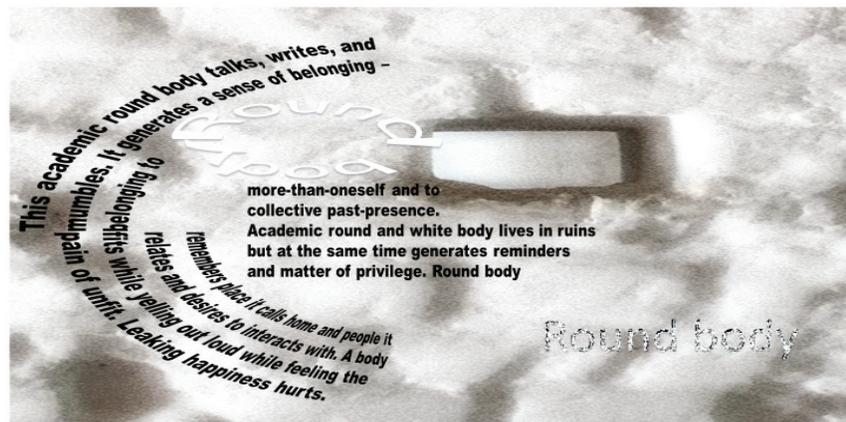
An academic round body functions as a child-producing-raising-educating body, who loves to be loved in its roundness.

| 123 4 | | 1 23 4 | | 1 234 |

Round body does not remember a time of thinness, boney-ness, or extreme (academic) athleticism.

| 1 23 4 | | 1234 | 1234 |

While dressing oneself, this body calls for clothes with large (textual) tops and tight (grammar) bottoms. This academic round body portrays itself as someone who is easy to hug and find (theoretically) in the dark. Radiation and generation of (conceptual) heat do come in handy.



The muscles of this academic round body can carry, resist, and persist (ontological prose), but they weaken and shrink without regular exercise. Sometimes this academic body feels the aching of arms and fingertips when it types, and it senses a stretch in the calves when it reaches (not) for a book that is high up on a bookshelf. A round body reminds itself of its academic round-ness and scholarly cultivation.

**O** Reflections in the mirror and the weight this round body places on its (academic) relations varies, and, sometimes, it is impossible to calculate. Some of these measurement and bodily reflections weigh more, sometimes less, but they always continue to transform.

It could also be noticed that this round academic body does (not) fit into its own graduation clothes from 20 years ago. It pushes against the seams of its (neo-liberal contours) long, black dress, and it creates multiple folds around the waistline. Its (linguistic) zipper does not close, and it may even break. Academic-body-breasts have enlarged after the birth of (academic) children. Squeeze and squeeze some more. Something might come out...

*As the sounds of thumb-sucking gets louder ... the milk rises up in the breasts... even the memory of the felt vibrations in the breasts set them in action...they fill up and leak the warm liquid which runs through my shirt while shopping... imitating the suction as a continuous stream. The movement forms a visceral viscous connection—leaking fold—of entangled bodies, mother-child-woman-daughter-attunement, messy mucous extracts and binding actions of attachment which gradually unfold when the sucking ends stopping the flow, and the passing connection between bodies.<sup>5</sup>*

This leaking-soft-round collective fold is made of an array of various actions, body parts, movements, and hormones that are linked to femaleness, to body-ness. This fold is about the reciprocal movement within the arrangement itself and what is produced by it, rather than about physiological phenomenon, such as lactation, which would be linked particularly to a female academic body. For instance, the hormonal treatment for menopausal symptoms eliminates the night sweating of this (academic) body, relieves anger (of lost—if encountered and recognized—academic or other life opportunities), and boosts (the academic work) mood. This (academic-non-academic) body responds to the other within, this time the non-human, animal, vegetation, and synthetic hormones, by swollen breasts, tummy, and hairy legs.

DEPRESSED HORMONAL BODY WRITES NOTHING.

.....

### ...And Affective Leaky Lines

Another academic body was invited to participate in writing this essay when the two other academic bodies had already begun the writing process. OOh yes. This (and these) body (bodies) was confused, if excited, about the contribution to this writing process. The planned essay consisted of components that were unfamiliar to this writing body, and even the more familiar parts were dealt with in modes that were uncharted to this academic body. The other bodies kindly and decidedly persuaded the confused

| 1234 | 1234 | 1234|

body to join in. Oh no. Little by little, by way of discussing, reading, thinking, and writing, storylines started to emerge and connect with the wordings the other bodies had already generated. The writing assemblage, consisting of human and non-human participants, such as computers, the Internet, Skype, e-mail messages, Google Docs, and the movements and sounds of human bodies on the screens, in books, in articles, and in many other modes, started to compose and recompose in the rhythms of Arizonian and Finnish timezones. Here this multiplied leakiness produced “porous, typological surfacing of myriad potential strata that field the relation between different milieus, each of them a multiplicity of insides and outsides” (Manning, pp. 1–2). As the initially confused body started to rid itself of the individualized ideas, it became more porous, understanding that “there is no body that is not infinitely more than one” (Manning, 2013, p. 210). That comprehension allowed the capabilities of the reconfigured writing machine to leak between its components.

Despite the ideals of the neoliberalist academic discourses that press for effectiveness and speed, this bodily writing compositions/assemblage has its own rhythms that cannot always be accelerated or slowed down. Its components have various and fluctuating rhythms, encountered in manifold ways; they are sometimes synchronized, but most times not. New rhythms also emerge within the writing machine, as different rhythms join in. At some point in this process, the rhythms seemingly slow down when they are placed into documents on computer screens and, perhaps, even onto paper. This process of territorialization has to occur in order to prevent getting trapped by the possibly deathly lines of flight in which **one might die. Oh.** Still, new rhythms engage with these rhythms by reading the text at hand, and the text leaks into the reading bodies, which join the rhythmic textures, and beyond, energy clusters of the written essay composed by words, ink, characters, screens, and paper. In these processes, the writing assemblage constantly continues, configuring and reconfiguring itself, always with novel kinds of human and non-human components. The assemblage is a direction of travel that will, inevitably, lead not only the writers (Hanley, 2019, p. 422) but other kinds of bodies, elsewhere.

Oh my. **O**

### Fields of Philosophically Leaking Writing Bodies

How can one think about fields (of writing bodies) when writing with lines and porosity? For Massumi (2015, p. 105) bodies and fields are interrelated:

What a body can do is tweak the field...if the movement effects an intensification of the collective field through the mutual inclusion in it of reciprocally heightened capacities in contrastive attunement, then the degree of freedom has been increased across the board.

Within the field of relations, writing and leaking bodies emerge as multiple. Bodies interact and relate in the field of collective individuation. For Massumi (2002, p. 35), the field has no boundaries; it is both limited and infinite, “*the limits of the field of emergency are in its actual expression*”. When leaky bodies and leaky writing cross a threshold, they move from one field to another the passing fields (of potential) the writing bodies and their writing simultaneously modulate the passing fields. The field shifts and moves. It entails modulations, modifications of potential, not mixtures; it encompasses the becoming belonging of writing and writing bodies. How might vision limit field? How might sounding, sensual, bodily, kinetic, and emotional fields produce writing differently? How would limits in the fields of writing, computers, fingers, the heart, the brain, the tongue, and teeth shape inquiry and scholarly encounters? Actually, the field of relations could be thought as an animate and vibrant event which “is thinking through you”. (Massumi, 2015, p. 195).

A body is always more than one, more than singular, it is a “processual field of relation and the limit at which that field expresses itself as such” according to Manning (2013, p. 17). The limits in the field of writing bring together intermodal and integrated experiences. This separates writing from the fields of singing and dancing while “[t]he separation of the visual field must in some way coexist with its interconnection with other sense fields” (Massumi (2002, p. 157). This co-functioning both differentiates and integrates. The round (academic) body as well as the somewhat hesitant compositions/assemblage of (academic) writing-bodies in their elasticity effortlessly expand into the visual circles, and leak into the rings and loops of words and letters. Similarly, the (academic) sketching-body easily slips into death and deer running in the fields, but it gets messy in expressing the leaking liquids and mucous processes of embodying hormones. The field of experience is embodied; it is “alive with bodyings, each of which are nodes of relations—ecologie—actively co-composing with the force of the impersonal *a life* that courses through them” (Manning, 2013, p.19).

Affective leakiness is openness to the transcendental, and more than one in person, because it is able to move “across the iterations of being” (Massumi, 2013, xii). This means that we consider writing with our vulnerable selves as a valuable technique and method enabling the examination not only of our thoughts, but of our being and becoming, as transformative and creative components within the

heavily regulated space of academic writing. We are also capable of recognizing the asymmetrical, and, complementary, movements occurring in the writing with this vulnerability. The movements, the forces and intensities in the writing beg us to continue, even though we feel exposed and are too aware of the ‘dangers’ of crossing the line—and stepping into the unknown. Yet, we feel that we have to better understand the scholarly knowledges we keep producing by venturing further into the event in which the academic writing is done.

Leaky and messy writing could be viewed as ‘processual philosophical writing’, which, in its expressivity, invites re-musing and re-reading. Even if it is fully composed, it is not final; therefore, it does not stop the flow of thinking-feeling-writing. Instead, it helps creativity flourish by assisting in letting go of the formalities and leaping into dangerous places (Massumi, 2013; Whitehead, 1978/1985; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). When writing academic texts, we are engaged with ourselves as living beings; we are also engaged with scientific knowledge and academic institutions, and their conducts and ways of being. Writing within academia requires technical mentality, which means knowledge of the entelechy of a system or organization (Simondon, 2009; Massumi, 2009). Because academic writing begins with the intra-actions between human and non-human entities in order to generate text, it is, simultaneously philosophical and expressive in nature. It demands creative thinking as well as technical skill, requiring objects that are clearly separate from the being as well as being part of the arrangement of thinking-feeling-writing. That is, as we *move* and *are moved* within volatile and leaky borders and limits between our thinking-feeling bodies and the affective outsides while writing. *The feel and the touch of the keyboard guides the writing as well as the moment of the writing guides the mind-body that is working on the writing the keyboard within its reach. The screen regulates our writing in forceful ways, in these processes these non-human agents negotiate with us. However, sometimes they allow, even compel us to withdraw from their governing impulses and find novel ways of intra-acting with them.*

However, in the question of affective modalities, the analogies of the usual scientific methods no longer apply. Instead, there is a completely different world of effects to consider as affective modalities rule the processes at least as much as the technics(methods) (language, thought, feelings), the objectsubjects (keyboard, screen), and the academic limitations and regulations (on the style, language, ideas, etc.).<sup>6</sup> To be able to understand the act of writing within academic work and scientific knowledge production as an affective composition, we need to consider authorship as part of the machinic arrangement, which, necessarily, is human, non-human, and therefore, a leaky and open-ended (anti)production. Writing with mucous bodies could re-position academic authors outside yet deeply inside precious and highly ranked journal bodies, collaborative writing bodies, and Academy bodies. Anti-neoliberal slow bodies join the movement of fluid female bodies and writing no longer appears, tastes, smells, sounds the same. Men-

toring manifesto (for novice scholars) now includes mucous writing bodies and plural writing machinery.

In this context, machinic means the desire to connect the plurality of hands, the acts of writing, and the affects into this leaking writing-assemblage. This assists envisioning academic writing as a dynamic, organic, and leaky on-going machinic assemblage that consists of explorations, musings, readings, thinking-feelings, and breathing, and writing the intensities, the movement, involved in the usual scientific works. From this perspective, the possibilities of academic writing become infinite, inviting, even seductive—and also bodily.

Academia, like any other human social and societal organization, is a messy assemblage of people, objects, practices, affects, and life. It can be a governing structure for some; for others, it can be a leaky web of complex but also gratifying encounters between humans and non-human elements. Academia needs to leak to be a living ecology. To embrace the vitality that leakiness, messiness, and change can bring to these academic narratives requires bridging the continual past to the present, and to what is not yet there, the future, in order to understand the space-time simultaneity of being and for being accountable for one's actions in the world. This also requires twisting and rupturing the already-known and legitimized academic knowing and writing, by writing over its normative structures, ethics, and affects to allow space for the situational resonances and for diverse text forms and patterns.

In its leakiness and lingering nature, messy writing can be dangerous in infecting molar structures by spreading nonconformist ways of expression and resistance within academia, in which one's vitality, "*ligne de fuite*", line of leakage, can leak into other writings, beings, becomings, and actions (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). This makes knowledge a matter of affect, leaking and messy, lived and felt, which has no clear departing and arriving points to declare and measure, but something that is often found, like in this article, in the midst of shared and overleaping expressive acts and gestures (of writing). This leakiness means life, vitality, and movement—and without movement, there is no life. With lines that leak out, into, and interweave with their human, non-human, and posthuman materialities, we are leaking into academia as academia is leaking into us and into our senses, sensibilities, and actions.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The hands and fingers are the human body-tools, similarly, for instance, to insects, who use their bodily appendages as tools (Bergson in Grosz, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Rantala, T. (2013). Unpublished diaries.

<sup>3</sup> Rantala, T. (2019). Unpublished diaries and a drawing.

<sup>4</sup> This writing with oral pleasure has been modified from Artaud (cited in Morfee, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Rantala, T. (2016). Unpublished diaries. See also Ettinger (2006).

<sup>6</sup> "The picture is much less clear...as soon as one tries to analyze affective contents" (Simondon, 2009, p. 20).

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## The Frankenpaper

### One or More Essays on Writing and Frankenstein and Deleuze and ...

*Joshua Cruz & Holly Corkill*

This work is a rhizome, a burrow. The castle has multiple entrances whose rules of usage and whose locations aren't very well known.

—Deleuze & Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*

We believe that this quotation situates our paper well; this paper emerges from an email sent from the second author to the first, containing the word “Frankenproposal.” Her use of that portmanteau, a combining of “Frankenstein” and “proposal,” provided a fruitful avenue to begin a conversation about the writing process. What are the Franken- qualities of writing, and what are the limits of the Franken- analogy? What exactly is the nature of a Franken(stein)? What is the nature of any creative endeavor? Our conversation became too much to contain; our thoughts meandered. They began to overlap and beget new ideas. The word “Frankenproposal” was an intersection of everything that had been said/thought/written about Frankenstein and everything that had been said/thought/written about (de)composition. The word “Frankenproposal” itself is a Frankenstein, a coming together of parts to form a creature that cannot be contained within a single directed conversation; it takes on a life of its own. This paper is the result of our conversational spill-over and a rhizomatic intersecting of ideas. Like Macaully's (1990) children's book, *Black and White*, these pages may contain a number of short independent essays: a literary analysis, an author's writing biography, thoughts on writing theory; or it may be only one essay. Like Deleuze

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and Guattari's (1986) castle, it has many potential entrances. We leave our readers to discover points of dis/junction among the various ideas that have spilled onto these pages (if they want to), the result of two individual multiplicities engaged in a dialogue about *Frankenstein*... or writing... or Shelley... or Deleuze... or some or all of these topics, or even more than these.

<p>The Frankenstein Monster: Anti-Oedipus, Body without Organs, a Phenomenon of Bordering</p> <p>“... the strange nature of the animal would elude all pursuit...” —Mary Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i></p>	<p>Is the Author’s Work Her Own?: Intensities, Assemblages, and anti-Agency in Shelley’s <i>Frankenstein</i></p>
<p>“What is the Body Without Organs of a Book?” Bringing the Post to Post-Pro- cess Composing</p> <p>The post-process movement in composition studies adopts the term “post-” literally: process no longer explains how writing works, so we move somewhere else. Post- in this sense is “after” (Kent, 1999; Trimbur, 1994). This version of post- does not necessarily leave process entirely behind, but it moves the concept of process beyond the <i>cogito</i></p>	<p>Holly’s Writing Reflection</p> <p>As horror writer Stephen King once said (appending on to a quote once written by William Faulkner), “...kill your darlings, kill your darlings, even when it breaks your egocentric little scribbler’s heart, kill your darlings” (King, 2000, p.222). The implications of this metaphor are simultaneously macabre and grossly accurate. Writing is an act of creation, and the manifestation of that creation is a product that</p>

<p>Consider the Frankenstein monster: it is the anti-Oedipus. Indeed, it has no mother to Oedipus about, and we cannot say that it was born in any kind of Freudian sexual frenzy. Rather, it wasn't, and then one day, it was. While the common portrayal of the Frankenstein monster's beginnings involve a body on a slab, scientific machinery, and harnessing the power of lightening, Shelley's description of the monster's "birth" is far less detailed: the narrator simply states that one</p>	<p>When Mary Shelley added an introduction to the 1831 publication of Frankenstein, she called this insertion "an appendage to a former production" that she promised to limit to "such topics as have connection to [her] authorship alone" (Shelley, 2017, p. 291). The use of the word "appendage" is apt considering that the text to which Shelley adds this explanation to a body of writing that documents the aftereffects of one man's efforts to create life through the</p>
<p><i>et scribo</i> approach of cognitivism that had dominated writing in the 80s; it suggests that matters of context and audience are paramount in writing and that there can be no one series of steps that produces "good" writing.</p> <p>But post- as a philosophical enterprise implies more than a simple social turn, which seems to be what the post-process movement ultimately boils down to (Breuch, 2002). Breuch notes that when applied to a discipline, post- has the potential to decenter the human</p>	<p>many refer to as a <i>body of writing</i>. In the same way that, at the moment of birth, a child's body exits the mother's womb and is suddenly present in a place where, only moments before there was merely the idea of a child, an author brings forth a body of writing...a child that, for better or worse, enters the world either as a divine creation or as a monster (maybe both). Though it is uncertain as to whether or not all writers experience this sensation, many writers perceive their work...this brainchild they have</p>

<p>rainy night in November, he saw the accomplishment of his toils brought about by collecting “the instruments of life” around him. There is no description of these instruments. As such, popular media has taken the Frankenstein creation in any number of directions: most are familiar with James Whales’ 1931 <i>Frankenstein</i>, for instance (“It’s alive!”), and there is the more elaborate Kenneth Branagh representation of the birth of the monster, wherein Frankenstein creates what is</p>	<p>cobbling together of a body... an assemblage of parts sutured together to make a whole. In the appending of the introduction to the 1831 edition of <i>Frankenstein</i>, Shelley insists that she only did so in an effort to satisfy her publishers’ concerns that the body of work as it previously existed in the 1818 publication of the work was not whole; however, this explanation reinforces the idea that the novel <i>Frankenstein</i> is an assemblage; moreover, from a Deleuzian standpoint, we can use</p>
<p>(e.g. Barnett, 2015; Rickert, 2013); provide attention to infinitely complex minutiae (Mays, 2017; Lynch &amp; Rivers, 2015); and express incredulity with metanarratives of what writing is or should be. However, Breuch claims, post-process theory has yet to do this. Similarly, Heard (2008) asks what we should do with the post-process movement in writing. He observes that there was something called a post-process movement, writing and composition theorists nodded their heads in acknowledgement, and</p>	<p>imprisoned in the page to be monstrous from its inception. Thoughts of the work’s ineptitude and ignorance plague the writer. “This paper can’t possibly be good enough... everyone who reads this will hate it... please do not read my stuff because you’ll think badly of me once you see just how wretched, basic, and grotesque my writing skills are.” The writer finishes the writing, and, for a brief moment comes the feeling of relief at completion, but this moment can be fleeting.</p>

<p>essentially an artificial womb. Harnessing the power of electric eels, Victor plunges probes into the body of his creature (the astute observer will not overlook the sexual implications of probing a body with rods or the phallic imagery of writhing eels in a yonic pool of liquid). Shortly thereafter, Robert De Nero is expelled in a deluge of amniotic fluid. This tells us that, at least in film representation, we cannot move beyond the idea of an Oedipal birth. There exists a fixation on pinning down</p>	<p>Shelley as a kind of case study to examine how authorial agency is, in fact, non-existent when speaking about the writing of a text. To understand any assemblage, one must embrace the multiplicities that exists within and around it as well as the intensities that inform it. Deleuze and Guattari posit that “a book has only itself, in connection with other assemblages and in relation to other bodies without organs” (p. 4). <i>Frankenstein</i>, therefore, has itself in connection with Shelley, the</p>
<p>then nothing happened. As late as 2017, Newcomb and Leshowitz observe that writing studies has become “stuck” in a space between process and post-process, unable to fully move into the realm of post-process. It seems that post-process, as a compositional movement, never had a chance to blossom to full potential, as it has been both undertheorized and underutilized. Barnett (2015) claims that composition, as a field, is only just beginning to think of the place that nonhuman actors occupy</p>	<p>How relatable this passage from <i>Frankenstein</i>: “I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart.” Upon beholding the finished body of work, the writer feels the exhilaration of “I really did it! I finished,” but this is followed by, “Oh God—what have I done?”</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">If the body of writing manages to make it past this initial rejection by its creator, then</p>

<p>the monster with human origins and rationality, even while Victor attempted to create a post-human species (Carretero-Gonzalez, 2016). We provide the monster with a beginning that we can wrap our collective heads around, if not ex-(faux) utero, then at least with the vivacity provided by a lightning strike on a marble or metal slab. And why not this neurotic fixation on the Oedipal? We have come to believe that “Oedipus is an easy subject to deal with, something perfectly obvious, a ‘given’ that is</p>	<p>assemblages that constructed her, and the assemblages that she constructed, a recursive relationship of monstrous generation wherein Shelley becomes the vessel, rather than the author, of her magnum opus. Shelley, we feel, offers a particularly interesting case given the nature and topic of her writing, and we believe that the assembly of a monster, one driven by intensities of passion and grief, offers a metatextual reading of Shelley’s process.</p>
<p>in the discipline; Lynch and Rivers’ (2015) work, which houses Barnett’s, is an homage to complexity, to “extend invitations and assemble collectives” (p. 14) around composition. In this spirit, we explore the works of Deleuze (1990) and Guattari (1983; 1986; 1987), thinking about what it might mean to post- process within the field of composition studies.</p> <p>Writing was one of many topics discussed by Deleuze and Guattari, but it held a special importance for them, given their heavy</p>	<p>revision occurs. The author strikes the delete key or the eraser like the wielding of the axe, hacking away sentences, paragraphs, and pages like they were gangrenous limbs. Perhaps, along with this act of amputating superfluous prose, the author appends, or transplants works from another piece into the body of work, cannibalizing one no longer viable monstrosity to give life to another.</p> <p>For the second author, this idea of cannibalizing one piece in the effort to create</p>

<p>there from the very beginning” (Deleuze &amp; Guattari, 1983, p. 26).</p> <p>This the monster is not: not an easy subject, not obvious, not a given (not even a thing with a beginning). Thus, we create a neat narrative where Shelley provided none; as we confront the alien, the philosopher, or the monster, we “pinch it, probe it, and in the end dissect it. Laboriously, bit by bit... cobble together an identity for it” (Massumi, 2002, p. 233). We attempt to provide an “Oedipal</p>	<p><i>Frankenstein</i> is assembled through Shelley and, in turn, it assembles her own life. Traumatic experiences shaped Shelley’s life from birth. Eleven days after giving birth, her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, died of a postpartum infection that left Shelley in the care of her William Godwin. Mellor (1988) indicates that, despite his biological relationship to his infant daughter, Godwin, who was a prominent British literary figure in his own right, preferred Mary Wollstonecraft’s</p>
<p>reliance on examples from literature and the fact that writing is intimately connected to some of their theoretical developments, such as the rhizome and schizoanalysis. Additionally, within the first pages of <i>A Thousand Plateaus</i> (1983), they ask us to consider “what is the body without organs [BwO] of a book” (p. 4). And perhaps, whatever the answer might be, offers us one entry point into the question of what it might mean to post-writing studies. There is, of course, no one answer to this</p>	<p>another was how the concept of the “Frankenproposal” came to be. In an effort to put together a research proposal, she turned to the boneyard of her hard drive, looking for the written equivalent to “bones from charnel houses... profane fingers...tremendous secrets of the human frame” so that she might use them again (Shelley, 1818, p. 55). In the end, she found two suitable corpses among piles of discarded writing. They existed because, at one point, they had satisfactorily fulfilled the</p>

<p>organization” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p.123) for that which we do not understand, and as such, an “interminable proliferation” of psychoanalytic readings (Rieder, 2003, para. 4) appear for the Frankenstein monster. Though Massumi is speaking about the outsider in general, his language evokes the same scientific lab present in various Frankenstein films wherein Victor does his work, providing a scientific rationale for the monster’s being. However, Massumi criticizes this scientizing</p>	<p>illegitimate first daughter Fanny Imlay. This emotional distance between Mary Shelley and her father only worsened after Godwin married Mary Jane Clairmont in order to establish the financial security that his liberal ideals and lifestyle had deprived him of for many years. Clairmont and Mary did not have an easy relationship (Mellor, 1988), so the theme of parental absenteeism and rejection emerged for her at a young age. Mary Shelley’s decision to leave home to elope with Romantic poet Percy</p>
<p>question, but as we consider what a body without organs is, as well as what a book is and the elements that go into making a book (i.e., writing), we hope to touch upon one of the multiplicities that might compose a more serious post-process movement in composition.</p> <p>What we see across Deleuze (1990) and Deleuze and Guattari’s (1983; 1987) work is that they attempt to dismantle individuations between content, writing, author, and reader, beginning with the idea that “there is no</p>	<p>requirements of one deadline or another, but, even at the time they had gone out into the world, the second author had known that they were deformed and that she would have to rip them apart and mend them back together again. Products of early journeys into qualitative research, they had been finished with a knowledge that something in them was flawed and monstrous. They could have very easily been completely discarded into the bone pile had the author not been willing to</p>

<p>as a kind of “running in place,” a “limited and limiting view” (p. 233) of the world.</p> <p>Despite media representations, the Frankenstein monster is too free to be bogged down by this kind of Oedipal organization or scientifizing; its intrigue is its inability to be pinned, despite our attempts to do so, from vague birth to equally vague end, appearing here and there throughout the novel of <i>Frankenstein</i>, emerging unexpectedly at the top of a mountain and, shortly thereafter, among</p>	<p>Shelley would place further strain on the relationship between father and daughter (Brackett, 2016). Along with this lack of parental affection, she experienced turmoil throughout her relationship with Percy Shelley due to his desire to engage in a libertine lifestyle of sexual dalliances with Mary Shelley’s half-sister Claire Clairmont (Brackett, 2016). In addition to these constant tensions, Mary gave birth to and lost shortly thereafter a premature daughter named Clara in</p>
<p>difference between what a book talks about and how it is made” (Deleuze &amp; Guattari, 1987, p. 4). Here, the line between process and content are obliterated. As one writes, the content drives the creation of the writing, and vice versa—writing creates content. But Deleuze and Guattari complicate writing further, stating that “there is no longer a tripartite division between a field of reality (the world) and a field of representation (the book) and a field of subjectivity (the author)” (p. 23). They seek to</p>	<p>acknowledge that, though the overall quality of the writings were something “permeated by unformed, unstable matters” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, p. 4), the author recognized viability within parts of each draft and grafted the meat of each of these papers into the new body.</p> <p>Odd that, even now, as this paper takes form, the same exploratory procedure of drafting is occurring. A previous draft written months ago gets pored over with surgical</p>

<p>the icy wastes of the near-north pole, existing always “at the borderline of the village, or <i>between</i> villages” (Deleuze &amp; Guattari, 1987, p. 246), haunting the fringes. It is ubiquitous and ever-hidden. Its actions are conflicted and contradictory, forging friendships on one page, murdering the next. Indeed, contemporary reviews of <i>Frankenstein</i> treated the monster with equal amounts of fascination and discomfort, stemming from his indeterminate and independent nature. Walter Scott (1818),</p>	<p>1815. Following the birth of the Shelleys’ son William in 1816 (he would die in 1819), Percy and Mary Shelley had come to reside in Geneva alongside Lord Byron. At this point in Mary Shelley’s life, following this accumulation of traumatic experiences, she would make the wager and have the nightmare that would inspire the creation of <i>Frankenstein</i>. Or, as Deleuze and Guttari might put it, her dream was “externalized, by a</p>
<p>oblivate the line that separates author from the book as well. The material that one writes about, the writing itself, and the one who writes—these exist as a singularity, penetrating and penetrated by one another. Writing, they state, exists as an assemblage with the external world, not as a representation of it, but a junction with it. A book is of the world as much as it is <i>of</i> an author, and the author is <i>of</i> the world and <i>of</i> the book: not a tripartite division,</p>	<p>precision. There are quotations and paragraphs within even this draft that had life before, but the organism they were a part of was monstrous in some way, so the author has cleaved the words from the bones of a previous draft. They are their own assemblage, part of the old draft and now part of the new. Should revision of this draft occur (and it probably will), they may or may not continue to be a part of the next assemblage.</p>

<p>for instance, seemed confused by the monster's freedom, stating that we should "be disposed ... to question whether the monster... could have perpetrated so much mischief undiscovered, or passed through so many countries without being secured... (Scott, 1818, n.p.). How in the world, he seems to be saying, does it manage so well, despite the structures and strictures that we might place on it? On the other hand, an anonymous review from <i>The Edinburgh Magazine</i> and <i>Literary Miscellany</i> appreciated</p>	<p>system of relays and plug-ins, extrinsic linkages" (p. 356).  By 1816, we are able to see the various mechanic assemblages that would produce intensities that could then externalize as Frankenstein: rejection, trauma, loss, grief producing machines. Attach to this grief machine a hideous figure within a nightmare... a figure whose "success would terrify the artist" (Shelley, 2017, p. 299), Shelley began to give a voice to the nightmare</p>
<p>but a tripartite constituting <i>of</i> among all three of these entities.  And yet another entity factors into this writing assemblage: the reader of a piece of writing. Deleuze (1990) and Guattari (1983) encourages the reader to approach writing as a schizophrenic, not as one who attempts to derive a precise meaning from the words present in a piece of writing, but as one who attempts to decompose those words into syllables and phonemes. What is left is not an</p>	<p>The origins of the paper do not just come from the fusing together of new words and words of previous drafts. There are multiple roots spreading across the writing. There is the author, yet there are also all of the things that are both beyond and within the author. The first author and the second author are simultaneously writing separately, yet one has an influence on the other. Equally, the experiences and influences of each author are at play as well. They are themselves, yet the</p>

<p>the juxtaposition of the monster's appearance and (usually) kind nature, lauded his ability to fit into both the Gothic-Romantic sublime and pastoral setting. The reviewer states simply that "we even like a story the better that it is disjointed and irregular;" the writing style, the monster's action, and the physical description of the monster itself contribute to a disjointed irregularity.</p> <p>The Frankenstein monster manifests as a "phenomenon of bordering" (Deleuze and</p>	<p>a voice that was, both hers and the monster. Deleuze and Guattari (1980) state that, "Each of us is caught up in an assemblage...we reproduce its statements when we think we are speaking in our own name; or rather we speak in our own name when we produce its statement" (p. 6). Though Victor, the monster, and Walton would speak each in their own names, their statements were also Shelley's statements. Content, author, and process</p>
<p>effect of language but a "pure language affect" (Deleuze, 1990, p. 88) that plays upon and within the schizophrenic readers. For "reading a text is never a scholarly exercise in search of what is signified, still less a highly textual exercise in search of a signifier" (Deleuze &amp; Guattari, 1983, p. 106). It is a surface-level, neurotic reading wherein words signify a particular meaning, being expressible and denotable, and it is this surface that the schizophrenic reader is able to see beyond: "as</p>	<p>sum of everything that has brought them to this place. each other. Within the lines of this paper, the first author's Capoeira instructor and the second author's Shakespeare professor shout over one another through the lines of prose, each voice competing for the territory of lines on the page until they reach a place where they can speak in concert with one another.</p> <p>In a series of letters between Deleuze and Guattari about the nature of original thought, Deleuze (1977) writes,</p>

<p>Guattari, 1987, p. 245), not quite human, not quite animal: an <i>anomaly</i> “which is outside the rules [and] goes against the rules” and an <i>an-omalie</i>, “the cutting edge of deterritorialization” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 244). Everything about the monster suggests a bordering phenomenon. It crosses the border between life and death, political, microbial, and anatomical borders—its body is a collective of sewn parts, an arm bordering a shoulder bordering a head: “bones from charnel</p>	<p>collapse into a singularity, manifesting as a book.</p> <p>Could we ever say that the author was alone with her nightmares and affects? Wolynn’s (2016) discusses the effects of trauma as they work upon genetics. These negative valences that wrote across Shelley’s body, Wolynn claims, can pass through generations in much the same way that one might physical features from parents. Trauma did not begin with Shelley. She represents a</p>
<p>there is no surface, the inside and the outside, the container and the contained, have no precise limit. They plunge into a universal depth” (p. 87). Within this depth, melding occurs. Words become utterances that create a space between author and reader wherein affect and intensity of language (sounds) manifest.</p> <p>What then does reading a text do? For Deleuze and Guattari (1983) reading is “a productive use of the literary machine, a</p>	<p>I would imagine myself approaching an author from behind, and making him a child, who would indeed be his, and would, nonetheless be monstrous. That the child would be his was very important because the author had to say, in effect, everything I made him say. But that the child should be monstrous was also a requisite because it was necessary to go through all kinds of decenterings, slidings, splittings</p>

<p>houses,” other parts collected from “the dissecting room and slaughter house,” brought together not in a lab but a “workshop” (Shelley, 1818, p. 55), which implies that unlike in Whale’s or Branagh’s media adaptations, the construction of the monster is not a scientific endeavor so much as a mechanic assembling of body parts over parts over parts. While this anatomical bordering is true of every body, the description of the monster as “uncouth and distorted” (p. 271) draws attention to the very</p>	<p>rhizomatic opening into the grief machine as we examine the map of grief through which various members of Shelley’s lineage had passed: traumas of parental loss, grief, violence, or rejection. They appear again in children, undergoing mutations that manifest as depressive affective states (Wolynn, 2016). Though born without the memory of the trauma, a child comes into the world with the parents’ trauma, nonetheless. What better example of a productive mechanic</p>
<p>montage of desiring-machines, a schizoid exercise that extracts from the text its revolutionary force” (p. 106). We have already seen the various parts that compose this machine: the author, the text, the reader, and context(s) surrounding author, reader, and text, all assembled in a recursive intermingling; but what is the revolutionary force of a text? Deleuze and Guattari (1986) claim that the literary machine is a relay for “revolutionary machine-to-come,”</p>	<p>secret discharges, which have given me much pleasure (p. 112-113). This idea of making an author who, in turn makes a monster, is the very essence of what it means to teach writing. Writers are not just writing as themselves; they are also writing as their teachers. The neuroses of writing is never one’s own—write in the margins...don’t use “I” ...don’t use “you”...the body of an essay is five paragraphs...don’t use contractions in academic writing—these are not simply</p>

<p>physical bordering that occurs from part to part. To “Frankenstein” something is to cobble together from various components, to overlap the boundaries of one object, to take the cut-up and to reassemble it into an exercise of border crossing. The monster’s existence rails against political, vivacious, and bodily territories. It is a living embodiment of Burroughs’s cut-up, a method designed to de- and re-territorialize (Moore, 2007), to upset and redefine boundaries; in doing so, it does indeed, as</p>	<p>assemblage? Couplings produce grief, but they also produce a child, an assemblage in its own right, coupled to a grief engine. Wolynn posits that one of the reasons that this epigenetic trauma becomes possible is because before we are even thought of, we are already part of our parents: our grandmother carries us as she carries our mother since there is a point in our mother’s fetal development where her body produces her own finitude of eggs. Chemical changes occurring in our father’s body and,</p>
<p>(p. 18). During this process, the author disappears from view, creating a “collective enunciation,” an enunciation of thought that has been (and will continue to be) acted upon by all. We might call this enunciation “kairotic” (Rickert, 2013), a coming together of time and location that spills over into writing through a writer. But there is no individual, autonomous expression of thought in writing, and the writing is not the writer’s own. Instead, it is to be taken up by other; indeed, the author</p>	<p>organic instincts a writer is born knowing. One cannot enact good or bad writing without another first teaching someone how to enact it. Writers are the sum of themselves, but also their teachers; writing teachers know this. They fear the idea of their students going forth and producing monstrous writing as much as they fear their own bad writing.</p>

<p>Walter Scott observed, “elude all pursuit” (Shelley, 1818, p. 85) making itself imperceptible (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). We cannot see the spark of life that is given to the monster, despite Branagh’s or Whale’s attempts; we cannot see the monster as it crosses from country to country if it wishes to remain hidden; we cannot see the body of the monster as homo sapiens (Carretero-Gonzalez, 2016)—only as an assemblage of overlapping parts.</p>	<p>impacting his mental health, become a part of the child’s at the time of conception. These affects are networked along various lines; we do not carry our mother and father’s trauma within us. We carry the trauma of our maternal and paternal grandparents, their parents, and so on, infinitely. Is the trauma really ours? Is fear of fire mine, or does it belong to the compositional forces that brought “me” about? We are an assemblage not just of our mother’s physical features, but also of the neuroses</p>
<p>becomes a “foreigner to one’s own tongue” (Deleuze &amp; Guattari, 1987, p. 388), subsumed and ultimately disappearing from the writing altogether. Joyce writes that his “head is full of pebbles and rubbish and broken matches and bits of glass picked up most everywhere” (Joyce, 1921). His head is permeated by this collection of foreign objects which spill onto his pages. The schizoid reader takes up the text, and once penetrated by printed words, engages in the act of “conjuring up the affect, and of</p>	<p>Josh’s Writing Reflection</p> <p>I think of all of the writing that I have done in the past; it pales to the writing that my colleagues have produced, and I know it pales to the writing that I will produce in the distant future. All that I have written and all that I will write: are they separate instances, each isolated from one another? Conventional wisdom in academia is to create a narrative of your research. Your work should speak to a particular interest, all housed within one neat</p>

<p>And while the parts overlap, they also decompose. When Frankenstein first beholds his creation, he describes the creature as having “yellow skin” that “scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath” (Shelley, 1818, p. 58). The monster’s body cannot contain the organs; the muscles and arteries burst forth from beneath the monster’s skin making the body “permeated by unformed, unstable matters” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 4). We have, then, a physical body without</p>	<p>psychoses, and traumas, always at play with one another, influencing and inscribing themselves into our compositional makeup.</p> <p>And these affects, these intensities that might be inscribed within Shelley spill over, onto paper. Shelley’s first experience of trauma, the loss of her mother, is one that is spoken by multiple characters throughout Frankenstein—or, rather, it is the experience of her characters as much as it is her own. Consider the monster, for example. In the same</p>
<p>transforming the painful passion of the body into a triumphant action” (p. 88). A text is not written so much as it writes; it inscribes itself upon the reader. This is the “revolutionary force” that the schizoid extracts from text: a changing of affect and disposition, a deterritorialization of stability, a call to action within the reader, whatever that action may be.</p> <p>And now we may begin to think about what the body without organs of a book might be. First, it is important to think about use of</p>	<p>story about who you are as a researcher: “I am a qualitative researcher; see how my work is all qualitative? I am interested in writing. See how all of these pieces of writing are about writing?” While I balk at the necessity of this (why should we be pigeonholed?), I wonder if it is possible to escape. Derrida (1981) talks about the preface—anything is a preface to anything else. When one reads the end to a novel, it is the preface to the beginning of the novel were we to read it again, as we will</p>

<p>organs, a body that seems to be refusing the organs inside of it. The body without organs as described by Deleuze and Guattari is at least partially physical: it is “matter that occupies space to a given degree: to the degree corresponding to the degree of intensities produced” (p. 153), as well as something “produced, at a certain place and a certain time in the connective synthesis, as the identity of producing and the product” (1983, p. 8). It is brought out spatially when it is called into</p>	<p>way that the monster suddenly becomes present in the story, the product of a vague process of assembly that readers are never a party to. He, rather, is birthed from Mary Shelley’s mind; we might imagine Athena emerging from the head of Zeus. Or perhaps he, an intensity of grief, tears through her head in the way that a child tears from the vagina. Many of her characters are without mothers: Victor loses his natural mother at a young age. Elizabeth first loses her natural parents and</p>
<p>the word “of,” as this word forces us to consider the indeterminacy of language. It is impossible to tell what exactly “of” signifies. On the one hand, it refers to the body without organs that composes the book, as in “a book made <i>of</i> paper.” In this case, the book simply <i>is</i> a body without organs. Alternatively, the body without organs is composed by the book, in the phrase “of the land.” It <i>comes from</i>, <i>is created by</i>. Likely, it is both. The body without organs is the blank slate upon and through which</p>	<p>begin to anticipate the expected ending. Or, the end of a novel prefaces the beginning of another piece of work entirely. The end to one novel primes our affective states, and colors the rest of anything we might read after it. A reading colonizes our minds, inscribing it indelibly across, prefacing anything we might read afterward.</p> <p>Why should this not be the case for writing? Can it be that writing is also the preface to anything else I will ever write?</p>

<p>space by the intensities that inhabit it, however it is also the metaphysical body that refuses to let one intensity dominate. For the capitalist, the body without organs is capital (1983), for the masochist it is implements of pleasure-torture, for the drug user it is a becoming cold; it is a way of being for each body (1987). As these intensities write themselves across the body without organs, it becomes extended into a spatial body, that of the capitalist, etc. But the body without organs prevents a neurotic tie to</p>	<p>then her adopted mother. Also, on his letter to his sister, Walton indicates that he grew up under his sister's "gentle and feminine fosterage" and that his father died when he was young (Shelley, 1818, p. 9), which suggests that Walton has also grown up without a mother. Along with a lack of consistent natural maternal influences or affection in the story, the one statement Mary Shelley makes regarding the presence of a mother figure mirrors her own relationship with Mary Jane</p>
<p>intensities pass, the point of 0 intensity itself (Deleuze &amp; Guattari, 1987). Imagine a hyper-permeable cell with no organelles. The organelles are all outside of the cell. But that hyperpermeability would allow those organelles to enter and leave as time passed. Perhaps only mitochondria passes through at one point—then it is a cell of mitochondria, an energy cell. The mitochondria is briefly joined by chloroplasts. It is then an energy producing cell and a photosynthetic cell. When the</p>	<p>Nearly a decade ago, I wrote my first publication. It was a socio-cognitive piece on identity and writing. We might see how that is the preface to a piece like the one I am currently writing—concerned about issues of writing, about (non) identity, about constructing and assembling sentences. But it is also the preface to anything I have written, whether the topic is writing or not, identity or not, assembling or not. Traces of the ideas of that paper (and any paper I have written) exist</p>

<p>these intensities or desires, acting as a barrier to desire-production (1983; 1987): a blank canvas, a place itself of 0 intensity. It is not intensity itself, but the space through which intensities are able to unfold, and as each being is a multiplicity, the intensity of desiring-production is able to erase and re-write itself across the body without organs. A capitalist body becomes the masochist body becomes the drug using body and so on.</p>	<p>Clairmont. Though Justine Moritz does have a mother, the relationship is strained. According to Victor, “This girl had always been the favourite of her father, but through a strange perversity, her mother could not endure her, and after the death of M. Moritz, treated her very ill” (Shelley, 1818, p. 68). Mary Shelley’s addition of this record of constant mistreatment of Justine at the hands of Madame Moritz then becomes the author’s expression of the trauma inflicted upon her by</p>
<p>mitochondria leave, then it becomes a photosynthesizing cell, until other organelles pass through and inscribe their actions into this hypothetical cell without organelles, much like Joyce’s head.</p> <p>Within a schizoid reader, text becomes a howling that is “welded together in breath... like the bones in the blood of the body without organs” (Deleuze, 1990, p. 89). The schizophrenic reader is a body without organs acted upon by the text, which itself is a locus of</p>	<p>in those papers that I currently write or ever will write, whether they are subtle or overt, apparent or lurking in the background. There is always a narrative, even if that narrative does not show progress, even if that narrative is disjointed and irregular, even if that narrative is difficult to thematize.</p> <p>Perhaps this idea of a perfect narrative also has its roots in this enlightenment value of perfection, which is easy to understand, to recognize, to pigeonhole. This researcher has</p>

<p>Just so, the Frankenstein monster operates in this bordering between the physical and the point of 0 intensity. The monster is a body without organs, in the most literal and figurative uses of the term—a neutral pile of dead flesh, acting as a physically manifest 0 point of intensity upon which the mad doctor may inscribe his toils and obsessions. But, just as the body without organs rejects a stable production of desire (Deleuze &amp; Guattari, 1983), the monster rejects being the Pygmalion</p>	<p>an indifferent stepmother. This is not an instance of an author writing from experience. Rather, it may be understood as an experience taking over an author: there is grief in this instance, one that manifests as the absent mother (which certainly was within the author’s realm of experience) but the grief penetrates bloodlines. The grieving machine attaches to Shelley: the Shelley-grief assemblage produces a text.</p>
<p>intensities that has been inscribed by a nameless author, that inscribes itself upon the reader, breathing a life of new affect into the schizoid reader. As I sit, writing these words, a friend beside me plays a video game; currently, she is fighting a monster called a siren, an ethereal spirit-creature which has the ability to reanimate dead bodies and call them to arms. The bodies have been wounded, gutted; they too are without heads, entrails, limbs, and a force deterritorializes them as corpses, making</p>	<p>no ties to any other being and, by Kant’s standards, is “free.” But when we think about the predictability that must accompany this writing in the academy, or as a result of a demanding audience or genre concerns, how far can we actually say that the one writing is free? When we must pretend that the writing was neat, tidy, that it began at point A and ended at point B with no meandering thoughts seeping in, we are putting on a show. When we claim that there is an untroubled</p>

<p>sculpture of Victor's desire— Victor must rewrite various intensities across his monstrous body without organs, filling it at different times with disgust-desiring, hate-desiring, and revenge-desiring. The monster sloughs off his role as a physical body without organs for Victor and engages in the act of inscription upon its own body without organs. Within the monster, the two planes of 0 intensity come together: the monster as Victor's own body without organs physically manifest, and the</p>	<p>Shelley becomes a vessel for traumatic intensities; it is not she that speaks through her book, but those intensities that are written upon her via the contexts from which she emerges. Along with her lack of being nurtured was her inability to nurture—specifically, the loss of her first child. The motherless child fails to nurture her own. If we understand grief as an intensity that can inscribe itself across generations, that lurks and looms in its own monstrous capacity, then</p>
<p>them new. As I watch this occurring on the screen, I think about the siren as a piece of text, creating a revolution within these bodies, initially lifeless, points of 0 intensity, ready to be inscribed by the intensity of the siren. The thought within a text, state Deleuze and Guattari (1987) “is like the vampire” (p. 377) and we know that a vampire infects (p. 242). The words in a text do not tell, but they spread, creating armies of revolting bodies of action and affect. Vampires, sirens, undead bodies</p>	<p>writing process, we do disservice to those learning to write, making them think that they are bad writers when not every piece falls into place (Lamott, 1994); such perfectionism kills creativity. We attempt to hide or smooth out the sutures that hold our writing together, but in doing so, we are being honest with neither our readers nor ourselves.</p> <p>Such suturing, I believe, gets at the real nature of Frankenwriting. Each individual piece of writing is assembled of various pieces</p>

<p>monster as desiring agent acting upon/with his own body without organs. We see such inscription as the monster realizes he has been abandoned by the De Laceys. He experiences a “luxury of sensation” (Shelley, 1818, p. 162) that initially he cannot endure. He allows himself “to be borne away by the stream” (p. 165) of hatred as his body without organs “sets up a counterflow of amorphous, undifferentiated fluid” (Deleuze &amp; Guattari, 1983, p. 9) that fuels his hate- and destruction-desiring. The</p>	<p>perhaps it was too much for the child to bear; grief transmutes itself from mother to child and left Shelley unable to carry her first child to term. We might say that Mary Shelley’s portrayal of the failed first meeting between father and child in <i>Frankenstein</i> was her way of processing her trauma and disappointment at Percy Shelley’s rejection of their own child, a premature girl who died shortly after her birth in 1815 (Badalamenti, 2006). We might just as soon say that this rejection also became</p>
<p>without organs, Artaud’s Jabberwocky monster (Deleuze, 1990): writing is an exercise in creating textual monsters and (re)animating bodies.</p> <p>Monsters, it seems, always emerge from darkness or mist—some space of indeterminacy. Within these spaces, there is always potential. They exemplify what Deleuze referred to as a virtual space (Wallin, 2010). Reality may be constituted and arranged in a number of ways, and Deleuze’s challenge to us</p>	<p>of writing external to it, whether these pieces actually take textual shape or not. A piece of writing has every potential to be something different than what it is: an idea may be expressed in a different way, a sentence may connect to another sentence with a semicolon rather than a period, or on a larger scale, a different topic may be approached in a similar fashion, or in the case of an academic paper, a different theory may be chosen to situate a piece of information. These are all tools at our</p>

<p>body without organs rejects the reason of language, rejects interrupting thoughts and “utters only gasps and cries that are sheer unarticulated blocks of sound” (p. 9). It is “the reversion of thought and perception-action into pure sensation” (Massumi, 2002, p. 109), of which the monster allows himself to experience a luxury. We see the monster, a body without organs and an actor upon/with a body without organs, operating in this state of aphasiac, fluid, intense sensation:</p>	<p>a part of Mary Shelley’s body without organs, passing through her arm, her hand, her pen, and into the text of <i>Frankenstein</i>. As Victor regards his efforts, he goes so far as to call the monster an “abortive creation” (Shelley, 1818, p. 38). Victor’s rejection of his creature may be seen as a kairotic moment (Rickert, 2013) a manifestation of all aspects of the malformed, miscarried and misgendered body that Mary had conceived and carried for seven months—</p>
<p>is an “ethical impetus against the world in advance” (Wallin, p. 27). Writing is not a given; if writing is a monster, then the author is the obscuring mist from which the writing must meander out of. The form the writing takes, however, should be unknown until it emerges; no method, no process, no stable or transcendental structure should tell us what that writing will look like.</p> <p>And just as Victor Frankenstein gives us no clue as to the method used to reanimate his</p>	<p>disposal, used to assemble a piece of text. If enough of the parts are different, then we can assemble a different paper. Or we might go through with some of these parts and revise what we have written, cutting away here, adding there, placing certain items in our respective shit-I-cut folders for later use. Every paper, themselves all Frankenthings, constitute a whole body of writing, some pieces of which may be loosely connected to others, hanging only by a thread, but always a preface.</p>

<p>[the wind] produced a kind of insanity in my spirits that burst all bounds of reason and reflection. I lighted the dry branch of a tree and danced with fury around the devoted cottage ... with a loud scream I fired the straw, and heath, and bushes, which I had collected. The wind fanned the fire, and the cottage</p>	<p>a malformed and unviable being passed through her own body without organs.</p> <p>Within the writing of Frankenstein, we cannot discount others who may assemble and connect to Shelley's writing machine. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) open one of their works by stating "The two of us wrote Anti-Oedipus together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd" (p. 3). Is there any doubt that Shelley could have said the same? According to Badalamenti (2006), one of the</p>
<p>monster, there is no process for the spread of ideas in this way because, like the monster, ideas are uncontrollable. Thought exists "in a smooth space that it must occupy without counting, and for which there is no possible method, no conceivable reproduction, but only relays, intermezzos, resurgences" (Deleuze &amp; Guattari, 1987, p. 377). Thoughts—texts—encounter readers and form a literary machines, having various effects on those readers that the author of the text cannot control. Here, we</p>	<p>In some ways, I wonder if the Frankenmonster is the best analogy for writing. Instead, it is as though I have a kraken with hundreds of tentacles inside me; at various points, a tentacle reaches out, comprising a piece of writing; the tentacles themselves are lines of flight, various manifestations of thought that all connect in some form. We can follow the tentacles back to their origin points only to discover that they connect to other tentacles, twisting around one another, forming linkages</p>

<p>was quickly enveloped by the flames (Shelley, p. 165-166).</p> <p>The monster, despite his attempts, has not been able to join the world that would seek to place Oedipal barriers of social and psychic repression. Anything but autistic, the monster becomes animal, a howling wolfman, a dancing, fire-producing Neanderthal, a monster in its darkest connotations of the term: open to intensities of experience, beyond the reaches of rational language, not bound at all by reason or</p>	<p>strongest influences on the novel was Mary Shelley's husband Percy who, upon Mary's completion of the work, reviewed the novel, revising it at points and explicitly contributed his own voice to the story by writing the preface. Shelley admits to the infiltration of Percy influence into the body of the novel in the author's introduction written to append to the revision of the work she released in 1831. At the time of this publication, Shelley wrote that the "several pages" of the original work</p>
<p>begin to think about what a real post-process theory might look like. A text, a paper, a thought constantly evolves, constantly emerges. This flies in the face of more traditional rhetoric and writing wisdom: the canons of Cicero, the conventions of genre, signposts designed to lead readers down a particular path. What does writing look like when we think of our readers as bodies without organs, 0 intensities, forming a literary machine with our writing?</p>	<p>and overlaps and knots. Then again, the kraken is its own kind of Frankenmonster, assembled over hundreds of years of folklore, borrowing from various cultures' superstitions about water monsters.</p> <p>Whether it be a kraken or Frankenstein, or vampire, or ghost that haunts, calling writing a monster is accurate because part of the allure of a monster is that it cannot be controlled. These creatures are notoriously difficult to locate and rid oneself of, and that is certainly</p>

<p>reflection. He is the schizophrenic visibly resisting Oedipalization (Deleuze &amp; Guattari, 1983, p. 52), the ‘rational’ being that caves into absolute irrationality as he burns the very symbol of the traditional, daddy-mommy-me triangle—the pastoral, domestic cottage.</p> <p>Still, we Oedipalize; we see in the Frankenstein films a kind of accounting for the monster: sexualizing it with eels and probes, identifying the spark of life with observable lightening. The same is true in the novel; there</p>	<p>reflected “many a walk, many a drive, and many a conversation when [she] was not alone” (Shelley, 2017, p. 300). She further alludes to her “companion,” indicating that she will see this person “no more” (Shelley, 2017, p. 300). Here, it is not necessarily the intensities of grief or trauma that spur the text, but another individual, triangulated into being by his own multiplicities, his own intensities, that further contributes to the work. Indeed, some of the key aspects of <i>Frankenstein</i>,</p>
<p>While compositionists, those responsible for a post-process movement, seem to have largely ignored this question, we find many examples of Deleuzian writing theory in qualitative research. Wyatt, Gale, Gannon, and Davies (2011), for instance, explore how individuated co-authors blur and overlap, bringing various intensities to one another, indelibly shaping one another’s thoughts as they wrote together: “instead of exploring Deleuze as an abstract set of propositions, we</p>	<p>the case with the thoughts that produce writing, at least within me. I would describe some of my most intense moments of writing as flow, when I become unaware of the world around me, fully enveloped in putting words to paper. In this case, the thoughts behind writing possess me. I can’t not write. Or if I refuse, something will seem off; I become hyperactive, squirmy, unable to concentrate on some other task until the idea is fleshed in writing. And how interesting that it must be</p>

<p>is a need to control the monster via the narrative of its life, accounting for his thoughts and actions. At the end of the novel, Victor identifies the monster, before anything else, as “rational” (Shelley, 1818, p. 269). These words fly in the face of the above passage, wherein the monster allows himself to be moved by sensation and intensity, those affects that inscribe themselves upon his body without organs, an act of anti-rationality, pure intensity</p>	<p>including names of the character, came directly from Percy’s experience, rather than Shelley’s head.</p> <p>It is also difficult to read <i>Frankenstein</i> without also considering the immediate connections of Mary and Percy Shelley to their Romantic contemporaries. Along with providing Mary Shelley a place into which she could explore the complicated web of her relationships, the novel also provided her with an inlet to explore and problematize the way</p>
<p>brought his concepts to life in our collaborating bodies and our unfolding engagements with life in its specificity—and in its Being. We sought to unleash the creative voice of matter in our engagement in [our] assemblage” (Wyatt et al., 2014, p. 409). Guttorm (2012), reacting to Wyatt et al. (2011), writes about how a paper is never quite under her control—ideas shift and evolve, and she reflects upon this experience using poetic language. The poetic language, she states, is designed to open a stream that flows</p>	<p>fleshed out—part of the hideousness of the Frankenstein monster was the fact that it was not fully fleshed. Its skin could barely contain itself; this appearance created a negative response in those that beheld it.</p> <p>As Victor created his monster, he seemed to be in a similar state of flow. He lost track of time, he disappeared from his friends, he stopped eating. He too was fully enveloped in his composition, fleshing out the body of work that he saw as his. And yet, it was not until he</p>

<p>And this is the nature of Oedipus: “a fantastic repression” (Deleuze &amp; Guattari, 1983, p. 3), one which seeks to create an arborescent singularity in place of the rhizomatic multiplicity of the monster (Heymans, 2011). By the monster’s account, it was, after all, his exposure to the cruelty exacted upon him by the humans he encountered that made him the villain his creator believed him to be. The monster’s linear, narrative account is a shame and a</p>	<p>that many of her contemporaries, including her husband, placed excessive faith in “science to answer questions about life and nature, expecting scientists to articulate a consistent worldview that would help people understand the vast world around them” (Hogsette, 2011, p. 534). Along with this reliance on science to explain the mysteries of the world, proponents of the Enlightenment, such as Kant, believed that human maturity occurred only when an individual abandoned the need to rely on</p>
<p>from those authors that she has read and that have inspired her thinking—she is an example of the reader as body without organs, being called to action by a text. Her call to action is a revolution of thoughts. More recently, a book was released that examines how we might use Deleuze to write in the academy and create monsters from our writing (Riddle, Bright &amp; Honan, 2018). It is strange that so few compositionists seem to have employed Deleuze and Guattari within their works; these</p>	<p>had produced his body that he realized what he had created, beheld the ugliness that he then allowed to wreak havoc across the world. Though it was months before any sign of the creature would appear again, it was always in the back of his mind, filling him with sickness and anxiety. What better way to describe the process of submitting or sharing a paper and waiting for a reader to respond? At the grade school or high school level, we write an essay and await criticism from the teacher. On</p>

<p>testament to the Oedipalizing repression that Victor, as well as the DeLaceys, the villagers that attack him, and the individual who shot him, force the monster into. The monster is a body without organs manifest and a phenomenon of bordering; it is this image of wildness which creates horror in others as well as a desire to tame and control. The monster's becoming animal places it into an unrecognizable species (Carretero-Gonzalez, 2016), and it is not allowed to operate within a</p>	<p>another's intelligence instead of their own. According to Kant, enlightenment required only freedom, and an individual gained that freedom when they sought to "walk alone" even at the risk of failure (Kant, 1784, p. 1). For Shelley, the monster is the embodiment of the Enlightenment's focus on the pursuit of scientific knowledge turned monstrous, without any thought to moral responsibility (Hogsette, 2011). Though mentors and teachers such as the repugantly described</p>
<p>pieces, largely written by qualitative researchers, might offer an excellent place to begin. But to our original question, what does a Deleuzian approach to post-process writing look like? And how might we employ this pedagogically? Pedagogy has been a bugbear of the post-process movement (Kent, 1999; Heard, 2008, Mays 2017). How to make something non-process-oriented, non-methodological, teachable? Deleuze suggested that we adopt an</p>	<p>Facebook, a post is submitted, and we wait to see how others will like it. Perhaps the stakes are lower than releasing a zombie into the world, but the waiting is the same; we anticipate how others will respond to our writing, we wait for the criticism or the feedback, and we dread the mistakes and errors that we have made, which only seem to make themselves apparent after we have finished our toils. We have no control over our writing at that point; we were simply the toiling force</p>

<p>space reserved for those that are recognizable. For one that is driven by passions and intensities, one that has no Oedipal beginnings, no physical coherence, there is no world to live in. The creature must live among borders and margins, and there is no end but to exile oneself and, perhaps, die.</p> <p>What might we take away from all of this? Alkon (2002) suggests that “the role of science in Frankenstein, as in so much subsequent science fiction, is not so much to</p>	<p>Krempe discourage Victor’s interests in alchemy, Victor fuses alchemy with the science of enlightenment and creates an abomination. Along with the monster representing Mary Shelley’s warning of how Enlightenment results in the practice of science without the temperance of morality, Mary Shelley also uses Frankenstein to critique the Age of Enlightenment’s pursuit of human perfection (Cook, 2019). In the novel, one of the reasons that Victor pursues the creation of</p>
<p>attitude of transcendental empiricism (St. Pierre, 2016); in line with his concepts of difference and the virtual, he suggested that we break with claims about what is in the world. An author cannot, with certainty, determine the ways that audience will react to a piece of writing. Instead, we should focus on what has the potential to emerge (from writing). Nietzsche’s writing was taken up by the Nazi cause, used by the monster that was Adolph Hitler, although Nietzsche could never have</p>	<p>that brought the piece of text into existence (and even then, how much credit can we actually take? We had no control over the desires that manifest to drive us to put pen to paper). The piece itself, then, disseminates its own ideas as others come into contact with it. It is no longer an author-text machine, but a reader-text machine. Perhaps it will be received well, but there is always risk.</p> <p>This leads to some interesting questions which I am not ready to answer. For instance, from a</p>

<p>consider scientific realities as to afford a unique vantage point for contemplation of the human condition” (p. 5). Could this human condition be one of scientization as criticized by Deleuze and Guattari (1983; 1987) and Massumi (2002)? The free, detached, a-multiple rationality of Kantian (1784) enlightenment? Certainly it is science that creates the condition of the monster, a condition which may then be reviled as horrific and irrational. Perhaps Shelley (1818) herself, a close associate of the</p>	<p>his creature is that he wishes to create a perfect human being that can defeat death. The monster then becomes a product and portent of efforts to achieve human perfection outside of the confines of the mentorship of morality; he also becomes Shelley’s critique of the Enlightenment’s drive for a freedom of discovery that rejects any sort of morality and instead relies solely on science in the pursuit of knowledge. However, what we may learn from this is that ideas do not spontaneously emerge</p>
<p>anticipated this (Higgins &amp; Solomon, 2000). Joyce acknowledged that his readers would add more to his writing, constantly guessing at its meaning, filling in blanks, theorizing, but never entirely aware of how his work might inspire others—only that it would inspire (Ellmann, 1982). In this, there is a potential lesson to engender within students if one is to take seriously a post-process pedagogy. That the effects and affects of writing will always be uncertain—that we can imbue as much</p>	<p>Deleuzo-Guattarian perspective, how responsible is the author for their piece of writing? If an author is simply overcome with intensities and must produce, then we cannot blame the author for what is written (should we blame Victor for his creation?). And if the text takes on its own life as it comes into contact with readers, we certainly cannot blame the author for the way that the text is taken up. And yet, I feel that there is a weight as I write, a need to make sure I express an</p>

<p>Satanic poets, was making a case for the wandering schizoid, criticizing the over determination that was present in the sciences even in the early 1800s.</p>	<p>within authors' minds to be written. We might say, rather, that ideas are inscribed within an author; they use the author, rather than the author uses them, insisting that the author write them. Ideas are negotiated, and they rewrite themselves as they come into contact with other ideas, as others attach themselves to the writing assemblage of author-idea-context-infinity.</p>
<p>meaning into a text as we may want, but it will always escape us as others come into contact with it. But from a transcendently empirical perspective, this is appropriate. Writing is not necessarily meaningful, but generative. Rather than a post-process pedagogy, we must ask: how do we teach generativity, creativity, works that inspire internal and external revolutions while erasing ourselves and static notions of what writing <i>needs to be</i> from the conversation?</p>	<p>idea clearly, try to bridge my mind with my audience's, although I do not know who will actually be reading my work. This is perhaps a neurosis on my end, one brought about by years of believing that I have some control. I wonder what a different approach to teaching writing might look like, one that allows us to think of our textual creations as creatures that we instill with life that will then, on their own accord, leave us and produce their own meaning.</p>

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## Academic Joyrides Uncreative Reading and Writing

Susan O. Cannon & Teri Holbrook

### Abstract

With this article, we invite you into our experiment with uncreative reading and writing drawing on the work of Kenneth Goldsmith (2011) and the Situationist International. In particular, we take up two situationist concepts, *dérive* (drift) and *détournement* (rerouting or hijacking). We experimented with these concepts through a series of invitations to see how they might work on our writing and thinking. The concepts are meant to take participants out of their predisposed and unnoticed practices to encourage new ways of thinking and being that work against restrictive forces. In this case, we desired to push back against the pervasive notions of efficiency and productivity in academic reading and writing to attend to other things of value.

*Keywords:* academic writing, invitations, uncreative writing, citational practices, academic reading

### The Story of the Interactions That Began This Piece

Teri doesn't know why, now, she decided to show a documentary about environmental artist Andy Goldsworthy (Mediopolis Film- and Fernsheproduktion, 2001) in a doctoral level poststructural inquiry class housed in a college of education. It may have been because Goldsworthy uses bare fingertips to melt together

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broken icicles—cold, water, heat, flesh, time, air, lungs and so on in relations that upend not only notions of icicles but also boundaries, binaries, and other calcifications. It might have been the way icicles are stubborn, how they keep falling apart, refusing the joint, and prompting soft grunts as Goldsworthy tries to coax them together. Or it may have been that she just wanted to show it, impulsively, like sometimes she just wants to eat an orange.

A couple of days later, Susan, a student at the time, came to Teri's office. If you like Andy Goldsworthy, she said, you might like Robert Smithson. She extended a book she had dug from a box in her attic. On its cover was a photo of Smithson walking along his massive land art structure, Spiral Jetty—another environmental work humming with relations and refusals.

(A side jaunt here: Spiral Jetty is 6650 tons of black basalt and earth coiling like a dead centipede from the banks of the Great Salt Lake in Utah. When Smithson built it in 1970, the area was undergoing a drought. The levels of the lake were low and the jetty walkable. But within a few years, water levels rose, and now the jetty is visible only some of the time. Smithson, who died in a plane accident in 1973, knew this would happen. Choosing a location that was only accessible by 15 miles of dirt road, he wanted the sculpture to be “both difficult to reach and difficult to see” (Julavits, 2017). The result is a massive piece of earthwork art in a constant state of living and dying; it emerges and retreats with the water levels like a rocky Loch Ness Monster (for that simile, see Sanford, 2004).)

Some stories have a definite beginning. *In the beginning there was....This story opens with....*The story of academic writing we draft here has no definite start. It started at multiple sites in multiple times with multiple gestures. It started with detours.

*Detour:* amazon.com thinking

In addition to the book on Smithson, Susan brings Teri a copy of *No. 111 2.7.93-10.20.96*, an experimental print text by poet and writing scholar Kenneth Goldsmith, published in 1997. If you like this, she says to Teri, you might like Goldsmith's (2011) *Uncreative Writing*. Teri muses: If Susan likes Goldsmith, she might like David Shields' (2011) *Reality Hunger*. Both books push at how readers are allowed to read and how writers are allowed to write.

*Detour:* Guilting in academia

Teri remembers as a child hiding under the covers at night to write what she worried were forbidden stories because they took away time that could be spent pulling up her puttering grades. She worries on the regular now, swallowing the twinges that accompany cross-field drives into poetry, fiction, art, hypermedia. Are they scholarly enough? Empirical enough? Theoretical enough? Susan diverts time from assigned class readings to read the short story *Time and Again* by Breece D'J Pancake (2002). It's about a snowplow driver who packs down snow on a familiar route. It prompts her thinking about research, but does it “count” as

academic reading? Is it productive? Does it increase her authority as a developing scholar? Can she cite it?

*Detour: Poem-stuck.*

A faculty/doc student reading group in a college of education takes up Barad's (2007) *Meeting the Universe Halfway*. Except Susan and Teri get stuck on Barad's excerpt of Alice Fulton's *Shy One*, so Susan turns to the complete poem and as the rest of the reading group shifts to discuss the chapter, they stay sticking, line by line, because "Nothing will unfold for us unless we move toward what/looks to us like nothing..." (Fulton, 2004, p. 59). The sticking for both of them feels joyful. Like an escape.

In this article, we describe one story of how we took up our questions around reading and writing in the academy. Intrigued by Goldsmith's (2011) uncreative writing, we drew from the practices and thinking of Situationist International, a group of 20<sup>th</sup> century artists, to craft a call-and-response-game that explored notions of text, materiality, and what counts as academic writing. We ventured on what we called academic joyrides, experiments in reading, writing, relations, and refusals. Through these academic joyrides, we attended to the value of following reading and writing spurs and lingering in moments of joy, beauty, and disturbance. In the process, we redrew the lines of what we conceptualize as value in academic reading and writing. Given the increasing demands on academic writers to be productive and efficient, we think this type of reterritorialization (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) is important. What we present below is just one of many playful forms of resistance that we imagine possible in reworking the academic writing and reading landscape.

### Uncreative Writing and the Academy

Both of us have folders in our computers that hold collections of other writers' words—scholarly quotes that we can put to use in journal manuscripts, lit reviews, coursework, and conference proposals. We select these words carefully, for how they confirm or pivot our thinking, how they demonstrate other scholars' ideas. We conscientiously attach citational information so we can make responsible attribution. Through these quotes and citations we show that we have done our work; they, in turn, give that work legitimacy. This borrowed language carries with it the residue of the authors' collected writings, their presence in the field, and the ways other scholars have taken up and contextualized/extended their words. In the academy, who we cite and how we cite matters.

But there are additional words in those folders that are collected for other reasons. They thrill, they resonate, they take our breath away: Yoko Ono's (2000) four-line poem "Time Painting" that tersely commands us to paint light, Carolyn Forché's (1981) "The moon swung bare on its black cord over the house," Naomi

Shihab Nye's (2001) "...wistful for something I have never tasted or seen." These words, too, carry residue, and they seep into our thinking.

As a doctoral student, Susan asked Teri about the rules of academic writing: When I cite an author and pull a quote, how do I know I am using that quote in a way that aligns with the author's intent? Can I cite songs or poems in my academic writing? How do I show—and count—fiction's and architecture's effect on my scholarship when I am not getting a degree in literature or architecture? Can I cite Wislawa Szymborska, Flann O'Brien, or Rem Koolhaas in an article on educational research? Will the journal editors and reviewers think my work doesn't belong in the field if they don't recognize the names?

Underlying all those questions was a threaded concern that both of us shared: Given that all writing involves the effacing of trails of thought—of names and sounds and images and so on that for disciplinary reasons don't make the cut—what happens if we refuse to submerge what we suspect we *should* submerge? Do we have to erase the raggedy trails of our thinking in order to write and publish in our academic fields? And what are the repercussions of those erasures? What's the impact of pretending they are not there?

Goldsmith's (2011) notions of uncreative writing provided space for us to consider these questions. Goldsmith describes uncreative writing as writing in which "new meaning is created by repurposing preexisting texts" (p. 35). He posits that in the computer-driven creative landscape of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, humans are experiencing "textual abundance," a "glut of language" coming at them from multiple media sources (pp. 23-25). In this environment, writers are not tasked with producing something original "but rather the technically skilled handling and systematic manipulation of the almost infinite texture that is already out there (on the internet)" (Haensler, 2019, p. 174). Texts, then, are conceptualized as material in their own right instead of as merely conduits of thought, and writers are positioned as textual appropriators who order (and disorder) already made language for effect.

Goldsmith is a poet, and his arguments owe much to concrete poets and visual artists who work with both the semiotics and materiality of words. But he also draws from the work of Marcel Duchamp, Walter Benjamin, Francis Picabia, and other 20<sup>th</sup> century thinkers who challenged understandings of originality and replication. To bolster his arguments, he uses a variety of contemporary examples: Sara Charlesworth's conceptual art that removes all the print text from the front pages of newspapers, leaving just the images; Simon Morris's experiment in re-typing on a blog the original 1951 edition of Kerouac's *On the Road*, which took the form of a 120-foot roll of paper; Matt Siber's removal of the environmental print in his photographs and displacing it *in situ* onto an accompanying sheet of blank paper, thereby demonstrating "how language in the city is ruled as much by the grid of architecture as the streets are" (Goldsmith, 2011, p. 42).

While Goldsmith (2011) does not focus heavily on academic writing per se, we nonetheless found his work provocative in light of our own restlessness

around the creative erasure and sidelining we were doing in our writing as academics. To explore our thinking, we borrowed tools from his text to push what we understood as taken-for-granted aspects of academic reading and writing. We posit that academic writing can be conceptualized as something akin to uncreative writing—if not uncreative writing outright, then enough of a relative to warrant attention. As Goldsmith sees it, in the digital age, writers become “hoarders of data” (p. 28), collecting bits of text in the hopes of putting them to use at some point in different configurations. Similarly, as social science academics, we hoard scraps of data/text in the form of interview transcripts, field notes, student work, survey responses. Like uncreative writers, we take that data and reorient and reassemble it—along with the theories, ideas, quotes, findings, implications, etc. of others—into a composed text. In doing so, we engage in 21<sup>st</sup> century writing practices, made more visible and expeditious by the computer, in which “what becomes important is what you—the author— decides [sic] to choose. Success lies in knowing what to include and —more important—what to leave out” (p. 10). As academic writers, we cite particular experts and draw on particular works in our fields to situate and validate our thinking. And, equally important, we leave some sources out, concerned that if we cite them, we risk our authority diminished and our work dismissible.

### Mapping Drifts and Detours

Given this broad recognition of a kinship between our work in the academy and uncreative writing, we sought to develop an intentional experiment in academic uncreative writing to, quite simply, see what it would get us. We followed Goldsmith’s lead and looked to the work of the 20<sup>th</sup> century artists and philosophers of the Situationist International to put form to our thinking. Goldsmith (2011) described the situationists as seeking “not to reinvent life but to reframe it, reclaiming dead zones as alive” in pursuit of new perspectives (p. 36). These artist-philosophers took up invented “situations” as tools of liberation from everyday life and in the process sought to enact social change. Like them, we too were seeking freedom from the taken for granted. We recognized the ghostliness of much of our academic thinking/writing. Particular words or phrases mattered in our writing and thinking but lurked on the edges of the finished text, vibrating there for a while before fading into dark corners through publishing’s polishing/erasing process. We were drawn to two concepts that the Situationist International used “to infuse magic and excitement into the dull routine of everyday life” (p. 36): *dérive* and *détournement*.

Debord (2006) described a *dérive* or drift as a “playful, constructive behavior” in which participants “drop their relations, their work and leisure activities... and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there” (p. 62). It was the hope that traveling through spaces differently

or traveling through different spaces would push participants to notice what had become routinized. In academic writing and reading, scholars have habituated the following of citational trails, going further into a field's literature base by traveling from one piece to another—*if you like this, then you might like this*—or relying on must-read lists curated by members of a given field. The increase in the digitization of academic texts and the tracking of citations have accelerated this academic trail following; Google Scholar, ResearchGate and Academia.edu feature algorithms that use citations and user downloads to suggest further readings. In our emails we often receive invitations to read articles that relate to the manuscripts we have published but predictably did not make visible the erased sources that made any of the work possible. The effacement hardens through our academic social media sites and our own citational practices.

Seeking something like Debord's (2006) "playful, constructive behavior," we looked for ways to go off track. Susan was particularly interested in Goldsmith's (2011) invitation to think with Vito Acconci's 1969 *Following Piece* exhibit, "whereby [Acconci] simply followed the first person he saw, walking a few paces behind him, until he disappeared into a private space" (p. 37). Once that person disappeared, Acconci would then follow the next person he saw, repeating the process but not the experience.

Such a *dérive* is "meant to renew the urban experience by intentionally moving through our urban spaces *without* intention, opening ourselves up to the spectacle and theater that is the city" (Goldsmith, 2011, p. 36). We wondered how this might be transferred to the textual spaces we traveled in the academy. How might we read a little less intentionally or read and write differently? How could we work to purposefully move off well-worn citational trails, to be pulled, as Debord's work challenged, "by intuition and desire, not by obligation and necessity" (p. 37). What would an intentional experiment in *dérive* get us as academic writers?

Another situationist example that Goldsmith (2011) gives is *détournement*, "a way of taking existing objects, words, ideas, artworks, media, etc., and using them differently so that they become entirely new experiences" (p. 38). The power of *détournement* circulates through the "double meaning" that is activated "by the coexistence within [its elements] of their old and new senses" (Internationale Situationniste, 2006, p. 67.) In other words, remixing elements does not remove what clings to them; they carry their excess with them into their new contexts even as they are remade into something different. As an example, the situationists would overlay a map of one city onto the geography of another to see how it might lead them through unintended and previously unexplored spaces. Such a move did not erase either the text of the map and all its semiotic and cultural connotations or the geography of the city and its complexities but created conditions for new constructions. In our academic writing, we committed to use a variant of textual *détournement* to pull us out of our polished reading and writing habits. What might be the effects of employing lyrics of a song to think about a poststructural

concept or citing an author for the evocative/visual effect of the words rather than the knowledge it conveyed? We sought ways to explore language for its semiotic, aesthetic, and material effects, recognizing that to do so would not expunge the intent of the original authors but might cause tensions and reverberations with the making of something different. (See Holbrook & Cannon, 2018 for a resulting experiment in the materiality of academic texts.)

### Invitations to Drift and Detour

To try and reclaim that feeling of escape that we felt when we pulled aside from Barad and reveled in Alice Fulton's poetry—the reckless abandonment of productivity driven reading—we engaged in a series of intentional call-and-response invitations designed to take us out of familiar patterns and to push us down intellectual and collegial spurs. We decided together to say yes to the tugs of curiosity and mischief and to *create* situations—similar to *dérives* and *détournements*—that would inspire unexpected thoughts. The rules of the game were as follows:

1. Send each other invitations in uncreative writing (Goldsmith, 2011).
2. Do not require or expect an answer.
3. Keep it joyful.
4. Collect the fragments in a virtual “green box.”
5. Open it when we decide it's time to do so.
6. See what we can make.

The “green box” refers to Duchamp's (1934) collection of documents and text fragments associated with the making of one of his art pieces, all of which could be countlessly remixed for different effects. We likewise constructed a “green box” electronic folder to stash the documents and fragments we collected/created during the game.

Over the course of approximately 18 months, we exchanged books, poems, song lyrics, hyperlinks, articles, abstracts, and quotes. We constructed our exchange as joyrides, surreptitious diversions from the academic compound. We took off-ramps into architecture and poetry and Talking Heads, unsure of how these tours might further a research agenda but certain that they did. Didn't William Gibson always shout out directions during Teri's thinking with Deleuze? Didn't Rem Koolhaas and Gertrude Stein travel along with Susan as she first read Foucault? We engaged in these joyrides to explore what, in an era of pastiche, mash-ups, heterotopias, and literary collage, we could recognize and reclaim as academic reading and writing

What follows is a reconstruction of our game as we applied situationist thinking to our academic writing. For this article, we have culled the invitations to four and included the original invitation as well as our reflective notes. In playing the game, we worked with Goldsmith's notions of textual abundance and the semiotic and material facets of words. Agreeing with Goldsmith that we live amidst a glut

of language, we grew attuned to the way we selected, assembled, portrayed, and used words. While deploying them to make meaning, we also, at turns, aimed to release them from both the page and the pixel. We stitched, glued, and ripped them. We recontextualized them onto cloth and canvas, employed skeuomorphic features to mimic “realness.” We photographed them, digitized them, sent them to each other as jpgs or in the body of emails. Through these various moves, we strived to challenge ourselves as academic writers to look past the expected and to “be drawn to the attractions of the terrain” (Debord, 2006, p. 62).

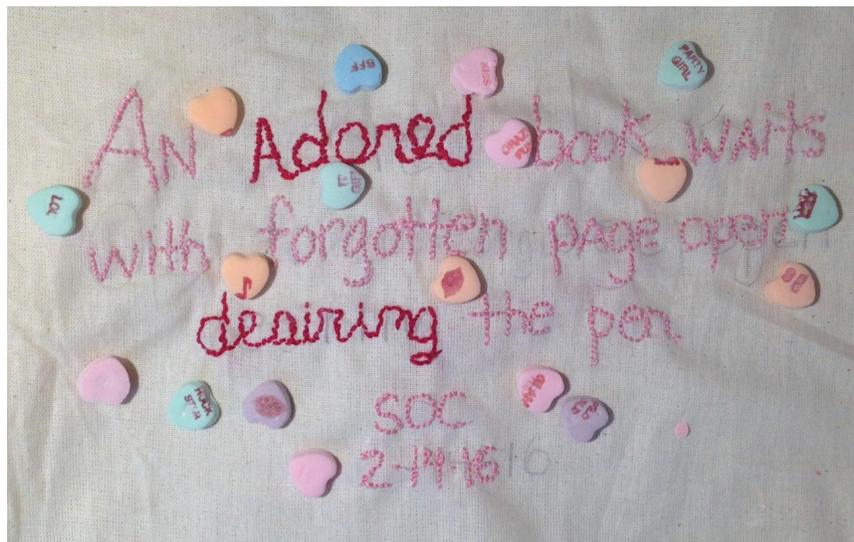
### The First Invitation

Susan made the first offering (See Figure 1). Her books are full of marginalia and underlined phrases, and she began to think about the parts of books that are unmarked—the phrases that don’t get underlined, at least not by her. She wondered what unseen or unremembered passages lurk in her books, or Teri’s books that might matter, if only they were attended to. She sent Teri an invitation designed to get at the unmarked.

*Susan: When I made the (first) piece, I felt like I was back in architecture school. There was something about the making, the stitching, the slowness of the task that made it feel important. I was trying to capture an idea, to play with the trope of Valentine’s Day and poetry, the way we use words to convince others to love us, or to understand us better, or to play with us.*

**Figure 1**

**An adored book waits/with forgotten page open/desiring the pen.**



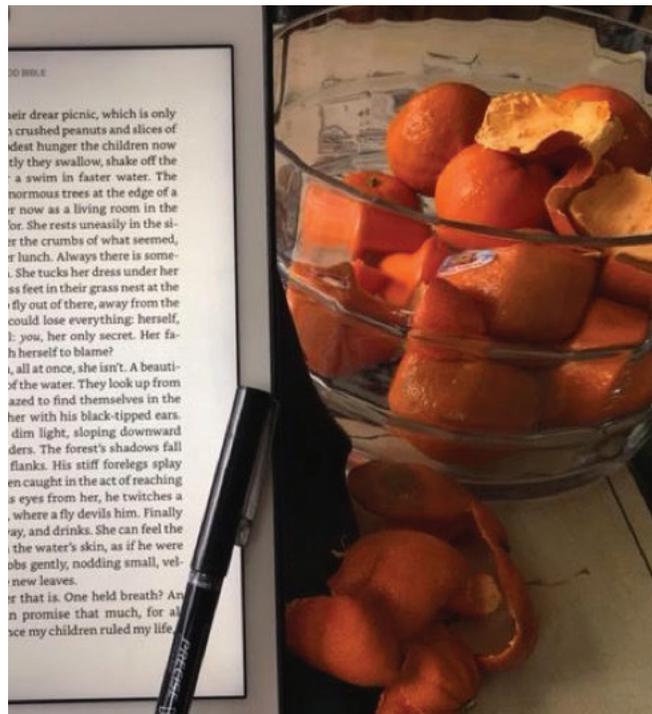
*Even the poem had rules. I counted the syllables on my fingers, playing around with variations on the theme. When I was stitching, I lost the carefully considered words. I lost the word in the work of the letters, and I lost the letters in the work of the stitches.*

*When I was doing the embroidery, there were moments where I wasn't thinking. I was just doing, following the instructions I was given for how to make the stitch and then align it with the rest. Part of the time, I was talking with my friend, I kept messing up, getting the thread knotted and jumbled. The front ended up looking ok, but the back of the piece shows all the marks of my distraction.*

*Teri: When I got the invitation, I was amazed. I couldn't believe Susan had made it. At first, I thought it was digital, but then I saw the penciled words behind the stitching. Then I convinced myself that she did it with some sort of sewing program, that she was a superseamstress who typed the words into her sewing machine, which whipped out the stitches. I looked at it up close, stretching towards the screen as if I were holding the fabric up to my face. I could see the weft of the cloth, the strands of the thread. Tactile even though I was only using my eyes. And memories. I could smell, taste, feel the sugar dust of the candies.*

To answer the invitation, Teri sent Susan the image in Figure 2, along with the

**Figure 2**  
**The page**  
**desiring**  
**the pen.**



following text: *This is a book I adore but cannot bear to pick up again. Holding the physical book is too visceral—memories of reading the saddest part at night in a deserted parking lot, pages lit by the marquee of a worn down movie theatre I shouldn't have given my daughter permission to go to, waiting for her to come out to the safety of my car; crying because I couldn't bear the book and the helplessness of motherhood. So here is the Kindle version. Safe in my kitchen with oranges and perspective. Still desiring the pen, but can't have it.*

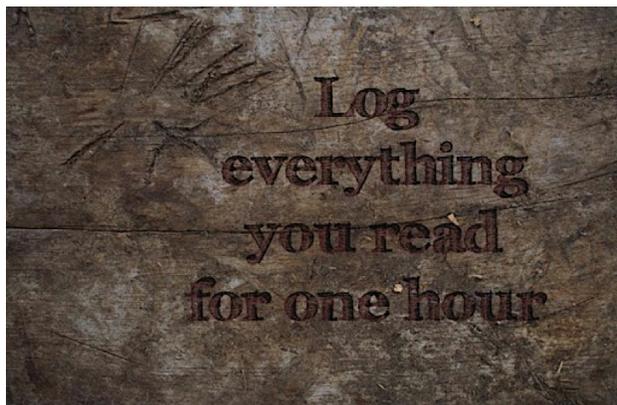
### The Second Invitation

Within the next few days, Susan received an email from Teri with the image in Figure 3 attached, “Log everything you read for one hour.”

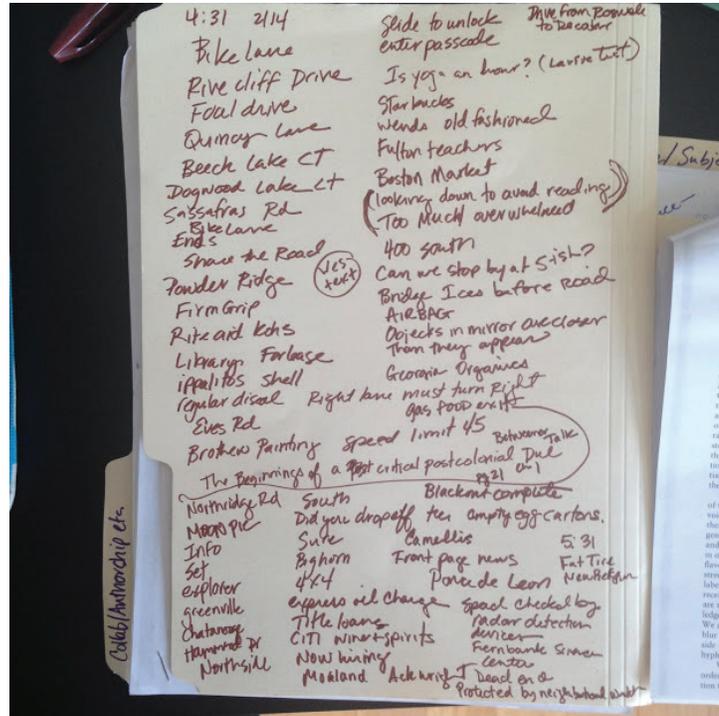
This invitation was derived from the work of Matt Siber who, by subtracting text out of images of streetscapes and laying it out on a white page, draws attention to all of the text that surrounds us. It's of note that the professor/student dynamic played a role here: Because the invitation was sent by an instructor, Susan responded to it as an assignment. As the passenger on a drive from the suburbs to town, she had planned to read a packet of articles; instead she took note of all the texts she saw around her (See Figure 4).

Susan: *Noting all the words on the car ride home from the suburbs. “Log everything you read for one hour,” she said. That was my assignment. Let all the language in. See it all. Do not discriminate. Bring it in. I only lasted five minutes before it became too much. I could not attend to all the language any longer. I looked down. The indiscriminate field (Manning & Massumi, 2014) was overwhelming for me. In pointing with each other, read this, read that, we narrow the field. We discriminate. And, we trace the lines, we acknowledge them. We directed each other's attention and allowed our attention to be drawn.*

**Figure 3**  
Log everyting  
you read  
for one hour.



**Figure 4**  
Log of  
Susan's  
reading.



### The Third Invitation

The third invitation (See Figure 5) was a collage, drawing from David Shield's (2011) *Reality Hunger*, which, by looking at contemporary writers and artists, does companionable work with Goldsmith. Teri hesitated sending the invitation. Worried that it might be too weird. Why on earth had she put her hair in there?

The text in the collage read:

Method of this project: Literary montage. I needn't say anything. Merely show. I shall purloin no valuables, appropriate no ingenuous formulations. But the rags, the refuse—these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them. (Shields, 2011, n.p.)

Susan received the third invitation and wondered: *What does it mean to purloin no valuables? I need to look up purloin. Can I send her back my valuable texts? Do I stitch? Do I montage—literally? "To come into their own: by making use of them" ... How do we best make use of rags and refuse? Does that imply the words left behind or those that we pull and don't use, strewn about on scraps of paper? The words that are not catalogued carefully in Evernote or elsewhere, the ones that slip our grasp?*

**Figure 5**  
*Method of this project.*



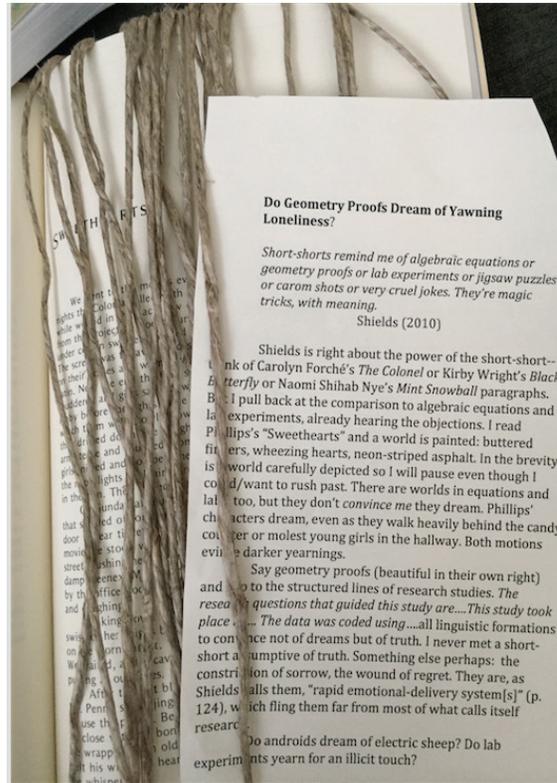
In the invitations, pressure had begun to creep in. Susan found herself asking, is what I am sending interesting enough, creative enough, going to go off the beaten path *enough*?

### The Fourth Invitation

Susan wanted to make an interesting invitation, to craft something. Yet, it had been a long time since she had received Invitation Three, and she was preparing for a conference. She continued reading *Reality Hunger* on the train. She felt that she should have been reading something more academic, yet didn't Teri's invitation give her permission to keep reading *Reality Hunger* even though it had nothing to do with her imagined research trajectory? Shields (2011) says that short-short stories (about 1-1/2 pages in length) are "magic tricks, with meaning" (p. 125). What did he mean? She sent Teri a text message with a photo of a page of *Reality Hunger* with the short-short title "Sweethearts" by Jayne Anne Phillips (1976) circled and the word "Read" written in the margin. It was an invitation and a command. Susan had no idea what the story might be about, but she wanted to see where it might take them.

Teri found a used copy of Phillips' anthology on Amazon. She responded to the invitation:

**Figure 6**  
**Do Geometry Proofs**  
**Dream of Yawning**  
**Loneliness?**



Susan, who had never read in the genre of the short-short, was off. She read Nye's (2001) *Mint Snowball*, collecting fragments of words:

Its scent clung to his fingers even after he washed his hands....She experimented. Once she came close. She wrote down what she did. Now she has lost the paper.... wistful for something I have never tasted or seen. (pp. 16-17)

And then, most memorably, Forché's (1981) *The Colonel*:

The moon swung bare on its black cord over the house....Some of the ears on the floor caught this scrap of his voice. Some of the ears on the floor were pressed to the ground. (p. 16)

Susan finally returned to *Sweethearts*, the assignment she had given Teri. She googled it and found it was out of print and expensive and felt a pang of guilt for having sent Teri on such a search. Then finding "Why She Writes" by Phillips (n.d.) on the Internet, she pulled, Goldsmith style, snippets of language:

[T]he work is never what you thought it would be, or what you hoped. Sometimes it's better; if the writing is any good, it struggles free of you, and the feeling of being inside it just as it moves away is so brief; a sensual visitation....[W]riting is a process, book to book, finished piece to abandoned fragment, dream to compulsion, every failure linked to its luminous twin star.... Words float memory, awaken desire; words do pull people in, even demanding, haunting words, because language is, finally, a matter of survival. (para 1-4)

Susan wondered as she stole (copied and pasted) pieces of Phillips' text: Do I read to feed myself? Do I read looking for words to steal or borrow, to appropriate, take up for my own use? And to what good, for what value, for whom?

She never sent those questions to Teri, who therefore never responded. The questions were holed up in Susan's Scrivner folder for this project until she searched them up to put them to use here.

### Relations, Detours, and Refusals

When conceptualizing Spiral Jetty, Smithson wanted water that was a certain shade of red. He learned that areas of the Great Salt Lake were "the color of tomato soup" (Smithson, 2005, p. 7), so he and his wife, artist Nancy Holt, went in search of the color.

Driving west on Highway 83 late in the afternoon, we passed through Corinne, then went on to Promontory. Just beyond the Golden Spike Monument...we went down a dirt road in a wide valley. As we traveled, the valley spread into an uncanny immensity unlike the other landscapes we had seen. The roads on the map became a net of dashes, while in the far distance the Salt Lake existed as an interrupted silver band. Hills took on the appearance of melting solids, and glowed under amber light. We followed roads that glided away into dead ends. Sandy slopes turned into viscous masses of perception. Slowly, we drew near to the lake, which resembled an impassive faint violet sheet held captive in a stony matrix.... (p. 8)

Interesting things happen when desire does the mapping. A desire for red water leads to surreal landscapes and a sculpture whose visibility and material configuration depends on precipitation. Follow those dirt roads some seasons and you'll see nothing but the violet sheet. Follow them other seasons and you'll see a coil of basalt rocks, encrusted white now from salt crystals that grow while it's underwater. Or don't follow them at all. For decades, with Spiral Jetty submerged, artists and interested others relied on the many existing texts that represented, explained, and theorized the work without having to undergo the difficulties of getting to the site: photographs, a film, Smithson's own essays, as well as the drawings and testimonies of people who had witnessed the work or known Smithson personally.

But relying on textual trails alone, in the case of Spiral Jetty, has its perils.

Because of the site's physical inaccessibility art scholar Ann Reynolds (2005) was satisfied for years with the abundance of related texts for her understandings. But the re-emergence of the Jetty in the early 2000s and new images and descriptions provided by the people who made the (now not-quite-so remote) trek convinced her to go. She describes the effects of her visit:

As I stood on the *Jetty* last September for the very first time, I was deeply aware of the fact that neither my on-site experiences nor the descriptions that I was familiar with, both old and new, were self-sufficient or even clearly distinct. All these things were hopelessly entangled, and this entanglement produced a form of vertigo that was at least dualistic: mental and physical, spatial and temporal. (p. 73)

The Jetty wasn't the Jetty. It was the basalt and the salt and the coil and the water and the photographs and the decades and the trek and the film and the artist and the sandy slopes and the drawings and the dead ends and the essays and the scholar's mind/body after years of delay standing on the build, produced by and producing an entanglement of relations that could not, in that moment, be erased.

If a *détournement* is a remixing of existing elements, and if its power comes from the double meaning ignited by the "old and new senses" at play in those elements, then Reynolds' visit to the Jetty can be taken up as a *détournement*. It could also be framed as akin to uncreative writing, one in which the textual—the photos, film, drawings, essays—coexist among other semiotic and somatic elements to create something new albeit not original.

When we started our game, we had no expectation other than it would get us somewhere different than where we were. Wrestling with questions of erasure and what counts as academic reading and writing, we devised a space of invitations and responses designed to move us out of our routines, to compel us to re-see and reframe what we had been disciplined to understand about how thought became recognizable through reading and writing in the field of education. We took up the constructs of *dérive*—a letting go of what's comfortable and everyday so that we could be "drawn by the attractions" (Debord, 2006, p. 62) of the textual terrain we moved through—and *détournement*—the remixing of existing elements to create something new although not original.

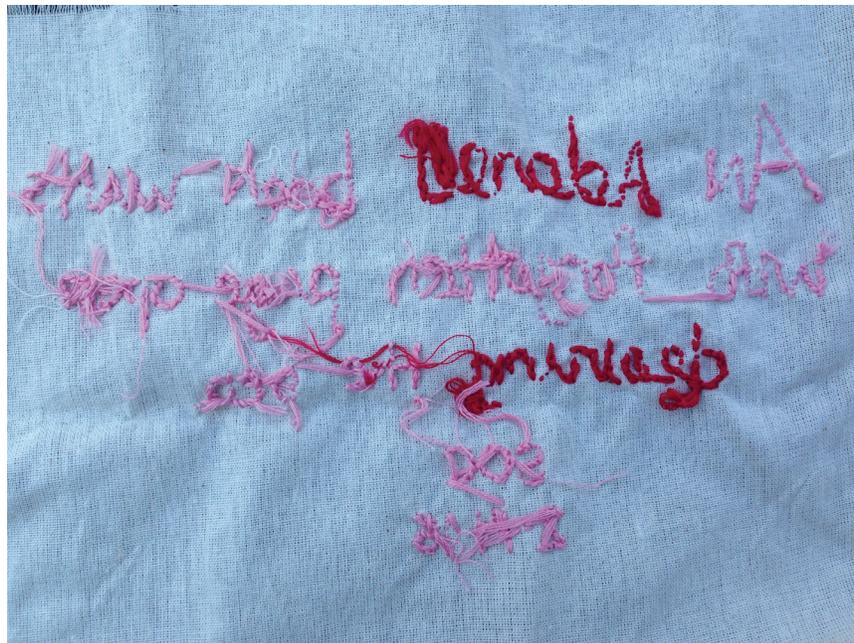
What we found was akin to Reynolds' entanglements, where our textual exchanges were hopelessly infused with the residue of our experiences, memories, desires, and intuitions. While the rules of the game called upon us to "keep it joyful," Susan nonetheless felt the pressure of performing as student in response to her professor's invitations. While Teri lamented the erasure of so much of the reading and writing she knew fed her scholarship, she nonetheless worried that the game was taking up too much time; she found its joy displaced by a persistent concern that it would not produce an article that could be counted—that all of the joy was, in the end, what Shields (2011) terms "rags" and "refuse" (n.p.).

But in playing the game—in drifting and remixing—we did go somewhere

different from where we were. By taking detours, we were able to ramble in and out of decaying academic silos, busted genres, snarled and encroached citational trails. We found space to put aside meaning and to instead make room for the aesthetics of sound and textures and gestures and shape. We allowed texts to act on us differently, and in turn we created different texts, ones that were not simply generative but also elevated the erased, the rags, the refuse, and made use of them.

We are not claiming that games such as this can shift the accounting practices of the academy, which demand particular notions of productivity. But we do offer an alternative accounting, one that counts the myriad of other people's words that we might otherwise leave out of our writings, as well as the sensations, unexpected diversions, gasps, laughter, and tears that accompany all academic writing but which remain imperceptible within the final written product. We offer this mixed and re-mixed set of artifacts, reflections, material productions, and images as a gesture toward the hopeless human and more than human entanglement of all that comes before, during, and after the acts of academic writing, and hope that along with what you bring, they get you somewhere otherwise inaccessible.

**Figure 7**  
*The mess behind the invitation.*



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**Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education**  
Volume 19, Number 5, Fall 2020

**Vision and Scope**

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*Beyond simply articulating critical perspectives how does the manuscript stake the unsaid and the previous and current unconsiderable and/or irreconcilable?*

*How and to what extent does the work seeks to wrap its lips around the complex, chaotic, and cutting edges of the sayable and knowable?*

*How does the manuscript push readers and contributors to perform complex questioning of the very ideas that have become all too common-place within traditional academic journals?*

*How does the manuscript foster discussions across and through different disciplines including explorations into how intertextualities and intersectionalities operate throughout and within different educational times/spaces/places?*

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ISSN 1080-5400

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**Publisher:**

Alan H. Jones

Caddo Gap Press

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