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A Schizophrenic Scholar Out for a Stroll Multiplicities, Becomings, Conjurings

Abraham P. DeLeon

I want to lift the veil from the 'normal,' the unrecognized, unsuspected, incredible, enormous normal.¹

This is not an escape, reads the sign at the back of the posh restaurant where Patrick Bateman dines. And indeed it was not for the murderer caught in his webs of consumption and empty bourgeois culture of 1980's New York City. Desperate for meaning, Bateman turns to designer clothing, the particulars of luggage he uses to haul his dead colleague, the contours and design of business cards to the procurement of reservations at exclusive restaurants. Bateman is linked only through a shallow consumerist identity; his unchecked psychosis points towards domination and murder; his paths to becoming-other have been permanently closed. Although neoliberal capitalism produces an identity that seeks and desires the type of wealth that Brett Easton Ellis so brilliantly describes, this paper seeks an escape from these dominant ways of being in/with the world around us. It seeks a crack to escape and conjure a new kind of person.²

Being located in the cracks and in-betweens of educational theory and the social foundations is challenging: between schools of education that are technician and empirical to creative writing that is relegated strictly to the fictional worlds of our collective imaginations. Scholarship within the social foundations has crossed boundaries between disciplinary worlds, opening critiques between the limits of education and social theory. It analyzes schooling from a socio-historical approach that attempts to blend multiple theoretical orientations that examine schooling in its full context(s). The challenge has been the enclosure of educational *research* and *theory* to be cloistered only in the institution itself, a reproductive approach in thinking about the possibilities of the social foundations and its links to educational theory.

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These challenges for the social foundations, and indeed educational theory, are where radically alternative potentials reside, existing within the in-betweens and middle grounds where productive forces collide between intellectual and creative worlds. By engaging a literary flair, a socio-economic critique, and historical and philosophical approach(es), rhizomatic connections can be made. This is not a measurable reality like much of typical educational research tries to be, caught in its webs of empiricism that stresses data collection and the extraction of experiences from communities to be recuperated back into the folds of a surveillance society; to make the invisible visible through the mechanisms in which research becomes known and seen. And although this visibility works on me now producing this particular work for dissemination through an academic venue, my hope is to still work in the margins, fleshing out potentialities and lines of flight in rethinking subjectivity that emerges outside of accepted scholarly parameters.

Accepting and desiring this marginality is a comfortable space, possibly finding a crack to momentarily sidestep the recuperative elements of neoliberal capitalism. Recuperation lurks at every corner, so pointing towards a utopian way of being/thinking must be cautious. I do not tread with a newborn's naiveté; we know what recuperation does for theory, for artistic practices and for outlaw culture that has tried to formulate an identity/ethos/ethic amongst a rebellious spirit. Paul Mann, in a brilliant little book, reminded us that the avant-garde was dead, that, "nothing could appear more exhausted than its theory, its history, its works."³ Its death was its recuperation back into the folds of a capitalist culture bent on profit extraction and value creation.

Graffiti culture now found in elite and posh art galleries and punk culture sold to angsty, suburban youth at shopping malls all signal a death that may never be recovered. There is much that could be expanded from Mann's concerns about the proliferation of death for most utopian potentialities, especially for the radical imagination, when he somewhat pessimistically states, "perhaps there is no resistance but a fiction of resistance that tried to render every truth it touches fictional."⁴ And although he claims that death is, "necessary so that everything can be repeated,"⁵ a utopian imaginary may still be possible. Death is an opportunity for rebirth, resisting notions that, "artists and critics continue exactly as before, endlessly recuperating differential forms, endlessly manufacturing shabbier and shabbier critical goods."⁶ This paper is not repetition, continuing the endless cycle of educational productions that focuses upon STEM, standardization, critical pedagogy or best practices to implement via a shiny new curriculum.

This paper seeks a daydream outside of this, welcoming its place within the pastiche of postmodern traditions that may have no place within academic production. Its existence may possibly be its non-existence; a non-space to point from that remains marginalized because invisibility provides possibilities, escaping the panoptic eyes that recuperates and disciplines dissent. Utopian imaginaries want to find ways to escape these types of shackles because utopian thinking welcomes

a death of the old world (in all of its guises from the far right, liberal, radical, Marxist to the avant-garde), and “only those willing to remain in the death of the avant-garde...will ever have hope of hearing what that death articulates.”⁷ This theoretical and imaginative provocation seeks to listen to these articulations death provides, dancing across disciplinary boundaries.

A utopian imagination possesses beautiful potentialities, providing theoretical tools in which to think about and theorize not only a reality apart from what is given, but also the chance to imagine a different kind of person, birthed from alternative paradigms and epistemological assumptions. Although there is no exteriority to theory or research (the *always-already* of discursive realities), a desire is birthed in the margins, meaning, “no prophecies, no call to arms, no pretense of moral support, no manifestos.”⁸ Some attempt to flee, but they end up imprisoned, shunned, fired, psychoanalyzed, unpublished, drugged or institutionalized. Critical scholarship must come to a new self-awareness that the possibilities of utopian or liberatory critiques are already re-circulated, with, “a thousand inane bohemianisms, daydreams of escape, outlaw romances.”⁹ This means to desire that which is yet to be formulated, still willing to accept it may all be for nothing. Deleuze and Guattari have planted some initial seeds of imagining different political and personal realities, giving us ideas for different kind of people.

Leaving the Couch and Taking a Stroll

Taking cues from Deleuze and Guattari, we look to the literary figure of Lenz.¹⁰ Lenz leaves the confines of the couch to walk outside, “a breath of fresh air, a relationship with the outside world...”¹¹ that connects him more deeply to a different kind of reality. “He felt as if he must pull the storm inside himself, contain all things in himself; he stretched himself out and lay across the earth, he burrowed himself into the universe, as though it were a joy that caused him pain.”¹² For Lenz the power of nature moved him and became a conduit for new possibilities: in the world and the universe, a simple walk for Lenz provided the context for change to occur. Lenz took his line of flight, becoming the “wasp and orchid” of his natural surroundings, doing away with “ontology, foundations, nullifying endings and beginnings.”¹³ Many psychoanalysts might attempt diagnosis, but that proves meaningless when you connect to the grass under your feet, the pavement on your walk, the clouds above your head, and point towards “the summit of the mountain.”¹⁴ Connections like these contain possibilities, existing beyond measurement that standardization demands. Think of a standardized inquisitor or psychoanalyst trying to measure, analyze and capture the connections you feel when your bare feet touch the grass! These old-world practices want to capture you under a disciplinary and medical panoptic eye; label you, diagnose you and eventually drug you in our contemporary era (at one point it would have been off to the asylum!). But bodies resist, as does mine, to these medical technologies

and strategies rooted within the notion of an ideal, still body. Take the couch for example.

The couch, or other confessional strategies and technologies relied upon by priests, analysts, teachers, health inspectors and doctors provide a closed system of meaning. Even religion proved to be a futile exercise for Lenz, its confessions demanded by an omnipotent God and His agents on Earth. For even Lenz raised, “a monstrous fist to the Heavens and tear God down and drag Him through His clouds; as if he could grind the world together with his teeth and spit it out into the Creator’s face.”¹⁵ One would think that confessing to God, or a saint as Lenz attempts to do, would provide a moment of escape or even a breath of fresh air, but that confession proves empty as it, “forces [Lenz] to situate himself socially, in relationship to the God of established religion, in relationship to his father, to his mother.”¹⁶ He desires to understand what father/mother asks of him, keeping him chained to the machines of an Oedipal recuperation.

Lenz wallows in the machinic world because he is disconnected from nature and knows not even himself: “everything is a machine,”¹⁷ Lenz painfully decries. Machines pervade the consciousness of humanity, existing in the subconscious desires of our imaginative creations. They beckon to us promising an easier life, they promise luxuries, they promise ideal bodies that jump and move faster. They are part and parcel to our social order.¹⁸ Bartlett Finchley discovers in *The Twilight Zone* episode “A Thing about Machines” their power, literally driven mad by a machinic nightmare: his car without a driver, sociopathic electric razors inch down the stairs toward him, and typewriters typing gruesome death threats. The television takes on a sinister flare, informing Finchley to leave the house or risk bodily injury. Finchley meets his ultimate demise through one of the symbols of 1950s consumerism, his own car. Machines become the ultimate torment that no one can fully bear.

Finchley is not alone in dealing with the torments of machines that usurp their organic creators. They drive Joey “the machine boy” mad as well, with only his imaginal machines to connect himself: his requirement for using the bathroom, eating, functioning, playing and experiencing joy. Without these connections, Joey becomes nothing, his self that only exists within the nodes/circuits of his imaginary machines. The first impulse was to study the machine boy, analyze him through the confessing moment the couch provides and delink him. The psychoanalytic gaze maps Joey through intersecting panoptic and medical discursive regimes, transecting bodies in the normalizing space of the hospital: “the professional is seen as possessing the power to ‘cure’ mental illness, and the client or patient is positioned as the recipient of any intervention.”¹⁹ Through these techniques, the schizophrenic/manic body is “cured,” the mind freed from its torments and the power of science re-inscribed onto a body that seemingly cannot function within “normal” parameters. Psychiatry triumphs as both savior and intervention; madness effectively recuperated: normalcy restored.

Whether through the institution or the analyst’s couch, the inner self is opened

for confessional techniques. That couch is metaphorical you know; it exists as a closed system of meaning in which the analyst possesses the truths of our hidden, inner selves. The psychoanalytic couch, in which the body is still, encourages a predictable retelling, our “narrative falls into a linear sequence: ‘And then...and then...and then...’”²⁰ Predictable, bland, linear and still: that is what conformity produces, serving particular political and social functions. Still bodies can be fed corporate news to assume particular political positions; still bodies can be tested and standardized to believe only one way of knowing is correct; still bodies can be wrapped within a discourse of nationalism to deport that foreign other and erect a wall to keep them out. To sidestep recuperation we must move, escaping to remain invisible. Invisibility can be thought of as a type of movement; escaping techniques of hierarchical observations. Stillness produces conformity and thinking of this within the context of institutions, like a prison or a school, it becomes easier to visualize its importance. Stillness can be mapped and placed; still bodies can be surveilled through panoptic institutional practices; still bodies tested through an ethics and care of standardization.

Take this imaginative example: when students of a British public school in the classic film *If...*²¹ are disciplined, it happens within the context of silence and stillness. They have a strict curfew and they must be shaved, their hair cut and visibly quiet at all times, as “Shut up! Be quiet!” are consistently barked, even when no sound emanates from the obedient pupils. But Mick Travis has to break free, representing that errant body that cannot be contained with disciplinary practices. He enters the film as a rebellious figure one can relate to that has dreamt of escape, dressed in all black, his face covered. He hides his face and identity as one steeped in metaphor to be that invisible subject that seeks to exist in the cracks of the institution. It is movement and rebellion that ultimately frees Mick Travis, declaring that, “violence and revolution are the only pure acts.” He steals a motorcycle from a trendy dealer, runs amok in the school and defies authority with underhanded comments. Ultimately Mick, in a metaphorical massacre, kills the oppressive Whips (fellow seniors who run the school), firing bullets towards his oppressive tormentors but runs and moves whilst doing it. He *moves*, and that movement is key to his metaphorical act of rebellion.

One cannot be rebellious if still sitting at a desk or lying on the analyst’s couch, missing the necessary connections movement provides. Movement allows a body to be in a constant state of becoming: reaching out to touch you is a political act of cooperation and community, but yet, I do not touch a body that is complete. Instead I touch the body that is *always already* in a constant state of flux: becoming-other and/or becoming-something other than what came before.²² That movement can happen anywhere, found in the yearnings of those who admire nature to our urban compatriots that find solace in steel and cement. When one is experiencing movement through say the tango or a stroll, the movement itself as practice becomes a radical act that is decoupled from a machinic reality. A technology and

tool of power, the couch/desk is that which must make the body still; confessional techniques of extraction depend on stillness, because movement does not allow that capturing to occur. Stillness is the act that exists in the singular experiences of a mapped and charted life, bowing to the panoptic eye that Bentham imagined. Movement (however that is defined by the body that moves) allows us to link with the multiplicities, opening critical potentialities of everyday lives.²³

Manning discusses and theorizes the tango as a possibility that cannot be traced, as its beauty and potentiality existing in its unscripted, unbounded movement that requires a touching and linking of bodies together as one. But for educators this becomes too abstract: we cannot have students moving and dancing, do you want anarchy? Think of the desk of the school pupil when a body occupies it: still, obedient, surveilled, accountable, measured, disciplined, these acts easily accomplished because the youthful body becomes fully accountable through disciplinary gazes, confessional techniques and standardized regimes of testing that operate under the watchful eye of the headmaster. Compare this to a classroom beyond the walls and desks of the institution that has delinked, those anarchist experiments in education without a formal curriculum, devoid of accountability schemes and embracing the chaotic nature of empowering educational experiences.²⁴

Like the confessional techniques of the analyst, schooling demands rigid curricular paradigms tied to accountability measures or you find yourself operating within the realms of the absurd. Education and psychiatry become linked through their confessional and normalizing techniques in which measurement becomes the operation par excellence; what Michel Foucault claimed were the, “minor techniques of multiple and intersecting observations, of eyes that must see without being seen; using techniques of subjection and methods of exploitation, an obscure art of light and the visible was secretly preparing a new knowledge of man.”²⁵ All done in the name of “mental health” and “classroom management,” the couch and the desk become normalizing operations of power, scopic tools in which to detail and map the invisible self that is constructed as wild and unruly, making possible, “a single gaze to see everything constantly.”²⁶

Pointing Towards Becomings

When Mick Travis breaks free from his oppressive British public school experience (or when anyone takes that unexpected stroll), Mick takes the audience with him; I felt a yearning to experience that same type of escape in which authority is shunned, that “hierarchized, continuous and functional surveillance” that inhibits new forms of becoming to emerge.²⁷ The violence of *If...* is purely metaphorical, but when one is captured with no escape possible, the absurd becomes an option, escaping “the uninterrupted play of calculated gazes.”²⁸ Our neoliberal world in the end has no need for unproductive and disobedient bodies; they must be drugged, imprisoned or simply put to death. Unruly bodies are historically and socially

constructed, moving from various constructions of normality to disease. Leprosy and madness immediately come to mind because they have been with us since the beginning.

Madness was the social/medical/political symphony of the Middle Ages in Western Europe, but its overture emerging from leprosy and other types of diseases and plagues, representing unpredictable forces for humanity that could not be tamed.²⁹ These fears emerge in gothic horror from authors like Edgar Allen Poe. When Prince Prospero and his fellow nobles wall themselves in his abbey to escape, even the walls and confining space cannot save them; they each succumb to death's calling through a horrific plague.³⁰ And that imagined disease emanating from Poe's dark imagination is gruesome; "sharp pains, dizziness and a profusion of blood from the pores."³¹ Poe ends his tale in a totalizing reality for the powers of death: "and Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all."³² Poe poetically and imaginatively describes the point of no escape: privilege nor wealth could save the Prince and his guests from their ultimate fate.

Prince Prospero's actions were deemed abnormal, his tastes "peculiar," with a "fine eye for colors and effects" and plans that were "bold and fiery."³³ Some thought him mad, but reaching out and touching the eccentric Prince determined he was quite human. Madness finally grips the guests once the gruesome stranger is revealed to be that being which stalks eternally. Death's cold embrace ultimately waits for us all. I imagine leprosy operated in a similar manner before the discourses/practices of medicine and hospitalization arose in the Western imagination: an unpredictable force that killed and infected indiscriminately. With the advent of cures and exclusion, Foucault argued that leprosy (ideologically, discursively and medically) and its accompanying fears shifted towards those deemed mad: the ship of fools that drifted the ocean, port-to-port, stateless and anarchistic.³⁴ "Madness was allowed free rein; it circulated throughout society, it formed part of the background and language of everyday life..."³⁵ The mad (represented as dark *and* magical), knew no boundaries or social expectations.

These conceptions of madness as a social problem relegate it to a space where production cannot occur. Medical schemes and diagnoses classify and produce an affect of despair, part of the radical project needs to be invested in rethinking and reclaiming diagnosis that mark bodies this or that. The schizophrenic is constantly producing despite the crushing reality of psychiatric schemes, producing new experiences that are not tied to the common scripts some follow. Madness becomes the realm of a new form of resistance. This has historical/artistic/literary precedent. Hamlet, deemed mad by his family, was in quite the predicament. Positioned between the ship of fools and the great internment movement, Hamlet was in the cracks of these medical/psychological practices. How could he expose the traitorous acts of his mother Gertrude that he knew to be true? As she proclaims Hamlet to be in her own motherly diagnosis, "Mad as the sea and wind when both contend..."³⁶ The common tactic would be to retreat to denial, but to ferret out deceit Hamlet chose

a façade; he chose to become mad to uncover the sinister plot. The specter showed him a path of becoming: a specter of the past, the present and future available to him.³⁷ The Oedipal complex is turned on its head, as the Father is victim from the hand of Eve. The mother's embrace for our poor Hamlet is cold and stinks of death and betrayal; what is a man to do when mother abandons him? Did he indeed become mad, or was it a ploy?

To feign madness is to be mad to the world. It interrupted the connections between Hamlet and his murderous mother. Familial and affective flows were delinked out of necessity for Hamlet; severed under the weight of scheming dishonesty. Mother represents the last refuge for a son gone mad. Literary traces of these motherly woes span centuries. It also happened to poor Willard, a social misfit that found kinship amongst his rats.³⁸ Willard's mother, overbearing, controlling and verbally abusive, finds herself at odds with a son who is in the throngs of becoming-rat. She tries to delink his connections to the vermin, but that connection is what Willard feels deeply inside him, transcending the animal/human binary so much that when naming one of his rats Ben, Willard believed that, "its almost as if he forced the name on me."³⁹ Nonhumans become the sanctuary for Willard, as his mother represents the Oedipal rage in which son disappoints a larger-than-life motherly figure.

Hamlet also felt that sting of rejection of motherly love that Willard experienced, and their connections severed as well; the pack for Willard provided new possibilities and ferreting out deceit for Hamlet provided tragic vindication. We must, however, tread lightly, as Willard's connections with the vermin only provided a backdrop for a horrific and macabre tale. And why not become-rat? Rats provide a context in which to rethink our subjectivity: their "feverish" actions and connections with each other as a backdrop for a new sense of self to be born from the swarm/pack: a "pack or affect animals that form a multiplicity, a becoming, a population, a tale," because becomings happen in "multiplicities."⁴⁰ It is a connection to a community with common purposes that provides meaning, "the exhilaration of working with people you like and respect toward an agreed-upon objective, an objective from which all workers will gain. *Happiness is a by-product of function.*"⁴¹ And for Willard, connections to his pack of rats provided that happiness his alienated body desired; alienation severed when connected to the pack; new connections formed. As Leonard Lawlor claims, "writing like a rat—writing no doubt a folktale—would produce a people who thought feverishly,"⁴² and a feverish thought can happen within the multiplicity, the collective: a swarm that seeks to escape its limited confines to become something else.

Does this mean all becomings lead to potential social/political/economic transformations? Unfortunately not, as neoliberal capitalism has its own form of becomings for its ideal subjects that become individualistic, entrepreneurial and self-reliant. Take the work of the neoliberal/libertarian dandy Ayn Rand. In the newly included notes in an appendix to one of her seminal works *The Fountain-head*,⁴³ Rand not only outlines the book and its justifications for setting, character development and overall themes, she describes their physical characteristics in

painstaking details. Their facial features detailed, their bodies outlined, their stature visually described through a language that constructs an ideal body. Rigid, linear, and hard lines laid bare through a celebration of an indomitable capitalist spirit that is seasoned, tough and able to handle a selfish and self-serving society, the pinnacle of human development. The hero of her story, Howard Roark, is described with razor-sharp precision: “angular-straight lines, straight angles, hard muscles...large, long hands—prominent joints and knuckles and wrist-bones...”⁴⁴

For Rand, this figure’s body is not simply rigid, linear, and angular (all the visions of a modernist aesthetic), but his demeanor is also outlined. His “utter selfishness”⁴⁵ is constructed to be part of a virtuous spirit un-phased by the concerns of most ordinary individuals. His individualism becomes a beacon that calls for society to abandon community and human, affective connections. He “seldom laughs,”⁴⁶ and he has found a way in which to transcend weak emotional states that plague human society; he has even transcended the feeling of suffering: “He does not suffer, because he does not believe in suffering. Defeat or disappointment are merely part of the battle.”⁴⁷ His character is a representation par excellence of the experience of neoliberal and modernist triumph: a selfish exploration of exalting oneself over any social or communal concern: a becoming under the auspices of neoliberalism. Roark selfishly and unrepentantly charts a course for himself through a virtuous triumph over real struggle, in which he forgoes even the affect of happiness: “and when he laughs—which happens seldom...”⁴⁸ Stoic, selfish, emotionless, egotistical: these are the traits for the hero in Rand’s vision for a future society. This is her path towards a neoliberal becoming; her utopian vision of a selfish, self-serving society that puts self at the forefront of all concerns.

Becomings proliferate the imagination from a wide variety of ideological frameworks and perspectives, and we contemplate these on our imaginary stroll. Becoming for Willard was not an escape, but a new connection to be explored with the swarming nonhuman. It was the existence of the pack that proved to be his most formidable offering because the pack is *multiplicity*. Within multiplicity, the Eurocentric individualist spirit is secondary, bodies instead pointing towards connections to those around us in the *always-already* forming community. When Christopher Columbus commented on the generous spirit of those indigenous people he first encountered, he found it curious. Instead of celebrating a cultural framework steeped in generosity, his conclusion is that servitude would be a fitting place for these errant bodies, figuring that only 50 or so men could subjugate the whole lot.⁴⁹ Generosity was the connection to domination for this infamous colonizer. What Columbus demonstrated is that these individualist notions were so firmly entrenched in the minds of these colonizers that any threat to this social order must be ferreted out and destroyed; enslaved for their cultural frameworks. This stroll I take imagines that generous spirit is one of the conditions of early humanity, untouched by complex hierarchies found in European society. Hierarchy produces the conditions in which generosity is constructed as weakness because

hierarchy positions bodies or nature or language or social practices within a top-down, competitive ordering in which one must be the *best* and *individuated*—selfish individualism championed by the likes of Ayn Rand. Multiplicity (not in a binary but within a rich continuum of ways of being and knowing) is where the counter to Columbus’ reasoning appears to exist. It is a feverish becoming that happens amongst the swarm, the pack and feverish rats because of connections between bodies: “bands, human or animal, proliferate by contagion, epidemics, battlefields, and catastrophes.”⁵⁰ Willard was amongst personal catastrophe because he lacked human connections and friendships, finding solace only amongst his swarm.

But for our poor Willard this proves to be no escape; he cannot move beyond his petty thirst for revenge, eventually trapping him and bringing his connections to the swarm to a bitter end. It becomes a good lesson to heed as the old world and its ways of being are still hidden deep inside of us, ready to subvert the possibilities of a future apart from this one we have created. And these ties to our past will continue to haunt us as we discover new connections, new ways of being, new swarms to join. Willard unfortunately cannot escape, and his becoming becomes the backdrop of a tragic tale. Escape proves to be the real challenge of the hegemony of the era we are historically, socially, economically and politically located. What about the castaway that has the path of escape there for the taking, the body flung from the comforts of her/his home to be stranded like the character of *Robinson Crusoe*? He was stranded on an island, but still unable to leave behind the European modernism that defined his time and his sense of self.⁵¹

Willard could not leave the rejection of his society behind him and move forward to sustain different kinds of connections. Crusoe the same, bound to a European civility that, despite the crushing reality of total isolation, he remained clothed.⁵² When another human being joins him, what happens? He enslaves him; Friday becomes an extension of the will of European modernism towards domination much like The One Ring that dominated any being in Middle Earth that found and donned its metallic embrace; modernism becomes the analogy of The One Ring of power that has the potential to rule them all.⁵³ Despite the reality of total isolation for Crusoe and The One Ring lost in the River Anduin for two and a half thousand years, the old world and its sensibilities live on.

Ideologies forever haunt us till the grave, and maybe that is why Dr. Frankenstein’s monstrous creation is such an abomination because death’s slumber is interrupted for a perverted vision of scientific creation. The dead body, animated by the will and knowledge of Western science, is too monstrous to bear because the flesh holds the memories of the past. Although death abounds and philosophical inquiry could be thought of as a way to prepare for an organic body’s ultimate fate, possibilities exist. Archival research, for example, is an opportunity to uncover the lost voices of those forgotten.⁵⁴ Exploring voices lost to history and to dominant narratives is one of production. Think about it this way: a social foundations scholar discovers the liberating, avant-garde musings of the French surrealists and that moment

becomes a point to uncover lost voices. S/he is so excited about their find, they fashion a class activity, research project or graduate student experience immersed in those uncovered voices. And although the death of the avant-garde is amongst us like the walking dead, possibilities may still exist.

Retracing the steps of Deleuze and Guattari through an examination of their primary sources reveals much. They scoured accounts for the productive nature of schizophrenia, delving into the work of Henri Michaux for the account of the schizophrenic who produced a table, made from, “continual manipulation” in which its creator “never stopped reworking it, complicating it, ‘overstuffing’ it.”⁵⁵ Despite not being a functioning table, the patient toiled to create that which defied categorization. “A dehumanized table, nothing cozy about it, nothing ‘middle class,’ nothing rustic, nothing countrified, not a kitchen table or a work table. A table which lent itself to no function, self-protective, denying itself to service and communication alike.”⁵⁶ And although Deleuze and Guattari remained fixated on this patient’s productive impulse to create a table that had no real function nor reference point to what we would consider a “real table,” there was another interesting point about this patient Michaux named “E”: his productive capacities in his interaction with others.

Not satisfied with what polite society might deem “normal” hellos and good-byes, E “composed a kind of festival of welcome, a whole pantomime of gestures, expressing approbation and delight, as well as playfulness, banter, resistance... a veritable ritual, mocking, enigmatic, with perhaps a touch of defiance.”⁵⁷ A new type of interaction was being produced, wanting to inhabit the realm of the absurd instead of commonly held social expectations. And the realm of the absurd is where madness is often placed, misunderstood outside the logics of psychotherapy. It becomes the true absence of work, the “paradoxically and tautologically doubled or absent: it is only decipherable in terms of a given set of articulations, and these articulations can only signify madness.”⁵⁸ Madness is that inherent double that Foucault explored, because madness is both known and unknown through the binary logics of Western society.

This is the point at which the social foundations scholar couples with the imaginal machines of her/his creations and says goodbye to social/scholarly expectations; we become intertwined within a critical historical past that connects us with traditions that are disparate. We produce concepts and tools that will show classroom teachers a different approach that seems absurd to a standardized reality. But we also realize the disparate connections made outside of institutions and we create a practice and intellectual tradition that is creatively interdisciplinary, finding inspiration in sources outside a strictly “educational” framework. We are told to remain tethered to schools. However the possibilities existing outside of the school walls becomes too much to bear. The chance of escape is recuperated; the internal logics keep us within boundaries so that our research and theories remain “relevant.” We are expected to chase grants that reward only particular ways of knowing and we are urged to remain within the throngs of educational practice that wants technocratic solutions to complex

educational and social problems. A traditional experience of schooling is too steeped in the State and its practices: its confessional techniques and modes of surveillance immediately capture and recuperate youth resistance techniques.

This capturing is what the unbounded stroll resists, crossing manufactured boundaries trying to find its line of flight. In the documentary, *An Examined Life*, Judith Butler declares with Sunnia Taylor that taking a walk becomes a revolutionary act.⁵⁹ It becomes an uncharted zigzag that cannot be predicted. Who will we see? Where shall we cross the street? What does a cool breeze feel like while your gait is quick? The sunlight blinds you as it bounces off the leaves of the trees and hits your eyes at that perfect moment. What does this curriculum look like that escapes standardization? So let's walk to experience these new connections and to ponder amongst an uncharted experience where complexity exists. To what destination, if any however, is where the theoretical imagining can be ignited to think of a new type of person expressed in multiplicity through this imaginative stroll.

The networks of capitalism have been clever, disappearing and reappearing at different points of its networks.⁶⁰ So we have to match this complexity by becoming the clever fox: thinking of more ways in which to feed new swarms and rhizomes to be made amongst a crushing totality. That totality is the end point we are forced that always has to happen: the ends of songs, the ends of stories to the ends of films, the recuperative moment. The point of this intervention is not to end at a fixed point, but to open the connections for future scholars and those "people yet to come"⁶¹ amongst the forming nodes of political/social/historical rhizomes.

Escaping with the Mycelium

The rhizomes of Deleuze and Guattari famously theorized is equipped to handle complexity and the possibilities of new connections. Unfortunately, many educational theorists have rested their imaginative and theoretical visions within a strictly *human* experience that happens institutionally, not opening ways other beings (plants and/or animals) socially organize themselves outside of institutions. Think of the process of becoming-other. Becoming is not imitation, replication or fixed towards a stationary telos nor is it concerned with a Romantic project that seeks a coherent and unified whole self. Becoming is multiplicity and not an end game; becoming can be other-than-the-human but does not seek the coherent whole in which to construct a new sense of self through a strictly human lens; becoming can be the invisible subterranean that exists beyond a panoptic regime that says goodbye to the dogmas of Western subjectivities; becoming is the specter that awaits discovery in our unknown past and haunts those futures still yet to materialize on our collective horizons.

I would imagine these networks to be much like the mycelium's root networks that exist underground, a rhizome with no beginnings or endings. "Mycelial networks interact with its host environment in a symbiotic manner with the health of

the greater system in mind.”⁶² Radical mycology has theorized the connections that mushrooms have with not only each other but also those plants and animals that surround it, forming rhizomatic connections, or, “a metaphor for the way humans can choose to interact in and within Gaia, our one world.”⁶³ It is these spores that become nodes for complex, rhizomatic, underground connections: spores and mycelia that decompose a dead culture, propagate at other times and places, destroyers of oppressive ideologies, affinity groups and collectives formulated and that point where conscious and theoretical liberation explodes. Deleuze and Guattari tried to think of the multiplicity of departures available in these types of ways, thinking about becoming-Other that possibly can escape the limited and singular idea of what it means to be “human.”

Human as a subjectivity and identity is a finite end-point whose script is already written: a belief in the idea of the primacy of humanity at the top of a manufactured pyramid. This has extended to the knowledge and discursive domains that have helped us construct our understandings of those worlds outside of our own. Non-humans have been studied and classified by Science to be this or that within these dominating schemas, but Deleuze and Guattari remind us, “we are not interested in characteristics (as told to us by science); what interests us are modes of expansion, propagation, occupation, contagion, peopling. I am legion.”⁶⁴ And when they establish themselves as legion, they connect to the multiplicity and the unbounded nature of the multitudes.⁶⁵

Nonhuman animals have been categorized through artificial hierarchies, when European scientists wanted to classify plant and animal life.⁶⁶ To take a stroll and think differently about the world around us would mean rethinking these dated and tired practices that emerged from the European Enlightenment and Scientific Revolutions in which Europeans celebrated finally grasping what they believed Truth to be in its purest forms. Let us escape these hierarchies and linear models and point towards rhizomes. The nodes and networks of mycelium are the organic rhizome that exhibit this radical form of inter-connectedness; lines that connect at every possible point with not only plant life, but with animals as well; “a rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences and social struggles.”⁶⁷

It is these connections that concern this imaginary stroll I wish to take that connects me to my surroundings in a radically different way. And I don’t reify nature as some Romantic vision, as these strolls can connect us to each other even within manufactured environments like city life provides. Connections are connections and some ideal form must be thrown into question (reifying nature for example) as conversations about planetary exploration on places like Mars and Europa stoke the imaginations of our current era and will place our bodies in alien environments. For Peter McCoy, the mushroom demonstrates a radical connection that humanity can learn from. And for an educational theory imagined within rhizomes, schools are severed from an ethics of domination and connections made upon learning

experiences that are interdisciplinary and steeped within a language of resistance. Like the multiplicity contained within our language systems, these connections are vast. And because a, “ideal speaker-listener” does not exist, language morphs and becomes something else within the throngs of a political multiplicity.⁶⁸

Here is where a real organizational idea becomes germane imagined within rhizomatic connections: the Spore Liberation Front. Determined to advocate for the potentialities of mushrooms outside just a food source, fungi become a metaphorical way in which to think of community and connections that gives birth to an emerging, always-formulating and connected community; a germane idea for educational theory and philosophy. They think of propagation in terms of spores that spread new ideas; ideas that tell us to, “quit our jobs, learn a trade, seed a garden, to fall in love, to care. The spores that alone may not germinate beyond a few steps but, when combined with those like them and surrounded by soil awaiting a new force of life, have the potential to transform whole ecosystems.”⁶⁹ This being just *one* of the possible nodes of this rhizome we conjure through direct action politics, connections between communities and new ways to organize ourselves.

This is a rhizomatic imagining, and for McCoy, the mushroom is linked together with other fungi, but also the trees, plants, shrubs, aphid and even those it “senses,” such as when we take a walk in a forest. “Mycelia change their behavior in response to the environment. When you walk through the forest, they leap up. They know you’re there.”⁷⁰ This is a radical connection little understood by humanity, but pushes us towards being with each other in radically new and organic ways, banding together, forming networks, pooling information and resources, what mushrooms might do when they spread their spores. And to people a new world, it would be through a radical connectivity because “multiplicities are rhizomatic,” without “subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature.”⁷¹

These multiple connections create the possibility for new nodes to formulate alternative social and political organization. Strangely, to rethink and recast bodies conceptually, epistemologically and politically is not a recent undertaking. During the Middle Ages in Europe, for example, the King was cast as a binary: the body politic and the organic body in which he was born. These formed an “indivisible unit,” “more ample and large than the body natural, but there dwell in the former certain truly mysterious forces which reduce, or even remove, the imperfections of the fragile human nature.”⁷² The despot’s body was one but also separate; an organic body whose flesh housed the power and legitimacy of the crown.

Unfortunately, this was not undertaken in which to bring about human rights or a forward thinking imaginary. Instead it was to solidify the power of the King and to remove any doubt about his potential weaknesses or failings. In the end, “an attack against the king’s natural person was, at the same time, an attack against the body corporate of the realm.”⁷³ The King thus was sovereign to himself and to the kingdom, which he ruled through both political and divine revelations. That medieval

conception of the State remained intact through a double-sided, royal existence. Think of this in another way linked to our metaphorical stroll: the sovereignty of the King was a closed system of becoming because it was relegated to only the *singular* binary; divine grace and legitimacy.

We desire to think in terms of multiplicities *and* connections, eschewing hierarchies for horizontal approaches to social organizations and resistant practices. The singular becomes antithesis to a newly formed swarm thinking in which community and connections are valued and nurtured; singularity becoming a barrier to the agitations of radical packs pointing towards connectivity. Barriers are traps and navigating them becomes the challenge set forth for radically inclined bodies, as shoots of the rhizomes take us in possibly different directions. These rhizomatic shoots take us to art, to pedagogy, to theory, to praxis, to resistance to the many more possibilities that can be dreamt by communities that resist. That is why the next section explores the conjuring sorcerer that captured the imagination of Deleuze and Guattari in which we call forth a new people (*a materializing multiplicity*) still yet on the horizon.

Legion and the Multiplicities of the Sorcerers

Deleuze and Guattari cultivated an interest in learning and exploring multiplicities; the multiplicity of the saying “I am legion and we are many.” And Legion is many and one at the same time; not losing a sense of self along with what is newly cultivated within the identity of many; the multiplicity; the swarm. Sorcerers in multiplicity evoke otherworldly forces outside of singularities because energies are always within the many. *Singularity is a dead end*. Sorcerers conjure through connections with the many and their packs, escaping dogmatic pragmatism of “reality” and enter the absurd. They think utopian, dreaming up alternative ways to socially organize and educate us. The naysayers will yell that utopian thinking is too trapped within past formations to be useful anymore; the haters will decry we are too tied to past failures, and the positivists will want us to quantify it so that we can erect a new exam like a statue of commemoration.

But new formulations have the possibility of escaping its past by reclaiming it for a new time; cutting it up and making a body with new parts that contain traces of the past, the present and the future. An amalgamation of the history of language and the ways formulated for trying to escape it. The Romantics wanted a place in which to begin again, that glimmering city in the distance with its promises of redemption. Utopian ways of being/doing/thinking conjured in this provocation seek not space or place; we desire to *think* and *scheme* like a utopian daydreamer. I want to reclaim dreaming not as a futile act but as a way in which to prepare for alternatives: daydreaming at the heart of the creative process in which we leave something behind for the future to ponder on their own terms. I don't wish to build a home on a utopian plot of land, ready for the good society to materialize before my very eyes. My only hope is to point towards a becoming that not only influ-

ences my scholarship now, but also my teaching to demonstrate to my students that alternatives are not only a possibility, but viable in today's current climate. The becoming-body needs to be daydreamed so that we are prepared to slip through the cracks when they arise.

Deleuze and Guattari found the sorcery in their philosophical tool-kit to be that of the becoming-other, that moment when a body experiences a transformation. But their plan appears too vague for us locked within the tentacles of empiricism that structures contemporary, celebrated research in education. What is conjured when we seek those cracks of an empirical world, crawl through them and run?

There is an entire politics of becomings-animal, as well as a politics of sorcery, which is elaborated in assemblages that are neither those of the family nor of religion nor of the State. Instead, they express minoritarian groups, or groups that are oppressed, prohibited, in revolt, or always on the fringe of recognized institutions, groups all the more secret for being extrinsic, in other words, anomic. If becoming-animal takes the form of a Temptation, and of monsters aroused in the imagination by the demon, it is because it is accompanied, at its origin as in its undertaking, by a rupture with the central institutions that have established themselves or seek to become established.⁷⁴

These two becoming bodies (might they even be *as mad* as the *March Hare*?) evoke with their language the cracks many of us on “the fringes of recognized institutions” seek: types of becomings that force us to examine and reconstruct our sense of self that escapes neoliberal subjectification. The fringe has already tempted me with ruptures as Deleuze and Guattari so poetically describe, and I hope to evoke these types of affective resonances in those that read this tale. My pedagogical practice is structured within the spaces of cognitive dissonance created when *one leaves the boat and is willing to go all the way*.⁷⁵ My students, with whom I deconstruct society, schooling, research, knowledge and power, discover there are multiple tales to tell and ways to tell them; we conjure others discursively. We welcome the ghosts of a painful past by working through them as a community, never demanding that each other takes up a way of believing or being. We resist pre-packaged identity formations, rather pointing to the pastiche as a way in which to think of a new self. We are comfortable with difference. We conjure within a multiplicity of a becoming-academic class. And it's messy, confusing, disheartening, captivating, joyous and challenging: inquisitors becoming-other within an affective experience that pushes and tests the contours of self.

Conjuring writers welcome these moments of escape that pedagogy provides a different kind of people that seeks to throw empiricism completely on its head. Let the empiricists call our work absurd; absurdity stands apart from neoliberal institutional realities and the realm of the assemblage/pack becomes a new domain for practice and thought. “Death to the old world in all of its guises!” the elders will say. Death, not as an end in which mourning the loss of our former world, nor our old, tired selves is necessary, but death as an opportunity to begin again; rebirth not

as the horrific undead called from their eternal slumber, but as vitally new beings seeking the spaces of becoming outside of that dead world we left behind. This is the work of an intellectual sorcerer, conjuring alternatives from interdisciplinary and epistemological explorations, escaping the panoptic eyes of empirical thought and practices. Bury the past where it belongs to feed the future, that's what the Romantics would say. But the body of the old will serve not as mere fertilizer, but memory rhizomes on what not to do; a simple reminder to never go back to those oppressive spaces of the 1%ers, the wealthy or the Donald Trumps of the old world. "Make America Great Again" will be the calling card of those bodies dying from the old world; tired ways of practicing what used to be considered "politics" or "scholarship" or "learning." We seek to formulate new bonds amongst other becoming-bodies.

Bonds form between packs and exteriors; interiorities becoming secondary to those connections happening across multiple peoples, bodies, times, spaces, affects and other ways human animals and vegetable life connect. It escapes the neoliberal utopian project through the nonhuman and plant life available to us; mycelium connects an invisible network of vegetation that is life: connecting underground and unseen from panoptic eyes. We can learn from these connections. Even when we walk, amongst an uncharted gait that crosses boundaries, the underground connections elude us, but I turn towards them, making connections to the natural world from which we are birthed. It is in the middles that we must begin once again, "in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*."⁷⁶

Escape is not a possibility in the sense that we become singular and move away from the pack, the multitudes; make connections for other ways of being. "Making a clean slate, starting or beginning again from ground zero... imply a false conception of voyage and movement."⁷⁷ We do not make something from ground zero, we build upon the rubble and catastrophes, learning vital lessons from our past mistakes and follies.⁷⁸ It is within the in-betweens we are after, "a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other way."⁷⁹ To cut through the logics of present-day normality means to stroll through reality differently, to understand the networks between, above and below us that make radically new connections possible. We must find opportunities to push boundaries of who we are as a species and the possibilities for the world around us. We must connect to the multitudes, to the swarms, to the packs.

As critical scholars that want to actualize differences, we must take a stroll outside. Not to evoke the language, the imaginations and discourses of those European Romantics that captured our hearts with the yearnings of a gilded past/present/future to be found in a return to that reified space called "nature," but we are searching for new types of cuttings that traverse borders and boundaries allowing for lines of flight to take shape; urban, suburban, nature, imaginal, west, downtown, east, north and/or south. So as you, the reader, finish this academic tale born from an interdisciplinary walk amongst the mountains, downtown urban spaces, the sky and

those connections underfoot, were you afraid to leave the analyst's couch or your school desk? Or, did you let the adventure take you somewhere...different? Find a way to subvert your reality! Think like the schizophrenic but do not get trapped in the logics of psychoanalysis. Break and sabotage those machines that want to quantify and measure us! Be weird; reject the telos of normality. Plot for the future: rhizomatic roots that begin to produce the conditions for a different humanity to be realized.

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