

MAPPING DE/TERRITORIALIZING LITERARY ENCOUNTERS
IN ELA CLASSROOM ASSEMBLAGES

by

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ABSTRACT

Building from two years of data production, this study engages in a DeleuzeGuattarian-inspired exploration of de/territorializing learning encounters with literature that materialize secondary English Language Arts (ELA) classrooms as rhizomatic assemblages. Thinking with Deleuze and Guattari and other poststructural scholars, *learning* here entails *becoming* different and signals shifts in the always entangled ethical, epistemological, and ontological relations of the world. My experience teaching middle school ELA in the rural South offers one entry point for this inquiry and it spreads out to other nodes, including three schools and four ELA classrooms. Data production included participant observation, field notes, audio/video recordings, artifact collection, and informal discussions with co-participants. Engaging with these data, I attempted to decenter traditional hegemonic binaries and coding categories while remaining hospitable to the uncertainty of becoming otherwise in the ongoing processes of the assemblages I was inquiring with (even as I was part of them). Working from the middle, I mapped classroom encounters as they unfolded producing shifting questionings, movements, and intensities, as well as blind spots of stagnations. In chapter four I offer these maps through data narratives and interludes of de/territorializing flows from subsequent thinking with the encounters. Data discussed here circulate through encounters with literature including Bradbury's "A Sound of Thunder" (1952), Harry Potter (Rowling, 1998), Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960), The Civil Rights Movement, poetry, and Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954). What was produced through these engagements demonstrates how aesthetic readings

(Rosenblatt, 1938/1995) and literature as machine (Deleuze, 1994a) carry the force for affirmative change as they disrupt “habits of inattention” (Boler, 1999, p. 16) and produce “wide-awareness” (Greene, 1978). Reading encounters like these cannot be prescribed, but certain orientations toward literary study seem to open classroom assemblages to more equitable futures: leaning into difficult topics, welcoming artfulness, affect, and emotion, and becoming more comfortable with uncertainty.

Keywords: aesthetic/efferent reading, affect, affective-material-discursive, assemblages, classroom assemblage, Deleuze, DeleuzeGuattarian, desire, deterritorialization, difficult knowledge, ELA, Emmett Till, encounter, intensities, learning, literary encounter, literature, pedagogy, poetry, positive difference, reterritorialization, rhizoanalysis, rhizome, Rosenblatt, secondary English, subjectivity/identity, territory, thinking, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, virtue, wide-awareness

DEDICATION

To my sisters, Margaret and Miriam,

You my favorite people, my best friends, my North stars

and to the generations of women whose names we carry,

May we honor the sacrifices they made with each step we take and each word we speak

and to my son, Penn,

If you happen to read this or anything else your parents write, consider this our message to you

(borrowed from Catherine Gray's 2019 piece in *The Bitter Southerner*):

Your daddy and I are going further in our understanding than our parents knew to go. They went further than their parents. And you will go further than us. This is the work of healing and reconciliation. This is the reckoning and the liberation. Every parent gives their child a ceiling to break through, and by hell, I hope you break through ours, even when it hurts us. (para. 23)

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ELA: English Language Arts

TKAM: To Kill a Mockingbird

QR: Quick response

LOTF: Lord of the Flies

POMO: Poetry Moment

BwO: Body without Organs

MLT: Multiple literacies theory

ABR: Arts-based-research

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To the teachers and students who shared their classrooms—thank you for letting me learn from you and with you. You have literally made this work possible, and I am eternally grateful for your generosity and kindness. May you always find joy in teaching and in learning.

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TOUR GUIDES

Research Companions

On a recent trip to the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum (MCRM) in Jackson, Mississippi I was struck by how important it is to learn with the whole body. Museums, in my experience, are places to learn with the eyes, but the MCRM helped me understand how much learning happens when we involve the other senses. Music in the background can quicken a pulse or produce a slow exhale; touch can create an instant connection to something from another place and time; a carefully placed bench can provide a still moment for soaking in the too much too fast that tends to accompany hard truths.

Inspired by my walk through the museum, I have attempted to curate this work by including visual and auditory exhibits throughout the text—ways of engaging that go beyond formal academic language neatly typed in 12-point Times New Roman. These exhibits include original poetry, photographs, drawings, as well as quick response (QR) codes like the ones in Figure 0.2 which are linked to web pages or YouTube song videos. The poems, photographs, and drawings were produced in the midst of this inquiry, but the songs were my artistic companions throughout this process. They played in my head as I read through field notes, played in my car on long drives to and from the inquiry sites, and played on my feelings continually. They set tones and cast vibrations that resonated throughout this inquiry as assemblage (defined later), pushing me on and drawing me back, setting into motion new ways of thinking with the data. They weren't alone in their ability to force me to think—bread baking, long walks in person-less woods, and the occasional deep REM dream led to newness too—but those springs of insight are harder to share. All of these sources have done some of the thinking/writing work by lulling the

busy-ness of a racing mind into calm and then sometimes clarity. I am still in the process of becoming clearer about just how messy learning is.

By including these other forms of knowledge and expression, I strived to create an experience that allows readers to participate in the ongoing becoming of this project. It is my hope that through their inclusion, these exhibits will add flows of intensity that produce a more vibrant experience—ways of being with the text beyond reading it. They are steps in drawing the territory that is this work by awakening memories, compelling feelings, eliciting emotions, and composing an atmosphere.

A Note About the Quick Response (QR) Codes

As I mentioned, I have placed quick response (QR) codes throughout the pages. They look like the images in Figure 0.1.

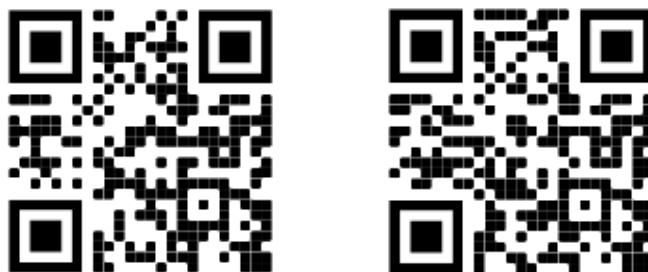


Figure 0.1. Introductory QR codes.

To access the pages to which the codes are linked, please open the camera app on a smartphone. You should not have to download any additional kind of QR code reader. It does help to have the YouTube app installed. Once opened, center the QR code in the camera's frame and you should see a pop-up to visit the linked page. Some codes are linked to informational content, but most are linked to YouTube song videos. You may have to watch a brief advertisement prior to the

videos, but the content should play shortly. Also, make sure to close the page after each one to prevent unrelated playlists from continuing.

Accessing the pages is not necessary to read and engage with the work. Open as many as you like while you read. They serve as additional nodes of connection to the assemblage that is this work, adding affective dimensionality and making present some of the sociopolitical patterns of thought that train our intuitions (Berlant, 2011). How many you explore is up to you, but I hope for generous readers to circle back to them as they read or perhaps play them as sonic landscape for your reading. Think of them as a digital tour guide or like a soundtrack to a movie. You could watch a movie without a soundtrack, but it might not be as rich an experience. A complete list of the linked content is available in Appendix A. Because these linked pages are not my own, I cannot control their permanence, and I apologize if any are removed before you read. If this occurs, I encourage you to hum another tune or compose one, which are always options.

A Note About Key Terms

For the benefit of the reader, I have also included a glossary of key terms as an interlude at the end of Chapter One which can be found on page 25. This list is not comprehensive, but it covers those key terms which may be less familiar to some readers. I find that “dog-earing” this page is helpful.

EPIGRAPH ONE: BLESSED

I have an early memory of eating maple candy under a star-shower sky in the back of a pick-up truck packed full of cousins and sisters up past our bedtimes parked in a cow pasture between small town Mississippi and the moon and thinking to myself
“blessed”

Blessed by the sounds of ceiling fans in the summer and high hearth fires in winter

Blessed by home cooking, honest and humble, heirloom tomatoes, pound cakes, and blueberries fresh from the yard

Blessed by and blessed be the name of the Creator who cares for his sheep especially when they wander

Blessed by family too big and busy to each be called by name

Blessed by parents who patterned a life of kindness, always reminding me of who and whose I am

Blessed by sisters, older and younger, and the peace that comes from having people know me better than the back of their own hands

Blessed to learn by living and by schooling and blessed with the opportunity to teach too

Blessed to engage with minds brighter than first-lit sparklers on New Years

Blessed by experiences of height and depth and the perspective they provide

Blessed to see the world and to still love going home

Blessed by the child who never sleeps, and the tiny hand ever lifted calling for me to come and see

Blessed by the love of my someone whose walk is well-guided by a desire to better the world in every way

Blessed each day with a new opportunity to live my life more fully, generously, and thoughtfully than the day before and to know that from my blessings I may bless others too

Figure 1.1. Original poem, “Blessed.”

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

An Entryway for the Problem

I was lucky to have a job. Cedar Knoll Middle School needed a reading teacher, and I was willing to make the 45-minute drive each way to continue my career at a time when there were more teachers than teaching positions (all people and place names are pseudonyms). From the first day, I was charmed by the small-town community and the picture postcard setting in which I was spending the majority of my time. Cedar Knoll yawned small-town South, from the “yes ma’ams” to the “bless your hearts,” from the mamaws and papaws who’d “hug your neck” at the post office or corner store when they’d catch sight of you. I fell in love with the place and with them, too.

The kids won me over immediately with their polite manners and Southern drawls. They were always painting pictures for my desk and bringing me flowers from their yards. Many of my students were avid hunters and fishers, and I soon learned that the first week of deer season meant low attendance. The *Duck Dynasty* TV show dominated their conversations, and I won major brownie points by taking a selfie outside the store while visiting family in Louisiana over the winter break. A lot of the girls were involved in beauty pageants and many of the boys were competitive wrestlers once they finished football season under the glare of Thursday night lights. Football games involved the entire town showing up and cheering on “their boys” to victory. The whole experience was like taking a trip back to a seemingly simpler time (see Figure 1.2).

The PTA was active in keeping the buildings painted and the grounds kempt, so while the school was old, it was lovingly cared for and well-maintained. Though the student body was not racially diverse, being 97% white folk, it did offer diversity in terms of social class. Some of my

students lived in gated communities on the nearby lake, some lived on farms, and others lived in subsidized apartments or mobile home parks not far from the interstate. Many of my students lived with aunts and uncles or grandparents who worked hard to make ends meet week-to-week. I had students who came to school in unwashed clothes when their water was turned off and others who never slept in a bed, just a mattress on the floor. It worked just as well.



Figure 1.2. If driving through Cedar Knoll were a song.

Like their parents and grandparents before them, the students in my classes had all grown up together. Everyone knew everyone and everyone's business, too. They all seemed to be related one way or another. Gossip, good and bad, spread like wildfire, and secrets were hard to keep. Most of the townspeople belonged to Christian churches that took the Bible as the literal and inerrant Word of God. Entertainment options were limited in Cedar Knoll, and outside of the school, the church was the center of social life. Nearly all my students attended church-related events two or three times a week.

Like my students, I was raised in the South, attended church regularly, and still knew to say "yes ma'am" to any woman who looked old enough to be my mama. However, to this community, I was an outsider. The principal who hired me had attended the middle school and graduated from the high school as had the majority of the faculty and staff. Throughout the year it became evident to me that many of my co-workers held me at a distance. I was one of the only

teachers in the school with a master's degree or who had traveled from her home state to go to college, and the only one with an "in-town" address—something they associated with wealth. I was the only teacher not from around there. We bonded over our similarities and did our best to bridge our differences.

The Pressure of AYP

The position I accepted (6th grade ELA/reading teacher) was created out of necessity because the number of students who registered that schoolyear demanded that another teacher be hired in order to keep the student to teacher ratio in check. The principal expected big improvements from everyone, and being new, I felt like the pressure was on. School test scores were down. Data meetings were up. Statewide benchmark scores and the money attached to them meant that our school was in a precarious position. Turnover was imminent if data points did not start moving in right direction and expectations were high for our students to demonstrate significant gains by the end of the year.

I was geared up to teach poetry, short stories, and a few novels, and I was intent on helping my students engage creatively with the literature. I mapped out the whole semester checking off each and every standard, creating units that averaged about three weeks each. Highlights of the literature included *Stargirl* by Jerry Spinelli, *Heartbeat* by Sharon Creech, "The Monkey's Paw" by W. W. Jacobs, and "Raymond's Run" by Toni Cade Bambara. We spent nearly a week on Alfred Noyes's "The Highwayman" looking at popular gothic themes in modern Halloween media. I turned the dreaded research paper into a more exciting "Expert's Journal" and announced that the presentation posters could be image heavy. When the principal told me to take the posters down from the exposed ceiling pipes where they were displayed

because the fire marshal was doing an inspection, I did, but I put them right back up as soon as he left. I was proud of my students, and I loved being their teacher.

Resisting the Status Quo (in small ways)

Though it seemed I would never be accepted as an insider, the town folk began letting me in a little. It was important for me to build relationships grounded in trust and honesty, and I worked hard to communicate my dedication to the school community. I stayed late, went to games and plays and concerts. I sent get well cards home with assignments when students were out sick. On Halloween, I dressed up as a sixth grader in one of their uniforms. I stayed out of middle school drama, but students still found me when they needed a hug or high five.

While most of the time, I kept my mouth closed when I heard or saw something attributable to small-town isolation, I pushed back on occasions when student language turned offensive. Racism was palpable throughout Cedar Knoll. Difference did not seem to be appreciated in this small town. No one raised an eyebrow at the carpool line full of vehicles with confederate flags and bumper stickers promoting the second amendment. There was also a local gang whose members donned swastika tattoos and hung out with white supremacist skinheads. I wasn't an alien, but felt an occasional rush of culture shock, even though these same phenomena were present in my own hometown. While we all wanted our students to succeed in school, I sometimes felt like I was one of the only teachers who thought open-mindedness was an attribute worthy of pursuing. Nothing in the curriculum seemed to invite this, and most everyone else seemed okay to let slurs like "faggot" and "retarded" go generally unchecked.

These sociopolitical stances weren't the only things making me stand out as different—my classroom was different, too. The desks were arranged in a rainbow shape instead of rows and columns. I devoted a whole corner of the room to comfy reading with big pillows and foam

mats on the floor. I was lenient with things about which other teachers were strict, such as gum and hats. I played music when students were working on projects. I let them open the windows on spring afternoons. These were subtle differences, but there were others that stood out more vividly.

I believe in God and in Jesus. I was raised Presbyterian, but I have grown tired of brands of Christianity that cannot strike a balance between messages of love and of guilt. Most of the teachers and students from Cedar Knoll were Southern Baptist or Church of God. While I have always attended church regularly, I have no ichthys tattoos or bumper stickers. At school, I wore no jewelry with religious content; big cross earrings and necklaces were common accessories among the other teachers. I value the importance of the separation of church and state, and I believe that the classroom is no exception. My lack of outward religiosity provided more fodder to the school community to think I was weird.

Discussing Difference

At the end of January, the students started working on a unit about ancient religions in their social science class, and I began frontloading the next novel they would be reading, Lois Lowry's *Number the Stars* (1989). This is a coming of age story about Annemarie, a young Danish girl, and Ellen, her Jewish best friend, set against the backdrop of war-torn Denmark in WWII. Their social science unit led to a lot of questions and conversations that trickled over into my classroom. On one occasion, the students came into my class completely amazed by the idea of Hindu followers thinking of cows as sacred animals. They thought the practice was absolutely ridiculous and they began making jokes about "holy hamburgers" and the like. After explaining to them that animal worship has been a major part of many religions worldwide, I decided that I needed to do a little more work preparing them to read Lowry's historical fiction story of the

Holocaust, specifically with regard to Judaism and how to study and discuss different religions without being derisive.

I created a lesson covering a few foundational concepts about Jewish culture, religion, and the events that led to World War Two. They were curious about what Jewish people looked like and what they thought about the Bible. It was important for me to help them talk about Jews as fellow human beings and to better understand norms, customs, and how to speak about differences with respect. I did what I could to help them realize that a Jewish person could look like anyone, just like a Christian could look like anyone. We also talked about how Judaism was a religion, but that a person could be of Jewish heritage and not practice Judaism.

I also had some frank discussion with them about the horrors of the Holocaust, and while their knowledge of the war was cursory, they were quick to make connections to various family members who had served in the armed forces. Death and war and religion were weighty subjects and the whole thing was a lot to take in all at once. Sometimes their questions poured forth and at other times the newness of what we talked about sat heavy on them—visible in their wide eyes and audible sighs. They commented on the fact that Jesus was a Jew and all twenty-four books in the Hebrew Bible were also in their Christian Bibles, but that Jewish people didn't share their belief that Jesus was the promised messiah. Students searched for similarities and differences, expanding their knowledge base but not altering their own religious beliefs. Feeling like they had sufficiently gained some important understandings about Jewish people and Judaism, we entered the novel unit covering a few chapters each week and checking off standards as we read.

Commandments in Play

Now in about the middle of the book, we were engaged with a scene in which the young protagonist Annemarie learned that her mother and uncle have been telling her a series of lies in

an effort to conceal their participation in the Danish resistance movement whose mission it was to smuggle Jewish people to safety. Their lies gave cover to the “illegal” activity of saving lives, as well as serving as a wall that insulated Annemarie from the unfolding terror. With SS guards on every corner, Annemarie couldn’t accidentally tell them the truth about her family’s involvement in the rescues if she did not know about it. All of this was going on in the text world, while in the classroom world, I was mainly attempting to establish the meanings of “protagonist” and “antagonist” in order to check off more standards.

We were in the midst of a particularly poignant scene in which eleven-year-old Annemarie walked into the barn where her uncle was milking a cow and told him directly that she knew they had been lying to her. Impressed by her perceptiveness, he decided that she was old enough to know the truth and explained to her that the lying was an attempt to keep her brave in the face of danger. The section copied here picks up the scene as Uncle Henrik begins explaining to Annemarie:

“But” he added, “it is much *easier* to be brave if you do not know everything. And so your mama does not know everything. Neither do I. We know only what we need to know.

“Do you understand what I am saying?” he asked, looking into her eyes.
Annemarie frowned. She wasn’t sure. What did bravery mean?

....

She began to understand, just a little. “Yes,” she said to Uncle Henrik, “I think I understand.

“You guessed correctly,” he told her. “There is no Great-aunt Birte, and never has been. Your mama lied to you, and so did I. We did so,” he explained, “to help you to be brave, because we love you. Will you forgive us for that?”

Annemarie nodded. She felt older, suddenly. “And I am not going to tell you anymore, not now, for the same reason. Do you understand?” (Lowry, 1989, pp. 76–77).

The whole story kept my students engrossed for weeks, and this highly emotional scene had all our hearts beating quicker. At this point, Carly raised her hand and asked me with the

sincerest look in her eyes a question that shook me. She wanted to know if it was okay to lie even though the Bible explicitly commanded, “Thou shalt not lie.”

“Hmmm,” I said, trying to respond without responding.

Time seemed to be both speeding up and slowing down, and all I knew was that right now I needed more of it. I knew that I was treading into precarious territory. I did not want to do anything that would potentially undo the efforts I had made to gain their trust. I wanted to respect their beliefs and recognize their local funds of knowledge. I also felt the magnitude of her question and the potential it offered for rich discussion. The weight of these things seemed to pulse around me as I stalled.

She pressed her question again, adding this time the caveat that this particular lie was being told in order for “something good” to happen. She wanted to know if it was “okay” under these circumstances.

I had chosen the book for a number of reasons: it was grade-level approved; I had read it before; it offered cross-curricular opportunities; and perhaps most importantly for me at the time, the school owned a class set. I spent weeks creating curriculum for it and mapped out all of the standards I could cover using it. I planned for everything, or so I thought. Somewhere in the midst of checking off standards, I somehow neglected to account for the ethical and affective valances the book would stir in my classroom, the relevancy to students’ lives, and the shared experience we would have as a class engaging with it. Here in this moment I was confronted with this mistake.

“Good grief!” I thought, my heart beating in my ears. “What in the world am I supposed to say?”

By this time the rest of the class had stopped what they were doing and homed in on what she was asking me, eager to hear what I would say. It felt like the room had taken on a thick quality, with each second ticking more slowly than the one before, my mind was turning more quickly than usual. It was disorienting. Had the scene been in a movie, the camera would have switched over to a soft-focus lens flipping between the student and me. Albrecht-Crane and Slack (2007) described moments like these as those “encounters that conjure affective ‘sensations’—moments of energetic and resonant connection—which indicate that something significant is at work” (2007, p. 99).

The student, the literature, the Ten Commandments, and the situation mixed to produce her as a subject who was reevaluating her doctrinal code of living, formerly stable pillars of her Christian faith. She knew that lying was wrong, but she also knew that killing was wrong. She was trying hard to make sense of this novel situation. Deborah Britzman’s (1998) concept of “difficult knowledge” is apropos here—the “traumatic residuals” of the fictionalized Holocaust events were present in the pedagogical challenge of learning from them (p. 117). Carly’s burgeoning knowledge was *difficult* because her cherished and fixed beliefs were shifting beneath her seat, complicated as they were by the horrors of the Holocaust.

So, there we were. Question asked. Door closed. Eyes wide with anticipation and wonder. Even the students who had been daydreaming or doodling were now looking right at me in expectation. I flipped through the book for a few seconds, still stalling, trying to figure out how to respond appropriately. I had set a precedent in my classroom to welcome questioning and tangential conversations.

But this was different.

Before this encounter, the Ten Commandments were unambiguous for Carly. Right and wrong were as simple as lies are bad, so don't tell lies. Killing is bad, so don't kill. Now there opened up the possibility of wiggle room, some play to a line that had formerly been taut and inflexible. The literature had pried open thinking, compelling her to question her fixed and beloved commandments. We were in dark waters. All of it felt dangerous. This was learning capable of undoing foundations. Deleuze wrote, "Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter" (1994a, p. 139). I didn't have these words at the time though.

There were regimes of truth and power at play everywhere (Foucault, 1991), and there were all these bodies before me coming together and *becoming* together in the production of something new, something dangerous. Who we were, what we believed was up in the air. This kind of learning meant changing who we were in an ongoing process of "becoming" different than we were (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). What unfolded from this moment was potentially life changing.

Dewey wrote, "One cannot climb a number of different mountains simultaneously, but the views had when different mountains are ascended supplement one another: they do not set up incompatible, competing worlds" (1916, p. 128). While the views may not be incompatible, achieving them involves *mountain climbing*. There were no less than four preacher's kids/grandkids sitting in that particular class, and this child was asking about something that could have a major influence on her kingdom come (one regime of truth). And not just hers.

"Oh my God." I thought, "I could lose my job" (another regime of truth). "This wasn't in the lesson plan" (another). "College didn't train me for this" (another). Fear gripped me. "Wow, that is a great question, what do y'all think? Who wants to weigh in?"

A few students said, “I don’t know” and shrugged their shoulders, still looking at me hopefully. The young woman who asked the question let me off the hook by walking us through *her* thinking. She suspected that it was okay to lie in this circumstance, but she wasn’t sure. She said it seemed like she was guaranteed to sin either way.

I wanted to yell, “YES! Of course it is okay, it is more than okay, it is RIGHT! Anytime a lie could save a life, you have the go ahead to lie, LIE AWAY!” but I just waited and listened. A few students said they agreed with her, and then there was another long pause. They were still waiting on me to chime in and clear it up for them. Finally, I said, “Why don’t we keep reading, and maybe things will start to clear up.” We continued with the rest of the lesson, and they didn’t bring it back up, but I felt physically sick about it for the rest of the day, knowing that I closed down would could have been a wonderful, if dangerous, discussion.

Proceeding

A lot has happened since that winter afternoon all those years ago. My personal world has changed (see Figure 1.3). I now have a child of my own, and I have gained insight into the powerful desire parents have for their children to grow up in a world where light triumphs over darkness. The lengths I would go through to protect my son are boundless, and the hopes I have for him to grow into a person who is kind and good are fiercely strong.

I worry about my responsibility to help my child navigate this world in which good and right are perpetually maligned in the name of progress, personal comfort, and the almighty dollar. A world where the state may think checking off a standard is more valuable than learning how to live with and for one another in difficult and easier times. Recent events in Ferguson, Charleston, Parkland, Pittsburgh, El Paso, Wuhan Province, and Minneapolis shout loudly that the world outside my little circle is changing, too, and there is so much to be done. Feeling the

weight of this now, I realize just how profound that moment at Cedar Knoll was in my becoming-teacher, becoming-mother, becoming-other.



Figure 1.3. Songs to mark becoming.

I am so thankful that my students were not bound by my attention to standards. They were swept up in a story that challenged their habitual thought patterns. I did not intentionally facilitate that kind of reading response, but it was immanent in the encounter. Literature has a way of finding the cracks, of getting us to interrogate our beliefs and ingrained ways of seeing the world (Harste, 2014; Spector & Guyotte, 2019; Spector & Murray, in review). Better understanding this encounter and learning more about the ways that teachers and students navigate and are navigated by moments like these is the central focus of this inquiry.

Statement of the Problem

In 1978, two years after the nation's bicentennial, educational great Maxine Greene rallied educators:

Students must be enabled, at whatever stages they find themselves to be, to encounter curriculum as possibility. By that I mean curriculum ought to provide a series of occasions for individuals to articulate the themes of their existence and to reflect on those themes until they know themselves to be in the world and can name what has been up to then obscure. (pp. 18–19)

In this statement, Greene was encouraging teachers to help students realize that their place in the world, specifically in their learning of the world, should not be a passive thing, but rather that it is active and open to producing a different future.

How literary encounters such as mine at Cedar Knoll work to intervene in the world is not well understood. Connecting with literature can create new ways of thinking and being—this is, as Greene described, reading as possibility. However, as exemplified by my experience, what is produced in encounters with literature is unpredictable and may be abandoned before it really gets rolling. Afraid of the unpredictability and potential filling my classroom, I reeled things in rather than letting them play out by leaning into the difficulty. I had made it a point to be a teacher of the whole child and to stomp out racism and prejudice where I saw it in the school, but somewhere between data meetings and lesson planning, I lost sight of how literature could also help do that. In closing down encounters because they are unpredictable, we shut off the potential for uncertainty, risk and trauma, and change, peace, and healing, too (Dutro, 2019).

Our pedagogies may reinforce the status quo, and they may encourage risk-taking, critical thinking, and engagement in the pursuit of justice and peace. Janks argued,

We need to ensure that our students can engage with texts, whether they agree with them or not ... they also need to be able to read them critically, against the grain, so they can judge whether the text serves the interests of some at the expense of others. (2018, p. 95)

This is challenging work for both teachers and their students. In my experience, unpredictability is not something teachers readily invite into their classrooms. Ellsworth (2005) described moments like these as “the crisis of learning ... that moment of letting go of a former self in order to re-identify with an emerging and different self that is still in transition” (p. 89). This work doesn’t just mean adding to an already constructed set of knowledge, but involves continual demolition and reconstruction, “los[ing] that part of ourselves whose identity depends on not

thinking that thought” (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 89). When I first became an English teacher, I did not consider continual demolition a big part of my job responsibilities. I do now.

Adjusting our view of learning as a series of unfolding, relational encounters rather than volumes of knowledge tucked away in the vaults of our grey matter takes some getting used to. We are so trained by the commodification of learning: the idea that we take in knowledge that has exchange value, such as buying course credits to produce credentials which can be then traded for some promised future (see Kuntz, 2019, on the commodification of objects in Chapter 6). Where is thinking in that equation? Research, inquiry, investigation, and curiosity are reduced to standards and checklists. Novels are mined for plot points. I had far too many teachers tell me that it was important to read Shakespeare because I was going to “need it” someday. Shakespeare as credential. Instead, I now see classrooms where literature, including Shakespeare, participates in opening up potential for material change in the world, “a challenge to the governing status quo” (Kuntz, 2019, p. 29). Part of learning what this means in terms of English classes is acknowledging how texts work as “participants in the world, one piece of our ever-changing assemblage, along with material objects, bodies, and sensations” (Leander & Boldt, 2014, p. 36). This doesn’t set classrooms up to be places where anything goes, but places that welcome literature and its dis/connections as active participants in the unfolding world. Reading as possibility necessitates as Leander and Boldt described, a dwelling “in the ongoing present, forming relations and connections across signs, objects, and bodies in often unexpected ways” (2014, p. 36) that open up new potential for more equitable futures. The present inquiry explores how that works.

Informing Research and Theoretical Orientation

The body of research informing this study is broad and diverse, but still partial.

Reflecting on the impossible task of following one philosopher completely, Crotty (1998) wrote,

We need not be so purist. It is possible to be more or less Heideggerian, more or less Gadamerian, more or less Foucauldian. There may well be aspects of the thinker's thought that we want to dismiss, while other aspects come together to form a useful avenue to what we want to study. (p. 215)

In my case, I am more or less DeleuzeGuattarian, or perhaps DeleuzeGuattarian-inspired.

Bringing in insights from multiple perspectives enriches this work. Dr. Joseph Milner, the chair of my master's thesis, told me that life is better with many mentors, and I think the same can be said for scholarly inquiry. Deleuze would support this decision. In his reflections on how to read Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) *A Thousand Plateaus*, Massumi "invited [readers] to lift a dynamism out of the book entirely, and incarnate it in a foreign medium, whether it be painting or politics" (p. xv). My medium is this inquiry, and I lift many concepts from Deleuze and Guattari, including: rhizomatic assemblages, mapping, de/territorialization, difference in itself, and molar, molecular, and flight lines. These concepts often overlap and at times they may be interchangeable. What they all share is a repudiation of binary thinking in favor of multiplicity amidst flux, the usually excluded middle, which is necessary for an inquiry that maps relations producing particular kinds of knowing subjects and ways of doing literature in schools.

Though this work is oriented through the conceptual terrain of Deleuze and Guattari, there are many others who have contributed to its production. My initial efforts to analyze what happened at Cedar Knoll led me to research from moral psychology. This research, coming from the Minnesota Group (James Rest, Darcia Narvaez, Stephen Thoma, & Muriel Bebeau) and their work with the neo-Kohlbergian model of moral development as overlapping schemas, was a productive territory to explore (Rest, 1983; Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau & Thoma, 1999). The idea of

tension between rights and wrongs paralleled the tension I saw in my students' efforts to sort out a hierarchy of commandments. While this was helpful, I wanted to enlarge the area of focus beyond moral reasoning within individuals because my experience at Cedar Knoll showed me that there were a whole host of forces shaping our emerging discussion of the Ten Commandments, including things like AYP, my outsider status, students' religious and sociopolitical backgrounds, the literature, the relationships we'd formed, and on and on.

Broadening my focus led me into thinking with DeleuzeGuattarian rhizomatic assemblages and the ideas of de/territorialization (1987). These concepts make use of a perspective that focuses on collective becoming through an ever-changing flow of connections and disjunctions. Thinking this way made it possible to attend to connections in the inquiry that were moral, but also to others more closely linked to theories of literature and learning. Among those influencing this work are Louise Rosenblatt, with her concepts of efferent and aesthetic reader responses and transactional reading (1938, 1986), and John Dewey (1925, 1938, 1949), who contributed the idea of learning being produced through unpredictable and potentially perilous encounters between stability and the unknown. In addition to the significant concepts provided by Rosenblatt and Dewey, Maxine Greene contributed an important charge that reading and learning ought to orient students toward "wide-awareness" and helping them "in thinking together about how they live, about the deficiencies in their lived situations, and about how they might be repaired" (1978, p. 84).

Thinking rhizomatically, literary encounters can be cutting edges that lead to new ways of being in the world. This kind of learning is risky, fugitive (Patel 2016 a, b), and transformative (Ellsworth, 2005). In addition to these more complex ideas of thinking and learning, this work joins in scholarship that focuses on the responsibility accompanying learning that incites difficult

discussions, specifically research on the pedagogical discomfort (Boler, 1999; Jones, 2012), difficult knowledge (Pitt & Britzman, 2003), and testimonial reading (Dutro, 2008, 2010, 2011; Felman & Laub, 1992). Each of these sources has contributed to the ways in which I map this inquiry. Though they come from diverse and at times competing fields, they harmonize, providing depth and richness to this inquiry as assemblage.

Purpose of the Study

I am interested in the ways that literary encounters de/territorialize knowing subjects and English pedagogies, specifically when they open potential to disrupt that status quo of neoliberal, white supremacist, cishetero patriarchy. I map experiences and encounters that create opportunities for testimonial reading: “the obligation of witnessing truth’s crisis, and accepting a responsibility to carry out the ethical relations implicit” in that crisis (Boler, 1999, p. 172). This kind of reading becomes possible when we think of learning as intervention in the world rather than representation of it.

I map what contributes to the emergence of de/territorialization by using a DeleuzeGuattarian-inspired mapping technique to examine the becoming classroom assemblage. I am interested in potential. How relations open, shift, loop back, and produce barriers, providing insight into the ways that classes move through the tensions and joys of creativity, vulnerability, rigidity, and all the potential of communal literary experiences.

I map how classrooms operate as multiplicities in relation to other multiplicities, recognizing that all becomings produce differences in the world that matter. Thinking along these lines, Rosenblatt wrote that “For literature by its very nature invokes participation in the experiences of others and comprehension of their goals and aspirations” (1995, p. 88). For Rosenblatt, this occurs through aesthetic reading experiences, ones that are created differently

with each reader and readings that “recall to us elements out of our own past insights and emotions [and] ... present them in new patterns and new contexts” (1995, p. 101). These aesthetic encounters with literature provide classes with opportunities not only to become self-critical, but to become different. I offer examples of such encounters (or near encounters), teasing out those instances when readers were engaged or could have been engaged in this kind of work.

Finally, I want to stress that this work is not rooted in some hope of stripping data down to some generalizable core as is common in arborescent models of research. With Patel (2016a, 2016b), I make no apologies for the specificity of the data shared in the narratives and interludes that compose chapter four. Boler (1999) wrote of her work, that it “does not lend itself to quick prescriptions and generalized rules applicable to all educational instances and all students and teachers” (p. 7). Like her, I keep the “the emphasis on the ‘particular’” (p. 7). Thus, the work I do here is particular to the flux of de/territorializing literary encounters, thinking about those encounters with relational materialist theories, and writing about them as a process of finding dis/connections. This dissertation does not even attempt to be the “final word” on the encounters I describe and analyze (Massumi, in Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. x).

Orienting Questions

- 1) What relations contribute to the unfolding of de-and re-territorializing literary encounters in secondary English classrooms?
- 2) How are knowing subjects produced through de- and re-territorializing literary encounters in secondary English classrooms?

Methods as Rhizome

Though begun with more conventional qualitative methods, this work became increasingly oriented toward what St. Pierre called post-qualitative inquiry (2016) and what Kuntz called “relational materialist inquiry” (2019, p. 3). Some practices were typical of more

conventional qualitative research: becoming part of the classrooms, producing field notes, recording and transcribing discussions, and writing analytical memos; however, instead of relying on participant interviews to see what sense they made of events, for example, I mapped relations that sustained, shifted, and reterritorialized classroom rhizomatic assemblages around literary encounters. Working in an unconventional way, I sought to decenter humans in this inquiry by thinking with relational processes of which humans were a part, and where books, photographs, poetry readings, and current events were also vibrant forces at play. I have engaged in rhizoanalysis using a DeleuzeGuattarian mapping technique which orients the inquiry toward relations as they emerge and shift. I explain this more fully in chapter three, but I next provide a brief overview of the rhizome and mapping and how they operated in this inquiry.

The Rhizome

Rhizomes (Figure 1.4) are multiplicities, have no center, are “defined solely by a circulation of states,” and are driven by a flow of productive desire to make dis/connections in the world (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 1).

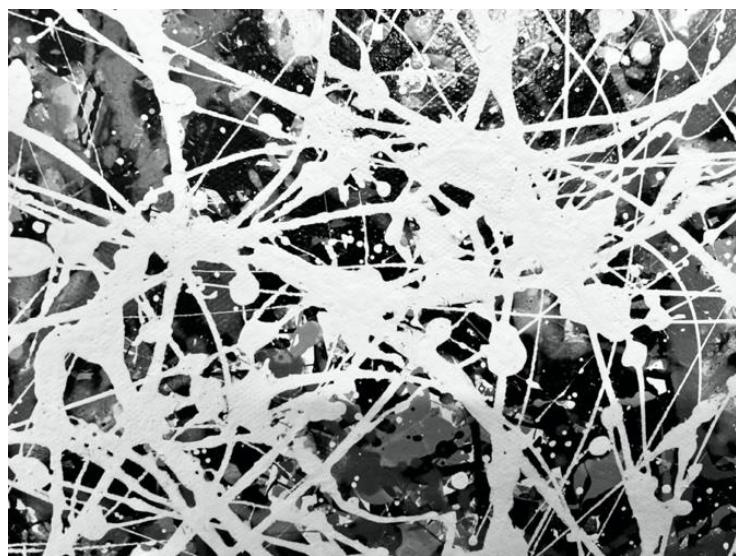


Figure 1.4. A rhizome, photo courtesy of Karen Spector.

A rhizome is like “the axon and the dendrite twist[ing] around each other like bindweed around brambles, with synapses at each of the thorns” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 15). It is a process of bringing heterogenous elements together in relation by active forces of organization and disorganization. Rhizomes cannot be dissected according to fixed patterns or binaries.

Unlike the tree, rhizomatic assemblages function according to a flattened ontology—one lacking arborescent hierarchy. They operate between the planes of immanence and organization in loops of deterritorialization and reterritorialization or “reciprocal presupposition” (1987, p. 72). Describing this in her own work, de Freitas (2012) wrote that rhizomatic assemblages are a “radically new ontology of the social, where subjectivity is formed by way of discontinuity, rupture, and multiplicity” (p. 561). Rhizomatic assemblages are always shifting. One of the ways they shift is through lines of deterritorialization that loop out of their current configuration but always eventually connect back to the rhizome because they are part of it and arise from it (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 9). As the line loops out and connects back, the assemblage shifts, expanding a bit, roping in a new cast of characters or new ways of moving. Rhizomatic assemblages are not stable, but fluid with temporary consolidations that are at risk of being deterritorialized further, or yanked back into rigid order, temporarily reterritorializing how the assemblage functions and what it produces.

Mapping

What you see in the following pages probably won’t remind you of a map. At least not a visual map like the one shown in Figure 1.5. I borrow Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the map as a way to present this inquiry that is always partial, ever becoming, proceeding from somewhere in a middle. While I do incorporate visuals throughout this work, I have not attempted to create a literal map of this inquiry. Rather, I take insight from what maps display—dirt roads, highways,

railroad lines, contours, detours, peaks, valleys, rivulets, inlets, hotspots and no-man's land—ways of connecting seemingly different places by a shared topographical landscape. Establishing that the maps presented here are not the Rand McNally type, but rather ways of creating snapshots of the ever-becoming rhizomes, it follows that the method used to produce them is mapping (as opposed to tracing) a technique that “involve[s] following the affects and percepts in their twisting, braiding, and knotting emergence” (de Freitas, 2012, p. 563). The encounters with literature, the discussions around them, and some relations that materialize these assemblages may be mapped.

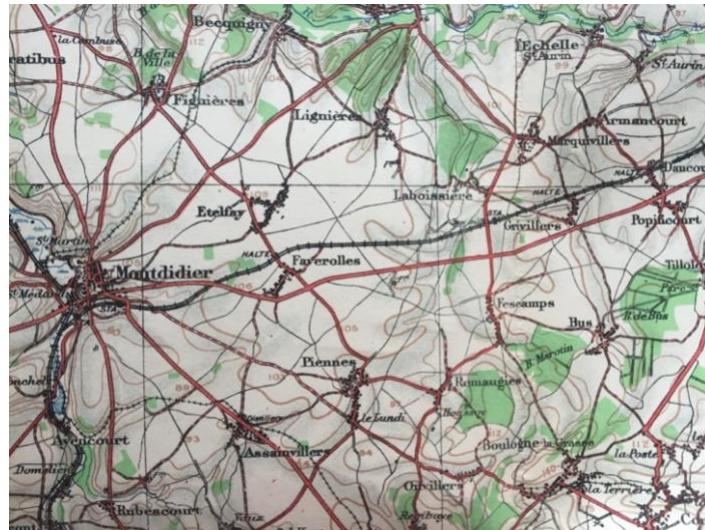


Figure 1.5. Map (traditional kind). Photo by Elizabeth Anne Murray.

Significance of the Study

On its website, *The Washington Post* keeps a visual record of mass shooting incidents in the United States (linked in Figure 1.6). The news source defined mass shootings as those “in which four or more people were killed by a lone shooter (two shooters in a few cases)” not including those connected to gang violence, robberies, or domestic shootings in private homes (Berkowitz & Alcantara, 2019, para 3). I wanted to include some of the visuals from this data,

but they multiplied faster than I could update drafts of this work. Of the ~~1242~~ 1246 victims accounted for, the ages range from eight months to 98 years.



Figure 1.6. Mass Shooting Data. The Washington Post.

Mass shootings re-ignite well-worn debates about gun control at the national, state, and local levels, but in the long run the status quo is reterritorialized with small differences. How does this assemblage of relations keep reconstituting itself despite most U.S citizens supporting universal background checks, red flag laws, and assault weapons bans (Montanaro, 2019)? How do walls that block sensible regulation from passing continuously re-materialize? During my time in the field, twelve mass shooting happened, and schooling around these shootings makes its way into chapter four.

Other sets of harm-producing relations also endure in fluctuating forms. Racism, white supremacy, and white nationalism have been on the rise in the U.S. since 2015, and racially motivated hate crimes are correlated to the 2016 election of President Trump (Edwards & Rushin, 2018). I update this section even now as Minneapolis and the nation reel in response to a white police officer kneeling for eight minutes and forty-six seconds on the neck of a prone, handcuffed Black man as he begged for his life on a public street.

In broad daylight.

In front of fellow officers also sworn to serve and protect.

With an onlooker intervening by claiming what should go without saying, but doesn't: "He is human, bro" (Alexander, 2020, n.p.). How has this set of relations re-materialized in shifting forms of lynching? Any list of names would be incomplete, but relevant to this inquiry is the name of Emmett Till, as readers will see in Chapter Four.

English education offers a potentially significant place for students to navigate these complexities with wide-awareness and openness to change as an ethical valence. Literature has a way of pulling current events and deeply cherished beliefs into new relations. Kuntz argued that we need,

to actively develop new ways of living, new possibilities for being other than we are; a fracture with the histories that claim a determining grasp on our futures. In some ways, we perhaps need to lose faith in our present moment in order to maintain the hope of a different future. That is, we need to believe that our contemporary times can become something different altogether. And, we need to develop an ethical relation to change that productively challenges and disrupts the exploitative processes we now endure. (Kuntz, 2019, p. 1–2)

As I ducked Carly's question about the Ten Commandments, paralyzed as I was by lack of training, lack of understanding, lack of knowledge, I may well have closed down the potential for new ethical relations to emerge. This inquiry is significant because it maps how literary encounters in English classrooms de/territorialize exploitative and harmful processes and produce knowing subjects who will help produce the future.

In the interlude that follows this chapter, I present a list of key terms, some of them I've already used, and others are yet to come. It is placed as a handy reference while you are reading because there are so many terms that may be new to readers.

Key Terms: An Interlude

Aesthetic reading: Rosenblatt's term used to describe "predominantly literary" readings—those which focus on the poetic experience of reading as opposed to nonliterary readings which treat texts as "a body of information to be transmitted" (1995, p. 292). For Rosenblatt, "meaning "happens" during the interplay between the text and a reader" (2005, p. xxiv).

Affect: A jolt, charge, "prepersonal intensity" or capacity to act or suffer the actions of others (Massumi, in Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. xvi).

Affective-material-discursive: The recognition that affective, material, and discursive forces operate in assemblages without an established hierarchy or notion of privileged human dominance. Interrupts mind/body, nature/culture, reason/emotion binaries.

Assemblage: A multiplicity made up of "lines and measurable speeds" that "necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 4, 8). As multiplicities, assemblages have "neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature" (1987, p. 8).

Chaos: This word is used for disorderly forces acting on and within territorial assemblages. Deleuze and Guattari explained that territories are drawn to keep the forces of chaos out and safety and security in (1987). The territory can open to allow some elements of chaos in while remaining metastable.

Classroom Assemblage: Throughout this work, I at times use the phrase "classroom assemblage." As de Freitas (2012) explained, classroom assemblages include "many kinds of agents or nodes aside from human or biological persons. The blackboards, the projectors, the furniture, even the announcements over the intercom, all factor into the assemblage" (p. 562).

Desire: Desire for Deleuze and Guattari is a productive force that does not suggest a lack (as with Freud) but rather the active production of the world. It can produce unhealthy relations, but when it's healthy it opens to positive difference, connection, and affirmation.

Deterritorialization: Territories are always in the process of becoming. Deleuze and Guattari explained that “in many cases, a territorialized, assembled function acquires enough independence to constitute a new assemblage” which occurs through a “deterritorialization” (1987, p. 324). This movement or transformation into another territory occurs via lines of flight which act as “cutting edges,” opening the assemblage to the potential for difference and “carr[ying] them away” (1987, p. 88).

Difficult Knowledge: These are “constructions of difficulties in teaching and learning” which are “meant to signify both representations of social traumas in curriculum and the individual’s encounters with them in pedagogy” (Pitt & Britzman, 2003, p. 755).

Efferent reading: Those readings on the other end of the continuum which are “predominantly nonliterary” having a focus on meaning that is contained in the text and “attention [is] centered on the most abstract referential aspects of meaning” (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. xxvi).

Encounter: Following Ahmed (2000), an encounter “suggests a meeting, but a meeting which involves surprise and conflict” (p. 7). I am interested in meetings between teachers, students, and literary texts, where teacher, student, and literary text are each rhizomatic assemblages and also relational elements in other rhizomatic assemblages that “ceaselessly establish connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 7).

Interlude: Interludes disrupt the current flow, marking a difference in speed or intensity or mode. In an interlude, things might heat up or cool down. Interludes break into data-narratives with theory, and methods with virtuous practices, and prose with images or poetry.

Intensity: The increasing or decreasing quality of relations that an assemblage takes on in its making and unmaking (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Deleuze, 1994a).

Learning: An active process of becoming different through engagement with others, or what Greene (1978) described as “a process of effecting new connections in experience, of thematizing, problematizing and imposing diverse patterns on the inchoateness of things” (p. 3).

Literary Encounters: These are meetings of heterogenous elements, including literature, that involve surprise or conflict (Ahmed, 2000). I organized Chapter Four through a series of such encounters.

Pedagogy: “the relational encounter among individuals through which many possibilities for growth [or change] are created” (Zembylas, 2007, p. 332).

Positive and negative difference: Positive difference is difference in itself, not difference from something else. Positive difference “distinguishes itself” (Deleuze, 1994a, p. 37). Thus, positive difference is not subtractive or negative.

Reterritorialization: Like deterritorialization, assemblages also have lines and intensities that draw them back in. These are the “reterritorialized sides, which stabilize” and open the assemblage to what is redundant and familiar (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 88). These lines interfere with deterritorializing lines by “segmenting them, blocking them, plugging them, or plunging them into a kind of black hole” (1987, p. 143).

Rhizoanalysis: As Masny (2016) explained, “Rhizoanalysis is not a method; in other words, there is no one way to do rhizoanalysis” but “the ontology remains the same: subject decentered, immanence, and difference” (p. 669). It is the means of inquiry used here which “emphasizes connections rather than separations, heterogeneity rather than conformity, fluidity rather than rigidity, and constant evo/revo/lution and flux rather than the static, ‘finished’ class reality of neoliberalism” (Strom & Martin, 2013, p. 2).

Rhizome: An assemblage, a multiplicity, and what Deleuze and Guattari called “the anti-genealogy” (1987, p. 11). It is “not amenable to any structure or generative model,” has no center, but has multiple entryways (1987, p. 12). Rhizomes are composed of collections or constellations of lines (molar, molecular, and flight-taking) which create flows and propel intensities.

Subjectivity/Identity: Human subjects are temporarily constituted and perpetually reconstituted through encounters, but encounters do not require human subjects, just two elements meeting (Ahmed, 2000).

Territory: Territories are the worlds in which multiplicities compose into relational assemblages.

Thinking: Deleuze espoused that there are “two kinds of things: those which do not disturb thought and ... those which *force* us to think” (1994a, p. 138). This distinction, Deleuze explained, associates the image of thought with “objects of recognition” and the act of thinking which is an affective “encounter” (1994a, p. 139).

Virtue: Following Kuntz (2019), “Virtue is not about compliance with or adherence to some external norm. Virtuous practice is to critically engage with such norms such that they cease their normalized/normalizing repetition” (p. 78). Virtuous engagement occurs in encounters

“informed by an ethical determination to change exploitative circumstance towards a yet-as-undefined potential for becoming otherwise” (p. 47).

Wide-Awakeness: How Maxine Greene (1978) described the “need to transcend passivity” and “attentiveness” toward the “*interest* in things” (pp. 2, 42). It is the idea of being present and aware—“the direct opposite of the attitude of bland conventionality and indifference so characteristic of our time” (1978, p. 42).

EPIGRAPH TWO: READING BOOKS

There are, you see, two ways of reading a book: you either see it as a box with something inside and start looking for what it signifies, and then if you're even more perverse or depraved you set off after signifiers. And you treat the next book like a box contained in the first or containing it. And you annotate and interpret and question, and write a book about the book, and so on and on.

Or there's the other way: you see the book as a little non-signifying machine, and the only question is "Does it work, and how does it work?" How does it work for you? If it doesn't work, if nothing comes through, you try another book. This second way of reading's intensive: something comes through or it doesn't. There's nothing to explain, nothing to understand, nothing to interpret. It's like plugging in to an electric circuit.

—Gilles Deleuze, 1995, p. 7–8

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Encounters



Figure 2.1. Thinking still, not still thinking.

Multiple times a week over the last few years, I have walked through the front doors of Bibb Graves Hall and into the classrooms and offices of the University of Alabama College of Education. Perhaps unnoticed by many who enter these doors, a sentence is etched into the entablature above the broad columns. In stately capital letters, it decrees from on high:

**RELIGION, MORALITY, AND KNOWLEDGE, BEING NECESSARY TO GOOD
GOVERNMENT AND THE HAPPINESS OF MANKIND, SCHOOLS AND THE
MEANS OF EDUCATION SHALL FOREVER BE ENCOURAGED.**

These emphatic words, written in a transcendental, passive voice, compel my attention. This statement comes from the Northwest Ordinance, passed by Congress in 1787, thereby creating the Northwest Territory and laying out plans for the addition of new states to the nation. Initially, the carved decree served as a reminder that my work—my profession—has been seen as important since the dawn of our nation. There was a sense of comfort and pride in this understanding. Now, however, learning keeps pressing and disrupting *it*, keeps reorienting *me*. Now, seeing the decree reminds me that the policies the Northwest Ordinance set into motion

were detrimental to indigenous peoples who lived in these lands for millennia before the newly formed confederation of states made decrees in the name of religion and morality over them. Now, I wonder about other points of contact between the Northwest Ordinance and the idea of Manifest Destiny that followed. Now, I wonder how often an image of thought, such as Manifest Destiny, manifests what has already been decreed to be good when it might be preferred for the happiness of all kind to foster critical inquiry as a “virtuous practice” instead (Kuntz, 2019, p. 78). According to Kuntz, “Virtue becomes radical forms of citizenship—becoming what one is not-yet in order to refuse governmental assumptions of what one must necessarily be” (2019, p. 78). Such practices of inquiry create “spaces of refusal, relations of/for resistance” (2019, p. 80).

If inquiry is a space for refusal and for becoming what we are not-yet, then teaching and learning in such spaces are never viewed as straightforward when it comes to the histories of ideas, places, bodies, policies, and artistic creations. Inquiry as virtuous practice should produce grappling amidst the complexity of problems that require supple rather than fixed solutions. Fixed solutions attempt to reel in differences that emerge, whereas *thinking* (which involves disruption, risk-taking, and engagement with the flux of the world) tends to proliferate differences (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994). “Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter” (Deleuze, 1994a, p. 139). As Dewey (1925) explained, “Every thinker puts some portion of an apparently stable world in peril and no one can wholly predict what will emerge in its place” (p. 222). I proceed with the assumption that unleashing the potential of thinking *is* the work of English education, work that is undoubtedly messy, uncomfortable, and complex. Thinking always imperils stability.

What happened in the class at Cedar Knoll that day when we were discussing *Number the Stars* has something in common with the decree chiseled in the stone of Graves Hall that greeted me at every passing. Each is a Deleuzian *encounter*. For Deleuze, “an encounter is perhaps the same thing as a becoming, or nuptials” (Deleuze & Parnet, 2007, p. 6). He goes on to explain that nuptials are not a couple, but the relations between two people. An encounter “designates an effect, a zigzag, something which passes or happens between two [or more] as though under a potential difference: the ‘Compton effect,’ the ‘Kelvin effect’” (p. 6). Ahmed (2000) used encounter to “suggest a meeting, but a meeting which involves surprise and conflict” (p. 7). I am interested in meetings between teachers, students, and literary texts, where teacher, student, and literary text (already rhizomatic assemblages) meet up in learning encounters that are themselves always already rhizomatic assemblages. Rhizomatic assemblages of the book-kind, person-kind, or encounter-kind always “ceaselessly establish connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 7).

Rhizomatic assemblages with territorial and deterritorial sides (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) do the theoretical heavy lifting in this inquiry, so I explain how this concept is situated within the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) here, and continue to draw on and build this conceptual apparatus both in chapter three (Methods) and in the various conceptual interludes of chapter four. Any accounting of such a broad concept will necessarily come up short, so I make no claim here of comprehensiveness nor complete orthodoxy; rather, I explore aspects of assemblages that are useful for making sense of the literary encounters that provoke the kind of thinking that Dewey and Deleuze wrote about.

Ontology of Assemblages

I was drawn to Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of *assemblage* because it helps me think about the complex web of relations involving movements, bodies, language and other "diverse elements and vibrant materials of all kinds" which I sometimes refer to in the hyphenated shorthand of affective-material-discursive relations (De Freitas, 2012, p. 562). This entanglement of relations produces places such as schools and encounters that give rise to disruptive readings. In the DeleuzeGuattarian ontology of immanence, assemblages operate between two planes. The first is the *plane of immanence*, or plane of pure becoming, which is "permeated by unformed, unstable matters, by flows in all directions, by free intensities or nomadic singularities, by mad or transitory particles" (1987, p. 40). This is the plane of "a Life," not a specific life (such as yours or mine), but a pre-individual, non-subjectified body that enters into composition with other pre-individual bodies not just human bodies, but any matter (de Beistegui, 2010, p. 194). This may seem like a lot to take in for a lowly dissertation on disruptive readings, but it is necessary for understanding what's at risk in learning.

The plane of immanence, as the quotation above states, is full of potential that is as yet dis-organized, un-stratified, un-stable, and multi-directional. All of these differential potentials on the plane of immanence give rise to a different plane, the *plane of organization*, which actualize only a portion of the potential from the plane of immanence. Deleuze and Guattari described the plane of organization as:

[an] inevitable phenomenon that is beneficial in many respects and unfortunate in many others: stratification. Strata ... consist of giving form to matters, of imprisoning intensities or locking singularities into systems of resonance and redundancy ... Strata are acts of capture" (1987, p. 40)

The pre-individuated matters of the plane of immanence may enter into relations of signification and subjectification on the plane of organization. In this way human subjects are a series of

temporary contractions. As de Beistegui explained, the two planes are constantly “engaged in undoing one another,” the plane of organization “always introducing depth, hierarchies, strata” and the plane of immanence “doing away with depth, roots, and strata by introducing … lines of flight …” (2010, p. 67). Lines of flight are “strange new becomings” that shake loose of rigid structures (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 191). Lines of flight break through border walls and other hierarchical constructions, and while they may produce something life-affirming (e.g. some new ways of thinking), they also may produce death.

Thinking back to the Ordinance instituting the Northwest Territory, it is easy to see how literal territorialization from the perspective of the U.S. Congress produced lines of flight. For the European-American settlers these lines of flight increased wealth and station looping back into the prosperity of an expanding U.S. At the same time, flight lines of the Ordinance opened up cutting edges of deterritorialization across indigenous lands and peoples already living there—historical and geographical deterritorializations that deprived them of sovereignty, language, land, and life. As we know from history, these flight lines also looped back into the expanding U.S., containing indigenous nations within their bounds of literal territories, not without uprisings and outbreaks.

Lines of flight or deterritorializations are still part of the assemblage, and they tend to loop back into the assemblage, reterritorializing it. At intense places in any rhizomatic and territorial assemblage are warring forces: forces from the plane of organization that work to keep the assemblage together and other forces from the plane of immanence that work to escape such organization. The vitalist ontology of Deleuze and Guattari describes both systemic structures on the plane of organization and the potential and excess that always escapes complete capture by

these structures through contact with the plane of immanence. The place between the two planes is the place of learning, of becoming, of disruptive readings.

Rhizomatic Assemblages

Keeping these planes in mind then, rhizomatic assemblages are constellations of heterogeneous, affective-material-discursive elements that partake of the plane of immanence on one side and of the plane of organization on the other. Hence, they are always shifting, doing and undoing, and should be considered a set of relations, “potentializing directionalities,” movements and intensities through which agency and desire are assembled (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Manning, 2016). Assemblages are becomings.

Just as rhizomes such as crabgrass are composed of lines that connect at one node and go their separate ways at another, various lines in an assemblage push out in new directions that expand its connections (deterritorialization) while other lines of segmentation (reterritorialization) constantly try to tie lines back to the assemblage. This is how rhizomes become different. As Deleuze and Guattari explained,

An assemblage is precisely this increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections. There are no points or positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree, or root. There are only lines. (1987, p. 8).

Lines produce becomings (new ways of being in the world) when they are open to multiple connections. On the contrary, if the lines are despotic or authoritarian, they function according to binary or limiting logic: “it is a man *or* a woman, a rich person or a poor one, an adult or a child, a leader or a subject” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 177). For example, consider for a moment a school that utilizes curriculum materials that narrowly channel meaning-making through a multiple-choice quiz: “Atticus Finch is: a) a hero b) a coward c) indifferent.” All the other ways Atticus might relate to the world are closed off.

De- and Re-territorialization

As new and varied connections plug into the rhizomatic assemblage like little machines plugging into circuits, they bring with them the potential for newness, change, and expansion—a movement that Deleuze and Guattari explained as deterritorialization. They wrote, “the assemblage has both *territorial sides*, or reterritorialized sides, which stabilize it, and *cutting edges of deterritorialization*, which carry it away” (1987, p. 88). We are used to looking at possibility as a sudden fork in the road—a binary choice to be made when none was apparent before. This or that? But these moments only appear to be binary, they are actually open on one side to the plane of immanence which offers multiplicity.

In order for deterritorialization to unfold, some amount of metastability must already be in place. Deterritorialization requires a territory from which to draw a line of flight. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) theorized that relations are never truly stable; they may be metastable at best, an “oscillational constant,” a familiar “rhythm,” ever beating in the background (p. 320). Certain forces create an illusion of stability and sameness composing the backdrop upon which these moments may be cast. Habits, customs, normative ways of being and doing create deep grooves of sameness in the classroom. Schools, to an extent, depend on stabilizing routines to run efficiently—bells, schedules, seasons, etc. In my classroom, the stabilizing routine of covering standards in units helped us truck along—introduce the content/skill, practice the content/skill, assess the content/skill, move on. While no day was ever the same as the one before, the repetition of familiarity made it easy to recognize difference from the usual—a fire drill, a weather delay, a field trip.

Rhizomatic assemblages expand through deterritorializing lines, as happened in the Cedar Knoll example. Such encounters might feel like the earth is beginning to crumble and fall away, calling us to grope for footing and ground at the same time. This may happen in a flash or

it may be drawn out like a slowly weathering fencerow. Regardless of shape or pace, it is marked by movement, the expansion of knowing, becoming, and doing. Connections built rather than walls. We judge these movements by what they make possible in the world.

Mapping

The concepts explored above depend on another, that of mapping, or surveying, or working with cartography as mentioned in the previous chapter. What was the autonomous subject in humanistic thought is now a rhizomatic assemblage, not moved solely by reason. Because assemblages do not depend on a subjective center, a new means of orientation is needed in order to explore and learn. To learn is to open “the body to connections that presuppose an entire assemblage, circuits, conjunctions, levels and thresholds, passages and distributions of intensity, territories and deterritorializations measured with the craft of a surveyor” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 160). Surveying and mapping are geographical terms used to show spatial elements, and here they function as ways of following the becoming of assemblages. To think this way, I borrow from Massey (2005) who described space as “the product of interrelations” and the “sphere of possibility...in which distinct trajectories coexist” which is “always under construction...never finished; never closed” (p. 9). Deterritorializing and reterritorializing encounters may be mapped as relations among assemblages. de Freitas (2012) wrote:

The map does not represent the territory—the map constructs the territory. The map is itself part of the rhizome. A map, like the rhizome, has multiple entry points and can be opened up for additional connections in all of its dimensions. (p. 563)

Ultimately, the rhizoanalytical map I produce with this inquiry is “entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real” having endless and “multiple entryways” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 12). Mapping provides a way to describe the changes in rhizomatic assemblages as the movement of lines are charted on the map’s unfinished spaces.

Encounters between rhizomatic assemblages and the relations that fuel connections and disconnections are both my theoretical orientation and my mode of inquiry, yet other theories plug in this inquiry to elucidate how pedagogies and literacies operate as stabilizing forces and as cutting edges of deterritorialization.

Plugging In: Theories of Thinking and Learning as Cutting Edges

Following Deleuze, we can

count upon the contingency of an encounter with that which forces thought to raise up and educate the absolute necessity of an act of thought or a passion to think. The conditions of a true critique and a true creation are the same: the destruction of an image of thought which presupposes itself and the genesis of the act of thinking in thought itself. (1994a, p. 139)

For Deleuze, “the image of thought” is capable only of recognition, while thinking and learning emerge in relation to the violent disruption of habitual practices of thought (1994a, p. xvi).

Learning occurs in the “encounter with the Other” (1994a, p. 22). The Other (e.g. a text, another human, an idea) is a rhizomatic assemblage that produces variation when it connects with other rhizomatic assemblages. Encounters produce potential changes in how we think and what we learn.

Thinking (not the image of thought) usually hits us with a disruptive violence (Deleuze, 1995). Writing about the learning potential in these encounters, Massumi (2002) explained, “Thought strikes like lightning, with sheering ontogenetic force. It is *felt*. The highest operation of thought is not to choose, but to harbour and convey that felt force, repotentialized” (p. xxxi). Thinking can also feel like “turning points and points of inflection; bottlenecks, knots, foyers” (Deleuze, 1990, p. 52). These terms describe processes of movement (including sudden stalls) from one place to another.

Movement doesn't just happen though, it involves potential—that other scientific word—which brings about force and electric charges. Kuby, Spector, and Thiel (2019) called this force “affect” and argue that “These mobile intensities make thought thinkable, practices performable, and worlds workable” (p. 186). Massumi argued, “Potential rolls in to roll on, in an experiential openness of clutter and invention” (2002, p. xxxiii). Dewey also used this kind of language to describe growth through educational experiences: “Every experience is a moving force. Its value can be judged only on the ground of what it moves toward and into” (1938, p. 38). While Dewey’s work as a pragmatist may not intuitively seem compatible with a DeleuzeGuattarian philosophy of immanence, rhizoanalytical ideas are present in his writing as well. Looking at this unlikely pair, Semetsky (2006) explained,

All thinking and learning—or “reaching the absent from present” (Dewey, 1991, p. 26) involves, for Dewey, the Deleuzean line of flight of sorts described by him as: “a jump, a leap, a going beyond what is surely known to something else accepted on its warrant. ... The very inevitability of the jump, the leap, to something unknown, only emphasizes the necessity of attention to the conditions under which it occurs” (Semetsky, p. 39)

Both Massumi and Dewey recognized that this kind of learning requires a jolt, increasing our capacity and responsibility to act in the world. In this dissertation, this jolt, charge, capacity to act or suffer the actions of others is called affect.

Thus, deterritorializing encounters and learning/thinking are two ways of describing the same processes of transformation. Following threads of similar encounters in educational literature, lead me to questions Dewey posed in his early writings—he asked, “Does the word “knowledge” indicate something the organism possesses or produces? Or does it indicate something the organism confronts or with which it comes into contact?” (1916, p. 194). To say that one has or possesses knowledge is truly a strange idea, as if knowledge is a tangible thing which can be held in the hand or locked in a drawer. It is this view of knowledge that comports

with the image of thought rather than thinking. Dewey recognized that knowledge wasn't simply out there, a thing waiting to be caught and coded by researchers but was instead a "relationally produced event" (Kuntz, 2019, p. 114). In asking the questions above, Dewey helps us engage with a fuller (while still partial) exploration of thinking as rhizomatic movement. This idea is even more obvious in his later writings.

In 1925 Dewey wrote that "*Freedom* of thought denotes freedom of *thinking*" (p. 222). This is a subtle point, but relevant to this project. In making this distinction, Dewey argued that in order for diverse points of view to exist, there must be processes which produce and affirm difference. Thinking, and by extension learning, isn't free if it is forced into a conventional pattern of being, for it is then reduced as Deleuze described to "the image of thought" (1994a, p. 22). Rhizomatic thinking and learning do not follow a single path, but rather branch out endlessly via multiplying connections.

The similarities between Dewey and Deleuze continued in Dewey's writings, specifically regarding the concept of stable meaning. Dewey (with Bentley, 1949) wrote, "In seeking firm names, we do not assume that any name may be wholly right, nor any wholly wrong. ... We take names always as namings: as living behaviors in an evolving world of men and things" (p. 98). A name suggests completeness—something that is knowable and possessable. The idea of namings—of "living behaviors"—however, operates rhizomatically through becoming. Dewey understood that any endeavor to define a concept will always be partial—always dependent upon the ever-changing context in which that naming may emerge. Though they didn't arrive at these ideas the same way, both Dewey and Deleuze recognized that learning is about thinking as opposed to thought, naming as opposed to names, and becoming as opposed to being.

Thinking exists on the cutting edge (deterritorializing edge) of the rhizome. Thinking opens up a line of flight in learning encounters, but not all schooling produces lines of flight. Too often what is called thinking (or learning) is simply the image of thought which is imposed as good (e.g. such as the Northwest Ordinance proclaiming that religion is necessary for good government). At the same time, not all lines of flight (deterritorializations) are good. Deleuze and Guattari clearly spelled out dangers. There is always the risk that a “line of flight” turns into a “line of death,” as when mutation and destruction blur and the war machine “would rather annihilate its own servants than stop the destruction” (1987, pp. 229, 231). Or when the state machine reaches out to annex an adjacent territory to pull it into its control, as happened in the Northwest Ordinance. Thinking is active, it enables feet on the ground working to bring about that which is life affirming for all, while never subverting to movement of difference to some ideal or telos.

The ideas explored here began with Deleuze who offered a big-picture of how thinking works to deterritorialize ways of being in the world. I added Dewey to the discussion because his ideas were not only compatible with Deleuze, but because his writing is more familiar to those with backgrounds in educational research. Dewey is not alone in this regard, so next I explore other educational theorists whose thinking complements that of Deleuze and Guattari. Though diverse in their focus, these scholars contribute specificity and insight to the discussion of thinking as the cutting edge of rhizomatic assemblages. So, looking forward here, I ask: “What do other scholars say about learning as deterritorialization?” “What do we already know about thought being disturbed and schooling deterritorialized?” and I begin by returning to my initial experience at Cedar Knoll which led me to research concerning moral development. Following this, I turn to ideas of learning as being fugitive (Patel, 2016b) and capable of breaking into

habits of thought (Boler, 1999) steering us toward “wide-awareness” (Greene, 1978). Continuing I turn my attention towards Deleuze ideas regarding ways of reading and the ways they relate to recent research on aesthetic reading and deterritorializing and disruptive pedagogies.

Moral Overlap

As I mentioned earlier, my first attempt to make sense of what happened in Cedar Knoll led me to research in the field of moral psychology. In my classroom, the students were struck by a learning encounter in which they surmised that a moral dilemma or a moral choice of action was required. The territory in which they were operating had been ordered in such a way that each of the rules for living (specifically the Ten Commandments) should be followed; however, when Annemarie learned about the lies her family was telling in order to save Jewish lives, the commandments became less universal and more relational (e.g. moving from “Thou shalt tell no lies” to “Don’t lie unless lying saves lives). Students recognized that a moral decision was required of them. “Do not murder” and “thou shalt tell no lies,” now connected to a story of great historical import, produced the conditions for thinking. Students were being propelled toward a new and unfamiliar territory.

The Minnesota Group (James Rest, Darcia Narvaez, Stephen Thoma, & Muriel Bebeau), though trained in Kohlberg’s more rigid model of moral development, realized the need for a new model that recognized fluidity and complexity. Consequently, they improved upon Kohlberg’s model by developing The Four Component Model/FCM (Rest, 1983), which offered a schema-based framework for understanding processes essential to moral functioning. Thoma (2002) explained that, “schemas represent a network of knowledge that is organized around particular life events and exist to help individuals understand new information based on previous experiences” (p. 241). Unlike sequential stages, the soft schemas appear as “shifting

distributions” that overlap “rather than as a staircase,” (Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, and Bebeau, 2000, p. 384). This is an important difference in a developmental model because it recognized that human development is not rigid and pre-determined, but involves a degree of complexity and fluidity, or what Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau and Thoma described as “fragments of lines of reasoning” (1999, p. 301). This idea of “fragments of lines” in particular speaks to thinking on the cutting edge of a familiar territory—those encounters in the rhizomatic assemblage where the image of thought fails, and new thinking is called forth.

I realize that moral psychology is rooted in a developmental perspective of which Deleuze would not approve, however, overlapping schemas address moral complexity in a way that complements Deleuze’s discussion of de/reterritorialization. Consider Deleuze and Guattari’s descriptions of the rhizome, “Good and bad are only the products of an active and temporary selection, which must be renewed. How could movements of deterritorialization and processes of reterritorialization not be relative, always connected, caught up in one another?” (1987, p. 10). Through their learning encounter with *Number the Stars*, my students were in the process of naming their ideas of good and bad and in the flux what Thoma and colleagues would call shifting moral schemas.

Fugitivity

Another perspective that has acknowledged the power of thinking to cut new territories is that of decolonial scholar, Leigh Patel. Like Dewey, Patel recognized the unpredictability which is necessary for learning beyond mere memorization, writing that “Learning involves departing from known automatic practices, venturing into experiences that aren’t wholly predictable, and experiencing temporary, productive failure” (2016b, p. 397). Taking this idea a step further, Patel also referred to learning as “a fundamentally fugitive act,” moving beyond the rules and

regulations put in place to keep relations stable and controlled (2016b, p. 397). Fugitive learning breaks rules and breaks out of prescribed boundaries. She explained, “Learning and life, though, cannot be contained” by boundaries; rather, “learning has found side streets to skirt the four-lane government-sanctioned highways” (2016b, p. 400). Learning for Patel is not in following directions, but in opening up the alleyways of uncertainty that are part of the “enactment of life” (2019, p. 258). For my students at Cedar Knoll, it didn’t matter that the discussion of killing and lies was not part of the lesson plan, but it mattered a lot that what had been an unmovable set of commandments before reading *Number the Stars* was now becoming a contingent set of orienting rules. In the encounter with the story, they were left drawing new maps. This is no small matter.

This work, Patel explained, requires us to see learning as answerability rather than the ownership that is privileged in coloniality (2016a). We should engage with knowing, not as something fixed, but fluid—something capable of moving through the world in new ways (2014, p. 371). “Learning” she argued, “is fundamentally about coming into being and altering that being. Coming into being is, in essence, about being-in-relation” (2014, p. 372). This language of “coming into being” resonates with Dewey’s language of “naming” and Deleuze’s “becoming,” and “being-in-relation” speaks to Deleuze’s concept of rhizomatic assemblages. All agreeing that learning involves fugitivity from the established order. All learning is productive, and in order to learn, one must flee what is known—flee the image of thought. As Kuntz (2019) argued, we may need to lose faith in order to maintain hope.

Inattention and Emotion

Coming from and also critiquing the psychoanalytic perspective, Boler (1999) added still another voice to the discussion of thinking and the image of thought, specifically in terms of

emotion and affect. Following the work of Iris Marion Young (1990), Boler suggested a focus on disrupting “inscribed habits of inattention” which she described as the “selectivity of our attention” as opposed to “the concept of the ‘unconscious’” from psychoanalysis (1999, p. 16). For Boler, these unconscious habits are “culturally patterned” (p. 17), meaning that they are produced under the influence of the social field. This was also a concern of Rosenblatt (1995) who, when seeing this in her work, wrote that it isn’t that the unconscious habits exist, but that they are guided by a dominant “scale of values” that has been “unthinkingly acquired” (p.156). Boler and Rosenblatt’s theorizations complement the distinction Deleuze and Guattari made regarding the treatment of the unconscious in psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis. They explained,

the issue is never to reduce the unconscious or to interpret it or to make it signify according to a tree model. The issue is to *produce the unconscious*, and with it new statements, different desires: the rhizome is precisely this production of the unconscious. (1987, p. 18)

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and Boler (1999) recognized that learning entails disrupting the unconscious habits operating as internalized “rules of self-control and discipline” that occur “fundamentally through structures of feeling,” emotion, and affect (Boler, 1999, p. 21) that circulate in the social field.

The habits may have been operating beneath the level of conscious awareness, but then some disruption forces them out of hiding, so to speak. Albrecht-Crane and Slack (2007) wrote about their choice of “Deleuze-Guattarian concepts” for their “pedagogy of affect” because it is “an approach that can address the intensities and possibilities of a present moment as it reflects and engages affect” (p. 105). As I mentioned before, Greene (1978) called these kinds of encounters “wide-awareness,” describing them as “the direct opposite of the attitude of bland conventionality and indifference” (p. 42). Similarly, Davies (2014, 2016) and Jones and Spector

(2017) termed moments of wide-awareness in their research as times of “emergent listening,” in which encounters are grasped as “something new to be understood and received” amidst the uncertainty they produce (Jones & Spector, 2017, p. 308). It takes wide-awareness to resist easy readings of the world that reinforce the status quo and by working this way, one might be able “to discern moments of escape from territorializations in a profoundly positive way” (Albrecht-Crane & Slack, 2007, p.107).

Summing Up Cutting Edges of Thinking and Learning

Deleuze and Guattari are far from alone in theorizing thinking and learning as upheaval and disruption of the established orders. Overlapping schemas and fragmented lines, fugitivity as the practice of fleeing what was known, and disrupting inscribed habits of inattention all describe thinking and learning as breaking away from established modes of organization. There are theoretical benefits to thinking with rhizomatic assemblages in my work, chief among them is that they act as conceptual apparatuses that can explain such things as moral reasoning in classroom discussion of *To Kill a Mockingbird* and how emotions are invested in reading Atticus in particular ways, while not being limited to only those selective areas of disruption that might make their way into English classrooms. Thinking with rhizomatic assemblages lets me exchange the zoom lens for the fisheye.

Just because rhizomes are too slippery for categorical organization does not mean that they are without tendencies and trademarks. As Deleuze and Guattari wrote, “The rhizome operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots” (1987, p. 21). Movement is its calling card. Positive difference keeps it from becoming a tree because lines of flight are immanent to all assemblages. Thinking with the rhizomatic assemblage helps me decenter the

autonomous subject of humanist research, pulling back to consider unfolding encounters wherein “Thinking invades us” (Colebrook, 2002, p. 3) and affect wakes us up.

I continue working with these concepts in the interlude sections in chapter four, and I mention them here to establish some of the benefits of rhizomatic thinking. Representational logic, or the image of thought, has long been accepted as thinking, but the image of thought is incapable of producing the newness that rhizomatic assemblages depend upon for expansion. Deleuze argued that, “modern thought is born of the failure of representation, of the loss of identities, and the discovery of all the forces that act under the representation of the identical” (1994a, p. xix). This is what my inquiry is oriented toward.

Deleuze wrote, “A thought’s logic isn’t a stable relational system. ... A thought’s logic is like a wind blowing us on, a series of gusts and jolts. You think you’ve got to port, but then find yourself thrown back out onto the open sea” (1995, p. 94). If the goal of thinking, then, is not stable knowledge, but continuous becoming, then the assemblage has to be open to lines of flight and deterritorialization, or as Patel described “run[ning] from what was previously known, to become something not yet known. Terrifying and beautiful” (2016a, p. 6). Thinking this way is undoubtedly risky, but it is necessary and maybe even inevitable, even if it is sometimes re-contained via “Regenerations, reproductions, returns, hydras, and medusas” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 16).

Two Ways of Reading a Book

At the beginning of this chapter, I offered an epigraph from Deleuze’s *Negotiations* in which he described two ways of reading a book: as a box or as a machine. These two ways of reading advance different kinds of questions. Of the box, one might ask “What does it contain?” or “What does it mean?” and of the machine, Deleuze explained the question is: “Does it work,

and how does it work?” (1995, p. 7-8). This second question he explained as the affective practice of “reading with love” (1995, p. 9; Spector & Murray, under review). Pedagogies that are good for opening up thinking allow for reading with love by viewing literature as machines that produce rather than boxes that contain.

I have long been attracted to Louise Rosenblatt’s reader response theory, specifically that of the reading transaction (1938, 1986). Rosenblatt explained reading as “a transactional process that goes on between a particular reader and a particular text at a particular time, and under particular circumstances” (1986, p. 123). The idea of transaction, borrowed from Dewey’s transactional theory of knowing (with Bentley, 1949), offers that readers, texts, and readings do not presuppose one another, but rather are created in the reading experience. Rosenblatt elaborated:

The physical text is simply marks on paper until a reader transacts with them. Each reader brings a unique reservoir of public and private significances, the residue of past experiences with language and texts in life situations. The transaction with the signs of the text activates a two-way, or, better, circular, stream of dynamically intermingled symbolizations which mutually reverberate and merge. (1986, p. 123)

What is produced in the dynamic interminglings may span a continuum from efferent to aesthetic. Efferent readings are contained and stagnant: the box, the image of thought. In efferent readings, “meaning emerges from an abstracting-out and analytic structuring of the ideas, information, directions, conclusions to be retained, used, or acted on after the reading event” (1986, p. 124). On the other end of the continuum, aesthetic readings are experienced with heightened awareness and affect in which, “inner tensions, sensations, feelings, and associations accompanying images and ideas may color imagined scenes, actions, and characters” (1986, p.

124). Rosenblatt argued that aesthetic reading experiences are essential for critical thinking, analysis, questioning assumptions, and interpretation.

Though Rosenblatt made no mention of Deleuze in her work or vice versa, her concept of the transactional process of complements Deleuze's idea of transformation/becoming. Deleuze would likely raise an eyebrow at the words "transaction" and "interpretation," but Rosenblatt's choice of "transaction" is thoughtfully justified. Drawing distinctions between transaction and interaction, Rosenblatt (1985) sought to clarify what had become "blurred" and to re-emphasize the presence of the reader in the *transaction*, when for so long "simply to insist on the importance of the reader was considered, if not subversive, scientifically unorthodox and irrelevant" (p. 97). Grounding this distinction and subsequent use of transaction in Dewey and Bentley's *Knowing and the Known* (1949) she explained the importance of her word choice,

At stake, basically, is recognition and assimilation of what has come to be rather fashionably termed a new scientific "paradigm" (Kuhn, 1962, 1970), a shift in the whole way of thinking about human beings in the natural world and their knowledge of it (Rosenblatt, 1985, p. 97).

Inspired by recent discoveries and theoretical advancements in other scientific fields, specifically Niels Bohr's work with subatomic particles, Dewey and Bentley articulated a view of "man as an active component within [the world], rather than one with man by fixed dogma set over against it" (1949, p. 135). They elaborated, "Our own procedure is the transactional, in which is asserted the right to see together, extensionally and durationaly, much that is talked about conventionally as if it were composed of irreconcilable separates" (p. 120). Incorporating this understanding into her theory of reading, Rosenblatt explained reading as "a complex network or circuit of inter-relationships, with reciprocal interplay" rather than as static and separate elements (1985, p.101).

This idea, and her particular preference for the words "complex network" is reminiscent of DeleuzeGuattarian rhizomatic assemblages. Rhizomatic learning is to aesthetic engagements

as tree-learning is to efferent engagements. Connecting these ideas to pedagogy, Rosenblatt argued,

Curriculums and classroom methods should be evaluated in terms of whether they foster or impede an initial aesthetic transaction, and on whether they help students to savor, deepen, the lived-through experience, to recapture and reflect on it, to organize their sense of it. (1986, p. 126)

As any rhizomatic assemblage does, literature has potential for hope, reconciliation, and life-affirming action. Rosenblatt believed that the aesthetic use of literature was critically essential to resisting the fascism she saw brewing during the 20th century. Writing in response to a modern world where “no ready-made answers or decisions seem possible,” she explained, “We need to understand our own priorities so that we may be guided to humane choices” (preface to the 1976 edition of *Literature as Exploration*, pp. xii-xiii). This should be an orienting force of rhizomatic learning in order for trees of injustice to fall.

Pedagogical Orientations that Open on the Side of Deterritorializing

The ideas of thinking as cutting edges of deterritorialization presented above, though unique in their approaches, all recognized that ingrained habits of thought are difficult to flee. Such habits are embodied and require little effort to maintain, such little effort in fact that we often don’t even know they are part of us. Teaching practices that facilitate learning as becoming different have to disrupt normative affective-material-discursive ways of being so that students may peer over these cutting edges of deterritorialization to imagine a different future.

Consider again the line from the Northwest Ordinance: “Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged” (1787). The forefathers who wrote this line believed that education was a means toward specific ends, good government, and happiness. They also had ideas that proper education would include religion, morality, and knowledge, as if

these were somehow neutral expressions of the way the world worked rather than specific aims of Congress which imposed its vision and will on the territories.

Education as imposition is not rhizomatic. It makes no room for positive difference, and it shuts down potential for connection and disruption. Thankfully, scholarship has blossomed since the 1700s and other voices now contribute their ideas of how disruptive pedagogies can overturn the inscribed habits that have long managed the fields of teaching and learning. These pedagogies do not guarantee that thinking will replace the image of thought, but they do create conditions more amenable to thinking. Though I use the idea of the disruptive pedagogy, others have explored DeleuzeGuattarian ideas of pedagogy under other names. Albrecht-Crane and Slack (2007) called this work the “pedagogy of affect,” writing that “The line of flight opened up by a pedagogy of affect recognizes the work of the molar, binary lines, but is no longer hostage to them” (p. 105).

Thinking in the same sphere, Zembylas (2007) described the term “pedagogy of desire” as one that,

interrogates taken-for-granted assumptions about what is (un)sayable or (in)visible in education and creates new landscapes of possibility for political resistance and transformation of oneself and one’s world without being confined in repressive discourses. (p. 334)

Zembylas explained that pedagogy should not be equated with specific teaching practices, but rather viewed as “the relational encounter among individuals through which many possibilities for growth are created” (Zembylas, 2007, p. 332). Swapping the word “growth” for “change,” I proceed with this as a working definition for pedagogy and the understanding that while “desire puts the teacher and student into risk (e.g. through experiencing uncertainties and anxieties), it also brings important pleasures (e.g. through assuming subversive positions of knowing)” (Zembylas, 2007, p. 334). The benefits outweigh the drawbacks. “In doing so,” as Albrecht-

Crane and Slack (2007) said, “the classroom becomes a messier but more exciting and potentially productive space” (p. 106).

Disruptive pedagogies acknowledge that “encounter[ing] curriculum as possibility” as Greene said, requires a necessary upheaval that is often accompanied by vulnerability, discomfort, and failure (1978, p. 18). But this intentional openness and vulnerability make these encounters bold rather than meek. As Brown (2012) described, “Vulnerability is not knowing victory or defeat, it’s understanding the necessity of both; it’s engaging. It’s being all in” (2012, p. 2). It is important to begin this review of disruptive pedagogies with this understanding that *disruptive pedagogies invite* openings for disruption. Though they may not always provoke disruption, they create learning climates in which disruption may occur, is more likely to occur.

In the sections that follow, I turn my attention to a discussion of the ways in which disruption is encouraged via pedagogical practices that are transgressive, discomforting, artful, and pleasurable. This is not a comprehensive account of disruptive pedagogies, but rather a focused discussion of those aligned most closely with reading literature in ELA classrooms. These pedagogical practices as lines of flight are offered as examples, but not as prescriptions because like all deterritorializations, “even radical trajectories often become systematised (Boler & Zembylas, 2003)” (Zembylas, 2007, p. 343), and therefore lose the force of disruption.

Disruptive Pedagogies: Transgressive & Vulnerable

Transgressive pedagogies sounds like something you do and then later have to confess to a priest. The word transgression connotes rule breaking and wrongdoing. Pedagogies that transgress boundaries do not necessary produce wrongdoers. As hooks (1994) explained, it is transgression that allows for “movement against and beyond boundaries” making “education the practice of freedom” (p. 12). For hooks, transgressive pedagogy began during her childhood

years in a segregated school where Black children were being equipped to resist racist ideologies and where “To be changed by ideas was pure pleasure” (1994, p. 3). For hooks, this stood in stark contrast to her later years in a white school where teachers were akin to dictators.

An essential idea gleaned from hooks’s writing on transgressive pedagogies is that students are not the only ones who change through them. Student change often begins with teacher change. As hooks explained,

Progressive professors working to transform the curriculum so that it does not reflect biases or reinforce systems of domination are most often the individuals willing to take the risks that engaged pedagogy requires and to make their teaching practices a site of resistance. (1994, p. 21)

Like hooks, Greene too saw the teacher’s role in transgression (1973) writing that teachers, “will only be able to resist inequity, mindlessness, and mechanistic imperatives if they themselves are freed to be present as persons, prepared to take the risks involved in enabling others to learn” (p. 190). Recent research from others (Bullough, 2005; Dale & Frye, 2009; Huddy, 2015; Kelchtermans, 2011; Lasky, 2005; Nowakowski & Sumerau, 2015; Yair, 2008) affirms this idea of teachers being open and vulnerable in order to move past boundaries—to deterritorialize.

Describing this move toward openness and uncertainty as paradoxical, Kumashiro (2004) explained that “asking students to raise critical questions about the necessarily partial and political nature of what and how they are learning requires a level of vulnerability and unpredictability for which we as educators have rarely been prepared” (p. 115). Even so, Kumashiro and others stand by this move as being critical for real thinking and learning to occur in our pedagogical practices. Reflecting on this idea, Kelchtermans (2011) wrote, “The relationship of an ethical and thus vulnerable commitment opens up the chance that education (literally) ‘takes place’” (p. 81). Lasky too offered that “A person being willingly open facilitates learning, trust building, and collaboration” (p. 901). This openness is repeatedly pointed to as

necessary for building the kind of classroom climate in which students and teachers feel enabled to transgress. Dale and Frye (2009) sought to help their teacher education students not to fear things beyond their control by nurturing a “loving gaze” toward them (p. 123). Yair (2008) identified openness as critical for productive classroom discussion reporting that “it provided [students] the courage to raise non-traditional, innovative ideas that in a less accepting environment would be frowned upon” (p. 452). In their work with pre-service English educators, Spector and Murray (under review) saw reading with love as “an empirical *encounter* with and beyond the text, … fueled by productive desire that opens to *difference in itself* which Deleuze (1994a) calls positive difference” (p. 8).

Though the teacher may be able to embrace openness, recognize vulnerability as essential for transgressive pedagogies, and nurture their loving gazes, it does not mean that this kind of work is without pain. Letting go of tree-learning inevitably means letting some chaos in. Depending on the content, that chaos could mean anything from engaging in critical conversations, to encountering new ideas, to enduring painful and traumatic unlearning. What is produced in these pedagogical encounters depends upon the particulars of the assemblages involved.

Disruptive Pedagogies: Difficult & Discomforting

In order to enable learning that produces thinking and life-affirming action, the cruelties of the present and past usually have to be encountered. Newness, risk, and peril are certainly present in learning encounters that involve thinking, but those that are marked with pain and trauma hinge on something more specific—difficult knowledge, or what Britzman (2013) described as “the anxiety made from encountering broken meaning” (p. 109).

Defined by Pitt and Britzman (2003), difficult knowledge is “meant to signify both representations of social traumas in curriculum and the individual’s encounters with them in pedagogy” which require knowledge of and implication in some kind of traumatic event (p. 756).

Britzman explained difficult knowledge:

acknowledges that studying the experiences and the traumatic residuals of genocide, ethnic hatred, aggression, and forms of state-sanctioned—and hence legal—social violence requires educators to think carefully about their own theories of learning and how the stuff of such difficult knowledge becomes pedagogical. (1998, p. 117)

The difficulty lives in the material trauma produced, for example, through state-sanctioned violence; through the literature which brings such violence into the classroom for inquiry; and through the shifts required in those who learn from these traumatic events. To Britzman, difficult knowledge involves the whole educative process of learning and of unlearning. The trauma is not productive if it remains locked away from consciousness in a consoling past. Rather, it should become known as an intense space that is already part of the classroom assemblage.

Recognizing that difficult knowledge is already there and thinking about the ways in which it has been made pedagogical is the first step in what Boler (1999) termed as the pedagogy of discomfort. Presented as a “call to action” Boler explained that the pedagogy of discomfort “begins by inviting educators and students to engage in critical inquiry regarding values and cherished beliefs” (1999, p. 176). Rather than sidestepping pedagogical encounters with difficult knowledge, the pedagogy of discomfort moves *toward* the discomfort—“to leave the familiar shores of learned beliefs and habits, and swim further out into the ‘foreign’ and risky depths of the sea of ethical and moral differences” (1999, p. 181). These pedagogical moves are made in an effort to push for something good—not one standard or normative idea of goodness, but rather the process of seeing more—taking hold of lines of flight. In her lovely conclusion to *Feeling Power* (1999), Boler wrote:

Ideally, a pedagogy of discomfort represents an engaged and mutual exchange, a historicized exploration of emotional investments. Through education we invite one another to risk “living at the edge of our skin,” where we find the greatest hope of revisioning ourselves. (p. 200)

This statement clearly complements a Deleuzian inspired view of the classroom assemblage.

Change, possibility, movement, becoming (or whatever you want to call it) happens in spaces of connection.

Though critical pedagogy and tensions in teaching have been widely explored in educational contexts (Bajovic & Elliot, 2011; Pytash, Morgan, & Batchelor, 2013; Sarigianides, 2012; Smith, 2001; Thomas, 2013, 2015; Whitney & Olcese, 2013; Xerri & Xerri Agius, 2015), there are fewer examples (Garrett, 2011; Love, 2016; Sonu, 2016; Tarc, 2011; Zembylas, 2017) of current research that directly take up the difficult knowledge or the pedagogy of discomfort, and fewer still that focus on English education. I turn to these empirical studies in the next section.

Difficulty and Discomfort in English/Humanities Education

Tarc’s (2011) research on reparative curriculum engaged difficult knowledge to create a “pedagogical mourning space” where students could work through their relationship with the violent histories to which they are “beholden” (p. 369). Attempting this in her classroom, Tarc recounted that “Done productively, this work can pose new questions and imagine altered possibilities and relations of human existence” (pp. 369). Similarly, Love (2016) illustrated how difficult knowledge may be taken up not just as a way to teach lessons about trauma, but also as a way of “working through” her own difficulties prior to teaching (p. 205). For both Tarc and Love, difficult knowledge was not just a catchphrase for traumatic topics, but included processes of healing that are necessary in troubled times.

While Tarc and Love were intentional in their engagements with difficult knowledge, it doesn't always happen that way in the classroom. Wanting to "explore the rich complexity of the ways that social and historical traumas are felt, experienced, understood and then made pedagogical," Garrett (2011) conducted a study in which a group of social science teachers discussed Hurricane Katrina prior to teaching (p. 320). Important to this discussion, Garrett noted how teachers often created a way out of discussing difficult topics by moving from race to something perceived as less fraught, like social class, or by having debates over whether or not the traumatic events should have occurred rather than directly dealing with them. These moves, Garrett argued, tend to serve as a kind of "release valve" instead of helping students deal with the "actuality of death and suffering that are part of the historical record" (p. 338).

While Garrett used a historical topic (coming from a social science background), Jarvie and Burke's (2015) work with high school students offered similar findings using Cormac McCarthy's (2006) fictional novel, *The Road*. They explained their work as an "examination of what a move from failing to engage difficult knowledge toward actively pursuing it ... might look like" (p. 82). Jarvie and Burke, like Garrett, identified avoidance as an early move in encounters with difficult knowledge, the participating teacher shying "away from problematic knowledge in favor of the comfort of nuts and bolts of language teaching, the dispassionate instruction of vocabulary, the rote rhythm of a classroom" (p. 79). These words mirror my own experience at Cedar Knoll. Identifying English classrooms as being "well positioned to engage in the messiness that is the human experience" Jarvie and Burke offered a few moves necessary for productive experiences with difficult knowledge (2015, p. 80). They advised teachers "to discard answers in favor of questions" and to "resist privileging their own reconciliations of that difficulty as a solution at which students should arrive," to examine what happened rather than

what might have happened, and to be intentionally vulnerable in their own difficult learning (p. 85).

In addition to studies engaging difficult knowledge, I have found Stephanie Jones's (with Enriquez, 2009; 2012; with Shackelford, 2013) work with pedagogical discomfort especially relevant. In her 2012 article for *Teaching Education*, Jones explored her own pedagogical practices, what she termed a "critical body pedagogy," while teaching an early childhood education course (p. 132). In the course, Jones worked to invite discomfort into the classroom by engaging in student-selected trauma narratives and other discomforting experiences which operated as tools for helping students understand and disrupt the nomos—the "unspoken rules and practices" (2012, p. 131)—of schooling. Reflecting on her efforts, Jones expressed that her "bottom line" was "to resist the urge to make things comfortable in the teacher education space" (p. 151). By leaning into the discomfort, she created opportunities for her students to "listen with compassion to—and be responsive to—the lives of children and families who are traditionally marginalized in school" (2012, p. 133).

While many types of content may be used to engage difficult knowledge and discomfort, Jones as well as others (Sarigianides, 2012; Spector & Guyotte, 2019; Spector & Jones, 2017; Spector & Murray, under review; Xerri & Xerri Agius, 2015) have noted the specific potential that literature has in creating these disruptions. Boler (1999) utilized Felman and Laub's (1992) idea of testimony to develop her concept of testimonial reading which "pushes us to recognize that a novel or biography reflects not merely a distant other, but analogous social relations in our own environment, in which our economic and social positions are implicated" (1999, p. 170). Testimonial reading surfaces in the exchange where readers and texts connect in the creation of newness and of responsibility. It is full of uncertainty and vulnerability—it is a "crisis of truth"

(Boler, 1999, p. 166). To Borrow Dewey's word, this is perilous learning, but what is perilous can also become productive. Boler explained, "Our responsibility in testimonial reading lies in our response to the crises of truth: How to recognize and put to use the information offered by the text" (p. 168). Reading testimonially helps learners see themselves as implicated in the relation and responsible for continuing or resisting it.

Current research engaging this understanding of testimony is led by Elizabeth Dutro (2008, 2010, 2011). In her 2008 piece for *Changing English*, Dutro reflected on her own experience of crying in the English classroom when a poem stirred feelings associated with the loss of her brother. Dutro argued that students who connect to literature by sharing their own "hard stories" make the ELA classroom into a place where testimony and witness—an acknowledging response—may occur (2008, p. 424). Dutro also noted that testimony is not limited to studies of the Holocaust or to specifically traumatic works, but that it "lurk[s] in our classrooms *all the time*" its unpredictability leaving teachers and students without "safe ground to which to flee" (2008, p. 428, 431). Dutro explained, "But whether it is attended to, taken up or taken in by her teacher, the student's testimony will remain in the room, like an empty chair" (2008, p. 431). The text, the students, and the "empty chair" all connect in the assemblage in ways known and unknown. I find this research incredibly important because it demonstrates how difficulties encountered by one student are still connected to the others in the classroom assemblage. Responding to another person's difficulty presents its own challenge. Borrowing Boler's description of listening as "fraught with emotional landmines," (Boler, 1999, p. 179), Dutro added that connections both similar and different are important to recognize (2011, p. 199).

Literature pedagogies that engage discomfort instead of skirting around it aren't meanspirited, but they do create turbulence. As Spector and Murray (under review) described, the orientation is about remaining open to difference, even when it isn't consoling:

When it works, literature speeds us up or slows us down. Literature may compel us to think and act in new ways in response to ongoing events. It may syphon our tanks, leaving us depressed and unable to carry on. (p. 9)

These are necessary risks for newness to be produced. Pedagogies of discomfort are presented as calls to action, movement toward the discomfort in an effort imagine a different future. This is not one person's agenda, but rather, a collective move toward openness and potential, what Deleuze termed "affirmation" or "the enjoyment and play of its own difference" all within the continual flux of rhizomatic assemblages, risk and positive difference forever entangled (2005, p. 178).

Disruptive Pedagogies: Artful & Multiple

The literature explored above illustrates how pedagogies disrupt by being and encouraging openness and by inviting difficulty and discomfort. Close readers will readily see that vulnerability and discomfort are often produced in relation to one another. Other ways scholars noted pedagogical disruption to the status quo are through encounters with the arts and by using multiple modes of thinking and creating.

Artful. Reflecting on the state of the educative process in 2017, Felman expounded, "Education is always a relation—and a dialogue—between the known and the unknown, as well as between consciousness and the unconscious, in ways we do not always fully understand" (p. x). Calling for resistance to the rising neoliberal approach to education, Felman found advice in the words of Camus who offered, "It is not surprising, therefore, that art should be the enemy marked by any form of oppression" (in Felman, 2017, p. xv). In terms of disruptive encounters,

art includes the obvious and familiar—literature, poetry, and the other language arts—but visual, performing, and fine arts as well. Like Felman, Rosenblatt saw this power in aesthetic reading experiences arguing that, “Many of the subtler potentialities of human feelings and behavior that could have been given common utterance in no other way are revealed and embodied in artistic form” (1995, p. 160). Greene, too, believed that imaginative encounters with art were particularly impactful by broadening our perspectives and therefore “realizing that the world is always incomplete” (2001, p. 84). She continued:

Like the learners ... we are in process, asked to chart our direction, to choose ourselves day by day. Reflective and diverse encounters with works of art, some of us believe, may well release and energize us for this kind of choosing ... They cannot but open new perspectives on the natural and human worlds around us. We are made conscious, sometimes abruptly, of alternative modes of being alive, of relating to others, of becoming what we are not yet. (2001, p. 99).

The value of art in schools has been widely recognized by Greene as well as countless others who have traced such benefits as student achievement (Ruppert, 2006), positive social outcomes (Catterall, 2009; Elpus, 2013), and school turnaround (Bouffard, 2014). While many of these studies still tie student success to cognitive gains, others have addressed how art helps students become more just and civic-minded. Specifically, recent studies from the field of arts-based research further illustrate how pedagogical encounters with art make continued becoming possible (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Shields, Guyotte, & Weedo, 2016; Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2018;). As Roffe (2007) eloquently explained, “The work of art does not represent (or distort) the familiar world for the benefit of a pre-existing audience. Instead, in creating new ways of experiencing and living, artwork necessitates a new people, an audience that does not yet exist” (p. 44).

Pedagogical encounters with the arts, or “artful pedagogy” (Shields, Guyotte, & Weedo, 2016, p. 45) do not require extensive training in watercolor, photography, or ballet to offer

classroom assemblages access to new ways of disrupting and being disrupted. Finesse and certainty are not prerequisites for these engagements. Rather, as Cahnmann-Taylor and Siegesmund (2018) explained, moments of being “constructively lost … are not a failure of education; they *are* education” (p. 8). This is an education that may collapse, experience temporary failure, or flourish by “perpetually prolonging itself, breaking off and starting up again” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 20). Artful engagements disrupt the ingrained ways of reading literature (thinking of literature as a box) and make demolition and construction possible (thinking of literature as a machine). They build connections, create new routes, and increase flows.

Multiple. Using arts-informed methods with challenging texts, Chisholm and Whitmore (2016, 2018) layered multiple literacies (including visual, embodied, and emotional) into their pedagogy as they engaged with Anne Frank’s *Diary* (1952) through multimodal social semiotic theory (see Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001). Among the activities they used with secondary students were cordels, living sculpture gardens, and pantomime. The emphasis of this scholarship was on the multiplicity of sense-making modes and their intra-actions, steps they offer as ways of “deepen[ing] students’ complex thinking and elevating] engagement” (Chisholm & Whitmore, 2018, p. 101).

In a similar way, but from a DeleuzoGuattarian orientation, Spector and Murray (under review) emphasized the artistic production of knowing, becoming, and valuing as they sought to challenge pre-established ways of seeing the world that led to purely consoling readings of traumatic texts. They offered multiple engagements with visual-verbal journals (Guyotte, 2014; La Jevic & Springgay, 2008) as a means of helping their students “take up a new path” and draw a new line (Spector & Murray, under review). While these studies demonstrated successes in

their encounters with art and challenging texts, they did not present art as a magic elixir. Reflecting on the ambiguity and challenges that come with working in arts-informed pedagogies, Dimitriadis, Cole, and Costello (2009) described these encounters a process of “Getting somewhere beyond one’s own competencies and expectations [which] means making oneself vulnerable” (2009, p. 372). Inviting discomfort into the assemblage also invites vulnerability and doing so through unfamiliar or unmastered practices compounds it. This is to be expected in moving toward chaos for the sake of potential. The in-between space of Deleuzian becoming requires a certain level of fluidity and dissatisfaction, but as Seigworth and Gregg explained, “affect arises in the midst of *in-between-ness*: in the capacities to act and be acted upon” (in Gregg & Seigworth, 2010, p. 1). This is what literature is good for when we think of it as a machine rather than a box.

Chisholm and Whitmore (2016, 2018) thought with multiple modes of sense making, and Spector and Murray (in review) did the same while emphasizing the process of iterative encounters with texts. Masny and colleagues think of multiplicity via their concept creation of multiple literacies theory (MLT) (e.g. Masny, 2006, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012; Masny & Waterhouse, 2011). Like the theoretical terrain I’ve laid out here, MLT is an assemblage that includes a wide variety of texts, “for example, mating rituals, music, visual arts, physics, mathematics, digital remixes” and a wide variety of literacies, such as “visual, oral, written, tactile, olfactory, and in multimodal digital” (Masny & Waterhouse, 2011, p. 342). Thinking with Deleuze (1990), they conceived of reading as intensive and immanent. “To read intensively is to read disruptively and to deterritorialize” and “to read immanently refers to the virtual” or the plane of immanence, as discussed in the first part of this chapter (Masny & Waterhouse, 2011, p. 342). These ideas from Masny and colleagues fit well with the theoretical apparatus I’ve

discussed here, even while my area of interest focuses only on deterritorializing encounters with literature in secondary classrooms.

Summary

What all of these theories show us is that pedagogies that open to the cutting edges of deterritorialization are about *intervening* in the world, not representing it. Allow me to return to Zembylas's (2017) description of pedagogical discomfort. He explained:

It should be clear that there is never an assurance that any transformation might take place; however, sometimes the initiation of a respectful and (relatively) ‘safe’ affective space of learning might be enough to spark the long and painful process of transformation. (2017, p. 671)

I find these words not only poignant, but incredibly affirming as I draw this chapter to a close, or rather leave it open to what follows. Encounters that deterritorialize are opportunity spaces where change is made available, made possible, but not demanded. Reflecting on this idea, Greene wrote, “A new pedagogy is obviously required, one that will free persons to understand the ways in which each of them reaches out from his or her location to constitute a common continent, a common world” (1978, p. 70). This is what my student was doing in our discussion in Cedar Knoll. This is what I was doing as I iteratively pondered the Northwest Ordinance, and what I continue to do here.

I realize that the rhizome of theories assembled here are as diverse as they are expansive. In choosing the phrase “plugging in” to accompany them I have attempted to offer a variety of connections that are productive in their difference, while also providing some familiar footing for those unused to thinking with DeleuzeGuattarian ideas. As I wrote this section, I followed DeleuzeGuattarian ideas from one theory to the next in an effort to show this. Continuing, I now take these collective threads of insight to aid in my ongoing inquiry and analysis. Specifically, I follow lines of fugitive, perilous, and disruptive learning as they move across classrooms; I

follow action and reading as intervention as they produce becomings, or not. I see that what Rosenblatt presented as the transactional response—reader, text, and poem—is simply one part of the infinite assemblage which has been and will continue to grow as it connects to other infinities. I see blurs between willing vulnerability and invited disruption. I see the aesthetic response expanded to embrace moral dilemma research which lives in the realm the cognitive, moral, and developmental psychology, but in its recognition of overlapping schemas now includes other capacities and potentialities like the affective, sociopolitical, psychological, embodied, and embedded. If I have learned anything from reading these ideas with Deleuze it is that above all, rhizomes are marked by multiplicity and it has been my aim here to engage in multiple entryways that have brought me to this place.

EPIGRAPH THREE

A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles.

—Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 7

New Waves: An Interlude Toward Analysis

On November 11th, 2018 a seismographer working in New Zealand noticed an unusual pattern of seismic activity ringing around the world. For unknown reasons, this wave pattern went unnoticed by people on the ground, creating a scientific puzzle. Reporting on the situation, Nicolas Taillefer, head of the French Geological Survey (BRGM), explained, “The location of the swarm is on the edge of the maps we have There are a lot [of] things we don't know” (Wei-Haas, 2018, para. 14).

I bring in this world event because I think it serves as a wonderful analogy for the way that data worked in this inquiry. Although the Earth feels still most of the time, like data, it is constantly moving, shifting, and changing under and above the surface. These subtle movements operate so smoothly at times that they project a façade of quiet stability, yet in reality their steady churning compounds over time creating earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and landslides capable of rocking even the strongest natural and manmade structures. Most of the time, seismographers are able to map the waves and their movements and thereby predict their effects, but something always escapes capture by our most sensitive equipment. Sometimes keenly felt and at other times only registering on the edges of our known maps, waves of intensity moved throughout the classroom assemblage, creating shifts and transformations never to be repeated or reversed.

The original identified purpose of this study was to investigate how teachers and students navigated deterritorializing events which arose from the texts studied in their secondary ELA classrooms. Back then, I thought that these events would be bold in their eruptions, like earthquakes. I also presumed that they would be predictable, coming in tandem with controversial topics of literature. I spent the better half of a semester waiting for such discussions to appear but found few. Rather, what I witnessed more commonly were subtle shifts in the classroom atmosphere, ripples altering the rhythm of the classroom assemblage in significant

albeit difficult to see ways. Furthermore, though these shifts interacted with and occasionally arose from the classroom texts, they more frequently had their genesis outside the classrooms I was part of: as social movements, such as Black Lives Matter; as current events, such as the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL; or as mandated department policies.

I did not begin my inquiry with a theoretical framework for mapping deterritorialization. Instead of creating a checklist of the necessary signs and symptoms telling of these kinds of events, I decided to follow what was happening as it unfolded and assured my committee that I would know destabilization when I saw it, or perhaps felt it. Reflecting on this now, I realize that I wasn't entirely empty handed because I was equipped with a bouquet of literature and theory which were both field-guide helping me to identify the unknown and legend (re)orienting me as I mapped the data. As I explained in the second chapter, the insights provoked by these theories were strengthened by the ways in which they worked together.

Like the seismographers mentioned in the above, the ripples I encountered were often at the edges of the map I was working to create, and it took several intensive readings of the data before they would suddenly come into view. Because the classroom assemblage was ever becoming and never stable, this work was messy, and it stayed messy. Lines overlapped, intersected, and doubled back. Deterritorialization became reterritorialization, and what was once a break from routine eventually became its own routine. Sometimes things that were not felt in the moment registered at the edges of the data, and other times I could sense when deterritorialization was afoot. On these occasions, deterritorialization presented in a flurry of people wanting to speak at once, in sudden silences, quickened heartbeats, flushed faces, physical changes in the classroom space, discussions that lingered through afternoon

announcements, time that passed more slowly or quickly, raised eyebrows, shrugged shoulders, faces turned all at once, chins in hands, straightened backs, higher pitches, louder and softer tones, tears, and laughter. Other events are still out there waiting to be read by more sophisticated equipment than I currently have access to.

CHAPTER THREE: RHIZOMATIC INQUIRY AS ASSEMBLAGE

This inquiry maps disruptive literary encounters as teachers, students, and literary texts function together in classroom practices which are always already socio-politically conditioned and operate through written rules, implicit norms, and deterritorializations. My concern with “disruptive” literary encounters aligns what Kuntz named “virtuous inquiry, that is, “immanent practices guided by ethical determinations toward an unknown, open future—enactments for social change” (2018, p. 60).

I begin by situating this work broadly within *qualitative methods*, then in what has been called *post-qualitative inquiry* (Denzin & Guba, 2011; Lather & St. Pierre, 2013; St. Pierre, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2019), and finally and more specifically in inquiry as rhizomatic assemblage (de Freitas, 2012; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Masny, 2013). Next, I compose inquiry maps back, forth, and transversally amongst more traditional qualitative methods, such as “researcher subjectivity” and “participant selection,” while at the same time deterritorializing these and other methodological processes through lines of flight that emerge as deterritorializing loops in the forms of poetry, images, and QR code connections. Mapping is a rhizoanalytical process. Rather than a record of the procedures I followed in my inquiry, this chapter and its assorted interludes (poetic footprints) produce mappings of the processes that unfolded as various rhizomatic assemblages “ceaselessly established connections between semiotic chains, organization of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, science, and social struggles” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 7)

On Qualitative Research

I situate this inquiry within the broad territory of qualitative research, which includes a variety of methodological approaches, each embracing “a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3). Specifically, “interpretive” here means coming to know the world via its affective-material-discursive representations and associations. Since its break away from traditional quantitative research, offshoots of the qualitative field have branched into numerous and often theoretically incompatible directions. Writing about these differences, Denzin (2010) affirmed that the resulting “plurality of approaches to inquiry is a major plus here” (p. 48), each qualitative framework offering useful tools of inquiry sensitive to the encounters they explore. Because the present inquiry thinks with non-representational, non-binary, vitalist theories of processual ontology stemming from Deleuze and Guattari, I position this work within the terrain of “post qualitative,” and more specifically relational materialist, inquiry (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013; St. Pierre, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2019). This move toward post-qual does not come with complete abandonment of those more traditional, qualitative, humanist epistemological traditions, rather I bring what I learned from them with me.

On Post-Qualitative/Relational Materialist Inquiry

Post qualitative inquiry never is. It has no substance, no essence, no existence, no presence, no stability, no structure. Its time is the time of Aeon—the not-yet, the yet-to-come. It presumes an ontology of immanence and is always becoming. (St. Pierre, 2019, p. 9)

The encounter with *Number the Stars* at Cedar Knoll hit me violently. This was my “encounter with the real” in which this inquiry began (St. Pierre, 2019, p. 11). My students and I unexpectedly moved from the written-in-stone law of the Ten Commandments toward the transgressive realization that sometimes it is better to let one commandment go. This is no small

movement. “Some encounter with the world,” St. Pierre, Jackson, and Mazzei argued, “jolts us and demands our attention” (2016, p. 104), or as Deleuze put it, “Something in the world forces us to think” (1994a, p. 139). Cedar Knoll was a jolt that I am still thinking through.

In my doctoral courses I sedulously tried to fit Cedar Knoll into the countless texts I was reading, various theories I was learning, and diverse methodologies I was practicing. Reflecting on this pattern of diligence and methodological training, St. Pierre, Jackson, and Mazzei wrote, “We are required, in the name of valid, systematic science, to force that experience into the structure of a pre-existing methodology that simply cannot accommodate it” (2016, p. 104). What I learned is that I couldn’t simply follow a path that had been trodden before. Cedar Knoll would never happen in exactly the same way again, and I needed modes of inquiry that were open and flexible enough to see other kinds of disruptive literary encounters that challenged the status quo of K–12 schooling.

Instead of pre-existing methodological prescriptions applied to events, post qualitative inquiry (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013; St. Pierre, 2014) informed by Deleuze and Guattari’s relational ontology operates via the middle, amidst the ongoingness and emergence of unfolding events. This work emphasizes the always already emerging relations of assemblages and therefore attends to the “‘concrete richness of the sensible’ (Deleuze & Parnet, 2007, p. 54) as it exists *for-itself*, not in relation to the human or to *a priori* categories” (St. Pierre, 2016, p. 8). Guided by the insights from relational materialist theorists, I explore below the ways in which Deleuze-and-Guattari-inspired methods produce what has been called “post qualitative” inquiry or “methodology-to-come” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Lather, 2013, p. 635; Lather & St. Pierre, 2013; St. Pierre, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2019).

Growing from what has been learned in the traditional qualitative methods, Denzin and Lincoln (2013) described the researcher as bricoleur or improvisational jazz musician—someone understanding that “the choice of which interpretive practices to employ is not necessarily set in advance” (p. 8). Inquirers operate with knowledge of the traditional practices of interpretation but remain open to modifying and creating new modes of practice as encounters unfold. This is not an “anything goes” methodological practice, but rather an innovative, crafty, and resourceful sets of practices built upon deployments of existing theories and practices, as well as the knowledge that “If new tools or techniques have to be invented or pieced together, then the researcher will do this” (Denzin, 2010, p. 8).

Conventional humanist methodologies produce mostly conventional results, so deterritorializing methods create the potential for positive difference, for difference *for-itself* to flourish. Recognizing this, Kuntz noted, “As processes change so must the means by which they are known and evaluated; they cannot be understood by the norms of convention” (2018, p. 68). This kind of work is experimental, risky, and inherently complex, and it has outgrown its classification as research and is better described as *inquiry* (Dimitriadis, 2016; Kuntz, 2019).

In becoming post-qual/relational materialist, I didn’t turn my back on what I learned from more traditional qualitative research genres. Instead, I operated as a bricoleur, much like Saldaña, who described his own methodological approaches in this way:

Me, I keep myself open to bein’ and doin’ what needs to be done. I’ll be a grounded theorist when I need to be. I’ll be a statistician and crunch some numbers when I need to. And I’ll be a poet or playwright or artist when the occasion calls for it. It’s all ‘bout findin’ the right tool for the right job. There’s somethin’ to be said ‘bout that. Blue-collar folks are good craftspeople—they know their tools. (2014, p. 978)

I resonated with this description and found my own inquiry in flux in similar ways, especially in relation to aesthetics as a living inquiry that is open to what is not yet here (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/1994; Greene, 1978/2018; Rosenblatt, 1978).

I didn't begin with a rigid plan of neat steps and "ordered maps" (Kuntz, 2015, p. 54); rather, I endeavored to be open to the becoming of the inquiry itself, knowing that I was part of rhizome. For example, I entered this work with a loose idea of how I might recognize a deterritorializing event (e.g. It might look like Cedar Knoll), but I was also open to the uncertainty that arises precisely when we stop *recognizing* something that is already known (that which requires no thinking) and instead become compelled into thinking differently. What I counted on, in the words of Deleuze and Guattari, was "the destruction of an image of thought which presupposes itself and the genesis of the act of thinking in thought itself" (1994, p. 139). At the same time, I *critically* pulled into the unfolding scenes practices that I learned from more traditional methods (Crotty, 1998).

This is a move required for those pursuing relational materialist work. Otherwise, as Kumm and Berbary explained, we risk becoming "Preoccupied with the "how" of research, [and] we blind ourselves to methodological process that preload, preauthorize, and predetermine knowledge production—often to the detriment of those positioned on the poorer end of binary divides and hierarchical structures" (2018, p. 73). My sense of ethical responsibility toward social change makes the risk of leaving a traditional qualitative comfort zone worth it. I acknowledge from the outset the messiness that came with this work and the many potential lines that remain unmapped herein. I don't apologize for what is left unmapped but look to continue drawing those lines throughout my career.

I take heart knowing this mode of practice is encouraged by those who have come before me, and I seek to position this work in relation to their calls and questions. Seeing both the risk and the reward of this work as she reflected on her own methodological turns, St. Pierre asked, “How comfortable do we need to be? Are we willing to think outside our training? What truths have we learned that we’re unable to give up, and why do we cling to them?” (2017, p. 41). For my own practice of inquiry, the methodological shifts suggested by St. Pierre’s questions led me away from ensconced and venerated methodologies (which have undoubtedly produced valuable and transformational knowledge and practice) and toward more experimental modes of inquiry.

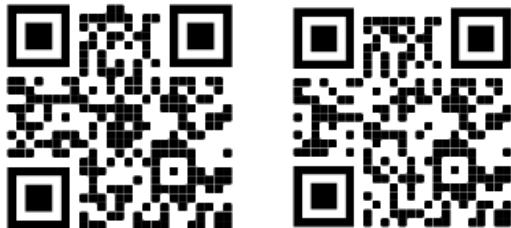
These experimental practices arise through the contingencies of networked relational processes, wherein I always have the “responsibility to think, act, and be in other ways” (Kuntz, 2015, p. 54), and to disrupt the “habituated ways of knowing, becoming, and doing” (Kuby, Spector, & Thiel, 2019, p. 14) that constrain the well-being of whole swaths of human and non-human populations. When I asked with Kuby, Spector, and Thiel, “What surge of knowing/becoming/doing can breathe new life into this scene and others like it?” (2019, p. 15), I sought to disrupt humanism’s ingrained separation of knowing from being and becoming. I sought to disrupt “thought-for-the-market” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 107) and other harmful and habituated ways of repeating the status quo. And while I sought this kind of disruption, I found that it often emerged unbidden, unplanned for, and unexpected within the openness of living. It usually came as a discomforting and disorienting jolt that scholars like Rosenblatt (1978), Boler (1999), Pitt & Britzman, (2003), Dutro (2008, 2010, 2011), Jones (2009, 2012, 2013) and others theorized.

I agree with Deleuze and Guattari who argue that while “We are not responsible for the victims” of harmful, habitual practices, we are “responsible before them” (1994, p. 108). Kuntz

poetically explained, “We are never granted the privilege of distancing ourselves from the relation we seek to change” (2018, p. 60). Through choice and requirement, I am involved.

Working in this genre of inquiry is not without its limitations, foremost for some readers might be that it produces nothing like closure or certainty. I am also ever at risk of falling into old ways of knowing and doing because they are so ingrained, as St. Pierre noted (2017). MacLure (2017) also warned that post qualitative inquiry could look like “new wine in old bottles” or “old wine in new bottles” (p. 56). This mapping offers an exploration inquiry-in-the-making as rhizomatic assemblage as I followed around the lines that produced disruptive literary encounters.

Poetic Interlude: “Moderation is a Four-letter Word”



Everything in moderation, they say.
Maintain a healthy work/life balance, they say.
Read this for next week's class, they say.

Good, I say.
Okay, I say.
Sure thing, I say.

To a people pleaser—
Moderation is a four-letter word.

Is balance possible in the pursuit of becoming?
Is moderation the goal in the pursuit of good (if I can even use that word)?
Yes?

I don't know.
I don't know.
I don't no.

Figure 3.1. Original poem, “Moderation is a Four-letter Word.”

Rhizomatic Inquiry as Assemblage

In approaching inquiry this way, I commit myself to undoing the thought of conventional qualitative methods stemming from the humanisms: self-possessed, autonomous researchers and research subjects acting upon an already given material and symbolic world extracted from their natural settings, usually as texts, to code, interpret, and represent to the world in a linear fashion (Kuntz, 2015, 2019; St. Pierre, 2014, 2016). Within a DeleuzeGuattarian philosophy of immanence, difference (the world) emerges through the productive relations of heterogeneous elements in rhizomatic assemblages (1987), which always contain:

lines of segmentarity according to which it is stratified, territorialized, organized, signified...as well as lines of deterritorialization down which it constantly flees. There is a rupture in the rhizome whenever segmentary lines explode into a line of flight, but the line of flight is part of the rhizome. These lines always tie back to one another. (p. 9)

Rhizomatic inquiry decenters the human researcher and research subject, theorizing humans as heterogeneous multiplicities plugged into other heterogenous multiplicities, in this case classrooms where reading and discussing literature unfold. In these classrooms, the literature texts are also rhizomatic assemblages, as are routines and other elements plugged into the classroom. We don't have a world represented in a book by an author that we interpret. Rather,

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). Rather, an assemblage establishes connections between certain multiplicities drawn from each of these orders. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 23)

Deleuze and Guattari are not denying that we are trained to think in terms of the world, representations, and subjects; rather, they are demonstrating that the things we come to know as world, representation, and subject are contingent upon the relations into which they enter. Inquiry as rhizomatic assemblage enters in the middle of this flux. Some of the moves I made learning to think this way can be found in Figure 3.1, and the story of its emergence I now briefly explain below.

Figure 3.2 is a map, or perhaps atlas, I have been creating as a way of leaving breadcrumbs showing where I have been and how and I am learning to “think outside” my traditional qualitative training (St. Pierre, 2017, p. 41). It was created with dotted lines to indicate the porous nature of so-called methodological boundaries. To avoid creating caricatures of the humanisms and specific qualitative paradigms, I gathered in the second column well-known problems associated with humanist, qualitative methodological assumptions that inquiry as rhizomatic assemblage helps to overcome (and that are relevant to the present inquiry). No scholars I’ve read are so naïve or thoughtless as to accept all of the assumptions in the second column, and in fact many have long questioned and disrupted them, including inquiry practices named: indigenous, anti-, post-, and de-colonial (e.g. Fanon, 1966; Desai & Sanya, 2016; Kimmerer, 2005; Patel, 2016a, 2016 b; Said, 2004; Tuck & Yang, 2014; Wynter, 2003), feminist (e.g. Ahmed, 1998, 2017; Collins, 2009; hooks, 1989; Lather, 2013; MacLure, 2013; Spillers, 1987; St. Pierre, 2014; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000), and relational materialist (e.g. Braidotti, 2013; Coleman & Ringrose, 2013; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Kuby, Spector, & Thiel, 2019; Kuntz, 2019), among others. My intent here is to show how thinking with rhizomatic assemblages produces different implications for inquiry.

Thinking with the questions framing this methodological movement has been such a helpful means of approaching inquiry as assemblage. Fox and Alldred explained that within “the multiplicity of affective relations in the research process” there is an effort to “seek out the affects that bind a research-assemblage together” (2018, p. 194). For me, viewing inquiry this way—as rhizomatic assemblage—brings the focus to how theory and practice enmesh.

Questions	Well Known Problems with Western Humanist Assumptions in Some Qualitative Methodologies	Relational Materialist Implications for Inquiry	What this means for this inquiry
What is a knowing subject?	<p>The individual, self-founding, rational Cartesian subject instantiates the mind/body duality (and other dualities, such as nature/culture, material/discursive) . From Descartes' <i>cogito</i>, there arises the assumption of a "causal relation between the immaterial mind [I think] and material body [therefore I am]" (Kuntz, 2019, p. 126; see also Cherniak, 2020).</p> <p>Having a body</p>	<p>The knowing subject is multiple, embedded, embodied; emergent in relation to human and more-than-human forces; responsible in the face of injustice, and at best, metastable (Braidotti, 2013; Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, 1987).</p> <p>Being a body</p>	<p>In keeping with the planes of immanence and organization discussed in chapter two, knowing subjects are produced through affective-material-discursive relations that congeal for a moment before shifting again. There are no stable Cartesian subjects that are the center of this inquiry. Rather thinking of the knowing subject as rhizomatic assemblage, I look for the relations of forces that produce the knowing subject (and other bodies) in particular ways. I ask: Who are we in the process of becoming? (Braidotti, 2019).</p> <p>Putting concepts of rhizomatic assemblages, re-, and de-territorialization to work in an effort to refuse "the repressive structures of dominant subject-formations (<i>potestas</i>), but also the affirmative and transformative visions of the subject as nomadic process (<i>potentia</i>)" (Braidotti, 2019, p. 34).</p>
Who is doing this inquiry?	<p>Researcher as stable, objective, autonomous agent who observes from a distance (e.g. in phenomenology or constructivism) (see</p>	<p>Inquirer as a material-discursive-affective, responsible relay point, "a relational subject constituted in and by a multiplicity" (Braidotti, 2013, p. 49) and plugged into other multiplicities (Deleuze & Guattari,</p>	<p>An embedded, embodied, emergent, knowing subject – congealing and dissolving in turns; momentary concretion come with habitual, communal patterns of thought (and unthought) that move me along (Ringrose & Zarabadi, 2018; Braidotti, 2013; Deleuze &</p>

Questions	Well Known Problems with Western Humanist Assumptions in Some Qualitative Methodologies	Relational Materialist Implications for Inquiry	What this means for this inquiry
	Koro-Lundberg, et al, 2009, p. 690).	1983, 1987); a flow encountering other flows. Researcher as subjective, semi-autonomous agent who affects and is affected by the field of inquiry, including powerful social structures (co-construction) (e.g. in some interpretivist, social constructionist, and critical traditions) (see Koro-Lundberg, et al., 2009).	Guattari, 1983, 1987). As a relay point, I become disjunctive, pausing the usual currents and being paused by them, flipping and becoming flipped, blocking and becoming blocked, intensifying and becoming more intense (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, 1987). This is inquiry as assemblage, inquirer as rhizomatic node.
What are processes of inquiry?	Following methodological procedures/guided steps to “separate cause from effect” as a means for “accessing (immaterial) thought” (Kuntz, 2019, p. 127).	Mapping unfolding affective-material-discursive processes that intervene in the world (Braidotti, 2019; Deleuze & Guattari, 1991; Kuntz, 2019; Spector & Guyotte, 2019; Spector & Murray, in review).	Intervention—plugging into the assemblage and thereby changing it forever. I love the way Barad (2014) describes inquiry as being like an earthworm moving through the field, turning “the soil over and over—ingesting and excreting it, tunneling through it, burrowing, all means of aerating the soil, allowing oxygen in, opening it up and breathing new life into it (Barad, 2014, p. 168).
What is desire?	Desire signals lack or needs to be acquired (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983).	Desire is what produces the world (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983).	Mapping desire as production of relations instead of desire as something that drives to fill a

Questions	Well Known Problems with Western Humanist Assumptions in Some Qualitative Methodologies	Relational Materialist Implications for Inquiry	What this means for this inquiry
			lack. It isn't driving flows, it is produced through them.
What is data collection ?	Data collection as extraction (Kuntz, 2015).	<p>Data production as invitation and creation. “The task, then, is to be attentive to data’s invitation; and alert to its capacity to force thought” (MacLure, 2017, p. 51).</p> <p>“A bloc of data has no beginning, no ending. A researcher enters in the middle” (Masny, 2013, p. 341).</p>	<p>Seeing data production as a fluid process and welcoming in play and creativity.</p> <p>Staying attuned to data’s many forms—its “motley crew” (Nordstrom, 2015, p. 169).</p> <p>Trying not to separate data production from analysis but understanding that they are continually becoming together.</p> <p>Thinking with theory/data (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012).</p>
What is entailed in analyzing and writing up the research?	<p>Accurately <i>representing</i> what was found.</p> <p>Reducing differences through synthesis (MacLure, 2013a; Kuntz, 2019).</p>	<p>Drawing maps (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, creat[ing] newly relational resistances that are not dependent on a reformation of what was, but rather a revolution of what might yet be” (Kuntz, 2019, p. 2).</p> <p>Moving toward “resistive citizenship” (Kuntz, 2019, p. 6).</p> <p>Resisting synthesis by living in aporia—an impasse in philosophy (Peterson & Tesar, 2018)</p>	<p>The data produced through this work is not presented as a stable batch of representations or reproducible findings. Nor are data directed toward a pre-established, neatly outlined end.</p> <p>Not tracing what was already there but mapping “even realms that are yet to come” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 5).</p> <p>“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). Rather, an assemblage establishes connections between</p>

Questions	Well Known Problems with Western Humanist Assumptions in Some Qualitative Methodologies	Relational Materialist Implications for Inquiry	What this means for this inquiry
		or what Kuntz called productive tension (2019).	certain multiplicities drawn from each of these orders. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 23)
What are the ethics of this inquiry?	Defined through codes of ethics and produced through organizations like IRB	Virtuous engagement occurs in encounters “informed by an ethical determination to change exploitative circumstance towards a yet-as-undefined potential for becoming otherwise” (p. 47).	The data produce me –allowing me to see what I couldn’t before. This is a creative act that unfolds and materializes the world in a particular way through analysis and writing.

Figure 3.2. Methodological movement.

As Coleman and Ringrose (2013) explained, thinking with assemblage “impels researchers to rethink research processes—to pose (and re-pose) questions about the relationship between theory and methodology, the conditions under which empirical research is conducted, and its effects/affects” (p. 2).

My inquiry, analyses, and writings are ways of thinking and intervening in the world, not simply post facto ways of *representing* what earlier unfolded. St. Pierre argued,

It is in writing, in putting words together (or not), that I first understand I cannot “apply” or use a concept from one ontology in a different ontology. It is in writing that I begin to get ideas in my bones when words and things ‘seep into one another’ (Deleuze, 1986/1988, p. 33). In this way, *I become in language*, and for Deleuze language is on the same flattened ontological plane as a galloping horse, the color red, a representation of a bird, the concept of justice, and five-o’clock-in-the-afternoon. Acknowledging that *writing is an empirical application* shifts educational research from its recent attachment to the social sciences to its older attachment to philosophy and literature. (St. Pierre, 2016, p. 1081)

Becoming different through language is no more abstract or representational than being hit in face with a pie. Knowing this, the logic of a self-possessed and autonomous researcher shifts toward an ontology of events whose relations produce researchers, participants, and data.

Fox and Alldred (2018) wrote that we can think of the big-picture of inquiry, “as if it were a series of interconnected machines that do specified tasks such as data collection, data analysis and so forth, via the affective flows they establish between event, instruments and researchers” (p. 194). Though I explore these interconnected “machines” independently below, they are always working together through the ongoing and ever-becoming process of inquiry as assemblage.

Poetic Interlude: “Life as an ISFJ”



A high school career aptitude test once reported
that I was especially well-suited
for life as a ferry-boat captain.
I laughed back then,
but now I think “perhaps.”

I am a 98% ISFJ.
Introverted.
Sensing.
Feeling.
Judging.

I am:
Samwise Gamgee,
Dr. John Watson,
Belle.

Call me:
Nurturer,
Defender,
Protector,
to ask what you got for your eleventh birthday,
but don't call me for karaoke.

Figure 3.3. Original poem, “Life as an ISFJ.”

Researcher as Assemblage

Though this work will be known as “mine,” the paths that it took weren’t mine to “choose.” As St. Pierre, Jackson, and Mazzei explained,

If we take seriously that there is no “doer behind the deed” but that the doer is produced either by or alongside the deed, then the work of method is not completely in our control and must be constantly re-thought and re-claimed in each specificity. (2016, p. 105)

Early in my coursework, I read selections from Patti Lather’s (2007) *Getting Lost* and began to have dizzy spells thinking about the researcher’s obligation to the research/ed while navigating her work from various positions. Moving past the researcher/researched binaries into rhizoanalysis offered a new perspective but cold comfort. Here, I seek to confront this fear by offering an account of researcher as assemblage in an effort to provide a sense of how relations produced me.

Position suggests stable location—not movement—as though I could drop a pin and send out my GPS coordinates. But in this work of becoming, my position was neither still nor solitary. My “subject positions” emerged as multiplicities in relation to other multiplicities, in other words, as rhizomatic assemblages. Making this same point, Martin (2018) explained, “The researcher and participants (each psychological, physiological, sociocultural, and emotional assemblages) are elements among elements in the processes of systematic investigation” (p. 13). Instead of picking one point on “my” map that captures a provisional subjectivity, I offer here those desires that carried me through this work. Finally, I explore some of the tensions I felt within the research which I attribute to my multiple and shifting orientations amidst the research process.

Poetic Interlude: “(How)to Bracket My Faith”



Is it possible to be a Christian and a post ... ?
(How) Do I bracket my faith?
Is that even possible?

I think not.

I do not want to hide my faith or hide from it.
These roots run deep and wide.
Here's my heart, oh take and seal it, seal it for thy courts above.
I sing it, and I say it, and I believe it, but how to live it?

What is my responsibility, then, in this relation?
It isn't enough anymore,
to take a saying at its word—whatever that means.
Is there a lens wide enough to capture it all?

For me,
For now,
It is enough
to err on the side of compassion.

Figure 3.4. Original poem, “(How)to Bracket My Faith.”

Orientation: Which Way am I Facing?

Positionality and reflexivity, for me, are not about confessing bias or viewpoint. Rather, it is about knowing my place(s). I seek to know my place(s) in this work and to know what and how my becoming reverberates within inquiry as rhizomatic assemblage. Relational materialist inquiry complicates notions of reflexivity and validity positionality. Davies, Browne, Gannon, Honan, Laws, Mueller-Rockstroh, and Peterson explained,

Not only must we engage in such an apparently fraught practice as reflexivity but also, in our engagement with research, invent our own methods of meaning making as we go *and* catch ourselves in the act of engaging in old practices and modes of meaning making that we are in the process of deconstructing and moving beyond. (2004, p. 362)

These constantly enfolding movements make for difficulty. Even so, it was (and is) important for me that this inquiry not lose sight of affirmative material change, whatever that may be. This entails an affirmation of others in a relation of positive difference and a push for new ways of being that recognize our “connective collective struggle” keeping our eyes and efforts fixed not upon what is, but what might be (Kuntz, 2018, p. 71). This is an active, interventionist, responsible line that runs through all aspects of my life, including inquiry. I face affirmative ethics, but with no pre-determined outcome in mind (Kuntz, 2018).

Shedding the conventional research armor (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) enabled me to work through the idea of a “naked methodology,” which Lather (2001) described as troubling “the possibilities for “coming clean” in practices of researcher reflexivity” (p. 17). Leaning on Nietzsche, she explained that this is not about being vulnerable, but rather about “staging and watching oneself subvert and revalue the naked truth in order to learn to live without absolute knowledge, within indeterminacy” (p. 17). Working as researcher-as-assemblage makes me accountable for (re)orienting myself continuously—in the field and in the data, trailing excess as I spill into these pages.

Poetic Interlude: “Lines of Books and Snuggles”



Penn woke up from his nap after *only* thirty minutes.

Daddy put him down with a book, as English profs do,
and when Penn rolled over in his sleep, the book with its hard-cardboard pages startled him
awake.

I was in the middle of a potentially great thought, had my finger on a promising quotation, and
then I heard him cry out a sad, little, sleep-deprived “Mommy”
I quickly scooped him up.

We snuggled in on the couch and I half-hoped that he would soon fall back asleep.

He had other plans.

I handed him a sippy cup and a handful of veggie straws,
and opened my book.
Two bites in, he sneezed a mouthful of mush all over Deleuze.

“The days are long, but the years are short,” women tell me.

My lines are composed of these moments of like these
Where books and snuggling are intimately entangled.
Where bodily expressions and Deleuze meet on the page.
We are in this together.

Figure 3.5. Original poem, “Lines of Books and Snuggles.”

Orientation: Excerpts of My Being and Becoming

Rhizoanalysis requires a different outlook on the traditional idea of researcher positionality. Though I claim no talent as a visual artist I have attempted to make maps of my own rhizomatic assemblage (example shown in Figure 3.6). In my head they look like a Jackson Pollock expression, but my hands don't quite take it there. These maps vary, but some share a few traits that remained consistent. They do not have a center. There is no "right way" to hold them. They incorporate words and visuals identifying parts of my assemblage I was feeling particularly acutely at the time. While drawing these, I got lost in the process. Lines and the spaces between them are one and the same, and they travel from one part of me to the next in no specific path—they do not flow from me but create me in their flowing, in their coming together and moving apart. The maps themselves extend past the page and into the liminal spaces beyond, open to unknown, but always being pulled back by a fluid, but intense line of affirmative ethics. These visuals, like me, are unfinished.



Figure 3.6. Close-up details of a positionality statement map.

Like the poetic interludes scattered throughout, this image is one of many, mini positionality statements I have composed in an attempt to express my becoming with this inquiry. These statements ebbed and flowed based upon the work I was momentarily in and the

facets that were dimming and glowing. This is not a new idea. Maxine Greene knew this was the only possibility for one engaged in this kind of work. She famously told one audience, “I am what I am not yet” and added that “You are always striving for completion, for a kind of wholeness, that, if ever you achieved it, you’d really be dead” (2001, last paragraph). All my mini statements add up to uncertainty and incompleteness—thank goodness!

I’ve been in many positions. Some facets of my becoming were more present at one time or another, and when examined (individually or collectively) moved me in different ways in relation to my research community. As Nordstrom (2015) explained, “I am assemblage—in the middle of vast connective assemblages, trying to make sense of the constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing entanglements” (p. 167). Threads of my personal life (if there is such a thing) would suddenly tug on threads of my researcher life. They aren’t separate lives at all.

In particular, my becoming mother is especially woven together with my becoming researcher. This would hit me in ways big and small (Figure 3.7). My child was born with a birthmark called an infantile hemangioma that marked him in a visibly distinguishable way from birth. It sounds scary, but in reality, it hasn’t been a big deal. The doctors said he was “lucky” because it was on his foot and that over 80% were on the face. Most of the time, I don’t give it much thought, but one day when we were reading *Lord of the Flies* (Golding, 1954) in one participating classroom, I almost had to leave the classroom. In the story, there is a child on the island, one of the littluns, who is known only by his “mulberry-colored birthmark” (Golding, 1954, p. 35). He is the first child to die on the island, and he is given little thought afterward—not even counted among the dead at the end of the book. Hearing this description of a little life forgotten caught me off-guard. My breath tightened in my lungs and I bit my lip in an effort to

keep my crying only on the inside. Whatever happened in the classroom was blurred for a little while as the mommy-threads pulled me away.



Figure 3.7. “Mommy, Come See Me,” artistic installation by Penn Murray.

In what follows, I only touch on a handful of those relations producing me, though I fully expect that many such entanglements are unknown to me still. To be succinct (and in no significant order), I am: educated, cis-hetero female, wife, mother, sister, daughter, middle class with upper class upbringing, 5'5", white, Christian, southern, over thirty, teacher, people pleaser, gardener, book lover, and about 70 zillion other lines depending upon the moment. Words like these are common in positionality statements, but what they connote will always be determined by context. Like me, these simple tags of my identity (sameness) are neither stable nor singular. Reaching this understanding in her research, St. Pierre (2013) reflected, “It was not simply that I “had multiple subjectivities” or “moved among subject positions” but that I was always already a simultaneity of relations with humans and the nonhuman (I could no longer think/live that dichotomy)” (p. 468).

In thinking of researcher as assemblage, I see these identity markers not as stable boundaries, but as bundles of lines that vibrate at different frequencies depending upon the other lines with which they are in relation. Cedar Knoll might be a through-line, but it, too, is a multiplicity, affected by the ongoing politics and practices, by readings, and re-visitations. This line and the others that produce me constantly shift in the light of new events, maturing relationships, and chance encounters. This “I” of the researcher is not a unity, but a multiplicity, a fractured one. As Zarabadi argued,

there is no total escape from our embedded and embodied position that we are worlding with, and this is how this ontology, as far as I understand it, does not suggest moving away from human subject to deny it; it's about starting from your position and making relations. So in a sense, it's a kind of rooted uplift or forward movement as a territorialized deterritorialization. (Ringrose & Zarabadi, 2018, p. 2017)

Though I have already offered here many accounts of *Anne as researcher*, I know that there are ones I cannot remember and do not yet know. Carole King’s “Tapestry” (Figure 3.8) plays over my keystrokes here as I tap and type trying to make sense of who I am becoming (King, 1972, track 11). It is a song that accompanied early morning drives to school as a child and picked up again during this research, convincing me that King knew something of the entanglements I was attempting to explore. It has been looping in my mind once again as I write this section. The first verse goes,

My life has been a tapestry of rich and royal hue
An everlasting vision of the ever-changing view
A wondrous woven magic in bits of blue and gold
A tapestry to feel and see, impossible to hold

“The ever-changing view” is something I’ve learned to count on, uncertainty that perpetually continues.



Figure 3.8. King’s song, an anthem to my “ever-changing view.”

Orientation: Knots in the Assemblage

Who I am in this work is a product of how I navigated the inquiry process which included stresses or knots—especially ones tied those moments of knowing intervention. The first knot I felt resulted from the lack of a sterile research environment or a control as one may find in quantitative work. I never imagined a research setting as something isolated, but I had a hard time knowing my place in the classroom, wondering how much to sit back and “watch” and how much to contribute. Just my being in the classroom altered any notion of “purity” in the research setting because the teacher and students accounted for my presence in ways both known and unknown. Stake (2010) shared this feeling in his qualitative work reflecting,

We are always somewhere. . . . We stand somewhere, sit somewhere. . . . Moment by moment, always, restlessly, we jolt, bump, jostle or caress the here-ness of here. We shed a tiny fragment of dead skin here, leave a footprint, snap this twig, swallow water from this stream, touch moss. (p. 59)

I felt the weight of my entanglement and responsibility all the time, and constantly made note of it. This connection was always on mind as I would walk the hallway after the last class observation and sign out in the office. It was easy to feel like I belonged when I was busy in the classroom, but when I walked out with my camera peeling my required visitor’s ID sticker off my shirt it my mind would begin to second-guess everything I had said and done. Most days I convinced myself that the ripple effects of my actions hadn’t been too significant. Other days I felt like I had sent invisible waves crashing.

Toward the end of the 2018 spring semester, Ms. Barrett, my primary participant, texted me to ask an opinion regarding two possible in-class essay prompts for the *Lord of the Flies* unit. One was more content related and the other one required the students to write a hypothetical response to a challenging situation like being stranded on an island (as happened in the book). The students were **not** supposed to write about something in their own lives, just think about their fight or flight tendencies. I told Ms. Barrett that I liked the more reflective question but admitted my concern that it could lead to some touchy discussion. I wasn't wrong. A few of the students misinterpreted the prompt and wrote about events that had happened to them and one student in particular shared (not to the class) details about a difficult situation at home. Ms. Barrett texted me later in the day when she read this student's response and asked if I thought it was a cry for help. I told her I did, and she agreed. Thankfully, everything ended up being okay. The school counselor took over the situation and the parents were alerted about the content of the essay. The student was grateful to have a chance to share and even wrote Ms. Barrett a thank you note when it was all over. As I watched the chain of events unfold around me, though, I couldn't help but wonder what would have happened if I hadn't voted for that specific prompt. The ripple effects of my actions, my involvement, were laid out in front of me in technicolor clarity.

The second knot I felt surfaced in my tendency to fret about the relationship between myself and the teachers. When I first planned this relational materialist inquiry, I proposed that I would be a helpful part of the classroom, offering assistance whenever possible. I never expected that my participating teachers, especially Ms. Barrett, would welcome me into the classroom to the extent that they did. I was not an eye-in-the-sky or a camera-in-the-corner. I wasn't just shedding tiny fragments of dead skin either—I shed questions, commentary, input, and playful banter. I even led lessons on occasion when Ms. Barrett asked. By the end of the year, many of

the students thought of me as the other teacher in the room, albeit the one with video camera and audio recorder.

As colleagues, Ms. Barrett and I clicked right away. Despite differences in our life stages, we got along terrifically, and I appreciated her letting me spend so much time in her classroom. I did whatever I could to lighten her load, checking over homework assignments, coming up with activities, and providing feedback when she asked my opinion. However, I never felt like I could shake the feeling that I was quite literally “using” her and the other participants as a vehicle with which to conduct my research. It made for an awkward power relationship in my mind—they had the power to pull the plug at any moment. I needed them to earn my Ph.D. I had the power write about our shared experiences. I did not know how to compensate for this feeling—I couldn’t shake it then and it is still here now. It fades with distraction as I attend to other things, but like my freckles shows back up after a day in the sun. However, I believe in the potential for this work. I am encouraged by the words of others who have felt similar tensions. As Caine and Steeves (2009) wrote, “Through traveling to each other’s worlds lovingly, we stretch ourselves, becoming fully engaged with the other” (p. 5).

The third knot I felt impacting my work stemmed from my commitment to being open and honest with the participants as I engaged in during the data production. Open here should not suggest deceit, but rather navigating how much to disclose to the participants about the progression of the study. Doing this research, at times, meant holding back a comment in order to see how things played out without my interjecting. When a conversation took an interesting turn, I worried about how anything I said could and would alter the “natural” course of things—the way things would have happened without me. The participating teachers frequently asked me if I was getting good data, and wanting to encourage them, I said I was. All of the data produced

in the study has been useful in helping me learn, but that did not necessarily mean I felt like the classroom activities were producing glowing bits of data.

Occasionally, students too were interested in whether or not my study was going well, and in one classroom a student felt it was her job to make sure I got good data. During my semester at Ridgecrest Middle School, one student in particular seemed intent on bringing up topics or questions that were difficult in nature and frequently used the words “morality” and “ethics” in her classroom discussions. After talking with her teacher, Ms. Bowling, I concluded that this was in part common conversation for this student—she was very bright—but also, she was doing this to “put on a show” for me. She thought my work was interesting and she wanted to be included in it, so she sort of forced the conversation in that direction. Even though this data is not really controlled for, she was skewing it by forcing conversations in one way, on my behalf. This is just one example of an interesting line that I don’t follow in this dissertation. I decided not to focus on her particular class for scheduling reasons, but I think this is worth mentioning because I never expected this kind of situation when planning this work.

The last knot I choose to bring up here is one that I feel quite intensely—knot orienting myself within the research in an effort to expose biases that may color my outlook. I believe that conversations about important topics like war, identity, current events, relationships have a vital place in the literature classroom. I tried not to force this idea in the research setting—letting the teachers lead the students (or students lead the teachers) there on their own. But I know that in ways known and unknown I still encouraged them when they happened on their own. I also weighed in when teachers asked for my opinion about things like essay topics and discussion questions.

Inquiry in the Making

Inquiry practices unfolded as I moved through two years of field work (see Table 3.1 for an outline of this time). In this section of the chapter, I present more traditional maps of my methods, beginning with research/orienting questions which were definitely not in this form when I began this work. For a look at how these questions changed from my prospectus until now, see Figure 3.9. In the following sections, I chronologically present each of the participants whose classrooms contributed to this body of work. While I do not include much data from the first three participants, I include their profiles here because the time spent in their classrooms was vital to the collective findings produced through this work.

Research Questioning

I have grown increasingly uncomfortable with the idea of a research question. A question seems to require answers. It also implies a traceable beginning point. That wasn't how things worked for me. St. Pierre (2019) reminded us, "Post qualitative inquiry does not exist prior to its arrival; it must be created, invented anew each time" (p. 9). This work of questioning began before I came back to school, and though I drafted more than thirty different research questions throughout this process eventually whittling them down to the ones you see below they are all still here (Figure 3.9). Moral dilemma became the crises of truth which became difficulty—discomfort—destabilization—de/reterritorialization. So, I rename this section, "research questioning" to show how questions, too, become. They don't sit still, but rather morph and expand, shrink, and tether together. The questions helping orient this study are:

- 1) What relations contribute to the unfolding of de-and re-territorializing literary encounters in secondary English classrooms?
- 2) How are knowing subjects produced through de- and re-territorializing literary encounters in secondary English classrooms?

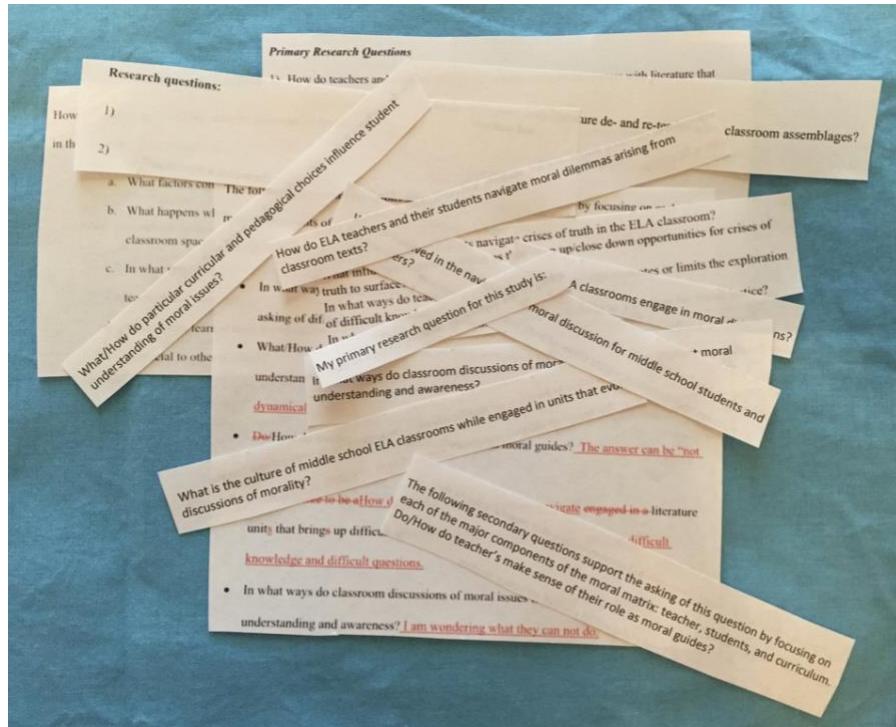


Figure 3.9. “Piling Up Questions,” photo by Elizabeth Anne Murray.

Site Selection

One of the ways traditional qualitative methods informed this work was through the participant selection process. While my location in Redwood provided me with the ability to do convenience sampling based on the readily available schools in the area, I selected participants for this study early in the process through a purposive criterion sampling technique—a combination of what may be considered typical cases and intensity cases in traditional qualitative research (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Specifically, I arrived at the primary participants in this inquiry based upon three main criteria. The teacher: 1) worked within the Redwood Independent School District within reasonable driving distance from my home, 2) was recommended by their principals, department chairs, or university faculty as being exemplary instructors, and 3) taught a unit that the teacher

believed lent itself to the discussion of moral dilemmas or difficult knowledge (these were the key ideas informing my thinking at the time). This process led me to four different teachers working in three different schools. Though it was not intentional, all of the teacher participants were white. All of the schools I visited had Black students, but Black teachers were scarce, especially in the English departments. While data produced from all of these classrooms informed my inquiry, I focus most specifically on the Honors Pre-AP English 9 course taught by Molly Barrett in the spring of 2018. This course provided the most robust data in terms of intensity sampling—that which “involves information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely, but not extremely” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 28). Tables 3.1 and 3.2 offer demographic information about the teachers in the study and the courses I observed for this research.

Table 3.1
Participant (Teachers) Demographics

Semester	School	Teacher	Identity markers	Years teaching	Course observed
Fall 2016	Ridgecrest Middle School	Kate Bowling	white, female	12	8th Honors ELA
Spring 2017	Green Oak Middle School	Jay Fisher	white, male	6	6th ELA
Fall 2017– Spring 2018	Southfield High School	Trevor Grant	white, male	7	English 12
Fall 2017– Spring 2018	Southfield High School	Molly Barrett	white, female	26	Honors/Pre-AP English 9

Table 3.2
Teacher Demographics Continued

Teacher	Course	Total number of students	Total number of participants
Ms. Bowling	8 th Grade Honors ELA (2 classes)	47	23
Mr. Fisher	6 th Grade ELA	26	9
Mr. Grant	12 th Grade English (D Block)	14	14
Ms. Barrett	9 th Grade Honor's/Pre-AP English (A block)	26	23

Participant Confidentiality Measures

As required for IRB approval of this study (after appendices), I took great care to ensure confidentiality and to protect the identity of the participants in this study. All data produced in this research, both analog and digital, were stored under password protected lock and key. Additionally, all names in this study are pseudonyms used to conceal the identities of students, teachers, schools, and locations and to protect their anonymity. I have made every effort to remove any identifying descriptions which could potentially compromise the confidentiality of participants.

Initial Teacher Participant Profiles

Though the parameters (time, specifically) of this study do not permit me to share all of the data produced, I include in this section short introductions to the teachers who welcomed this research into their classrooms. I describe the first two teachers and their schools individually, but because the third and fourth teachers worked at the same school, I describe their school first and then the teachers.

Kate Bowling and Ridgecrest Middle School. When I set out to engage in the pilot study during the fall semester of 2016, I was naively optimistic about how often I would see moral dilemmas and difficult knowledge unfolding in classrooms. That semester I visited Kate Bowling's 8th grade honors ELA classroom at Ridgecrest Middle School four days a week. Ridgecrest Middle was less than a ten-minute drive from my home and scheduling visits there worked well with my course-load and teaching schedule. Ridgecrest Middle definitely catered to the suburban population of Redwood, and it was known for its strong academic reputation. Two different elementary schools fed into Ridgecrest which then fed into Southfield, the nearby high school.

After explaining the focus of my research, Ms. Bowling suggested that an upcoming unit on Elie Wiesel's *Night* (1956) might be a good time to visit. I was thrilled. A week before I was supposed to begin researching, she emailed to let me know that the other 8th grade ELA teacher thought it best to save *Night* for the spring semester, but that she was going to teach a unit on short stories if I still wanted to attend. I accepted her offer. My visits began in early October, and I attended her two afternoon classes which had 23 and 24 students in them. During these classes, I had permission to take audio recordings and collect work from participating students. On my first day she held a discussion on banned books. Witnessing the students' rich conversations perhaps led me to believe that this would be typical for the rest of my data. It wasn't. It also wasn't long before I began to realize how many things got in the way of teaching and learning like book fairs, fire drills, and pep rallies. These were disruptions, but not the kind I was interested in following.

Ms. Bowling was a technology whiz, and she was highly involved with the district's technology team. She also served as a team leader for one of the student teams Ridgecrest

Middle. These obligations kept her busy and out of the classroom quite a bit. Thankfully, she would email me ahead of time so that I knew not to come on those days. She also emailed me when things like, career testing, state benchmarks, field trips, and instructional rounds were happening because those days wouldn't be typical. In addition to these quotidian interruptions, she also had a student teacher working in her class, and we decided that I would not observe on days when the intern was teaching. I found it difficult to gain some sense of routine, but eventually, I learned that interruptions were the routine.

Things settled down and the class got rolling with a short stories unit which included such titles as Kurt Vonnegut's "Harrison Bergeron," Ray Bradbury's "The Sound of Thunder," Liam O'Flaherty's "The Sniper," and "The Tell-Tale Heart" by Edgar Allan Poe. This phase of research was helpful in providing some focus, clarity, and direction for later stages of the project. One notable finding is that during my fifty plus hours in this setting, I noted only one literary encounter that momentarily deterritorialized the classroom assemblage.

While I had hoped to return to Ridgecrest in the spring semester to experience the unit on *Night*, Mrs. Bowling and her 8th grade ELA counterpart both received student teacher interns who were my former students. Factoring in a student teacher was not part of my research plan, and we agreed that my presence in the classroom could cause unnecessary pressure on the interns. Thus, I decided to move to a different location—Green Oak Middle School where Jay Fisher would be teaching *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Rowling, 1997) in his 6th grade class.

Jay Fisher and Green Oak Middle School. Green Oak Middle was at the far end of the county and a solid 35-minute drive from where I lived. The school was just outside of the small town of Harding which had a population of nearly 2000. Harding had a country store, a country

beer joint (what my dad would call an “ice-house”), a post office with one mail truck, four churches and a Dollar General. I passed all of these things on my drive in along with trailer parks, modest cinder-block homes, big vegetable gardens, and at least 18 confederate battle flags.

Harding Elementary fed into Green Oak Middle, which fed into Green Oak High School, which graduated about one hundred students per year. All three schools qualified for Title I status. Harding was a small town, and my encounters there reminded me a lot of my time at Cedar Knoll. Jay Fisher, my teacher participant at Green Oak, was the picture of devotion, and his students seemed to truly enjoy their time in his class. He had spent his own money and whatever grant money he could find on making his classroom a space for hands-on learning. He had yoga balls, kidney shaped tables, and bright posters. He was a self-proclaimed, “Harry Potter nerd,” and the enthusiasm he had for teaching the book was palpable. This unit fell during the last nine weeks of the year, and I made the trek out to Green Oak about four days a week.

Unfortunately, though the unit held the promise of engaging with difficult knowledge, I found little evidence of real engagement with the text or the larger thematic concerns that might jolt the class out of its routine and propelling us all toward productive deterritorialization. Let me explain. Mr. Fisher set up the unit to follow a pattern: read a section, answer study guide questions, take a quiz, and repeat until the unit arrived at its end. This basic pattern repeated each day, with some additional hands-on activities which in their own ways deterritorialized the habitual pattern. For example, when the students got to the scene in the book where Harry and his friends were sorted into their Hogwarts houses, Mr. Fisher pulled out a “real” sorting hat, and the class proceeded to have a sorting of their own (the results of which were pre-determined by a questionnaire the students had taken the day before). The whole unit was filled with fun activities

like these which the students loved, but which never led to anything else except back to the routine.

These were certainly de/territorializations of the routine, but they never erupted into the violent jolts to thinking that Deleuze and Guattari (1994) theorized. They never even threatened to. While they kept kids interested in the class, they also functioned to keep contact with the ongoing world at bay. I came to see these activities as wasted opportunities to discuss things such as how certain lines produce our belonging to certain territories (houses) and not others. How racism and bigotry—topics related to concepts from the story like Muggles and “mudbloods”—are other lines that mark some bodies as abject and others as privileged. All the while, all those confederate flags mocked my determination toward affirmative ethics as I drove back and forth each day. This was inquiry in the making.

Mr. Fisher was not shy about asking for my help in the classroom, but he did not seem to want my input regarding his teaching plans. I was matched up with a table of students who were often absent and needed help catching up. One of these students newly immigrated and spoke little English. I ordered a Spanish version of the novel and donated it to the classroom so that he could engage with the story a little easier. He seemed glad to find it on the table on the day it arrived, and Mr. Fisher also appreciated the gesture.

Six years into his career, Jay Fisher had overcome most of the hiccups found in novice classrooms. He was organized, engaging, and hardworking. He spent long hours at the school volunteering, tutoring, and investing in his community. The students’ grades were fine, but their state test scores weren’t where they “should” be, and the *Harry Potter* unit was condensed to save time for test preparation towards the end of the semester. By all accounts Mr. Fisher was an outstanding teacher, and I do not want to suggest otherwise. I just did not see *anything* during my

time there that looked like working through difficult knowledge—the kind of learning that evokes thought, that changes minds, that puts questions into the air and catches answers in the throat.

Southfield High School. I regrouped over the summer break and set my sights on high school, specifically Southfield High School, which was known for its great academic reputation. Southfield High School stands in a cleared-out grove on the edge of Redwood, a small city in the southern United States with a population of around 100,000. Redwood is not that big geographically speaking, but it does have distinct “parts” of town. Southfield’s location isn’t exactly suburbia, but it is certainly distanced from the city center and draws students who live in nearby planned and gated neighborhoods as well as a handful from a less economically well-to-do part of town.

Spanning grades nine through twelve, Southfield served approximately 1000 students who came from various ethnic and social class backgrounds. It was roughly 57% non-Hispanic white, 38% Black, 3% Asian, and 2% multi-racial or unspecified. Around 30% of the students were considered economically disadvantaged and 2% were homeless. Of the 30% economically disadvantaged, 90% were Black and most were bused in from across the railroad tracks that literally form a boundary between the wealthier and whiter side and the more working class and Blacker side. English language learners accounted for 1% of the student body population.

Southfield had a graduation rate close to 94% but a college and career readiness rate closer to 68%. The faculty is over 80% white and over 50% had earned a Master’s degree or higher. While the students may enter the same building and cheer for the same team, the numbers tell a story of inequity that is all too common in the Southeast United States. The academic success rate of the school was around 80%, but for the white students it was 100%. For Black

students, however, the number was closer to 45%, and for those students considered economically disadvantaged, a mere 35%. This picture mirrored the statistics on college and career readiness. Around 80% of the white students were proficient in reading, but only 25% of Black, and 15% of Hispanic/Latinx. While it was considered a Title 1 school, in terms of academic achievement, it far outperformed the other high schools in the district by 37 and 50 percent. Of the three district high schools, Southfield was the one with the best academic reputation and also the deepest pockets.

After the IRB approved my revised protocol and the Redwood Independent School District granted me access to conduct another year of research in their schools, I secured Mr. Trevor Grant as an initial Southfield High participant. Mr. Grant was recommended to me along with another teacher, Mike Littleton, but at the last minute, Mr. Littleton ended up taking a new position as an administrator at Ridgecrest Middle shortly after the school year began. I was intent on having two participants this time, so I made contact with the new principal at Southfield High School to see if he would suggest a second participant. In my communication, I explained to the principal the focus of my research questions and the type of classroom I sought. He suggested Molly Barrett, a teacher who was new at their school, but someone he thought would be a great fit for my work. I immediately emailed Ms. Barrett to introduce myself, and she welcomed me into her classroom.

Trevor Grant. Trevor Grant was a white male in his early thirties of athletic build. He commuted to Southfield from Trenton, a metropolis about an hour away from where he lived with his dog, Sadie. He didn't tell me much about his life outside of school life, and I didn't feel free to ask. Occasionally he would tell the students stories about his world travels and trips he took to visit his brother who lived abroad. Mr. Grant was a self-proclaimed "total foodie" and

somewhat of a health-nut—behavior not unrelated to his position as a coach. Though he was a dedicated English teacher, coaching seemed to be his true passion. At the time of my research, he had been teaching for seven years, all of which were at Southfield.

Mr. Grant's classroom. Mr. Grant's room had desks in rows and columns and he frequently adjusted them to make sure they were matched up with the tile lines on the floor. The walls in the room had a several student art-projects and one or two English-classroom type posters, but nothing else. It was orderly and sparse, but not cold. He had let classes paint ceiling tiles at the end of the school year, the content of which was a blend of genuine sentiments and snarky inside jokes. Mr. Grant usually left his back whiteboard open for one of his aspiring artists to do a fantastic marker drawing. He was relaxed about tardiness and eating in the classroom. He joked with students and they joked with him. The students had a running bit with him where they put humorous jabs at him on the front board. They frequently hid things from him, and they called him by his last name without saying the “mister.” He was casual about most things, but he had little tolerance for the students not doing their work, and they understood that.

When I asked Mr. Grant about his teaching, he told me that for the last three years he had been turning in the school's required lesson plans with song lyrics interspersed throughout. Since nobody had caught this, he assumed nobody was reading the plans. Instead of writing up new plans that nobody would read he turned the same set in year after year and did what he wanted in his classroom. He wasn't unprepared to teach, but he was not willing to do busywork for the sake of administrators. The teachers seemed to respect him, and the students adored him. Behind his desk, a never-flipped calendar was surrounded by notes and drawings from his many pupils. On top of the bookcases were trophies won by the school sports teams he coached. The classroom was always tidy, and he was a stickler about sorting the trash from the recyclables. It felt lived

in, but a “just the necessities” kind of lived in, like the effort you might take to make your bunk area at sleepaway camp feel like home. As it turned out, his classroom was far less conducive to deterritorialization than was Ms. Barrett’s, my primary research participant, to whom I shall now turn.

Molly Barrett. Molly Barrett was a petit, white woman in her mid-forties with a warm smile and kind eyes. Her stature and style reminded me of Jennifer Aniston, but her accent tagged her as a Southerner for sure. She was raised in a middle-class home with conservative Christian values and Emily Post manners. She attended the big state university where she majored in English education and graduated with honors. She left home after college and taught in various locations around the state for the next twenty years. After a series of life events, she moved back to her hometown of Redwood to be closer to her parents and raise her children. She proudly purchased a “lovely garden home” and continued in the teaching profession. At first, she worked at a high school in the neighboring district for five years, but during the summer before I met her, she was recruited to teach at Southfield. It seemed like the right thing to do because her children attended Southfield and taking the job meant being closer to them and to her home. Molly was a devoted mother and a hardworking teacher with a surprisingly adventurous spirit. She was also the epitome of a lifelong student, ever pursuing opportunities to grow and learn.

Ms. Barrett’s classroom. Ms. Barrett’s classroom sat at the sunny corner of a long front corridor. It had windows along two walls which created an immense amount of natural light and ample afternoon sunshine. Desks in Ms. Barrett’s room changed depending on the activity, but on that first day of my inquiry they were in kind of an arch with a few seats on each row of the curve. The walls in Ms. Barrett’s room were covered in all sorts of the accoutrements of teaching. There were anchor charts, posters, notes from students, drawings, random areas

dedicated to new ideas like a “tearable pun wall” where students could tear off a bad pun to read. She had a classroom library that was sparse but always open to students. She also created a growth mindset (Dweck, 2007) display of facts about famous people showcasing the struggles they encountered prior to finding success. She had tables with stacks of papers, folders in crates, and her boards were always covered with the agenda for the day, standards, and important things to remember. She has told me time and again that it is chaos, but organized chaos, and she knows where everything is, and from my observations this was true. The whole classroom was pulled together with décor featuring her favorite children’s book’s characters including posters, books, stuffed animals, and at Christmas a little tree.

Ms. Barrett’s room felt cozy, cheerful, busy, and settled-in. She had a framed photograph of her children on the filing cabinet and post-it notes and cards from them wishing her a good day and thanking her for being such a great mom. She didn’t allow any food in her classroom, but she would let kids finish their lunch or breakfast in the hall if they needed to. A rule follower, Ms. Barrett kept up with the school’s expectations for posting standards and turning in lesson plans. We have this in common.

Tensions from being the new teacher. Being a new teacher at a school, regardless of experience, comes with hurdles to jump. Every school is different in the ways that it handles day-to-day procedures and adjusting to a new teaching environment certainly necessitates some degree of trial and error. However, certain events occurred during Ms. Barrett’s first year at Southfield that yielded additional sources of tension and stress beyond the growing pains of entering a new school climate.

Having been newly certified to teach Advanced Placement (AP) courses, Ms. Barrett started her new job at Southfield with the impression that she would be teaching AP American

Literature classes. However, this was not the case. Instead, they gave her grade-level nine, honors pre-AP nine, and grade-level eleven sections. Though she may have been frustrated by this, she did not protest outwardly. She was new at the school and did not want to get off on the wrong foot.

Beyond the disappointment concerning her course assignment, a few other factors transpired that also contributed to a rocky start to the year. First, her positioning within the faculty created some initial tensions. It just so happened that the teacher who got the honors and AP American literature class was young, in the first three years of her career. To make matters worse, this teacher was also acting as Department Chair. The age and experience differences positioned Ms. Barrett so that she was “taking orders” from someone young enough to be her child. Also, the rest of the department had been trained in using a specific program the year before, but when Ms. Barrett asked about getting trained in it, her request was met with unanswered emails. She was often left out of the loop on group emails and not included in impromptu department shared lunches. It seemed that every attempt she made to position herself as a member of their teaching community was unsuccessful. I mention these facts to help paint the contextual landscape of Ms. Barrett’s teaching, but also because I think that these tensions made her happier to have someone (me) in her classroom supporting her teaching efforts.

Poetic Interlude: “The Researcher’s Confession”

Molly and I
would occasionally
meet for coffee on weekends.
It was never
my intention
to let the relationship
between
researcher and friend
overlap
this way, but that just wasn’t
going to work.
It’s not who
I am.
Yes, I am
a researcher.
Yes, she was
my participant, but
She is
a person too
And
I am
a person who
is guided by a desire
to reduce cruelty
and
to alleviate suffering
in the world.
I don’t stop being
me,
I just continue
becoming me.
Becoming researcher
and now
becoming
friend.

It happened one afternoon when
Ms. Barrett had
a bad day.
I was there.
She needed someone to talk to.
I turned my recorder off.
We talked.
We decided to meet for coffee and
get to know each other better.
It shouldn’t be so one-sided,
I thought.
I know
so much
about her
and she knows
so little
about me.
We ordered coffee and talked.
She talked. I listened.
I talked. She listened.
I felt guilty
at first,
but I would have felt
worse if
I had turned down her invitation.
And I would have missed out.
Not just on good coffee.
You don’t know going in
how things will go.
I was following a flow of
sympathy
and my people pleaser nature
and pushed researcher guilt aside
and these connections produced
a friendship.

Figure 3.10. Original poem, “The Researcher’s Confession.”

Student Participant Information

In the section below, I present specific information about the make-up and students in Mr. Grant and Ms. Barrett's classes, both of which were at Southfield. Though the data shared in chapter four does include productions from Ms. Bowling and Mr. Grant's classes, it focuses primarily on Ms. Barrett's. I would have limited this section just to her, but Mr. Grant also taught at Southfield I decided to include information regarding the make-up of both classes here for the sake of contrast.

Class selection. My research time at Southfield began on October 2nd, 2017, almost six weeks after my son was born. From that day, I spent at least four days a week at Southfield for the remainder of the 2017–2018 school year working with Mr. Grant's and Ms. Barrett's classes. Southfield operated on a block system with most classes lasting for two nine-week terms. This gave me a chance to see both of these teachers teach one class two times over the course of the year. For the most part, I stayed with Mr. Grant for D and Ms. Barrett for A, but at the beginning of the fall semester I switched every couple of days trying to decide which classes would be the most fruitful. Mr. Grant's D block class was a grade-level 12th grade English class, and one of the credits needed for graduation. Ms. Barrett's A block class was a 9th grade honors pre-AP course. These details may seem small at first, but in the scheme of this work, they are important.

As the above data on Southfield may suggest, it is a diverse school, but it doesn't always look that way. Certain classrooms, and sometimes certain wings of the school are racially segregated. While school segregation may be illegal these days, at Southfield tracking nearly ensures that students find themselves in classrooms of people who look exactly like them. Mr. Grant's AP Language class and Ms. Barrett's 10th grade-level English class were two of those classes. Had someone used these two classes to make isolated projections about the rest of the

student body, they would have been way off. For example, the English 10 course Ms. Barrett taught had 2 white students and 13 Black students. The AP language course Mr. Grant taught had 23 white students and 2 Black students. Things were more diverse in Mr. Grant's 12th grade-level English and Ms. Barrett's 9th grade honors pre-AP classes, but not much. However, in the end, I decided to attend these two classes because of their diversity, and also because the AP language class did not focus as much on literature.

Student participant selection. I invited all students in Mr. Grant's D Block (level) and Ms. Barrett's A Block to join the study. All those who returned the appropriately signed assent and consent forms were enrolled in the inquiry. In spring 2018, there were approximately 14 students in Mr. Grant's D Block class and 26 students in Ms. Barrett's class. All of Mr. Grant's students returned their forms—this was in part because most were over 18 and didn't require parent or guardian signatures. Of the 26 students in Ms. Barrett's class, 23 returned permission forms agreeing to participate in the study—11 boys and 12 girls. The racial make-up of the students included 4 African American, 2 Asian American, and 17 Caucasian students. In terms of race and ethnicity, this sample was in parity with the racial makeup of the school. After introducing the study, I took questions and then reviewed the consent/assent forms with the students which were sent home for their parents/guardians to read and return. Figure 3.11 shows the participation agreement chart offered to consenting parent regarding their child's involvement in the study. Once permitted by their parents, student participants then chose their desired level of engagement with the research process. A student would only be as involved as they personally desired to be, even if their parents had provided full permission.

Check if you agree	Description of Participation
	I can make copies of your child's coursework for the study. (no names included)
	I can ask your child questions (interview) your child about his or her course work for the study.
	I can include your child in whole class audio recordings.
	I can include your child in whole class video recordings.
	I can include your child in class photographs (small groups).

Figure 3.11. Student involvement permission form.

Ms. Barrett's A Block class. Ms. Barrett's A Block class seemed to me to be straight out of a movie or nineties sitcom. All of the stereotypical players were present: the jocks, the popular girls, the loners, the techies, the band kids, the artsy ones, the geniuses, the theater crew, and the all-American kids next door. I made notes about this during the first week of observation, but these identities were never really stable. This class was more diverse than the other classes I observed (see Table 3.3 below for more information on the participating students). Although the students were freshmen and seemingly learning their collective position within the school at large, in this class they seemed sure of themselves. They were used to getting good grades and for the most part, they seemed prepared and willing to do the work required to get those good grades. The handful of students who ended up with a C seemed to have taken on more than they bargained for—struggling to complete assignments or not paying attention in class. One student told me her mother made her take the class even though she didn't want to be in honors. For the most part, the class got along well—something they attributed to having been in school together

since kindergarten. Ms. Barrett and I were the outsiders, and the students took care to get to know us as the semester went by.

Table 3.3

Participating Students in Ms. Barrett's A Block Class

Participant	Race	Light Description
Windsor	Asian	A respected classmate, careful to speak, in the school band
Mallory	Black	Artsy, rarely spoke, responsible with her work, wise beyond her years
Eleanor	White	Quirky, a class leader, in the school band, clearly intelligent, spoke often
Misty	White	A perfectionist, wants to go to Harvard Law, spoke often, in the school band
Chloe	White	Quiet, always drawing, didn't like being called on
Hannah	White	Very sweet, polite, chimed in occasionally with good things to say
Kelsey	White	Quiet, but spoke to me a lot, rode horses competitively
Stella	White	A class leader, played softball, spoke often, sometimes off task
Annie	White	All American girl next door, spoke frequently, very insightful, friendly
Chase	Black	Intelligent, but maybe bored with the class, outdoors enthusiast, spoke often but usually off task
Lucia	Black	Athletic, on the track team, interested in class, but often behind on assignments
Ronald	White	Kind of a loner, easily annoyed, very into video games, spoke occasionally but often hard to follow
Liam	White	A talker, insightful and outlandish, a member of the school band, a theater kid
Devon	Black	A cool kid, creative, athletic, into video games, terrific cellist
Hayes	White	All American boy next door, very insightful, spoke often and people listened
Jordan	White	Quirky, loved music, really honest, very kind, spoke often
Gary	Asian	Gentle, spoke occasionally, looked out for others in the class, fun sense of humor
Stephen	White	A cool kid, athletic, often off-task, generally friendly

Participant	Race	Light Description
Josh	White	Clearly intelligent, rarely spoke, kind of a bored attitude, usually off task
Marley	White	Spunky, a class leader, spoke often, an artist, in the school band
Ginny	White	Always reading (not for class), quiet, Ancient Greece expert, usually doodling
Alexander	White	Funny, spoke occasionally, friendly, insightful, aware of school goings-on
Chelsea	Black	Fashionable, liked to participate, usually hadn't read, friendly

Regarding Data

Data Production as Assemblage

Like the researcher and the research participants, data too operated rhizomatically in this work, and as Masny (2013) explained, this means “a bloc of data has no beginning, no ending. A researcher enters in the middle” (p. 341). At times this was an overwhelming understanding—that data were being produced beyond my reach of control, but it was also inspiring. Though I began with traditional forms of data, I also stayed attuned to different forms of data as I encountered them in the assemblage. As Nordstrom explained, “Data are a motley crew of connective and folding object-interviews, media, novels, theories, weather, dreams, and responses in all their forms” (Nordstrom, 2015, 169–170). I know this to be true. I experienced it throughout my work. I also believe that acknowledging and incorporating different forms of data made for a more robust study. To be sure, these data were not lying in wait for me to collect like eggs in a henhouse. Rather data were being created, produced, becoming as I engaged with the participants in the classroom. Reflecting on this understanding, Torrance (2017) explained,

If we are entangled with data, implicated in both its production and use, we cannot stand outside of the process. ... Data then, are not inert. They are produced, but in turn become an agentic part of the assemblage that produces them. (in Denzin & Giardina, 2017, p. 82).

This kind of research, is good and needed, but gosh it's messy. Reflecting on what it looks like to collect/produce data when using a Deleuzian ontology and feeling like you have simultaneously read “too much but never enough Deleuze”, St. Pierre (2013) (humorously? sarcastically? pityingly?) shared, “My advice to my students who read Deleuze and find his work exhilarating is to “read everything you can by and about Deleuze and plug his machine into yours. Then tell us what happened” (p. 226). I cannot account for all for the ways data came to be in and through this study. Therefore, I sheepishly offer that the data informing this study include: participant observations, field notes, video and audio recordings of class activities, communications between teacher and researcher, classroom artifacts, small group interviews, and teacher interviews. I should also include tears, laughs, stomach lurches, quickened heartbeats, deep sighs, chill bumps, and other affective intensities felt but uncaptured by technology. All of these data sources, both visible and invisible, contributed to production and analysis of data in different ways.

Table 3.4
Methods of Data Production

Production Sources	Data Produced	Frequency
Participant Observations	Field notes	Daily
Video recordings	Footage	Daily
Audio recordings	Transcripts	Daily
Participant Communication	Text messages, emails, phone conversations	Daily, weekly, continuing still
Classroom artifacts	Student work samples, photographs, assignments	Several times a week
Interviews	transcripts	Informal check-ins with small groups of students
Other sources	Visual notes, data poems, memos, creative narrations	Sporadically

Participant observation. The primary means of data production occurred through my participant observation which was conducted through “long term immersion in the setting” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 19). Time spent in the classroom evolved as the study progressed, but during the spring semester of 2018, I was in Ms. Barrett’s classroom a minimum of four days a week for 85 minutes per day. The meaning of participant observation meant various things across inquiry projects, ranging on a continuum between participant and observer (Glesne, 2011). I am gladly in the middle of this continuum; the focus was not on my personal experience in the classroom, but I did not hide behind my camera in a corner of the classroom. Ms. Barrett, especially, welcomed me into her class as a fellow teacher and leaned on my knowledge and experience more than I expected. She often referred to our relationship as co-teachers or collaborators. There were days when she wanted me to teach parts of the lesson and other days when I merely assisted in the way a teacher’s aide might. The students seemed to forget I was researching—ever wanting me to check their work or give them permission to go to the bathroom. My level of direct interaction depended upon what was happening in the classroom. I had to use my judgment and intuition to decide when I should say something and when I should hold back.

During my observations, as often as I was seated at a desk, I took field notes. These were rarely neat. I wrote in shorthand, scribbled in the margins, made doodles, and wrote myself questions and to do lists about things I wanted to look back upon when I had more time. Some days, I did well to get the agenda and a short play by play down on the page. Other days, I filled up multiple pages, focusing in on a particular student or encounter from the class that captivated my attention. MacLure called these kinds of data intensities “a glow” explaining that “The

unruly potentials in data can be sensed, for instance, on occasions when something seems to reach out from the inert corpus of the data to grasp us" (2013b, 2017, p. 51). Glowing field note moments were marked by a star. Field notes did not simply serve as a record of each meeting's agenda, they became the first visible form of analysis.

Video recordings. It was important for me to have access to visual recordings of glowing lessons and events in the classroom, so I brought my basic video camera to the classroom daily. Most of the time the camera was perched in the far back corner of the classroom, but occasionally I used a small tripod on my desk when the class would be grouped in a circle. The video footage, though at times grainy, was incredibly helpful in seeing things that I missed. It was useful to focus in on certain students at the same moment when at the time my eyes could only stay on one or two. Camera footage recorded facial expressions, body language, side conversations, and other important details that audio recording couldn't.

Audio recordings. I used a digital audio recorder during most class periods. I would turn the recorder on as soon as I was settled in the room and turn it off when the students walked out after the bell. Occasionally, I left it at my desk, but most of the time I carried it with me as I moved around the room talking to people and helping out.

Storage and transcription. Audio and video files were digitally uploaded into an online storage account provided by the university. The files were labeled by class period and day and organized by teacher. The amount of data this produced was immense. I made an attempt to listen to all of the class periods I starred in my field notes multiple times, and from those made transcriptions. Ms. Barrett's classroom had a noisy air conditioner that provided an incessant hum the whole time it ran (which was often). It was one more part of the assemblage. In listening

to the transcriptions and watching the videos over and over, I began to notice things I hadn't before. New things began to glow. The listening, transcribing, watching were part of the continual process of analysis.

Data conventions. The pieces of data that are shared in chapter four were produced through re-engagement with the data in multiple ways. I relied heavily on transcriptions I made using the audio and video recordings of the classrooms, but these were also always partial and always entangled with other sources of data production such as field notes and memories. I present them narratively, as dialogue would be written in a novel. However, because the dialogue was taken from the transcripts, the language did not always create a complete sentence. I have not added to the dialogue, but I did edit it for clarity. When appropriate, I use bracketed text to fill in words that are missing or suggested. I did not measure extended vowels or pauses with the exactitude of a stopwatch, but I noted ones that were clearly different from the set tone and speed of speech. Interruption by others is noted in the dialogue and for the most part. I note most pauses and indicate the length. For readability, I have removed the more distracting hedges (umms, likes, you knows) and used only minimal transcription conventions (Table 3.5) which were adapted from Bucholtz (2000).

Table 3.5

Transcription Conventions

Marking	Explanation	Example
:	Length	"Oka:::y" Eleanor said, annoyed.
—	Self-interruption	"He's the one," Hayes said, "I think he—it said that he's not like."
Italics	Emphatic stress	I know <i>that</i>

?	Interrogative statement	Ms. Barrett asked, “Do you want to share that one?”
!	Exclamatory statement	“That’s blood!”

Participant communication. One source of data I had not originally considered was the constant communication between Ms. Barrett and me. Emails, texts, and phone calls—some sent to her by me and others me to her—became an important part of the data. Used, with her permission of course, these conversations acted like little time stamps marking important moments during the semester. Sometimes we talked for me to member check something I had thought about during focused analysis. Other times she would email asking my opinion on an activity or an essay prompt. All of these exchanges informed the process.

Classroom artifacts. I collected several forms of classroom artifacts throughout my research. These included copies of lesson plans, handouts, activity pages, and assessments. For students who provided me permission, I also collected different samples of their work. These were mostly pieces from their daily grades, projects, and assignments, but occasionally I did a few quick writes in an effort to collect their thoughts on a particular topic or event. The whole class responded to the quick write prompts, but I only kept the ones from participants. I also took pictures of artwork they did during the course of the semester and a few photographs of presentations. These pictures were taken on my cellphone and then immediately saved to the online storage account via an app. Upon successful upload, I deleted them from the photo cache on my phone.

Interviews. Interviews were particularly important to this kind of research, because they provided opportunities for further exploration of the observations, audio/video recordings, and artifacts. Throughout the semester I did a few sit-down interviews with Ms. Barrett. These were

usually short, around ten or fifteen minutes, and took place after class in her room. I did not want to bombard her with a long list of questions, so I usually just asked what she thought about a particular incident or asked her to explain her decisions more fully. These “interviews” were more like two teachers talking about work during lunch than anything else.

I informally chatted with students during class. Most often my questions regarded a point they made or something needing elaboration. I also used voluntary student groupings during project work time as a way to talk with students. I had a go-to group whose members typically included: Misty, Eleanor, Marley, Hayes, Mallory, Alexander, and Kelsey. The go-to group was important for me because they all turned in forms providing me with full permission, whereas other groups generally contained a non-participating member. Logistically, the go-to group made it easier to have transcripts without gaps in conversation. These students were also responsible with their assignments and involved in the class discussion. Towards the end of the year, I conducted a few focus-group type sessions, posing questions about likes and dislikes from the year in addition to some follow-up topics.

Other sources. In addition to the traditional sources of data explored above, data were created in other ways unforeseen when the work began. These sources were different from the ones above because they truly brought into light the understanding that data production/collection and data analysis are inseparable processes. At times something would happen, and I would react a certain way. My mood would change, or the mood of the class would shift, and I would have to map back to see what was said or done that altered the atmosphere. Analytic memos became data as did visual notes I would take during the class. From these and from listening to transcripts I created data poems and other creative narrations that appear in this work as excerpts and interludes. While I explore these more fully below in the data

analysis section, I mention them here because they were not just part of the analysis, they were also the data itself. They were produced in and through this research. Working rhizomatically, I tried not to draw boundaries and hard lines of distinction between data and analysis. Prior to describing data as “a motley crew” Nordstrom (2015) wrote, “Data became a supple and moving ontology of folds” (p. 169). That’s how I see it—data and analysis—folded in like yeast in bread dough. Data were assemblage—always connecting, creating, expanding, and informing in new and unexpected ways.

Poetic Interlude: “I’m Charles Baker Harris”

It was a lesson on characterization, the kind where you have to figure out what you know about a character based upon what the book says directly and also what you learn from their thoughts and actions.

The group decided to start with direct characterization.

Marley was in charge of drawing the picture of Dill on the poster-board.

Misty read aloud, “Dill was a curiosity. He wore blue linen shorts that buttoned to his shirt, his hair was snow white and stuck to his head like duckfluff.”

“What does that look like?” Marley asked, “Shorts buttoned to his shirt?”

My ears heard her question slower than my brain. I looked at the words and wondered to myself what that would look like.

Suddenly my mother’s mandatory southern lady worship of all things British royalty came flooding into my head. I knew what it looked like.

It looked like Prince George. It looked like the Prince George outfit she had bought for my son, which was hanging in his closet at home like a big question mark. Our social engagements were few and usually informal, and I hadn’t quite known what to do with the outfit.



Now, Marley’s question had given it purpose. “That’s what the outfit was for,” I thought, “for this.”

I pulled up this image
“Oh, like that!” she
Hayes keep thumbing
internal



on my phone and showed it to Marley.
said and began to draw. Misty and Eleanor and
through the text looking for quotes to show Dill’s
characterization.

I listened to the group
work as she sketched.

for a moment and then turned my eyes on Marley’s

I felt the assemblage
of my notebook,
eyelids, and filling the room like oxygen from the noisy air conditioner.

around me in a new way. Data pulling at the edges
creeping in under the door, lurking behind my

My mother’s love of the royals and Harper Lee’s story had never crossed paths before, but now they had. Here, in the classroom at Southfield. Here where I continue to become in and through this work. This literary encounter pulled the past into the unfolding event, and now these things linked to each other and to this moment.

Figure 3.12. “I’m Charles Baker Harris,” first photo of books taken by Elizabeth Anne Murray, second photograph by Londisland of *The Duke of Cambridge holding his son, George, in 2015*, Wikimedia’s Creative Commons (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:William_and_George_Trooping.png).

Data Analysis as Assemblage

The rhizome was not simply a metaphor for the way I tried to unthink learning and learners, myself as researcher in this work, and the data, it was also the methodological approach I took in terms of data analysis. Using a rhizoanalytic approach changes the way in which this qualitative work came to be and the forces that moved it forward. Stressing the ongoing process of becoming in their own rhizomatic work, Leander and Rowe (2006) explained rhizoanalysis by contrasting it with traditional representational approaches,

a rhizoanalytic approach, as informed by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), involves asking different kinds of questions and engaging in a different mode of thought regarding literacy performances. This mode of thought may be described as moving from identifying what is present or contained within an interaction to analyzing the interaction as a process of producing difference. (p. 434)

What this looks like for inquiry in terms of data production and analysis varies obviously based on the specifics of the individual project, but Deleuze and Guattari (1987) offered the concept of mapping (as opposed to tracing) as a manner of studying and presenting these engagements. Tracing, is representational; it involves copying what was already there. Mapping, however, they explain “has to do with surveying ... even realms that are yet to come” (p. 5). To create maps with/in/through data is to be on the move, mapping lines of flight as rupture out of bounds and as rhizomatic assemblage.

Historically, surveyors have used advanced technological contraptions to measure distance, slope, and angles in their work (Figure 3.13). Picking up the language of this work, rather than the specific tools, Deleuze and Guattari wrote that mapping depends upon the ability to follow lines, or “lineaments running through groups as well as individuals” (p. 203). Recognizing these lines and exploring what they produce is the aim of this work.

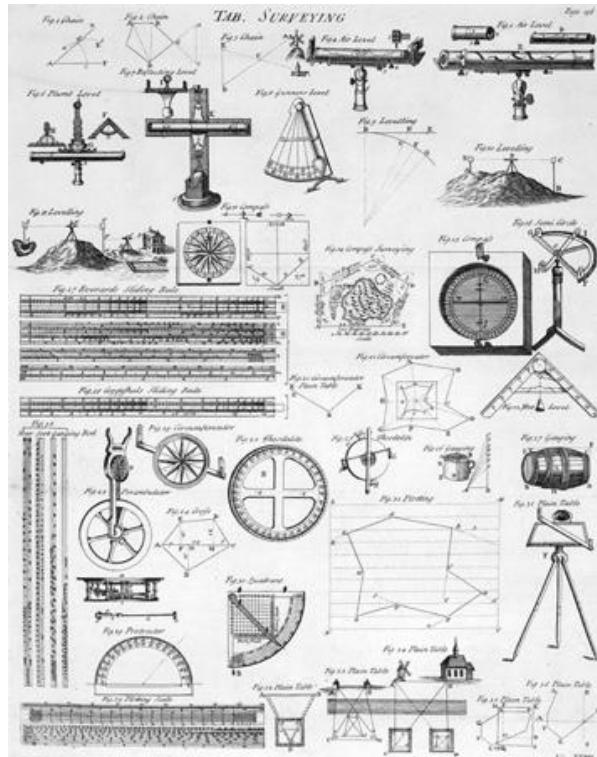


Figure 3.13. Drawing of Surveying Tools, Public Domain,

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=643156>

Again, moving away from the idea of representations, doing this means acknowledging that any data produced will always be partial. Like a surveyor mapping a geographic terrain, maps become outdated in small and big ways. Roads are constructed, fault lines shift, and landslides carry structures down mountains. So, it is in mapping the rhizome. Surveyors also realize that the territory they map has a history and a future, and the work that they do will always be in the middle. This research also enters in the middle and exits in the middle. As the one conducting the research, I understand I am implicated in this middle—these lines, “compose us, as they compose our map” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 203). I have drawn from what I learned in more traditional qualitative methods, specifically narrative, ethnography, and case study even as I work rhizomatically.

As I mentioned earlier, these days I find it more and more difficult to think of data production and data analysis as separate processes. In traditional qualitative work, data analysis and collection (production) inform one another in a cyclical process, but in the realm of rhizomes, things grew even more entangled. It was helpful to think of data collection as production, and it is helpful to think of analysis in new ways too. MacLure (2017) posed the word “wonder” as a suitable option. Childers (2014) offered the concept of “promiscuous analysis” explaining that, “engaging in the rhizomatic and iterative nature of inquiry quickly disrupts such perceptions. Writing, thinking, and theorizing happen all at once and exceed the containment of phases, time, and space” (p. 820). She was right, not only about this happening to me, but about the speed at which it would occur. I follow the advice of St. Pierre (1997) as she suggested to begin by troubling the traditional idea of data and in turn the process by which that data gets analyzed. We may be limited by our traditional understandings of concepts like data and method, but we also have the option to use “them even as we attempt to escape their meaning” (p. 175). St. Pierre worked this way using traditional methods and terms, but also acknowledging that data appeared in her work that was never translated into words that could be coded into neat categories.

We enter where we are with what we know, but we don’t have to stay there. For St. Pierre’s work, this meant doing the traditional tasks but remaining open to “data that escaped language,” to the point where the concept of data itself took a line of flight (1997, p. 179). She reflected, “even though I will continue to use the word data, its meaning has forever shifted for me and will continue to shift as I prod and poke at this foundational signifier on which knowledge rests” (p. 185). This action, she argued helps to create an “ethics of response” where: ethics is invented within each relation as researcher and respondent negotiate sense-making by foregrounding their theoretical frameworks, by risking confusion, by

determining to read harder when the text begins to seem in accessible, and by being willing to attend to the absences in their own work that are made intelligible by the difference of the other. (1997, p. 186)

Inspired by St. Pierre, I began with the traditional methods of analysis like reading through field notes and writing analytic memos, but I remained open to new ways of doing and being with my data.

Analytic memos. With this project data analysis began with field notes which sometimes turned into reflective memos. In these memos I reviewed field notes and listened to audio attempting to cull key moments that scattered my thoughts on a page, paying specific attention to the disruptions, moments of relative stasis and destabilization. Glesne (2011) noted that writing memos daily is important, and that reflection needs to happen “as often and as soon as possible” (p. 189). Good advice. Analytic memos did not happen daily for me, but they were helpful when I was able to produce them. Loose threads, new questions, and important insights surfaced through them. Rather than try to find *something* in every single class session, I took Saldaña’s (2013) advice and used the memos to “reflect on and write about [my] study’s research questions” (p. 44). More specifically, I asked questions that would help me map how the classroom assemblage was being produced as a way of mapping how it was de/territorialized through literary encounters. Knowing myself as a writer, things worked better when I began with a specific question or prompt. Some process questions I thought with, included: What different ways of knowing/becoming could breathe new life into this scene? What assumptions and histories make these encounters possible? How did something this problematic become routine? As Ronald Bogue (2007) wrote, “one cannot teach the truly new in its newness, but one can attempt to induce an encounter with the new by emitting signs, by creating problematic objects, experiences, or concepts” (p. 67). Following these questions, memos typically took the form of

short narratives in which I would take a section of transcription and paint in the details not audible in the word for word transcriptions.

Member checking. Another analytic tool I used in this study was member checking, specifically with the primary teacher participant, Ms. Barrett. This became increasingly important to me as I felt an obligation to respect her work—our work—in the classroom. She saw us as co-teachers and I saw us as co-researchers. It was and still is important to me that she remains involved in the research analysis, not just in the production of data. In order to do this, I provided Ms. Barrett with opportunities to double check things. Most of the time, this occurred through a text or a phone call, but I also shared snippets of polished sections with her. She would gladly respond to provide her perspective on the situation or clear up a lingering question in the data.

Analysis without coding. Early in the research process, I intended to use an inductive coding process (Patton, 2002). I am absolutely a paper and pencil (sticky note, gel pen, index card) kind of person, so it made sense that I might tackle data that way. Reflecting on what data looks like for research in the milieu, Springgay and Truman (2018) wrote, “Follow a thought in the direction of the wind CROSS (m)any lines” (p. 86). Though they were specifically writing about walking as methodology, they extended this sentiment to other means of rhizomatic analysis. They continued,

In the middle, immanent modes of thinking-making-doing come from within the processes themselves, rather than from outside them. ... The middle can't be known in advance of research. You have to be ‘in it,’ situated and responsive. You are not there to report on what you find or what you seek, but to activate thought. To agitate it. (p. 87)

Once I began to open myself up to rhizomatic thinking, coding like that just wasn’t going to work. Instead, I reflected on data as it became. Sometimes this was more formal—sitting down

with my transcripts and a highlighter looking for what glowed (MacLure, 2013b). Sometimes this was the result of a star I had drawn on a field note, but at other times glimmers appeared the third or fourth time I read through a transcript. Sometimes a song would come on the radio and two threads of data would cross in a surprising, but sense-making, way. Masny (2016) offered the example of “palpation” as a way of rhizomatically analyzing data—like a careful hand checking a bone for a fracture. She explained, “From a rhizomatic perspective, representational data emit lines of flight, a becoming–problem that de-territorializes the givens of data, becoming in response to what it is not, difference and palpating data” (2016, p. 667). There are many different ways of looking at the deterritorializing events in the classroom and I found myself sifting through the data wearing many of them at the same time, like a person in need of bifocals. These wonder-lenses guided my gaze as I analyzed but did not determine it.

Writing. The writing process itself has probably been the most productive means of data analysis. Though it didn’t occur to me that writing could count as a means of inquiry analysis until I read Richardson and St. Pierre’s (2005) “Writing: A Method of Inquiry,” I have always written as a way of processing and producing what I know. More recently St. Pierre described this as words “appear[ing] on the computer screen unbidden” and that is exactly how it has been for me. Thoughts pool into existence—unknown to me one moment stare back at me the next as though they had been there all along. Magic. There have been hundreds of drafts drawn up of the various data sections presented in the next chapter. Insight and shifting context have made them morph time and again. Many threads of data are on the cutting room floor and others are still finding their way to me. This is how it has been and continues to be. “Think[ing] with/in a horizon of multiplicity” this way in their work Hofsess and Sonenberg (2013) explained, “We

(re)vision our analytical work as forever on the move; we (re)vision ourselves as scholars continuously moving, becoming” (p. 307).

READ—READING CHECK—STUDY
GUIDE QUESTIONS—READING
CHECK—CHAPTER SUMMARY—PART
ONE TEST—CHAPTER SUMMARY
QUESTIONS—CHARACTER ANALYSIS
ESSAY—READ
MOLAR LINES ABOUND

-- PERSONAL CONNECTIONS --
- - CURRENT EVENTS - - OPINIONS -
- - DIFFERENCE - - QUESTIONS - -
- - MYSTERY - - SCANDAL - - HUMOR - -
minor GESTURES chip away at rigid
structures as connections and
M-O-L-C-U-L-A-R – L-I-N-E-S –
A-P-P-E-A-R

Connections continue
FOUND POETRY BODY BIOGRAPHIES
difference emerges
SOCRATIC SEMINAR
students become
and
LINES OF FLIGHT TAKE OFF
and
RUPTURE
and
RETREAT
and and and and and and
and “My Dad’s a cop.” and “I worry
about my brothers.” and “At least we
ain’t dead.”

Figure 3.14. Data poem example.

Creative narrations and data poems. For me, other means of analysis emerged throughout this experience that I hope work as examples of Deleuze’s idea of “creative stuttering” using language (visual, verbal, etc.) creatively (1994a, p. 27). Having taken courses on narrative inquiry and arts-based-research (ABR), I had some practice in these more creative ways of engaging with data, and I learned to trust the process. On my drive home I would let my thoughts drift around as scenes from the day replayed in my mind’s eye. Sometimes this would

inspire a do-over play in which I interrupted the scene and projected on how things might have gone differently. I occasionally found myself doing old ballet warm-up exercises one hand on a chair back and the other holding a transcript page. Other times I would read through transcriptions and a poem (see Figure 3.14 above) would emerge in the data, like putting on a pair of glasses that could see invisible ink. Reflecting on her creative and poetic inquiry pursuits, Richardson (1994) wrote,

Any or all of these processes through which the self is constructed and reconstructed may be going on simultaneously. Lyric representation mimics the complexity and openness of this human process—“shifting subjectivities”—by which we come to know, and not know, ourselves, and know ourselves, again, differently. (p. 10)

Comforting words to a novice. I do not consider myself a screenwriter or a poet, but I see the world this way. Since childhood, it has been a natural reflex to see a person and “cast” them. I am the product of spending my afternoons with too many books and too few people. In this work, my casting habit surfaced in descriptions of research events and people in the classroom. In addition to casting I was constantly writing poems or maybe they are poem-like-things. I paid no attention to metrics, but I played around with words and shape like a painter plays with color and texture. I have a dozen or more inquiry/data poems that I have written throughout this experience (some presented in this chapter) and crafting them was and continues to be part of the analytic process.

In what follows, I present data narratives and interludes as a way of reporting from within the still becoming assemblage ...

CHAPTER FOUR: PROCEEDING FROM THE MIDDLE

What I map in this chapter are a handful of shifts and ripples—events both deterritorializing and reterritorializing—that emerged in the midst of literary encounters. This is not a comprehensive account of the time spent in the field, but I have attempted to supply a broad sample of the different types of de/territorializing events that unfolded in this inquiry. Such encounters were more plentiful in Ms. Barrett’s classroom than in the others, so six of the nine examples come from my time there. The encounters shared below “proceed from the middle”—they were becoming before they became these pages, and they will continue becoming as they join with reader assemblages (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 25). The encounters begin with a broad heading but are divided into a series of small sections. QR codes are woven throughout. Rather than separating data from the theories that brought them into view, I utilize interludes to remain immersed in the telling which I cannot separate from the analysis or meaning making that continue even in these late drafts.

The order of these narratives and interludes are purposeful and only somewhat chronological. The first two are important for setting the scene for others to come. I have attempted to order the others in a way that would move us along. However, as Massumi explained in his foreword to *A Thousand Plateaus*, the book “does not pretend to have the final word. The authors’ hope, however, is that elements of it will stay with a certain number of its readers and will weave into the melody of their everyday lives” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. iv). So, I also want to recognize you, the reader, and your place in these narratives, for you, too, are becoming part of the assemblage. The threads and connections that compose you will allow

for new paths and circuits (as well as old blockages) to form as you plug into the data rhizome. In addition to data narratives and interludes, the other forms of analysis continue here via poetry and QR codes linked to music and informational pages on the internet. I see these serving as “floating affects,” as intensities that move through, from, and within the data that may speed things up or slow them down (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 267).

Temporary, Productive Failure



Figure 4.1. Songs of approaching thinking.

Time Travel and a Pet Plant

Ms. Bowling’s 8th grade honors class was an inquisitive and bubbly crew. Having reached their last year of middle school, they had a group-wide sense of confidence that was fun to watch. Though still kind of gawky and elbowy, they were proud of their intellect in a way that would be harder to see in the older classes I came to observe. Ms. Bowling was a perfect fit for them. When I was teaching middle school, people would always say things like, “I don’t know how you do it. Middle school was the worst time of my life.” I would usually respond by saying, “Oh I know. Me, too. It’s much easier this second time around.” In reality, I think middle school is the best, a just right space between baby teeth falling out and learning to drive. Ms. Bowling felt the same way. She knew her students’ interests and spoke their language. She wore “Neville Longbottom for President” t-shirts and Chuck Taylor’s on casual Fridays. She regularly

implemented games and technology into her curriculum. There were no desks, only tables and chairs, and the whole atmosphere was one conducive to learning and collaboration.

On a gray afternoon in late fall, students dressed in jeans, athletic pants, and pullovers lazed contentedly in their chairs. The class was working through a short story unit meant to cover figurative language beyond poetry. Ms. Bowling printed out a class set of stories that by now were looking a little weathered in the hands of the students. The texts she chose were engaging—Liam O’Flaherty’s “The Sniper,” Kurt Vonnegut’s “Harrison Bergeron,” Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart,” and a few others. All dead, white, male authors. This day’s story was Ray Bradbury’s “A Sound of Thunder” (1990) which is a science fiction, time-travel, butterfly effect/chaos theory story in which a man living in 2055 pays for a prehistoric dinosaur hunt adventure. The plot hinges on the hunting group not doing anything do disrupt the past in order to avoid cataclysmic domino effects in the future. Of course, that doesn’t happen. Alarmed by the t-rex, Eckels, the main character steps off the floating path and subsequently steps on a butterfly. The butterfly’s death sets off a chain reaction that causes the hunting crew to return to a very different future.

Earlier in the class period students round-robin read through the short story in their table groups, and when they finished, Ms. Bowling took the whole class back through it one chunk at a time. There was an activity page to go with the reading, but Ms. Bowling waited to hand it out because she wanted to do a little unpacking first. She knew the students would all have questions about one part of the activity, so she was taking time now to review the story in an effort to address likely questions ahead of time. Students seemed to be taking advantage of the “lull” between activities—some were listening and reading along, but others were nodding off or texting under the tables. The conversation was carried along by a handful of students who were

almost always highly engaged. Standing next to one of the tables, Ms. Bowling read again the following selection from “A Sound of Thunder”:

A touch of the hand and this burning would, on the instant, beautifully reverse itself. Eckels remembered the wording in the advertisements to the letter. Out of chars and ashes, out of dust and coals, like golden salamanders, the old years, the green years, might leap; roses sweeten the air, white hair turn Irish-black, wrinkles vanish; all, everything fly back to seed, flee death, rush down to their beginnings, suns rise in western skies and set in glorious easts, moons eat themselves opposite to the custom, all and everything cupping one in another like Chinese boxes, rabbits into hats, all and everything returning to the fresh death, the seed death, the green death, to the time before the beginning. A touch of a hand might do it, the merest touch of a hand. (Bradbury, 1990, p. 212)

Looking up at the class Ms. Bowling asked, “What does that mean? Returning to the seed death?”

Her question was not met with an immediate answer. Students shuffled papers and averted their eyes, unsure of what she was getting at. She spoke again, this time scaffolding her thoughts a little more carefully.

“Do seeds typically represent death?”

Students seemed thrilled to have such an easy question and replied in unison, “No, birth!” and “They represent life!”

Affirming their response, Ms. Bowling said, “No. They represent life.”

Hank added, “A new beginning.”

“A new beginning.” Ms. Bowling nodded before continuing, “Okay, but if you’re rewinding time, [short pause as she moved to the center of the room and held her hand out to the air beside her, palm down, patting gently] so here’s this plant. Everybody say ‘hi’ to the plant.”

The students goofily and enthusiastically replied, “Hey! Hi! Hey! Hi plant! Hi, Plant!”

Suddenly, things changed. The students were giddily tuning in. Ms. Bowling’s move to the

middle of the room, her impromptu theatrics, and the new class pet had people's attention. The group of engaged students was expanding. Postures improved and pages flipped to find the right passage.

Continuing to gesture and dote on the plant, Ms. Bowling elaborated, "This plant, right here, is in the prime of its life, and, we time travel to [short pause] I don't know. How long is this plant going to be alive?

"Three months!" Max called out.

Ms. Bowling accepted his answer and said, "We time travel to three months ago. And, three months ago this plant was a seed.

"Huh?" they replied.

The students were confused for a second, but the gears were clicking away in their minds as her question began taking shape.

"Oh!" [her point dawning on them] "O:::h."

Ms. Bowling asked now, "What just happened to the plant?"

"It." [pause] "It. "[more pausing]

Many students started to answer but they stopped short, perhaps not finding the right word.

Finally, Jean spoke up, "It shrunk!" [dramatic pause]. "It died!" [more pausing]. "It un-grewed."

They were all looking at Ms. Bowling with puzzled but enthusiastic expressions. They got the image, but something else had happened. "It died," other students added, agreeing with Jean, "It died."

Ms. Bowling continued, "Well, is it alive? The seed?"

"Well, technically, yeah, it is," Jean added in a modestly confident tone.

Recognizing that she needed to be the one to clear things up, Ms. Bowling proceeded: “It’s no longer [dramatic pause]. It’s no longer its same self, right?” For a moment longer, she looked around, checking the pulse of the classroom and looking for signs of agreement.

She continued, “It’s a completely other form. It is not a plant. It is a seed, so in a way, it is like a death, right? Because that plant no longer exists, I mean you can rewind time to point where the plant has shrunk back down into the earth and is now just a little seed, so in a way, that sort of backwards tracking of it takes it back to [pause].

The air in the room seemed to thicken, and I sensed where this was heading: when does human life begin and the biological and religious difficulties that ensue. Fear visibly gripped me and Ms. Bowling, by the look on her face, as she continued to stammer.

“Ah, death in a way. It’s just the opposite end. It. It. It has yet to live.” At this point, the class erupted into talk. They had been sleepily working through the passage, pointing out an image here and there, answering out of obligation when the silence got too long, making pencil drawings on their desks, and so forth. But all of a sudden, their eyes were alert and on Ms. Bowling standing next to her pretend plant that had just now in front of their imaginative eyes shrunken down to tiny seed. And all of this right in the middle of the classroom. There was a palpable vibrancy in their sudden interest in the conversation. What word is there for yet-to-live?

Ms. Bowling slowly began to speak, “In a in a certain way of looking at it, it is a kind of death on the other side.” Again, Ms. Bowling she used her hand to draw an image—this time of a timeline rather than a plant. She swept her hand from left to right as she began to speak.

“So, life is here,” she said, holding her two palms about a foot apart. “There’s this stuff before [moving her left hand to the left] and there’s this stuff after [moving her right hand to the right]. We go ahead with it and call this stuff on the other side—after—we call that death.”

Without being called on, Johnny suddenly asked, “At what point do things actually start living?” This question tumbled out of his mouth like he was thinking of it for the first time. He spoke in an earnest way, not trying to spark a pro-life/pro-choice debate. To me, now, this was especially evident in his use of the word *things* as opposed to *people*, but Ms. Bowling didn’t see or hear that in the moment the question was asked.

“O::hkay” Ms. Bowling responded raising her eyebrows and tilting her head. “That’s a.” She paused briefly before continuing with laughter in her voice, “That might be a question for a different day.” It was obvious she did not want to go down any road that could lead to a conversation about sex.

Picking up on her hesitation, Johnny quickly added, “I mean but. I know *that* [the bird and the bees]. If you look back far enough, there has to be a point in time where things did not live. So, at what point is [the seed]? Does it? Is it *living* on the tree? Is it not living on the tree?”

Ms. Bowling didn’t respond right away, and in the few seconds after Johnny asked his question, Jean tried to answer by discussing the circle of life vis-à-vis *The Lion King*. Ms. Bowling let her speak for a minute and then brought it all to a close.

Okay. I think that this is fascinating. And, valuable, conversation. Those, those existential discussions are ... are ... are really fun to have. I want to make sure that we focus on what’s going on in the text. I think perhaps, that that question needs to be set aside for the moment, so that we can focus on this.

And just like that the existential discussion reversed back into one about figurative language, like the class plant being sucked back into its seedling beginnings. The worksheets were handed out next, and students began to chip away at them, proving their mastery of close reading skills, figurative language, and sensory details.

While the topic was never addressed again in official class activities, students were still discussing it as I sat with them at lunch. The following day in Ms. Bowling's class, I overhead two students still debating the meaning of "yet-to-live."

Interlude

The above encounter happened early in my fieldwork. I saw in Ms. Bowling's reaction, students' increased engagement, and the atmospheric shift in the room an encounter akin to my own experience at Cedar Knoll. There weren't yet questions of right and wrong, but clearly the lesson had strayed off of the predictable path, away from standards and objectives, and the teacher was determined to close it down once the question of when life begins appeared on the horizon.

As I read back through the transcript, I kept hearing the phrase "temporary, productive failure" in my mind. I went back to the volumes I had worked through in the literature review and found it in Patel's (2016b) article. She explained, "Learning involves departing from known automatic practices, venturing into experiences that aren't wholly predictable, and experiencing temporary, productive failure" (p. 397). I had read the quote several times before but hadn't really thought about the idea of productive failure until re-engaging with this data. Before, the first part of Patel's quotation pulled me in: "experiences that aren't wholly predictable"; now, "temporary, productive failure" was bringing things into focus for me (Patel, 2016b, p. 397).

Productive failure is a seemingly oxymoronic phrase. Failure is often seen as unproductive, especially in neoliberal times. If Ms. Bowling's goal was to help students work through a few difficult examples of figurative language, then she failed. But this failure wasn't un-productive. Students misunderstood Ms. Bowling's question which led them to think about much more than she bargained for. Something unexpected was produced, matters of life and

death, unlife, and ungrowing. Ms. Bowling's initial question was, "What does that mean? Returning to the seed death?" Had somebody understood her intention immediately and responded, "reversing time" or "the opposite of aging" the question would have been sufficiently answered, and she likely would have moved on to, "In which direction does the sun rise?" and so on and so forth. But there was failure. Failure to follow where instruction was leading them. Failure to pay "proper" attention. Failure to answer in a satisfactory way.

Her initial question was one more lap around the familiar circuit—a molar line drawn by standards and state testing, but when failing, Ms. Bowling introduced something new. Teachers use illustrations all the time, this was not re-inventing the wheel, but it was the introduction of newness, of humor, of gesture here that created an opportunity for failure to become something else. This small thing allowed Ms. Bowling and her students to momentarily move away from driving routine through a valve—a run off, a change of plans, a new way of thinking, a deterritorialization. As soon as the students said "Hi, plant!" they were taken off through that valve away from the circuit of grades and standards and into the realm of the story.

There, they ventured into productive failure, collectively adding their intensities to the forces was circling Ms. Bowling and the imaginary plant. This gesture led to deterritorialization, but it wasn't a line of flight. It seemed like such a small thing for her to do, but the potential it added to the assemblage was immense. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) described encounters like these as "outbursts and crackings in the immanence of a rhizome," a "micropolitics" of the molecular line occurring without notice, but "bring[ing] everything into play" (p. 199).

The first failure soon led to a second failure. The students understood the meaning of the "return to seed death" phrase almost as soon as Ms. Bowling introduced them to the plant. The first failure became understanding. The students could now correctly answer the question on the

packet asking them what happened to the plant—it shrank back into a seed. Deleuze and Guattari explained that there are “degrees of deterritorialization” and this event could be considered a “relative movement” (1987, pp. 87, 91). Welcoming in the plant gave them the answer, and so they could move on, but that wasn’t the case. Success in this first understanding created a failure of a different sort, the truly productive failure of learning and thinking or what Deleuze and Guattari would call “an absolute threshold of deterritorialization” (p. 91). Just because the students could interpret the text and decode the metaphor didn’t mean that they became different in the encounter.

She didn’t have to, but Ms. Bowling pressed them further, “Well, is it alive? The seed?” In this moment made possible by failure and newness, learning went into a mode of unpredictability where thoughts can fail, yet still be productive. A small crack made way for larger ones. Ms. Bowling, satisfied with how the plant led to understanding of the metaphor, fueled their new failure with a second visual gesture—the one of the timeline. Their failure snowballed into productivity as she spoke—"it is a kind of death on the other side." The intensity of that little statement was immense. Moments like these, Deleuze and Guattari explained, are not brought about by “object[s] of recognition” but of those encounters with the unfamiliar, the unknown. These are moments, as St. Pierre (2017) described that “make thought stutter” (p. 1087). Here in the deterritorialization Ms. Bowling and Ray Bradbury were doing just that—making thought stutter. It’s not like the students had no notion that things cease to be on the other side of life, it’s just that they hadn’t ever taken the time to entertain the idea. Now that they had, that someone else had done this for them—the concept stuttered. Death was simply not going to work. It wasn’t death. It wasn’t life. Language was failing them—productively failing them.

I don't know why Ms. Bowling didn't stop the conversation when the students had their "right" answer. It was clear that the students' energy had Ms. Bowling equally enthused, but her enthusiasm morphed into nervous panic as soon as the discussion veered toward something potentially off-limits. Her fun demeanor molecularized the bodies and the atmosphere of the classroom, but as soon as the potential of a taboo topic ensued, things snapped right back into their territorialized places. As soon as Johnny asked, "At what point do things actually start living?" Ms. Bowling slowed the fast-moving flow way down. Ms. Bowling, like the students' thinking, began to stutter. She faced multiple possible ways to proceed. Reverse? Continue? Stall? None of these options is neutral. Each one communicates something to the students about what counts as knowledge, what is considered appropriate conversation and study for the ELA classroom. Each one enters a flow of connections in the classroom space that negotiates relations of power and authority.

Ms. Bowling threw out a line to a place of discovery where thinking quickly overtook the image of thought. Johnny's question threw out another line of flight into a space where topics like sex, viability, and abortion roamed with unpredictability. Just the possibility that students could deterritorialize to that space was enough for Ms. Bowling to end the conversation, saving Johnny's "question for another day." She recognized the merit of the question calling it "fascinating," and "valuable," an "existential discussion," but she stopped it—or tried to stop it. Even after she turned the conversation back to the book, I could hear several students still chatting with their neighbors about it. Jean dramatically said, "This changes everything. I have to rethink my whole life."

I literally feel Ms. Bowling's panic reading through the transcript. It was the same panic I felt back at Cedar Knoll. I picture Johnny's mom asking him on the ride home from school what

he learned, and him responding, “Well, in English we talked about where life begins.” Books have been banned for suggestions far less taboo than this and Ms. Bowling knew there was a line that could be crossed and Johnny’s question—raised in the already deterritorializing space of the classroom where they pushed past right answers for the sake of actual thought was just too risky. Recall Johnny’s questions: “So, at what point is it [the seed]? Does it? Is it *living* on the tree? Is it not living on the tree?” The answer wasn’t readily available in the back of the textbook or on the teacher’s copy of the worksheet. It belonged to anybody and everybody. I think she knew this and recognized that this kind of unpredictability was more than she signed up for with this particular tangent. I cannot blame her—I literally did the same thing when I was in her shoes. We were both unwilling to engage in the pedagogical discomfort the discussion required. It was too much.

Temporary productive failure. Emphasis here being on the temporary. Johnny’s question dammed up the rolling intensity only to have Ms. Bowling open a second valve and carry the flow back into the familiar routine circuit. They were only allowed to revel in the deterritorialized space for a moment—less than two minutes according to the audio transcript. Long enough to find different answers and create a whole other piece of difficult knowledge.

As I mentioned before, I knew when this event happened that it mattered to my inquiry, but at the time I was still very caught up in looking for moral dilemmas. The conception/viability conversation could have taken that turn had it been allowed to play out, but I crossed this particular event off the moral dilemma list specifically because it didn’t. I see now that I was wrong. I was looking for moral dilemmas in the students’ interactions, but here I should have been looking at the teacher. Ms. Bowling was the one facing the moral dilemma. I missed it the first ten times I read the transcript, but after writing about the productive failure I could not stop

thinking about her last comment to Johnny where she described the conversation as “valuable.” Ms. Bowling had a legitimate moral obligation to teach the students what was on her agenda—the school’s agenda. She was bound by her position as an employee of the school district to cover the standards and keep the grades entered into the computer two times a week. She also knew that she had a moral obligation as an adult, a person of authority, a role-model, a good and decent human being to let the students explore the deterritorialized space of Johnny’s question, to hear each other out in a safe and open environment. These competing moral obligations came to a head in the midst of the assemblage with the plant, with Johnny’s question, with the dog-eared copies of the short stories, and the clock ticking towards the hour.

Coda

I thought I had finished this piece of the project, but it is (as I am) always-becoming (and ever on my mind) I found my thoughts lingering back to Ms. Bowling’s classroom last night. I had cut open a green bell pepper (Figure 4.2) and found myself staring at its core.



Figure 4.2. Green pepper, photo by Elizabeth Anne Murray.

The pepper had several good-looking seeds, a few that were shriveled and sickly, and many more that looked like pinpricks—ones that had not yet gotten to grow. The pepper was off the plant

and therefore dead or maybe dying, but the seeds within it were still alive—at least some of them looked like they would grow. I wondered to myself, “Is it *living* in the pepper? Is it not living in the pepper?” Johnny’s question could have been sparked by cooking spaghetti, but it wasn’t.

It was the productive failure that made his question possible. Five minutes before he, like many of the other students, had just been floating along in the lazy river of routine, doing school, making sure he knew enough to answer the questions, and then “Hi, Plant!” and they were off to the land of possibility where failure, disruption, and broken meaning (given the chance) can produce thinking with life-altering, mind-boggling questions.



Figure 4.3. Pepper growing.

Standing in the Doorway of a Territory

With the yet to live seed encounter came renewed hope that this inquiry was on the move, but as I geared up for Ms. Bowling’s next unit featuring Night (Wiesel, 1956/60), the rug was pulled out from beneath. Due to testing, the unit was postponed and eventually canceled. I moved on to other classrooms: Mr. Fisher’s, Mr. Grant’s, and eventually Ms. Barrett’s.

Mr. Fisher and the Harry Potter Unit

If asked to describe Mr. Fisher’s classroom in one word I would choose joyful. He was only in the fifth year of teaching, but already had been voted teacher of the year at Green Oak Middle. When he wasn’t spending time on his classroom, he traveled around going to 90s bands

concerts, and he was an altogether cheery person. His job made him happy and that happiness was visibly present in his class. The walls were colorful, the seating was collaborative, the students were friendly and usually glad to be there. I was glad to be there too. Being back in a 6th grade classroom in a “country” school felt like picking up where my secondary teaching days had left off. Mr. Fisher was very welcoming toward me and interested in my work. When I entered his class, his face lit up and students flocked around me. Mr. Fisher was curious about whether or not I was getting “good data.” His demeanor showed me he wanted me to succeed and he wanted his class to be a place where this could happen. He was appreciative of my efforts to help students who were “lagging behind” do some catching up. He had an ever-growing list of ways I could contribute to his class: making snacks, painting house banners for the Harry Potter banquet, working with English language learners. It became a mutually beneficial collaboration.

I slid right into the routine of Mr. Fisher’s class. Most students didn’t complete the nightly assigned chapter in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* (Rowling, 1998), and class always began with reading quiz. From there, the class would engage in a review of the chapter, listen to parts of it on the audiobook, and fill in the daily worksheet. Mr. Fisher found this packet of worksheets online from teachers in other places, and they worked as reading guides focusing mainly on plot elements, figurative language, and comprehension (see Appendix C for an example). Mr. Fisher had not grown up on Harry Potter like many people his age had but reading the books for the first time to prepare for his class made him an instantly devoted fan. He was having fun teaching with *Sorcerer’s Stone*.

To break up routine that reigned from Monday through Thursday—read a chapter, take a quiz, review the chapter, listen to the audiobook, fill out a worksheet—Mr. Fisher implemented “fun Fridays,” such as sorting the students into houses and introducing group projects for the

culminating House Cup Banquet. Work, work, work, work, fun Friday. Work, work, work, work, fun Friday. We came to count on this repeated pattern, and even though it never to my knowledge opened up aesthetic readings, learning as fugitivity, or thinking as changing the world (Rosenblatt, 1938, 1986; Dewey, 1925; Greene, 1978; Patel, 2016b), it was predictable and easy for all to manage.

Now Mr. Fisher's room *was* equipped with lots of items that would have been excellent for cooperative and creative learning, but the kinds of activities that repeated day after day did not make use of them. Fun Fridays did disrupt the worksheets and quizzes, but they did not seem to open deterritorializing lines that expanded the assemblage by forcing people to think. The most exciting Fun Friday happened when students were sorted into their Hogwarts houses. Thursday during class the students filled our personality questionnaire which Mr. Fisher scored that afternoon. The next day he called them up one by one to the front of the room where they donned an official sorting hat as Mr. Fisher announced their house. The houses served as groups for an ongoing project which would be displayed at the upcoming House Cup Banquet.

While Mr. Fisher told me in an email that he planned to use the book to talk about some “weighty” things like “social class, broken homes, bullying, and lineage,” topics that could have led to “why” and “how does it work” questions (thinking), he later explained that he simply ran out of time. Weeks cut short by testing made it challenging-enough to just get through the “nuts and bolts” of the book, he explained. “Weighty things” could only come after all the nuts and bolts had been counted, put into plastic tubs, and labeled appropriately as elements of fiction, an efferently focused way of reading (Rosenblatt, 1978).

The semester continued in its routine, and as the presentations and House Cup competition neared, students were given time to work on their projects each day in class. They

also had events in other classes that allowed the four houses to earn points including a whiffle ball competition in PE. Students got increasingly wrapped up in the games of it all, and while they seemed to enjoy listening to the audiobook in class, the enthusiasm surrounding the unit did not find particular resonance in the reading of the book.

The big night of the banquet finally came. There were costumes, wands, and project presentations drawing the Harry Potter unit came to a close. School let out for the summer a week later.

Mr. Grant and the Never-ending Joke

Having taught at Southfield for seven years, Mr. Grant had made himself comfortable in his place and in his practice. He survived the first five years of teaching and by the time I met him in during his seventh year, he had earned some seniority at Southfield especially among the English teachers. Mr. Grant spend his weekend on the sidelines coaching for the high school, and while he was dedicated to teaching it was easy to see his greater passion was being on the field.

Like Mr. Fisher, lessons were pretty much the same day after day. Grade-level English 12 included a long list of canonical texts, such as *Othello* and *Dracula* as well as British short stories and poems (see Appendix B for a list of literary texts they read). Independent reading was kept in check by daily quizzes which were followed by vocabulary words, and a quick discussion. He rarely used technology, the textbook, or supplemental resources. He sat on his stool with his copy of the text and a list of things to talk about. Notes usually ended up on the board, but the students knew the test material would come from a provided study guide. During the discussion, the floor was open for questions, but they were few. The lesson finished with a small group assignment. Some of these assignments were formal (printed) and others were on designed on the spot (find quotes supporting a theme, compare/contrast characters, trace Biblical

allusions, make a list of recurring symbols). Students had the rest of the class to work and when they finished, they could sleep or talk or look at their phones. Rinse and repeat the next day. He assigned projects occasionally because they were easier to grade than stacks of essays.

I found Mr. Grant hard to read. Of the four classrooms I visited, his seemed to be the least impacted by my presence. He didn't seem to mind me being there, and I don't think he changed much because of me. I tried to be helpful, but there were fewer opportunities for me to contribute. He frequently asked my take on something they read but in a way that seemed to request my support more than my opinion. He would say "Is that what you thought, Ms. Murray?" or "Ms. Murray, do you agree?" There were no snacks to make or banners to create for a literature-themed banquet, but I did what I could to help students get started on assignments or catch up after being absent.

Mr. Grant and his classroom were a mishmash of rule-breaking and rule-following, and it took me a few weeks to figure out the "rules of the game." He never turned in new lesson plans. His board rarely had an objective written on it. He let burgeoning artists draw on his whiteboards in preparation for their AP art exams. He had sarcastic nicknames for everyone which he used frequently. He let students eat in the classroom and have their phones out. He fake-cursed at the intercom and if a student left to go to the he would pretend to ignore them when they came back and needed to get back in. He and the students razed each other constantly and the literature occasionally added fuel to the fire. Someone wouldn't pick up on an obvious plot point or get two characters confused and a new joke would form. Students took turns being the butt of the joke and Mr. Grant took his own share of jabs from them. The literature led to jokes about Mr. Grant being a vampire and drinking blood in his protein shake (*Dracula*), Mr. Grant always picking books where babies get eaten (*The Road, Dracula, A Modest Proposal*), and Mr. Grant

secretly working for Big Brother (1984). As the semester continued these jokes would resurface from text to text and students were always looking for opportunities to throw them out into the classroom. All of these behaviors seemed to stand in stark contrast to the ways he handled the teaching aspect of his class.

Though Mr. Grant's desk was perpetually piled up with papers needing grading, the rest of his classroom was always neat as a pin. He followed the school's shared DRIVE for his AP language classes and used the same lesson plans each year for his other grade-level classes. His teaching was rigidly routine. He had high expectations and little grace for errors, excuses, or procrastination when it came to students doing their work. He would not hesitate to call a student out for talking out of turn or for not having read—usually in a voice that walked a tightrope between deadly serious and “just messing.” There were hard lines not be crossed, but he maintained a likeability. He could blast a student for doing something wrong, and seemingly unfazed, five minutes later, the same student might hide Mr. Grant's protein shake, so they all could a laugh together. There was safety in his approach to teaching, and students knew exactly what was expected of them. There was sanctioned work and sanctioned goofing around, and it worked.

Interlude

When I began to think with the data being produced in Mr. Grant's and Mr. Fisher's classrooms, I started to panic. How could two more teachers be added to my network of assemblages and still leave the deterritorializing encounters tally at one? How was I supposed to write about how teachers and students navigate these moments if I wasn't witnessing any? Though their mannerisms and classrooms looked entirely different, both Mr. Fisher and Mr. Grant managed to teach literature in ways that kept “at a distance the forces of chaos knocking at

the door” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 320). To be certain, forces of chaos were still present in the territorial assemblages. Quotidian disruptions that are perpetually linked to the common school day such as intercom announcements, fire drills, and pep rallies dragged our focus away from the literature. We had no choice but to let them in, but the forces of chaos that come from engaging with literature, perilous thinking, fugitive learning were kept out.

For a moment, I thought it would be best to scrap this data and move on. However, the more I read and looked at the map being drawn around me, the more I realized the importance of including these narratives. There is no “bad” data, as it were—there is just difference. Deleuze and Guattari advised, “To block, to be blocked, is that not still an intensity? In each case, we must define what comes to pass and what does not pass, what causes passage and prevents it” (1987, p. 152). Understanding how deterritorialization that produces thinking is kept out is part of this work, and I came to see that through Mr. Grant and Mr. Fisher’s classrooms.

How are deterritorializing literary encounters kept at bay? Returning to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), I found their discussion of the “internal organization” of the territory particularly useful for mapping how differences produced similar blockages. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) laid out three levels or stages of assemblages: infra-assemblages, intra-assemblages, and inter-assemblages. Infra-assemblages, they explained as the aggregates that are “the first thing[s] to constitute an assemblage” (p. 323). Once the territory is temporarily congealed, it is still “in the process of passing into something else” and as it does so it may “take something from chaos across the filter or sieve of the space that has been drawn” (1987, pp. 323, 311). The second type, the intra-assemblage, has an organization that is “rich and complex” including “not only the territorial assemblage, but also assembled, territorialized functions” and “assembled behaviors” (p. 323). In this way, joking in Mr. Grant’s class and fun Fridays in Mr.

Fisher's were expressions of these functions which “deterritorialized in the same closed territory through regrouping the assemblage’s elements” (Duoblienè, 2016, p. 233).

Mr. Fisher's fun Fridays offered something new to the assemblage without risk of radical deterritorialization. A certain kind of chaos was selected from the outside and carefully brought into the assemblage while literary encounters that invited risky and unpredictable lines were never part of the intended curriculum. Where these activities fell on the continuum from efferent to aesthetic ranged, and though the activities seemed to awaken students from their sleepy routine, they did not appear to awaken to how themes present in *Harry Potter* could help them to be otherwise in the world—*their* world with its vegetable patches and confederate flags.

Deleuze and Guattari explained that sometimes an “assembled function acquires enough independence to constitute a new assemblage,” but this didn’t seem to happen with the fun Fridays I witnessed. The activities certainly changed things up, but they did so without upsetting the metastability of the assemblage. The lines drawn through the fun Fridays were molecular, which Deleuze and Guattari described as being marked by ambiguity:

Supple segmentarity, then, is only a kind of compromise operating by relative deterritorializations and permitting reterritorializations that cause blockages and reversions to the rigid line. It is odd how supple segmentarity is caught between the two other lines, ready to tip to one side or the other; such is its ambiguity. (1987, p. 205)

The molecular line opened the threshold to chaos, but only just cracking it slightly. Breaking from the routine was chaotic enough, compounding chaos with discussions of “weighty” topics could have tipped the molar line into flight. So, while rigid in his teaching of plot points and figurative language, Mr. Fisher orchestrated planned chaos into his routine. They looped out only to be continually brought back in.

Fun Fridays were not a thing in Mr. Grant’s classroom, and I cannot even begin to imagine him donning a Sorting Hat with any degree of seriousness, but chaos was still permitted.

Mr. Fisher picked ahead of time the kinds of chaos he allowed in and generally limited their presence to Fridays. He controlled the openness through activities. Mr. Grant, however, had a more general approach. He erected rigid lines around certain activities and supple ones around others. Sketching out the problems prone to each kind of line (molar, molecular, flight), Deleuze and Guattari advised to look for “alliances and battles” (1987, p. 204). In Mr. Grant’s room, I see this strange juxtaposition between curricular rigidity and laxity in comportment. Lines of order safeguarded his curriculum from the antics and humor that often dominated the non-curricular aspects of his classroom. Or rather, humor existed as a looping line of flight—one that erupted from the literature and circled out for a moment before swinging back into the discussion. Mr. Grant knew that the jokes would come, and he fed into them, but he also knew that after a few laughs he could draw the students back into the task at hand. Intermingling “lines and movements” created competing force fields in the classroom, and the jokes though they were less scheduled than the fun Fridays still made regular appearances.

Writing about the body without organs, which is an assemblage, Deleuze and Guattari said, “the organs are continually under attack by outside forces, but are also restored by outside energies” (1987, p.150). Both Mr. Fisher and Mr. Grant found ways of sustaining the special rigidities in these classroom assemblages by inviting openness in through supple lines that allowed for deterritorialization, but only to approved locales. Or perhaps they were lines of flight, but just a different kind than those capable of offering students the opportunity to become different through encounters with literature. Deleuze and Guattari described the differences between lines of flight writing, “the line of flight of children leaving school at a run is different from that of demonstrators chased by the police, or of a prisoner breaking out” (1987, p. 202). This is the difference between traceable lines and those making maps. These carefully drawn

lines of flight allowed Mr. Fisher and Mr. Grant to cover standards, put grades in the grade book, and still ensure that everyone could break out of their jail cells now again without much risk of them ever scaling the prison yard walls.



Figure 4.4. Songs of Mr. Fisher and Mr. Grant.

Meeting Ms. Barret: A Few Encounters

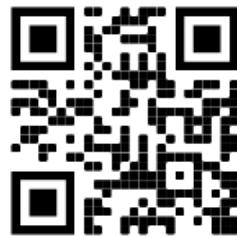


Figure 4.5. A song of Ms. Barrett.

Though I began working with Mr. Grant and Ms. Barrett during the same semester, I quickly realized that Ms. Barrett's classroom was more open de/territorializing literary encounters. She opened up herself and her classroom to me in a way that Mr. Grant certainly did not. She was passionate about learning and as a graduate student herself, she knew the importance of being able to "do a project" well. In addition to these differences, her classroom seemed more prone to deterritorialization, a tendency owing perhaps to its lack of rigid order and routine. She would eventually fall into a rhythm as the year progressed, but it was of the syncopated kind. Tensions, affects, and emotions were more visible in her classroom than in Mr.

Grant's, and she saw me as a supportive fellow teacher and ally with whom she could share private thoughts. Some were said in confidence, but others—particularly connected to this section of the data—I share with you now not only with her consent, but also with her hope that they might improve conditions for teachers.

She Went Up to the Mountain and Saw Silver Clouds Below

“The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain. And the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.” (ESV, Exodus 19:20)



Figure 4.6. Songs of the mountaintop.

People in religious circles often speak of having a “mountaintop experience,” a high point of clarity and closeness with the Lord—a time that becomes a turning point in the way in which they see the world and prioritize their lives. Martin Luther King, Jr. famously told his audience at the Bishop Charles Mason Temple in 1963, “He’s allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I’ve looked over, and I’ve seen the Promised Land” (final paragraph). This phrase has trickled into the secular world now being used to refer to experiences that re-energize and refocus an individual. Mountaintop events provide clarity, heightened perspective, and enthusiasm.

During my time in Ms. Barrett’s classroom, she made references to two such mountaintop experiences throughout the semester. The first event occurred in the summer of 2016 when she joined 75 teachers from across the country as a participant in the 2016 National

Endowment of the Humanities Summer Scholar Program for Educators in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania which was focused on Benjamin Franklin. This experience was an extremely positive one for her, and she shared stories from it with her students on several occasions.

The next summer she was an alternate winner for the same grant, this time focusing on Emily Dickinson and set in Amherst, Massachusetts. When she did not win a spot in the Dickinson program, she decided to attend the Advanced Placement (AP) Summer Institute in Colorado. She taught pre-AP courses in the private schools where she worked and also in the public-school system since she moved back, but she had never been officially AP trained. She decided it was something she wanted for herself. She paid the conference registration fee, bought her own airline ticket, and arranged to stay with friends in Colorado. Like the NEH program, Ms. Barrett's time at the AP Summer Institute formative. She explained,

I looked on AP [website] at the top ranked AP certification locations and Colorado was considered one of the top if not *the* number one AP training site. I was not disappointed. We had the top AP Lit person in the country training my group.

It was during this summer program that Ms. Barrett engaged in an activity called Poetry Moment (POMO) that would later become a key part of her classroom. Every time the students engaged in a POMO that went exceedingly well, Ms. Barrett would reminisce aloud about her incredible experiences at the AP Summer Institute. Experiences like these become part of our story, part of who we are and what we are about. All of the relays animating our lives can with a snap of the finger push up into the present situation, making themselves felt. The time Ms. Barrett spent in the NEH and AP programs continued to affect her practices as a scholar and a teacher, and the connections she formed on the mountaintop would occasionally light up in the classroom, ramifying intensity and making a material difference in our shared lived space.

The DRIVE

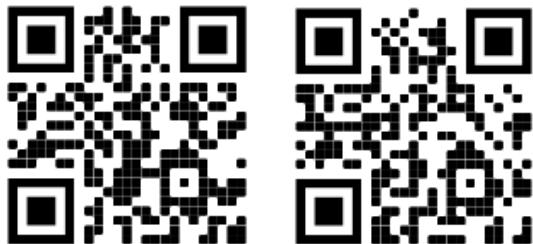


Figure 4.7. Songs of the DRIVE.

When Ms. Barrett entered the English department at Southfield, she was given little instruction on how things would proceed in terms of planning her units for the year. In fact, she repeatedly told me that the other teachers were sometimes “stingy” with their materials and resources. Shared planning, *if* it occurred, did not always include her.

With regard to the ninth-grade honors pre-AP students, however, she was provided access to a shared digital folder known as “the DRIVE.” It was loaded with study guides, worksheets, multiple choice tests, essay prompts, and activities that *should be* used for each unit, appropriately designed around canonical anchor books. The kinds of activities that made it to the DRIVE were mostly rooted in a New Criticism approach to literature (e.g. Richards, 1929), with emphasis upon pinning down textual meaning. Meaning—true meaning—was contained in the text itself and therefore it mattered not who was reading it, what they brought to the reading, or any events happening in the world at the time of its writing or reading. Reading literature this way makes it easier to keep different classes on the same track and also makes worksheets and tests easier to grade because there are only right and wrong answers. Every class would be presented the same instruction of the same AP approved texts and activities which had been “tested” for success thereby ensuring that the AP students would continue to succeed.

The DRIVE quite literally drove instruction in pre-AP classes. Ms. Barrett followed it closely all during the fall semester, even when she doubted the quality of the resources. When I asked her why she followed it, she explained that she thought it was her place as a newcomer to the school not to make waves. By the second semester, her place apparently changed because she began moving away from reliance on the DRIVE. Reflecting on this decision, she told me,

[I received] no support or direction, just “Teach from the DRIVE and do it this way,” even though I had twenty plus years of experience. Odd, right? Great teachers change, reflect, make things better. They aren’t complacent or happy with the status quo. I think its poor leadership in that department that created the DRIVE, though. I’ve never been at a school that did that. So, I felt comfortable being me in the spring, and I have continued being me and not being in only the DRIVE.

The existence of the DRIVE for pre-AP says a lot about the way that students were valued in terms of their abilities and potential for academic success. At some point, when the DRIVE was originally created, the honors Pre-AP students and their success took precedence over the grade-level classes. No such shared folder existed for the grade-level classes which were referred to as “regular.” Though Ms. Barrett wasn’t sure who created it, the DRIVE itself likely had its roots in NCLB (2001) era politics emerging in the early 2000s when “gold standard” practices were believed to be transferable from one classroom to the next (Slavin, 2003; Trybus, 2004). Students who performed well academically didn’t just make schools look better, but their scores attached to them as credentials, making promises for a certain kind of future. Putting together a curriculum to follow from classroom to classroom, semester to semester, seemingly would ensure that once-upon-a-time-tested materials would guarantee success year after year. No such efforts were created for the grade-level classes; rather, their curriculum was left up to the individual teachers. There is no doubt an irony here that emerges from the lack of attention paid to the education of “regular” kids.

Interlude

The DRIVE and the mountaintop experiences stand out as two of the strongest pedagogical forces that moved through Southfield. Each one created powerful flows that set a course for so many of the encounters that took place in Ms. Barrett's classroom. The maps that I have created of the assemblage have been overtaken time and again by these two forces which were ever in tension. They worked by constantly materializing effects and affects in the learning and living of the classroom. Thinking of forces like these Bogard (1998) reflected,

There are modes of social inscription that are exclusive, that separate bodies from what they are capable of doing, that demean their desire and distort their sense; and there are modes that are inclusive and connective, that liberate desire, destroy limits, and draw positive "lines of flight" or escape. (p. 58)

For Ms. Barrett and her students, both modes were present. The DRIVE prescribed how honors pre-AP courses should go, and the mountaintop informed some movements away from the DRIVE. Each time the mountaintop flowed back into the classroom assemblage via Ms. Barrett's shared memories or student POMOs, many of us were carried along to a new place, one temporarily removed from the deep groove of the DRIVE.

The focus is not just on how these forces moved, but also on what they produced. The DRIVE was thought to produce students as knowing subjects who could pass their AP exams, but it also produced boredom, unfinished homework, univocal readings of the world, and images of thought rather than thinking. What the DRIVE produced through these flows was circumscribed, capped off like a "closed vessel" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 223). Good scores on the AP test might be a good thing, but the ways the DRIVE produced scores privileged the destructive image of thought rather than thinking that produces a more equitable future. The DRIVE shut down opportunities to engage with the world in ways open to positive difference.

The DRIVE kept organizing people, materials, and pedagogies according to rigid paths pointing toward narrow conceptions of success.

Oddly enough, promises of success on the AP exam were also one thing that attracted Ms. Barrett to the workshop in Colorado; however, her experiences there produced flows much more open than the DRIVE was to discussion, questions, laughs, aesthetic engagements, and thinking.

POMOs were one pedagogical practice that Ms. Barrett translated from the workshop into her own classroom. Students would select, read, and lead a discussion about a poem. Ms. Barrett modeled for them ways to think about the poetry: “Where did you enter?” she would ask, and this kind of question initially kicked wide open the door to potential answers. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) described the potential of nomadic activity like this as an “abstract machine of mutation,” which “draws the line of flight … steers the quantum flows, assures the connection-creation of flows” (p. 223).

Activities like POMO invite in or lurch forth in becomings that the study guides and reading quizzes in this inquiry worked to constrain. Openings like this were glimpsed in Ms. Bowling’s classroom with the plant and in my classroom as we puzzled over the Ten Commandments. They are unpredictable becomings (no one knows where they might end up) and they feel quite different than the closely controlled cracks of Fun Fridays and Mr. Grant jokes. Openness without telos, as Spector and Guyotte explained it, “loosens our grasp on the comforts of fixity” and instead draws “new lines of potential that (just might) carry us away” (2019, p. 225). Students were free to draw lines of deterritorialization using their poems as paintbrushes.

Immanence and organization are forces of de/territorialization coming together in the assemblage. The mountaintop and the DRIVE were only two of many forces that moved through Ms. Barrett's classroom, but I share them separately here separately because of how present they were in the data that unfolded and how similarly they echoed the tensions Ms. Bowling and I felt in our classrooms when academic expectations and the responsibility to help our students make sense of the world came into productive tension. Those mountaintop moments are so noticeably different because they produce thinking encounters as powerful aesthetic engagements. They wake us up from "the mechanical round of habitual activities" (Greene, 1978, p. 42). They charge our batteries and reorient our direction.

A Tree in a Territory: A Literary Encounter



Figure 4.8. Songs of the tree.

Teaching *TKAM*

In fall 2017, Ms. Barrett followed the DRIVE which directed her to spend nine weeks of class time on Harper Lee's (1960) *To Kill a Mockingbird* (hereafter, *TKAM*), even though students had already read it over summer break. As a newcomer to the school, she wasn't yet feeling comfortable moving outside the DRIVE, preferring to stay within its bounds which offered her the security of well-ordered precedent. The DRIVE moves along a DeleuzoGuattarian (1987) molar line: pre-given, rigid, designed to keep everyone headed in the proper direction by ticking off standards one-by-one while at the same time steering clear of

difficulties that just might blow the whole unit off its intended course. With the DRIVE organizing Ms. Barrett's instructional home for 9th grade Pre-AP, "The forces of chaos are kept outside as much as possible, and the interior space protects the germinal forces of a task to fulfill or a deed to do" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 311). And students had lots of tasks to do, including answering pages of multiple choice study guide questions.

After the class finished the efferently-focused (Rosenblatt, 1938, 1978) novel study from the DRIVE in 2017, however, Mrs. Barrett introduced an *extension* project involving small group research on key Civil Rights era leaders and major events, such as MLK, bus boycotts, Malcolm X, and the march from Selma to Montgomery. The small groups chose topics, conducted the historical research, and presented their findings to the class as a whole at the end of the unit.

Mrs. Barrett explained she wanted to "hit the research standards" while maintaining the continuity of themes from *TKAM*, in this way historically contextualizing the novel we had just finished studying. She said,

I always have taught the unit on *TKAM* that way because it grounds the students in the importance of the book. They need to understand when the author was writing and that she is immersed in the Civil Rights movement and then correlate that with the time frame. I think it brings realization to the issue of Tom [Robinson from *TKAM*] and the social issues of treatment of African Americans. ... You want the students to engage and not just enjoy the book. Engage with the difficult topics that were clearly things on the mind of Harper Lee when she is telling the story.... I believe that book needs a relationship with the time period in order for students to create connections to the present. It makes it relative.

Ms. Barrett left the DRIVE to explore the historical and sociopolitical events producing the Civil Rights movement, which she viewed as informing Harper Lee's storyline as well as providing connecting links to the present, presumably #BlackLivesMatter and other ongoing racial justice movements. She told me that she wanted students to know how audacious it was for a white woman from Alabama to be bringing up these issues when Black and white civil rights activists

were dying in the fight. One hundred years may have passed since the abolition of slavery, but in places like Mississippi and Alabama, law enforcement regularly looked the other way (and sometimes participated) when the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) attacked Black and white Freedom Riders, as in the case of Schwerner, Goodman, and Chaney in 1964 (Chaney, 2000).

In spring 2018, with a new set of students and one successful term at Southfield behind her, we decided to *begin* the unit on *TKAM* with these Civil Rights research projects, thereby frontloading historical background knowledge, and stirring up from the start the topic of race relations then and now. Students presented on the same historical topics including Rosa Parks, *Plessy Versus Ferguson*, Jim Crow laws, Emmett Till, and Medgar Evers. During the presentations, students were directed to “take notes and look for connections between the historical events” being presented and “the fictional events of the novel.” All of these presentations included information that was “difficult” in Britzman’s conception of the word because they juxtaposed both the pull of “staying put in the logic of official knowledge” alongside the perils of agitating for something more (1998, p. 49). The presentation on Emmett Till was perhaps the most difficult to bear because of the heinousness of the crimes that adults committed against this child. By adding these projects to the beginning of the unit, we seemed to be inviting warring forces into the classroom, forces that the DRIVE was working so hard to keep out.

“If you don’t want to look at it, you probably should not”

For their research project, Mallory and Alexander chose the violent lynching of Emmett Till by the hands of white men in Money, Mississippi. Mallory was a Black young woman who occasionally injected comments into classroom discussion about the policing of Black boys, an issue close to her heart because she had brothers. She and Alexander, a white young man, were

best friends, and he also became my self-appointed tour guide, frequently leaning over to give me his take on what just happened in the class. Of course, the DRIVE knew nothing of these entanglements.

On the day of their Emmett Till presentation, Ms. Barrett was keen on giving students a trigger warning for what they were about to see because she knew well the emotions it could provoke.

It may upset you. [short pause] And they're going to give you the story background on this. I've done this presentation before in my other ninth grade classes, and they've shared the pictures [of Emmett Till's dead body], but they've always just said, "Hey it's pretty graphic, it's gruesome." If you—if you don't want to look at it, you probably should not.

Turning to me, she added, "This all went through the newspaper [meaning the graphic pictures], right?"

"Yeah," I answered, and added, "his mom wanted it." I knew that much was true, but I have since learned more of the details concerning the publishing of post-mortem pictures of Emmett Till.

Mamie Till, Emmett's mother, wanted to have a glass-topped, open casket at the funeral in 1955, knowing that newspaper reporters would be there to cover the funeral. When others pushed back at her decision, she told them, "let the people see what they did to my boy" (Till-Mobley & Benson, 2004, p. 139). Those pictures would go on to be published in newspapers all over the country, with *Jet Magazine* doing an exposé on the whole event including pictures of Mamie Till-Mobley viewing her deceased child for the first time. Reflecting on this decision, Till-Mobley's co-author Christopher Benson wrote,

One newspaper headline got it exactly right when it noted quite simply that Mother Mobley had opened a casket and opened our eyes. She made us face what we all must experience at some point in a full and complete life: a move away from our own naivete,

our own ignorance; an increase in our awareness. For it is only in the sacrifice of our innocence that we can achieve absolute understanding. (2004, p. 286)

Benson and Mobley expected that eyes would be opened and national naivete about the workings of racism in this country would be dashed at the sight of Emmett Till's murdered body. They expected that viewers in 1955 and beyond would "face what we all must experience" by becoming attentive to the destructive forces keeping Black folk in the claws of white supremacy; however, the "absolute understanding" that they expected surely didn't unfold for all who viewed the pictures then or now. The lynching of Emmett Till still attracts considerable intensity, both repulsive as Mamie Till-Mobley hoped and attractive, as recent events in Mississippi¹ attest to (Vigdor, 2019). How do we response-ably register in our pedagogies something that is so fraught, so difficult to process as the desire to imagine something more for our country versus the pull of official, white supremacist knowledge? *Plessy v. Ferguson*.

As Mallory and Alexander stood waiting for permission to go ahead with their slideshow, tension between Mamie Till-Mobley's "let the people see what they did to my boy" was jutting up against Ms. Barrett's warning, "If you don't want to look at it, you probably should not." Till-Mobley's "See" versus Ms. Barrett's "you probably should not." Another case of competing intensities—*Plessy versus Ferguson*, agitation versus white supremacist complicity. Deleuze and Guattari wrote that "There is always a place, a tree or grove, in the territory where all the forces

1 On July 25, 2019, The New York Times published a story reporting an incident at The University of Mississippi "Ole Miss" in which a fraternity had suspended three of its members after a photo surfaced depicting the young men holding rifles and standing in front of a shot-up memorial sign which was placed on the banks of the Tallahatchie River where Emmett Till's body was discovered three days after he was killed in August of 1955. The Mississippi Center for Investigative Reporting stated that this was the third time the sign would be replaced. The first memorial sign, erected in 2008, was vandalized and thrown in the river and a second one was replaced after it weathered over 300 bullet holes.

come together in hand-to-hand combat of energies,” and learning about the violent operations of racism through the story of Emmett Till was shaping up to be one such combat zone (1987, p. 321).

Upon this mention of Mamie Till-Mobley’s desire to have the gruesome picture of her son printed in the newspapers, Ms. Barrett again reminded the students about how important it was for them to understand the time period in order to better understand the storyline of *TKAM*. “You write what you know,” she told them, the implication being that Harper Lee *experienced* events such as these or at least that Tom Robinson’s fictional case in the book was similar to real events happening in Harper Lee’s world.

But was it?

Writing about this subject for a recent *TIME* magazine article, Levy explained, “While [the racist lynch mobs] are stopped in *Mockingbird*, because Scout Finch shames them, many real-life incidents went unchecked. Between 1882 and 1951, 3,437 blacks in the United States died that way, 299 of them in Alabama” (2016, para. 4).

Now, with the warning and the go-ahead from Ms. Barrett, Mallory and Alexander began their PowerPoint presentation on Emmett Till. On the second slide, Mallory began speaking in her soft but steady voice (see Figure 4.9):

Emmett Till was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1941 on July the 25th. When he was fourteen, his mom sent him to see his uncle in Mississippi, and he bragged to his friends how about up North he had better social norms and he had a white girlfriend. And later that day he went to a store.

With help from Ms. Barrett and me, the presenters filled in the rest of the class on the details of fourteen-year-old Emmett Till’s murder which was set in motion by a false accusation of sexual harassment after Till was accused of cat-calling a white woman in a store. Before

Mallory clicked the presentation to the next slide, she and Alexander stopped again to warn their classmates that the graphic depiction of violent racism was about to appear.

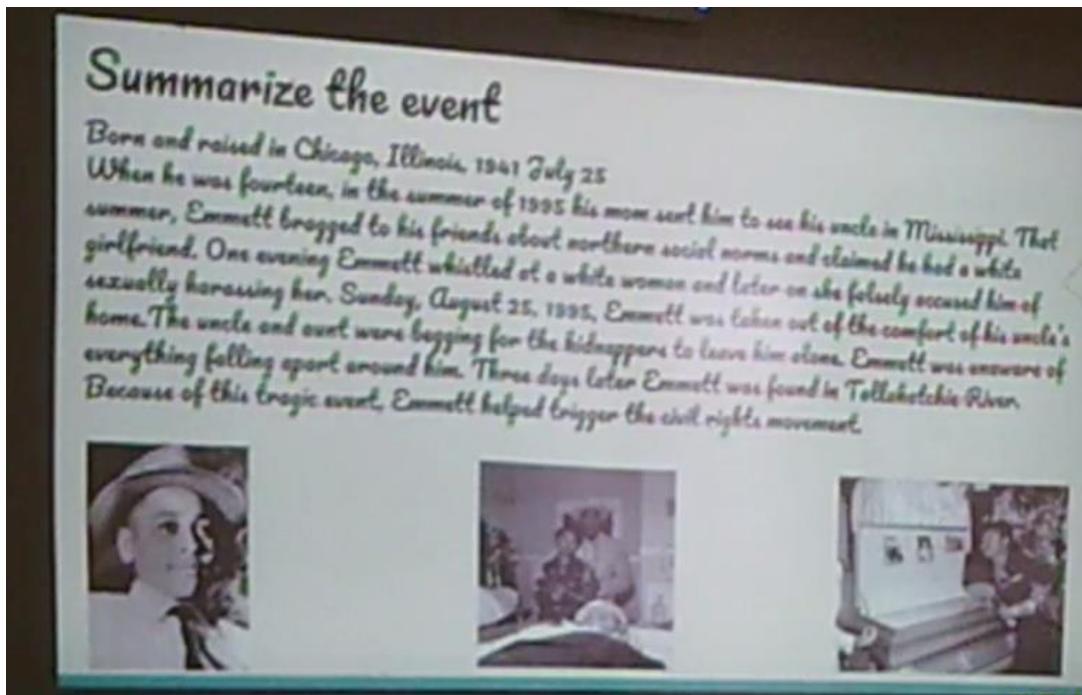


Figure 4.9. Mallory and Alexander's research project on the lynching of Emmett Till, Slide 2.

A Black young man spoke up asking, “He whistled at a girl?” his tone of voice concerned and curious.

Ms. Barrett explained, “Y’all get that, right? They thought that he was coming on to her.”

Unless students were aware of miscegenation laws, or racist stereotypes of Black men being hyper-sexual, or myths of Black men exacting revenge on whites by raping their women (Bogle, 2016/1973), then torture and murder likely appeared as a baffling reaction to a Black young man whistling at a white woman. We didn’t as a class take up these laws, racist stereotypes, or myths that made murder thinkable or actionable for the murderers.

With obvious apprehension, another student asked, “How graphic is it?” and Ms. Barrett told the class that it was a close-up of his face. She further explained Mamie Till-Mobley’s

justification for having the open casket and the pictures of Emmett's face published in the newspaper, pointing out that he was only fourteen, their very age! It was a fair amount of build-up, and students who were normally quiet or distracted were tuning in and asking questions, sensing that what they would soon see might change something. In other words, simply seeing the photo would matter, as Mamie Till-Mobley had hoped all those decades ago. There was a buzz growing in intensity as students geared themselves up for the next slide.

"Alright. Everybody good? I'm not going to get a call from a parent? Close your eyes at this point if you're going to," Ms. Barrett checked in once again before Mallory switched the presentation to the next slide. The slideshow moved forward with a slide titled, "His appearance after death ...". Mallory paused, and in that moment of hesitation, groans and exclamations arose from across the classroom.

"Oh!"

"Oooo:::"

"That's blood!"

"Man."

Students commented on the images, one of Till smiling as a cheerful young man and the other of his mutilated head, post-mortem. As these initial comments began to subside, Mallory resumed the presentation, and the class fell immediately silent as she related the spectacular details of his torture and murder while they peered at or avoided the slide. There were no giggles, no chit-chat, no further comments. The air was heavy with silence. Mallory read quietly:

Alright so after binding his body—his mom requested for it to be an open casket and for it [the body] to be left as it is. She wanted everyone to see what had happened to her son and how it was kind of unnecessary to tie him to a cotton gin and you know choke his tongue out, teeth knocked out, gauge his eyes out and ear torn off.

She paused momentarily after she finished reading from the slide before adding her own commentary, “And he got shot. After doing all of that, so the shot was just completely unnecessary.”

“Will you read that again?” Ms. Barrett asked Mallory. And once again, Mallory read through the repulsive list of injuries that the grown men inflicted on this child’s body.

He was bound with barbed wire to a 70-pound cotton gin, his tongue choked out, his teeth knocked out leaving only two, his pelvis [penis] cut off, his eyes gouged out, his ear torn, disfigured nose, and a bullet hole through his head.

Mallory finished speaking and the class sat quietly for a little while, reading through the description of the torture and staring at the gruesome photo of Emmett Till. Those students who had initially covered their faces or put their heads on their desks were now looking at the slide.

Finally, one white student broke the silence, asking “How does a tongue get choked out?” He was referring to the language on the slide about Emmett Till’s tongue, which had been cut out of his mouth by the murderers.

No one took up his question.

A young Black student said something about how he would have reacted if people tried to do that to him. In a mix of bravado and anger, he threw a punch with his right hand into his left and muttered threats, “I would have [inaudible].” This seemed to release the tension in the room, and the class again found its way back to its usual tempo. Alexander moved onto the third slide, one drawing connections between Till’s murder and *TKAM*, thereby fulfilling one of the requirements of the assignment and pulling the class closer still to the comfort of the successfully *thwarted* lynch mob in *TKAM*. Within the span of three minutes, the class seemed to leave the disruptive memory of Emmett Till and the men who murdered him behind. They applauded Mallory and Alexander and they moved on to the next presentation about the Scottsboro Boys.

Interlude

We left the comfort of habitual routines, annexing new territory (deterritorializing). We found ourselves in a place where we were less certain of how to proceed. We were improvising, leaving the home base of the DRIVE to “join with the World” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 311). We were on guard. This new territory included student choice, the potential for rogue presentations, the possibility of emotional upheaval, particularly with the images of Emmett Till. We wanted at once to usher in and at the same time hold back unwieldy forces that might ensue and threaten life outside the DRIVE.

We wanted to bring in historical context and in Ms. Barrett’s words, “create connections to the present,” but our actions also show that we tried to mitigate the impression that Emmett Till’s murdered body would have on the class. There was the careful build-up, the warnings, the advice to look away, and then another last-minute caution. We wanted to manage how affect would move through the classroom assemblage. We wanted to tamp it down. We didn’t want to be *too* affected. We didn’t want parents to call in protest.

We were on edge as anticipation built. And when the image finally lit up the screen, there was an abrupt tonal shift in the room. The usual noises of the classroom—turning pages, shifting bodies, whispered conversations, and humorous comments—were replaced with gasps, and then, a heavy silence. But not stillness. We changed our expressions and postures—looked on in disgust, covered our mouths, saw the image warily, sadly, anxiously. Our shoulders tensed, fists clenched, some eyes narrowed in focus while others fixed wide. I felt shudders between my shoulder blades—the feeling of someone walking on your grave, as my grandmother used to say. We listened to the gruesome list of traumas endured by Emmett Till—twice.

All of the heterogeneous elements plugged into the classroom that day were in motion in novel ways, in part because we left the rigid structure of the DRIVE for the much more fluid sea

student choice presentations of world events. As all the various lines met, intermingled, repulsed, and attracted one another, our class materialized in particular ways. Ehret (2018) stressed the importance of listening to the body in events like these, writing, “Coming to know affect as it moves through literacy events requires … a sort of bodily attunement from within the social field of the event unfolding (p. 568). Through my own body passed waves of trepidation, hope, excitement, and uncertainty.

Dewey explained that bodies in “interaction with the environment” are together the sources “of all experience,” producing “checks, resistances, furtherances, equilibria” (Dewey, 2005, p. 153). These checks, equilibria, and so forth are attunements between bodies and the social field. In relation to literature specifically, Rosenblatt called these attunements “transactions,” highlighting intra-actions of various forces in literacy encounters. She wrote that it would be impossible to give a summary of “the dynamics, the interplay, the fusions, of the to-and-fro process” (1985, p. 102). I want to build on these complementary ideas from Dewey, Rosenblatt, and Ehret by bringing them into conversation with Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts of territorialization and deterritorialization, which help to explain various aspects of the class’s encounter with Emmett Till’s lynching.

Despite the movement and perpetual flux that momentarily congeal in territorial assemblages, Deleuze and Guattari warned us that “There is always a place… where all the forces come together in hand-to-hand combat of energies” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 321). This is to say that even in a territory that tries to keep chaos at bay, forces of deterritorialization are immanent to it, threatening it from within. One recurring place of warring forces involves the hierarchical ordering of humans in U.S. institutions, such as schools. Kendi (2016) argued that Black Africans were stamped with inferiority by the white Europeans funding the sea routes to

Africa. The practice of slavery was justified after the fact on the grounds of racial hierarchy, with white European Man abiding at the pinnacle (Kendi, 2016; Wynter, 2003).

Once in play, the practice of slavery was further sedimented through the creation of ever-shifting official reasons (e.g. religious, intellectual, civilizing) that justified these egregious practices. Racializing assemblages continued churning out shifting racist practices and ideas (Kendi, 2016; Weheliye, 2014), such as the segregationist policies that *Brown v. the Board of Education* overturned in 1954, a year before two white men lynched Emmett Till.

“The attribution of all the diffuse forces to the earth as receptacle or base takes place only at the deepest level of each territory” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 321). When Deleuze and Guattari write about depth, they are usually explaining some process on the plane of organization. All the diffuse forces involved in materializing slavery, such as desiring wealth, cheap labor, colonization, white supremacy on the one hand and equality, fairness, and justice on the other are warring forces “wed in a battle” over the territory (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 321). This forms an intense center, a tree in the territory of the United States at its founding.

The aggression that fueled Bryant and Milam’s murder of Till grows intense because “Wherever territoriality appears, it establishes an intraspecific *critical distance* between members of the same species” (p. 322), and in the eyes of Bryant and Milam, Till encroached upon that necessary critical distance with his supposed whistle at a white lady. When the student in Ms. Barrett’s class asked the clarifying question about why Till was murdered, this dynamic of warring forces was the very relation at issue. We didn’t take up his question as it would have been wise to do because only then can we begin to explain to students how a supposed whistle could summon violence from the warring forces at this center of modern western civilization.

To Kill a Mockingbird is a highly contested book. It is both loved and hated. How it operated in the classroom depended upon its long history in relation to the longer history of racism. For both Ms. Barrett and me, the novel could be read as a familiar story of southern whiteness. This reading largely steps around the tree that attracts all the warring energies. In the summer of 2018 (just a few months after this encounter), PBS aired a program called *The Great American Read* in which they featured the top 100 best loved books as voted on by their American public television viewers. *To Kill a Mockingbird* was voted number one. Why would a story of racial discrimination, near lynching, unjust conviction, and murder by police be such a well-loved book? When announcing the series on the TODAY Show, *The Great American Read* host, Meredith Vieira, was asked which book would get her vote. Her answer:

I am actually going to vote for *To Kill a Mockingbird* because that book probably did more to change my life than any other. ... because I read it when I was a young teen and I grew up in Rumford, Rhode Island, a very small town, and if there was racism around me—I was in a bubble and I wasn't aware of it, and to read that book and to see how much hate there was and how much love—and those two sides and Atticus Finch just really touched my soul—and it was—the protagonist was Scout, a little girl, so I was drawn into it, and how it made me think about what would you do in the situation? How would you respond?" (Vieira, 2018)

Like Vieira, *TKAM* captivated me as an eighth grader in Mississippi when I read it for the first time. I found companionship in the mischievous Scout with her skinned knees and roly-poly bugs, I longed for a brother like Jem, and I thought Atticus Finch was the perfect combination of wisdom, strength, and tenderness. Lee's words connected straight to the small-town South in which I had been raised, and the novel's description of southern ladies being like "soft teacakes with frostings of sweat and sweet talcum" still floats into my mind on summer days when I curse the humidity (p. 6). My memories of this encountering this book for the first time are not complex, however. The book was assigned, read, discussed, and tested in a manner that left little room for difficulty. Yes, it was tragic that Tom Robinson was shot by prison guards 17 times, but

yay for Atticus, the white man who tried to save him. The real people to blame were the “white-trash” Ewells and their kind. The Ewells weren’t us good white people. We did not discuss the treatment of Calpurnia or her place in the Finch family. Atticus was praised as a hero, but nothing was said of his role as the great, white savior. We didn’t discuss the supposed “few shots in the air” that prison guards fired before riddling Tom’s body with 17 bullets as he tried to escape his fate. I have to wonder whether or not these more complex issues were mentioned in Vieira’s “small town” classroom.

Looking into this situation now, it is important to consider what made my first reading of *TKAM*—a reading that did not produce discomfort—possible? I was at a private school created in response to integration, sitting in a classroom of all white students, taught by a white teacher. There was no discussion of the N-word except as a disclaimer that we would not say it out loud. My teacher had not pulled up images of Emmett Till on the overhead projector or asked us to make connections to Tom Robinson.

Almost twenty years later, when I encountered the book in the classroom setting for the second time, there were new connections in the assemblage that led to a different and more complex reading experience. There were still white students and white teachers, but there were Black students too who were now quietly enduring the revictimization of the N-word as they encountered it in the book. Connections to history were invited in with the research projects. Ms. Barrett had also included a reading of Brent Staples’ 1987 article “Black Men and Public Spaces” which was followed by a Socratic seminar discussion. She was working to supplement the DRIVE and its efferently focused and school-approved activities—working to teach the novel in a more complex way. But I have to admit that as I look back now at all the missed opportunities for *learning from* the lynching of Emmett Till rather than merely *learning about* it,

I am convinced that what was produced was a revictimization of Emmett Till bordering on what Spillers (2003/1987) called “pornotroping,” defined as “the enactment of black suffering for a shocked and titillated audience” (in Weheliye, 2008, p. 90).

Looking at this encounter with DeleuzoGuattarian concepts, the tree of racism beckoned Ms. Barrett who was trying to get the students to see that events in *TKAM* were not unlike events in the world. We acknowledged it, approached it, but we were also wary of the combat taking place there. We safely focused on the bravery of Lee. Mallory and Alexander’s connections between *TKAM* and Emmett Till seemed superficial—focusing, for example, on Emmett’s speech impediment and Tom’s cotton gin injury as important connections between the two worlds. Though the projected slide said something about this being a “particularly troubled period in the South’s history of race,” that was the final word on the subject. Case closed.

Ms. Barrett knew that the image of Emmett Till was powerful, but she also knew that letting it in might produce intensities that exceeded her control. It is informative that one of Ms. Barrett’s stated concerns was that parents might complain that the racialized violence that Emmett Till suffered might cause their own children to suffer now. If I had it to do over again, I would focus on the white men who lynched Emmett Till, on the history of racism with its myths of Blackness, on the criminal justice system that failed time and again to uphold equal justice. I’d say, “Look at these ordinary white men from Money, Mississippi. How did they become homicidal?” I would leave the description and image of Emmett Till’s body out.

We approached, but ultimately retreated from the tree. As Britzman argued, “The trauma of education is its incapacity to respond adequately to its own history of ‘bad faith and cruelty’ (1998, p. 52). The classroom operating with the DRIVE didn’t better equipped us to *see* what racism produces, but neither did the image of Emmett Till, as Mamie Till-Mobley had hoped.

The DRIVE didn't move us to agitate against instances of racist cruelty; in fact, it offered stability, predictability, and comfort.

Ms. Barrett knew that looking at the picture mattered. Here, at the tree, with Emmett Till's disfigured face filling the room, we yearned to be distracted from the response-ability confronting us. As Boler explained,

I see education as a means to challenge rigid patterns of thinking that perpetuate injustice and instead encourage flexible analytic skills, which include the ability to self-reflectively evaluate the complex relations of power and emotion. As an educator I understand my role to be not merely to teach critical thinking, but to teach critical thinking that seeks to transform consciousness in such a way that a Holocaust [or Emmett Till's murder] could never happen again" (1997, p. 256).

Rosenblatt and Deleuze told us that to produce a new people, we would have to war against the reterritorialization of white supremacy. How do we handle an image like this? How can we handle it so that we are not simply spectacularly revictimizing Till, but forcing ourselves and our students to think with the image?

Continuing her thoughts about affective responses necessary for aesthetic reading experiences, Rosenblatt explained that "in actual life constructive thinking usually starts when there is some conflict or discomfort or when habitual behavior is impeded and a choice of new paths of behavior must be made" (1995, p. 216). Encounters like these produce forces powerful enough to at least temporarily deterritorialize racist thinking and to push students into action that has potential for materializing a different future. However, such encounters are also combatting incredibly strong currents of reterritorialization produced by comfort, normalcy, routine, and safety. These kinds of lines "hold together" the arborescent model and "the refrain that assures the consistency of the territory," giving the tree its immense power to localize all the warring forces at its deep center (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 327). Racism is produced by this

hierarchical image of thought that in 1955 made it possible for two white men to torture and kill a young Black boy.

Arborescence is always there in the territory because it is what makes the territory possible. The DRIVE-based reading of *TKAM* did its best to skirt around the warring forces, and Mallory and Alexander's presentation of Emmett Till could have brought the whole class to the tree, and maybe it did for someone for a brief moment. But there was little left to be done when that moment came. Emmett Till's mutilated body was already designated as gross and disturbing, something worthy of our averted gazes. Our recognition of this proved that we had already decided before we arrived at the tree what it meant. In regard to encountering traumas like this one, Britzman (1998) asked:

What is actually occurring when education represses uncertainty and trauma if the very project of reading and of love requires risking the self? How could teachers—of any era—teach their national literature if that literature itself broke apart the order, the punishments, the didacticism, the religiosity, the greed, the conformity, indeed, the very structure of disavowal? (Britzman, p. 55)

Deleuze and Guattari would have offered that “what is actually occurring” is this battle at the tree—the convergence of new territories toward the old one (1987, p. 321). Those new territories require students to be able to see the picture for themselves. And not just the picture of Emmett, but also the pictures of the men who murdered him smoking victory cigars and kissing their wives in celebration after they were acquitted of all charges. The intense center is the place where as Britzman said, the self can be risked, where order can be broken apart. We cannot decide this for the students. We cannot approach the tree knowing the outcome of the battle before it has been fought.

“At Least We Ain’t Dead”: A Literary Encounter



Figure 4.10. On hearing “At Least We Ain’t Dead”

The Wisdom of the DRIVE

It was mid-afternoon on a day in early February. The class had begun with a word of the day which was followed by a study guide check in preparation for an upcoming quiz on *TKAM* chapter 7–11.

“Ugh!”

“Seriously?”

“Didn’t we take that one already?”

Boredom and negative emotion crept across the room as students half-heartedly protested the announcement. They had grown tired of *TKAM*, and neither Ms. Barrett nor I could blame them. The unit was dragging out for far too long, and they had been quizzed at least two times a week since returning from break. Whatever engagement they may have found in the initial reading experiences had by this time long faded. The DRIVE’s version of reading *TKAM* was a forced march through required assignments until the nine weeks ended. Ms. Barrett proceeded as if the pace of the unit were beyond her influence, having already been determined by the DRIVE. I went with the flow.

The DRIVE demanded dialectical journals and study guide questions for each chapter.

The daily pattern of instruction was familiar: answer the study guide questions one-by-one,

searching for the right answer that students would hastily scribble in their study guides if need be; little to know discussion or elaboration. Students were mostly willing or resigned to this pattern, but there was little enthusiasm in its unfolding. Is it surprising how dutifully students go along with such things? I noticed similar patterns of compliance in Mr. Fisher's and Mr. Grant's classrooms, and to lesser extent in Ms. Bowling's.

Though the lesson plan this day included what were called "discussion questions," they did little to invite discussion even when the content of the questions pertained to politically loaded topics like social justice, race, and violence. These questions required single answers ordained in advance to be right by the DRIVE, which Ms. Barrett read verbatim when students failed to answer "properly."

Reading aloud from the teacher's copy, Ms. Barrett spoke, "Why is Atticus angry with Jem, Scout, and Dill?"

Students flipped pages in the book and turned through their study guide packets. Nobody said anything loud enough for the whole class to hear, so Ms. Barrett read from the DRIVE. Atticus catches the children trying to sneak a note into the Radleys' window. He has already told them to leave the Radleys alone, so he is angry both because they have disobeyed him and because they are bothering the Radleys.

Ms. Barrett advanced to the next question, reading: "What emotion is Scout really displaying in the following passage? What does Lee show about Scout's character through this passage?" Her voice changed slightly as she read aloud from the book.

Dill was becoming something of a trial anyway, following Jem about. He had asked me earlier in the summer to marry him, then he promptly forgot about it. He staked me out, marked as his property, said I was the only girl he would ever love, then he neglected me. I beat him up twice but it did no good, he only grew closer to Jem. (p. 41)

Again, Ms. Barrett paused to give students a chance to review their answers before continuing. Some students looked at each other, or looked up at Ms. Barrett, but nobody responded. Ms. Barrett addressed the whole class again with THE ANSWER.

Scout is jealous because the boys exclude her from many of their activities. Jem plays with her when Dill is not there, but the boys have started including her only when they want her to do something specific, such as run errands. Lee reinforces Scout's desire to be thought of as one of the boys—to be a tomboy. Scout's solution to being ignored is to beat Dill up rather than "act like a girl" and cry.

Students who hadn't done their homework scurried to get down as much of the answer as they could. Those who had come prepared could be found erasing their existing answers, adding to their responses with squiggly arrows, or simply ignoring the DRIVE's wisdom altogether. In the group to my right someone asked, "Wait, which one is Dill again?" And so, it went. The DRIVE and the driven seeming to make this literature activity work in their different ways.

While some of the students in the class diligently read the book in the summer and again as they completed the study guide, others had never even bought the book or checked it out at the library. One told me that even though she bought the book, she ended up watching the movie. Others admitted to just reading summary notes online. On more than one occasion I had to remind someone that Scout was a female character or that Atticus was her father. Basic stuff.

The Scandal of it All

Even though the DRIVE activities left little room for personal engagement, Ms. Barrett occasionally wandered away from its plan to share unofficial knowledge about the story or author they were reading. Each time this happened, students would look up and listen, always more interested in these stories than in the daily slog through the literature at hand.

A few days earlier, she had told students about the scandalous mystery regarding the authorship of *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Most of the students did not know enough about Harper

Lee or Truman Capote to have an opinion on the matter at first, but this little bit of drama added some new energy to the unit. Chelsea, a student in the class, was so moved by this information that she brought it up in basketball practice, and her coach told the team that he believed Capote wrote the book. Chelsea was now asking Ms. Barrett to give her opinion on the matter. Before answering their request, she asked me to weigh in. Suddenly everyone was rapt.

“I think she wrote it. Is that what you think?” I answered simply.

We had diverged from the DRIVE. Ms. Barrett, enthusiastically contributed her opinion to the discussion,

Okay, so let me tell you why I don’t think Truman Capote [wrote it]. Let me give you my take. The reason I don’t think it was Truman Capote is because if you know Truman Capote—as far as his personality and his flamboyant-ness—he could never have let Harper Lee win a Pulitzer Prize for that book and not taken some credit for it. Because he wanted a Pulitzer Prize and never got one. He wanted one for *In Cold Blood*. And he didn’t get it. And in fact, it caused a rift between him and Harper Lee because she helped him do all that research about that murder, and if you haven’t read that book, that’s a cool book, but you know he wrote *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*. He wrote some amazing stuff.

And right there the study guide was cast aside, a piece of trivia about the author bringing the whole class to the metaphorical table. Conversations started to ping around the room, propelled by this opportunity for discussion. The pressure of right answers was lifted and the energy surrounding a topic of scandal pulsed through the class at a quicker pace.

I didn’t notice as it happened, but after reading the transcript and watching the lesson again, this conversation surfaced as an important turning point in the class that day. The work before us shifted from reproducing the DRIVE to exploring what motivated people to act. Possibilities for movement seemed thrilling in comparison to options so closely circumscribed by the DRIVE.

Shifts in student engagement are apparent on video. Before the scandal, the malaise of the class materialized in absently flipping study guide papers, braiding and unbraiding hair, and

sketching in the margins of DRIVE packets. One young man was napping. For the most part, all of this halted when Ms. Barrett began to speak of scandal.

When Ms. Barrett left the scandal and moved back to study guide question three, this new energy fizzled a little, but it didn't fade completely. The questions that followed dealt with the Missouri Compromise and Scout's role as a narrator, both of which had straightforward answers typed out in the DRIVE. Soon enough, the class returned to the humdrum that preceded the scandal.

"At least we ain't dead"

A few minutes later, though, another question provoked a second unscripted discussion. "Why did Harper Lee include Boo Radley in the story?" Misty was quick to raise her hand.

Well, it shows that the town is. Anything that is foreign or unknown to them or is different in the way that they act or look or just in their thinking, they're scared of that. And they are biased against it because they're scared of its power, like Atticus's way of thinking. Like the fact that Atticus is willing to represent a Black person is, in some way, unknown to them and kind of a foreign idea and that's why he gets so much criticism about it.

Ms. Barrett affirmed Misty's response and then continued by offering her opinion instead of reading from the DRIVE. Grinning, she began to express her love for Lee's inclusion of the character Dolphus Raymond, a white man who lives with a Black woman, who is the mother of his children: "I love Dolphus Raymond 'cause for me that's just, that little minor character there, that little guy, he just brings it all into the big picture." Reading again, Ms. Barrett asked, "How does Lee use the setting of Maycomb?" Stephen's hand shot up. "Okay, Stephen?"

"Uhh." he hesitated, rereading his answer before speaking. "It has extreme racism, and it's really small, so like if you do something wrong in that town, it's kind of hard to get away from it."

“Good.” Ms. Barrett replied, “Alright. Anything else? So we’ve got racism, anybody else use another word?”

“Hatred,” Hannah said.

“Prejudice,” Windsor added.

Ms. Barrett confirmed their answers, “Alright, prejudice, hatred. Okay, there’s a lot of that going on, right? Those are themes within the social structure of Maycomb.” Ms. Barrett went back to the official answers from the DRIVE. Finding the answer, she began to read from the teacher’s copy working to guide the students through this idea of small-town social structure.

Maycomb is a typical small town in the rural South that experienced severe poverty at all social levels. For example, even though the Finches are considered part of the upper class with a nice house, African American housekeeper, and a car, they have very little money. However, they are much better off than the Cunningham family, which owns farmland, has no money, and must pull their children from school to work the farm. Below families like the Cunninghams are the “white trash” like the Ewells, with the African-American community at the very bottom.

As she read, some of the students began to look a little uncomfortable, and Ms. Barrett’s voice waivered to meet their discomfort.

In this small town, Lee is able to illustrate the prejudice and hatred of those at the top looking down on the ones below them. With a strict social structure, Lee questions the segregation of African Americans and whites as an accepted system even by open-minded people like Atticus Finch.

Here, Ms. Barrett stopped reading and looked up at the students checking their understanding of the official response, surveying the territory they were tiptoeing toward.

“Okay. So, they could [pause]. Do you understand what that’s saying? Does that make sense to you? That social structure?” Turning to me she asked, “What do you think? Ms. Murray would you like to add something?”

Her deferral to me here was typical of our relationship and interactions. I had been there five months at this point, and she viewed me as peer and co-teacher.

I was just thinking like, “small town, small mind.” I think people in a small town get a bad reputation for being [pause]. You know even at the top of the social class it’s like, “Oh but you’re from a *small town*,” so they feel like they have to have somebody that’s below them to make them feel better about themselves. And each strata of their social class does the same thing. So, there’s like the wealthier whites, and then they’re like, “Well at least we’re not the country people” and the country people are like, “at least we’re not the “white trash” people,” and the “white trash” people are saying, “well at least we’re not the African Americans” and it’s just sort of like each person, you know, has to have somebody to step down on to make themselves look better.

The words left my mouth before I could hear them, spilling into the classroom and spreading out.

Hearing them now is like watching a pot suddenly boil over.

“What about the African Americans?” Chase, a white young man, asked.

Before either Ms. Barrett or I could respond, Devon, a Black young man, laughed out, then spoke, “And we say, at least we ain’t dead.”

It was said jokingly, but I for one heard the authority of experience behind it.

Ms. Barrett and I were speechless for a few moments, nodding to Devon, not really sure what to say next. The enthusiasm and engagement from before filled the room again in an uncomfortable quiet this time.

Ms. Barrett was the first to respond in words. “Well. It’s not a pretty picture is it? It’s not something we [she catches herself and makes a repair], it’s not something *I* like to talk about” she said looking out at her students.

The class shuffled around in their seats, but it was increasingly clear that the discussion had taken on an uncomfortable tone.

Ms. Barrett continued, “So the [Civil Rights] projects that you guys did [show] the picture of our country that’s not pretty. It’s. It’s a part of our history, but it’s now how we [looking at me], how Ms. Murray and I think.”

Taking this as my cue to speak again, I jumped back into the conversation to discuss the often-unacknowledged part that Calpurnia, the Finches' maid, plays in the book.

Ms. Barrett added, "That book was a light to guide a movement or help to guide a movement—a statement, "Hey this isn't right, what we're doing's not right, and she very accurately takes and puts it in the 1930s versus the 1950s." Ms. Barrett's voice showed genuine conviction that she believed the truth of what she was telling the class.

Students were really thinking now, bringing up parts of the book that glowed for them, things not mentioned in the study guide questions. After a few minutes, the discussion centered on the rabid dog. Ms. Barrett asked, "What's that dog symbolize?"

"The racism in Maycomb." Marley said without skipping a beat.

"Racism in Maycomb" Ms. Barrett repeated, "Yes. It's simple, right?"

Not understanding the symbolism, Jordan asked, "How did the dog represent racism?"

Since it was Marley's idea, she continued, "I mean [pause] like especially in comparison to modern society like very ugly, right, so it—it's intimidating and it's ugly and you don't want to face it, but everybody knows it's there, but they just don't do anything about it."

Ms. Barrett replied, "That's good" as Hayes raised his hand. "What've you got Hayes?"

"Also," Hayes began "Scout points out how it's the winter not the summer and it didn't look like a rabid dog—so racism in Maycomb isn't as pointed as sometimes you might think it would be." He continued, "But it's still there and it's still really dangerous."

"Good!" Ms. Barrett said, adding "You've got to write this stuff down people, because you're going to use it for the second essay." A few students now alerted to the reason for the discussion scribbled down ideas that would help them ace the second essay. Ms. Barrett nodded to Hayes who had his hand back up.

Also, for Calpurnia and Atticus taking the credit. You could even bring that in with the symbolism because Atticus is the one who is very openly trying to fight it while it's definitely not just Atticus trying to fight it in town. It's the African American community also trying to fight it. And I'm sure there are others. And then Ms. Maudie is not racist, and then there's Mr. Underwood. ... He was, I think, even condemning Atticus for even taking the case in the paper, the newspaper, but he still was defending Atticus and had the shotgun loaded up that night [when Tom was in jail and the lynch mob came].

Offering a counterpoint, Ms. Barrett said, "He wrote the editorial at the end [in which "He likened Tom's death to the senseless slaughter of songbirds by hunters and children" (Lee, 1960/2002, p. 275)]

"He gives Tom Robinson's wife a job" Misty added.

"Yeah," Ms. Barrett said. "Okay, so he would not be racist. Right?"

Somehow, we had taken the question from the study guide about how Harper Lee was using the setting of the town of Maycomb and had gotten into a discussion of who was or was not racist.

Ms. Barrett continued her point about Helen Robinson:

You remember what happens to her when she's walking home, all that kind of stuff? They're catcalling and the Ewells are giving her a hard time, and all that kind of stuff. He makes sure that all that ends. So, there is some light, right, there is some light amidst the darkness, yeah, or against the darkness. Alright, alright, so let's do the next one.

Ms. Barrett turned again to the DRIVE and read the next study guide question verbatim.

Interlude

Reading through this discussion again is an unsettling experience, and each time I revisit it my skin crawls worse than the time before. I don't think I have captured the awkwardness and red-hot embarrassment that swarmed my body when Devon laughingly said, "And we say, at least we ain't dead." I know I haven't captured what he was feeling.

My shoulders tense at his words, and I catch my posture going ridged when I see what follows my response. It's like the amount of discomfort I have will have somehow changed the

past, and it won't be as bad this time. I'll hear something else in the recording that I didn't catch the first ten times.

Devon said what I didn't have the courage to say. I left it hanging there, implied, but unspoken. I have been over this transcript so many times now, I have parts of it memorized. While this inquiry is not focused on discourse analysis, I find a closer inspection of my many lines, especially Devon's, to be productive. In the comments I spoke leading up to his, I used the "at least we" phrasing three times to walk the students through each of the social classes and their attitudes, but I didn't knowingly include myself as part of that "we."

"At least *we*'re not the country people."

"At least *we*'re not the "white trash" people."

"At least *we*'re not the African Americans."

These groups of people speaking the "at least we" are not *me*. I did not project myself back in time to their world, I simply used the first-person plural to make the point. I was play-acting through each part of the small-town society parts. But Devon, when it was his turn to speak, picked up the phrasing and made it his own, shifting my rhetorical strategy to include himself in the "we." He brought the horrors of the past into the dangers of the present and smacked them right down in our laps.

"And *we* say, at least *we* ain't dead."

This one line channeled an intensity into the classroom that brought Ms. Barrett and me to our knees. My "at least" statements awkwardly stopped after I said African Americans. They were the people positioned on the bottom rung of Maycomb's society. Climbing down that ladder, I ran out of people to step on. Ms. Barrett recognized the ugliness of the fictional situation and connected it back to the Civil Rights projects the class had done. She removed herself (and me)

from the group of people who thought like that, but neither of us brought up ongoing racism or the ongoing legacy of 400 plus years of systemic injustice. When it was my turn to talk, I again tried to keep the discussion between the covers of the book, or at best to limit it to the time period in which Lee was writing.

We were cutting escape routes away from the real discussion and action.

We had been doing this all semester.

I was back at Cedar Knoll. This was congealing as a problematic and recurring pattern.

We spoke about racism enough to seem like good white people (DiAngelo, 2018), but not so much or in such ways that forced anyone to think. Deleuze defined “reading with love” as a way of letting literature come “in contact with what’s outside the book, as a flow meeting other flows, one machine among others” (1995, pp. 8–9). We were definitely not reading with love, even though we thought we were.

Instead of exploring the complexity or racialized relations, we slapped fixed categories of “racist” or “non-racist” on the characters so we could move on now being consoled by easy answers. We could move on because our main purpose was to write good AP essays, not become knowing subjects who could change this persistent set of relations in racializing assemblages (Weheliye, 2014). Comfort for the white majority in the room over the potential discomfort of exploring what it means to take moment by moment stances against racism.

We were doing what my teachers had done twenty years earlier, focusing upon academic credentials (finding symbols, exploring setting as elements of literature) rather than learning about how racializing relations still operate today.

Marley said, “in comparison to modern society [it was] like very ugly.” Emmett Till’s murder, the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church, the murders during Freedom Summer

were all ugly historical events. But were they more “especially ... intimidating and ugly” than 21st century murders of Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, Freddie Gray, or the nine lives gunned down at Bible study in Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston? Were they less intimidating and ugly than Derek Chauvin kneeling on the neck of George Floyd for nearly nine minutes? Comparing traumas to see who wins the place of worst is probably just another escape route that helps us maintain faith in the myth of progress. That helps us move on having been consoled.

How is it that we could spend so much time discussing the conspiracy theories and scandals surrounding both the publication of Lee’s original text and the newly released *Go Set a Watchman*, but made no mention connections to ongoing events? Both topics were tangents directing flows away from the approved curriculum of the DRIVE, but the similarities ended there. Deleuze and Guattari used many different metaphors to describe those controlling flows: “gatekeepers,” “passers-on,” “door openers,” and “trap closers” (1987, p. 153). Of the assemblage they ask, “What peoples it, what passes across it, what does the blocking?” (p. 153). Here, the answers seem to be clear.

We couldn’t talk about why grown men felt compelled to murder a 14 year old boy or how an unarmed Black man could be choked to death on the streets of New York, but we could talk about the dog being a symbol for a fictional racist society. We could talk about country people in small Southern towns. Discussions of the text which had some utility—getting prepared for the upcoming test, collecting evidence for the impending essay—passed through an open gate. We held the door wide for discussions of intrigue and the titillating publishing scandals, but we actively blocked deeper discussions of racialized violence then and racist people now.

We did not talk about white silence, the guilt of being a bystander, or how there is no middle ground when it comes to racism. We are either contributing to a racist society or an anti-racist one (Kendi, 2016, 2019). Anti-racist is not a stable identity but materializes in moment to moment decisions. Like Mr. Underwood, one moment an anti-racist, another moment a racist. There is no opting out.

We drew lines molar, molecular, and flight, and cordoned off what was acceptable conversation in the English classroom. The conversations we held were momentary breaks from the study guide and the rigid path of the DRIVE, but we didn't let them deterritorialize to a place where we could flee our consoling ways and embrace our own ongoing complicity racialized violence.

Marley, speaking about racism back then, said “everybody knows it's there, but they just don't do anything about it” but we didn't talk about how doing nothing is still doing something—then and now. What is at stake if we send these messages with our pedagogical actions? Literature can teach us something about the past. It can help us write strong essays and get good test scores. But what about it being, as Rosenblatt described, “one of the important media through which our cultural pattern is transmitted” (1995, p. 180). The students were the ones taking steps towards those discussions, but like I skirted around the topic of lying in my classroom at Cedar Knoll, we skirted around these deeper forays into discussions of race here. Each move we made and didn't make affected the becoming classroom assemblage.

Flows in the assemblage do not stay still, they are “created, exhausted, or transformed, added to one another, subtracted or combined” (1987, p. 219). The lines we drew, the alternate paths we offered which looped everything back to the credential-producing study of the book, made this happen. Intensity flowed when students gave their attention to Ms. Barrett's anecdotes

about the story's origin. The questions of the study guide slowly subtracted that attention away until another valve opened as soon taboo topics like race were suggested. Devon's keen insight into the broader realities of the book's connection to the assemblage momentarily opened a floodgate, but the intensity of it all was soon syphoned away as we drilled holes in the pipe with our questions about symbolism and static characters. On that day, the adding and subtracting flows may have resulted in good evidence to support soon-to-be-written thesis statements. It also resulted in missed opportunities for exploring how racism was taken up in Maycomb, in Harper Lee's world, and in our own, opportunities for students to see alternative ways of living in a society that draws "less than" signs on the backs of Black people like targets.

We Grow Accustomed to the Dark: A Literary Encounter



Figure 4.11. Songs of seeing darkness.

New Lines and Old Speeches

I was eight when the Oklahoma City bombing occurred. It is my earliest memory of watching the news. The image of a lifeless baby being carried out by a firefighter has hung in my mind since then, and I understand why my parents flipped the channel whenever coverage came on. The shootings at Columbine High School happened when I was in sixth grade. Again, my parents shielded me from most of the news surrounding the event, but I remember chatting with my friends about it at lunch. The next year, when I was in junior high, one of the Columbine

victim's families came to our school to speak at a forum, and again, the shootings became a topic of conversation, but we were still somewhat removed from any local effects of the trauma. Two years later this would change with the attacks on World Trade Center. Though the events of 9/11 were thousands of miles away, locally their effects surfaced in blood drives, prayer meetings, increased school security, and bomb threat drills. Our high school mascot, the patriot, took on a new meaning, and Friday night lights felt like the Super Bowl played on the 4th of July. Understandably, 9/11 was a major event that shocked the nation and altered the world. These tragedies, along with the deaths of Princess Diana and John F. Kennedy Jr. are the major news stories that reached me then and remain in memories of that time still. They are clear and distinct—deep notches on a door-frame growth chart keeping track of some U.S. entanglements with violence and trauma—and whenever tragedy of this level occurs their lines snap back into focus.

My time at Southfield began on October 2nd, 2017, the day after the mass shooting at the Route 91 Harvest Music Festival in Las Vegas. I remember getting up in the middle of the night to quiet my crying newborn and seeing the news alert on my phone. I sat listening to Anderson Cooper report on the tragedy calling in the deadliest in US history. “Not again,” I thought, “why does this keep happening?” That next day, my first at Southfield, I expected conversations to center around this atrocity, but I did not hear a single student make mention of it. Not one.

I asked Mr. Grant about the lack of discussion and he said, “It’s really sad. These kids have grown up with it.” He was right. When he and I were in high school, mass shootings were a major (and thankfully rare) news event. There were only three that occurred in the first fifteen years of my life, but in the next fifteen years that number would more than tripled. The absence of conversation about the Las Vegas shootings caught me off guard, but it also repositioned me

to look more carefully for evidence of students reacting to events like these which continued to occur in rapid succession.

After the Valentine's Day mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in 2018, I experienced changes taking place at Southfield. The students were still not talking about the recent massacres, at least not in my presence, but school administration showed concern by installing walk-through metal detectors at the front entrance. Students were cautioned not to open doors for people outside. One day when I arrived at the school, nobody was present in the front office to buzz me through, so I stood behind the glass doors waiting for an office worker to come along. The students with whom I worked were used to me by then, and I think many had even forgotten I wasn't a teacher, so it surprised me a student in Ms. Barrett's class walked up to the glass door and said, "I'm sorry, I can't let you in." He was following directions. I noticed.

In early April, the school held a safety forum with the superintendent, district attorney, and local chief of police. As we walked into the auditorium, Eleanor candidly told me that it would be the "same-old speech" they had been hearing every year about not talking to strangers and being careful when posting things on social media. She wasn't wrong. As the principal took the stage to greet everyone, he told the audience that school safety was their "number one" priority. New security measures were being implemented throughout the school district, and the superintendent told students to be vigilant: "See something? Say something!" This slogan was the local adaptation of the national war on terror campaign mantra, "If you see something, say something" that started circulating in 1992 after the first World Trade Center bombing.

The speeches continued with the police chief giving warnings about posting inappropriate and threatening things on social media and encouraged students talk to a counselor if they felt like making threats. The district attorney told students that simply knowing about a threat made

them accomplices; if they didn't report threats, it was the equivalent to "looking around right now and picking out seventeen classmates to be killed" (the number killed at Stoneman Douglas). I looked around to see how students reacted to this analogy: no fear or outrage but plenty of students were busily playing on their phones while others had fallen asleep. By the time the principal took the stage to wrap things up and remind us not to prop doors open, students were already gathering their belongings and talking about other matters. We filed out of the auditorium, continuing on with business as usual.

School safety talks and drills were normalized in Southfield's landscape and forums like these were as familiar as back-to-school night and homecoming. Though the shootings at Marjory Stoneman Douglas seemed to wake up students across the country and rally them to take stands against gun violence, students at Southfield seemed undisturbed. But were they?

Seeing the Dark

A few days after the school safety forum, the students came into Ms. Barrett's room buzzing with energy. The weather was warming up and the days were getting longer. They were busy working on dialectical journals, grammar concepts, and study guide questions—activities of the DRIVE. This day, however, Ms. Barrett assigned an activity in which students identified quotations from Taylor Swift or Shakespeare. It was a well-timed release for their energy. Ms. Barrett's version of Mr. Fisher's Fun Friday activities.

"See the lights, see the party, the ballgowns," Taylor Swift belted throughout the classroom, as Ms. Barrett played the "Love Story" (2008) video. Several students joined in excitedly:

“Cause you were Romeo, I was a scarlet letter
And my daddy said, ‘Stay away from Juliet’”

Ms. Barrett laughed, appreciating their enthusiasm and added, “All literature makes connections to popular culture.” This was perhaps her justification for using pop music in the classroom although in this case it was Swift who was making the connections, not Shakespeare.

Following the activity, the transition to POMO was a little slow. They were coming down from the excitement of the activity and Hayes, the first student to share a POMO, wasn’t feeling well. They moved on. Marley was next up, and she stepped in amidst the T-Swift craziness with this intense little punch of poem that went on to serve as a literal wake-up call.

Marley did not take choosing a poem lightly. Having a chance to lead discussion gave her the opportunity to stir things up, and she always took it. Marley was responsible with her schoolwork and candid with her responses to in-class questions. When other students fumbled uneasily with Shakespeare’s sexual innuendos or hesitated to say an “awkward” word like “teat” when reading aloud, Marley would come right out and say it for them. She was a class leader—the kind of student teachers trusted to run errands and grade quizzes. She was also an amazing artist, doodles filling up her notebook’s margins. She was tall with light brown hair and green eyes. She wore yoga pants and vintage t-shirts—more for their comfort than their functionality—low-top Converse sneakers and a ponytail. On this day, she had chosen the poem “We Grow Accustomed to the Dark” (Figure 4.12) by Emily Dickinson.

“This is one of my favorite poets because she is kind of modern, well modern in terms of beliefs,” Marley said before pausing as Ms. Barrett quieted the talkers.

We grow accustomed to the Dark –
When light is put away –
As when the Neighbor holds the Lamp
To witness her Goodbye –

A Moment – We uncertain step
For newness of the night –
Then – fit our Vision to the Dark –
And meet the Road – erect –

And so of larger – Darknesses –
Those Evenings of the Brain –
When not a Moon disclose a sign –
Or Star – come out – within –

The Bravest – grope a little –
And sometimes hit a Tree
Directly in the Forehead –
But as they learn to see –

Either the Darkness alters –
Or something in the sight
Adjusts itself to Midnight –
And Life steps almost straight

Figure 4.12. “We Grow Accustomed to the Dark,” by Emily Dickinson, available through the Public Domain.

There were a few mumbled responses from the class as soon as she finished—mostly people saying they had not read the poem before. Next, Ms. Barrett spoke to welcome Mr. Richardson, the assistant principal who had come in unannounced and sat down while Marley read. Mr. Richardson nodded, and Marley took her cue to keep going with the POMO discussion.

So, I come into it towards the bottom where it’s talking about groping around and hitting a tree. It’s really neat because it’s called we grew accustomed to the dark, so it’s kind of like the evils of the world I think. So it’s talking about how some people grow accustomed to the dark, but there are certain brave people that will try to see even though everybody else isn’t and they still try to walk even though they get hit in the forehead sometimes.

“I thought it was really neat.” Ms. Barrett replied. “I haven’t read that one. Ms. Murray, have you?”

“I haven’t,” I said, “and I’ve read a lot of Emily Dickinson.” Ms. Barrett recounted her favorite Dickinson poems before nodding to Marley to proceed.

“Emily Dickinson uses lots of em dashes when she does poems, so that’s like one of her general things,” Marley said. “It kind of makes it so you pause when you, so you really know like when to pause, and I think they sound better out loud so that [pause] what did y’all think of it?”

Devon began, “I think, I entered when I saw it in the first stanza, the dashes, yeah” and Ms. Barrett again took the opportunity to have a mini-lesson on em dashes.

Liam raised his hand and offered, “I enter at “neighbor holds the lamp” because when I try to sleep at night, I can see out the window, and my neighbors always have their front like porch lamp on, and it keeps me awake.”

Chase replied, “There is a streetlight right outside my house, and it’s so bright. It’s retarded [sic].”

There weren’t rules limiting comments about where the students connected to the poems, and surface-level responses like these were frequent. When making a connection is directly tied to participation points, everyone manages to find a connection. Comments like these got on my nerves, and on this particular day, I attempted to stop conversations about streetlights by posing a question.

“What’s the brain part about?” I asked, “Those evenings of the brain?”

“Umm,” Marley said, looking back at the poem,

I feel like, there it’s kind of like there’s no light, you’re like alone with your brain, I guess, at least that’s how I thought of it, and it’s just you when it’s dark, that’s how people think a lot. And you start thinking about all of the different things.

Picking up this idea, Eleanor added, “I think that maybe there is some larger darkness, and for some reason the dark is like trying to come in.”

“We do know about Emily Dickinson that she was kind of dark, I mean she always wore white, but her life, she was reclusive, she never left her house” Ms. Barrett informed us before answering a question from Stella about Dickinson. She was trying to help things along, but she got swept up into talking about Dickinson’s life. The forces of de/territorialization were working hard. Marley wanted to take the poem in a new direction, but the tide of Dickinson details kept pulling things back in.

“I think that dark and light here mean much more than dark or light here, wouldn’t you agree?” Ms. Barrett asked looking at me. I nodded. “Okay?” she said, “So, you talk about connections with theme, there’s something more than just light and dark going on.” Misty raised her hand.

I think that um the dark is [pausing to collect her thoughts]. We grow accustomed to the dark, and I think that like, that line might be probably about how in the world we are surrounded by a lot of bad things that are happening and sometimes we’ve grown so used to that, that it just becomes normal to us, even though it’s not necessarily normal, or it shouldn’t be, but we get used to it. Like this is the world we live in, and most people don’t really try to change that, we just kind of accept it.

These were the kinds of poetry moments that Ms. Barrett had experienced in Colorado. This threw out more lines into the assemblage than Liam and Chase talking about annoying neighbors and their lights. Misty’s words got Marley thinking.

“Umm” Marley began, “this is kind of off topic.” She continued:

But I’m reading *East of Eden* by Steinbeck right now and they talk for a while about how it would be to not have a certain trait like to not feel kindness in your heart and they are like, it’s like a person without arms, like they never really miss the arms, they might want arms, but they don’t know what it feels like, so they don’t really know what it’s like to miss it, so it’s kind of like when you’ve grown accustomed to something you don’t really miss the other thing anymore. You might like want it, but you don’t really know how it was. I guess.

My heart broke a little as she spoke, and in the margin of my field notebook I wrote the words “school shootings?!?” but hesitated to ask. I had stepped in once already, and Mr. Richardson might not approve. I opened my mouth to speak, but before I could say anything, Hayes, sat up in his desk, his posture alert to what Marley had just said, and raised his hand. Hayes began:

I sort of thought that like when you go out—when you go outside—the metaphor of like going outside in the dark, like you just said, you get accustomed to it, and you don’t really mind—because you don’t see—when you’re outside in the dark you don’t see, and it takes courage because you could like run into a tree, like this is something that we can all relate to like going outside without seeing—but it’s not just that—they could be talking about like something darker—a real issue that you grow accustomed to and you don’t see.

Marley nodded her approval. Though his response was closer to what she had intimated with her response, they were both speaking in generalities. The social field organizes desire through repeated exposure to tragedy, but this was harder to see when generalities dominated the responses rather than specifics.

Stella and Ms. Barrett were once again discussing details of Emily Dickinson’s life, but by this point, I had underlined the “school shootings?!?” scribble in my notes and I decided to enter the discussion again.

“So,” I said with growing confidence, “I’m just thinking about what Misty said.” I paused for a beat to gather my thoughts.

So I’ve been out here doing research since October, and the first day that I was here was the day of the Las Vegas shootings, and then the Marjory Stoneman Douglas shootings happened. And I just feel like all of this bad stuff is happening, but I haven’t heard a lot of conversation about it and I just wonder if the age we are living that that stuff has become” [pausing to find the word].

“Commonplace?” Ms. Barrett offered.

I nodded before continuing. “They’ve [the students] grown accustomed to it. We had the assembly about like school safety and everything, but I felt like, even right after that the conversation went back to what was happening locally, not necessarily like big picture.”

Looking around the room, I added, “It wasn’t—it wasn’t so much normal when I was in you guy’s place, that was sort of when the first big events like that were happening, but I feel like you all are almost growing up with it.”

My thoughts spilled into the assemblage and there was no reeling them back in. I paused a moment then asked, “Is that kind of what you had in mind, Misty?”

“That was like exactly what I was thinking about when I said about—like especially here in the communities in school,” Misty said confirming my hunch. “Stuff like—since Columbine and similar shootings—those were like a really, really big deal and were really shocking for everyone.” Her voice was solid as she spoke. “But then after we hear about stuff happening over and over again, it’s just like everyone is just used to. It’s just like “oh another school shooting” [no intonation]. It’s something that we shouldn’t be used to.” Looking right at me, she finished, “But it happens all the time, and so we’ve become used to it.”

The school forum had become an all too familiar pattern that was redeployed each year when something bad would happen. The poem, however, created a new way of engaging with the topic of gun violence. It is fascinating to me that a poem written over 150 years ago was better suited to awake the discussion than police chiefs and superintendents speaking of current events.

Marley continued with an explanation, “One of the reasons we don’t talk about it a lot in my house is my dad really believes that you shouldn’t talk about things like that because it gives other people the idea to do the same thing.” She wasn’t alone. I had heard the copycat criminal

logic before. She continued, “That’s why news sources usually don’t release the name of the shooter, because there are certain people that want that kind of fame, and it’s an easy way to get it.” She paused and then added, “So if you don’t talk about it as much it makes it less known, I guess and less practiced.”

Jordan, a thoughtful but usually quiet student, chimed in next. “I was also just thinking about what it would take for us not to be used to stuff, like Columbine was the first big real shooting, and that was like nineteen years ago I think?”

“Yeah,” Ms. Barrett confirmed, “that was before any of you were here.”

“So that was the first big thing, but like back in January of this year there was a shooting every other day” Jordan continued. “Like, so, you know every time we hear about a shooting, we do the whole “thoughts and prayers” thing, and we act like we are shocked, but in the back of our mind, it’s just another event to us.”

He was spot-on. Gun violence events were so common that they created a steady rhythm which had faded into the background of everydayness. According to a CNN report that came out in May of 2018, shooting incidents occurring at schools averaged one per week (Ahmed & Walker, 2018). In December, the BBC would write that 2018 was the worst year on record for this kind of violence, with 131 people being killed or injured in at least 23 separate events (Coughlan, 2018).

Picking up on Marley’s comment about unwanted fame, Ms. Barrett brought the discussion back to Emily Dickinson before asking if I had anything to add. Not wanting to press my luck, I left things there. The POMO was officially closed for class discussion. Ms. Barrett recounted to Mr. Richardson the success of the Taylor Swift activity before moving the class

back into the world of the *Romeo and Juliet* study guide. Students tuned in and out, being pulled along by the path of the DRIVE.

Interlude

Either the Darkness alters—

Or something in the sight

Adjusts itself to Midnight—

And Life steps almost straight

These words are simple but overwhelming. As I read them again, I cannot help but see just how exact Emily Dickinson was when she scribbled them down all those years ago, with the United States fighting the Civil War. It was a dark and troubled time, the country ripping apart, brother fighting brother. Every time I read the poem, I change my mind about it. I cannot decide if it is hopeful or utterly depressing. I feel certain the speaker is making a statement about humankind's capacity to adapt or change, but I do not know if it is for better or worse. Light does not come back, but either the darkness somehow changes, or our vision adapts to it. Even without light, we can still find our way. At least that is what the poem communicates to me today. But my task here is not to interpret a poem—that's what POMO was for. My work is to map flows that are ever in relation, and on this day the various flows producing the assemblage were strong, warring forces between de- and re-territorialization.

The perpetual flows of the classroom curriculum channeled through the DRIVE were doing their work, producing academic success. You can see them in Chase and Liam's responses to Marley's poem. They threw out connections that merited a check in the participation box, but nothing more. These flows were certainly helped along by Mr. Richardson's surprise drop-in. Ms. Barrett knew that her professionalism was being evaluated. The quality of the POMO

discussion could be gauged on students' abilities to pick apart lines, drop buzzwords, and bring up facts about Dickinson, not on the lines of flight produced through their lived encounter with the poem.

Certain flows draw lines in an effort to keep reading territorialized to the realm of the text. Ms. Barrett's flow focused on reading the poem using a historical view of literary criticism. Rosenblatt argued that these kinds of details are "essential to [help readers] appreciate the literary merits of [a] work," but "incidental" for aesthetic readings (1995, p. 239). Avoiding binaries, I would not call this a bad way of reading, but I would call it less productive. It doesn't do much to help us wake up to the present darkness to which we have become accustomed. This requires reading with love allowing the book to be plugged in to our circuits so that we may ask, "How does it work for [me]?" (1995, p. 8).

This way of reading a book is there, too. It is present in Misty's comment bringing the poem into the present, in Marley's use of *East of Eden*, and in my "school shootings?" scribble in my field notes. Rosenblatt (1995) wrote, that the poem is "not simply a mirror of, or a report on, life, [but] ... a mode of living" and that "The reader's primary purpose is to add this kind of experience to the other kinds of desirable experience that life may offer" (p. 264). Plugging it in, as Deleuze would say, seeing how it works.

For those momentarily constituted in the assemblage who might be approaching this second kind of reading—reading with love—circuits were moving intensities that clashed hard with those trying to maintain the "ready-made, sharply-crystallized ideas and habits of response" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 92). We brought conversations about modern-day gun violence into the discussion of a poem that was over a century and half old. Real events weren't part of the DRIVE's agenda. I knew that much. Ms. Barrett knew that, too, and I cannot help but see her

attempts to keep the discussion focused on testable topics as being a flow redirected because of Mr. Richardson's presence. While she stayed in character talking about her love for great authors, she didn't mind students bringing literature into the present. She had done that herself earlier in the classroom with the Taylor Swift activity. But with Mr. Richardson's presence she was (like me) more uncertain—leaning in to discussion of em dashes and Dickinson's life.

These are the flows making and being made in the assemblage—non-DRIVE ideas of reading meeting up with the DRIVE's ideas of reading. There were standards-based flows meeting up with flows of critical reading pedagogy and flows of Ms. Barrett being fun meeting up with flows of Ms. Barrett being surveilled. Some of these flows deepened the dark that settled around us. Other flows worked to “alter” the darkness or adjusted our eyes to see through it. These are the flows produced in reading with love, the flows that helped us think. These flows made it possible for darkness from the days of the Civil War to reach into the present and touch darkness surrounding school shootings.

Ms. Barrett's addition of the open-ended POMO made it possible for these connections to be drawn and disruptions to happen, and when they were juxtaposed with the monotony of the DRIVE, differences were drawn in sharp relief. Of course, not all POMOs went well and even in ones that were captivating, the territorializing desire to earn participation points would sometimes move a great discussion off course. Greene saw these competing flows of learning in the ELA as typical with regard to arts in schools,

Explorations in the domains of the arts are seldom allowed to disrupt or defamiliarize what is taken for granted as natural” and “normal.” Instead, the arts are either linked entirely to the life of the sense or the emotions, or they are subsumed under rubrics like “literacy.” (1988, p. 13)

We see this here—art being reduced to a daily grade. However, the exploration of the poem coupled with my question made it possible for a few students to disrupt the all too familiar backdrop of gun violence.

This poetry moment went so different from others where topics pushed into the room only to be stepped around or pushed out. It was a heart-breaking conversation, and it began and ended in the span of just a few minutes. This POMO produced more discussion than the school forum had. Literature was capable of helping them diagnose what was wrong with their society in ways that other powerful flows hadn't (Deleuze, 1997). Recognizing the potential of encounters like these, Deleuze and Guattari asked,

And how can we unhook ourselves from the points of subjectification that secure us, nail us down to a dominant reality? Tearing the conscious away from the subject in order to make it a means of exploration, tearing the unconscious away from signification and interpretation in order to make it a veritable production. (1987, p. 160)

The shootings themselves were not enough to awaken the students from the dark, rather they were shields and shadows contributing to the darkness. It didn't surprise me that the metal detectors in the front of the school appeared and were accepted. It made sense that they would be. What surprised me was the lack of discussion. What surprised me was their growing accustomed to the dark of their new environment.

To do that “unhook[ing],” Deleuze and Guattari suggested use of a “fine file” rather than a “sledgehammer” (1987, p. 160). I see now, that Marley's poem served as the file that day. Simple, short, carefully selected, showing the students that they might have grown accustomed to the dark, but it didn't have to be so. The darkness could be changed, or their vision could adjust allowing them to point out the sources of the growing shadows. Other students around the country were demanding this, and now Marley had taken the first steps to awaken that realization at Southfield. A deterritorialization was produced with a five-minute poem discussion even

though a half-hour safety forum had been unsuccessful. Poetry moment was especially well-suited for this kind of movement because it provided Marley and the other students with an opportunity to propose the otherwise. As Greene described, it gave them authorship.

To be aware of authorship [expressing what is lived] is to be aware of situationality of and of the relation between the ways in which one interprets one's situation and the possibilities of action and choice. This means that one's "reality," rather than being fixed and predefined, is a perpetual emergent, becoming increasingly multiple, as more perspectives are taken, more texts are opened. (1988, p. 23)

The territory of school shootings was the norm, but here with Dickinson, there were "possibilities of action and choice" that opened lines to a new territory where forums and metal detectors would not be seen as "same old" markers of routine.

I am not trying to argue that schools should not take steps to safeguard their students, but it strikes me that in this particular assemblage the metal detectors and the DRIVE acted in comparable ways. The metal detectors acted as literal gates working to ward off chaos, mayhem, and violence. In a similar manner, the DRIVE acted as a symbolic gatekeeper working to keep particular groups of students and particular knowledge bases in their places. Writing about the state of literature education in 2017, Felman explained, "The academy throughout the world materializes nowadays at once a ferocious battlefield—and an unbreachable abyss—between two competing yet incompatible and contradictory visions of academic education" (p. viii). The first vision is one in which educational successes are linked to profits and the other in which "World citizens encounter, and address, the big questions of humanity" (p. viii). These "competing visions" are visible in the planes of immanence in the data above.

Eyes Opening to Darkness

This particular encounter more than others has my mind walking the halls of the school. I enter the building through metal detector, check in at the office, step through the vestibule into

the hall where the DRIVE flows around me carried by the students in a hurry to get to their next classes. I switch over to the poem, and I am walking again, only this time I creep one toe-length at a time, wary of the limb that threatens a knock on the head. I know the paths of the school and the ways of the DRIVE by heart. I can walk them blindfolded. The students knew them, too, and the arrival of the forum and the metal detectors was nothing more than a routine speedbump. The path of the poem, though, was unfamiliar. I know not what lies ahead, but as I leave the “safety” of the porch, of the DRIVE, of the routine, I know that this is the way of potential. Eyes open to the dark, I follow Marley as she makes her way onto the growing map of change.

Unnoticed Deterritorialization

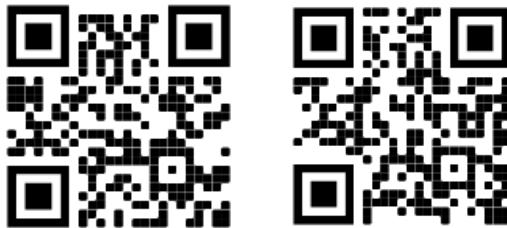


Figure 4.13. Lines left.

Noticed Deterritorialization

Every day is different than the one before, but some days this difference can be felt more acutely. Upheaval was in the air and was making its mark on the encounters that unfolded during school time on this Friday afternoon in late spring. State testing was in full swing. The bells weren't ringing, so the lack of resonance and periodicity produced a disturbing stillness that haunted the sonorous atmosphere. Classes were shorter than usual to accommodate testing, which was being sandwiched in between other state requirements, such as our English class. Parts of the Southfield main building were cordoned off as "silent," and many teachers and classes were relocated to louder wings of the building. Ms. Barrett now occupied a small, second floor classroom built entirely of whiteboard walls. The room typically housed a business elective, but today it would be home base for our English class.

Students began trickling in. They were taking full advantage of a day without bells and could be found lollygagging in the hallways, joking around and laughing with their friends, lazily finishing their lunches, and sweettalking their sweethearts. If they were late to class, then the ready excuse was that they couldn't find the new room, or they were waiting for a warning bell. Soon enough teachers emerged into the hallways to shoo students along, and eventually it

seemed that everyone was accounted for. Ms. Barrett closed the door, sealing off her share of the chaos and attempted to call roll.

The room was buzzing with excitement, and the students made no effort to quiet down. There weren't enough regular seats in this temporary room, so we scrambled to locate folding chairs from the closet concealed behind a whiteboard door. Ms. Barrett was having a hard time getting the roll-call program to pull up on the unfamiliar computer. The projector was too small and too blurry to be useful for magnification. Students seemed to be in a strange mixture of exhaustion from testing and restlessness from long hours of stillness, which produced a serious case of the sillies. Classrooms are always in perpetual flux, but on this day, all the little changes produced an unsettled atmosphere that made it feel like anything or nothing could happen.

Serious Silliness

My camera was rolling by the door where I stood because of the seat shortage. Still working on the roll-call, Ms. Barrett asked for my help getting the class settled and started. After the POMO, we would pick back up with a textual evidence activity that directed our energies toward the central ideas in *Lord of the Flies (LOTF)*. Ms. Barrett flipped on the blurry projector and pulled up Eleanor's chosen poem for her POMO. Things seemed poised on the edge, of what I didn't yet know. Eleanor walked to the front of the classroom, and amid all of this flux, began to talk.

"I'm going to read from *Where the Sidewalk Ends* by Shel Silverstein. And it's got a lot of really funny and hilarious parts, but one of my favorite parts was how he writes to a younger audience than umm" she began to say something else but neglected the thought and continued. "It's filled with crazy stuff like you pull off the top of your head. One of my favorites since I was

really little is called “Ickle Me Pickle Me Tickle Me Too” and um...” She stopped talking and glared at her audience.

The class was all talk and no listen. Eventually, with gentle prodding from Ms. Barrett, the class settled a little and quieted down while still not giving Eleanor their full attention. Eleanor began to read,

Ickle Me, Pickle Me, Tickle Me too
Went for a ride in a flying shoe.
“Hooray!”
“What fun!”
“It’s time we flew!”
Said Ickle Me, Pickle Me, Tickle Me too.

...

(Silverstein, 2004, p. 16)

Eleanor continued reading the poem which told the story of the trio of shoe sailors who flew “higher and higher” until they eventually went “over the sun and beyond the blue” never to be seen or heard from again (Silverstein, 2004, pp. 16–17). It was clear that Eleanor had read the poem countless times before and she managed the tongue-twister silliness of the wording with both speed and agility.

Eleanor was known by all as an incredibly bright student, and it was just like her to surprise the class with a treasured poem as opposed to something that might appear on the AP test. The students who had not been paying attention at first were listening by the end, and the sillies erupted again around the room as people took turns saying “Ickle Me, Pickle Me, Tickle Me too,” trying out the funny phrasing for themselves.

Cutting through this new bout of deterritorialization, Ms. Barrett tried to get students to behave, “Okay. Let’s hear from Eleanor, what she remembers about the poem, what she thinks

about the poem. I know it's small up here [referencing the projection], but you can try to engage and stop embarrassing me because you won't listen to me."

"I think it's just really funny" Eleanor began "and I've always been reading these poems since I was really little. So, I guess I kind of enter the poem at the title. I don't know."

There didn't seem to be a lot to work with here, but in the midst of all the distractions, Ms. Barrett tried to manage the activity, even though it was clear that she was taken aback by Eleanor's decision to share this particular, silly poem.

"So is that depicted then, in a flying shoe?" Ms. Barrett asked pointing at the drawing below the poem which showed a few little figures in a winged shoe.

"Yeah" Eleanor answered.

"They're like little fingers" Stephen added.

"Not exactly the most amazing art in this book, but it's kind of funny. And it doesn't show, but there's like numbers. Any thoughts?" Eleanor replied sounding a little defeated.

This POMO felt like a death spiral compared to Ms. Barrett's mountaintop experience in Colorado. I stood at my tripod with a sinking sensation that felt like disappointment, embarrassment, and failure all wrapped up into one.

In a pitying voice, Stella said, "I enjoyed it, uh, "Ickle Me Pickle Me Tickle Me Too."

"Okay, why?" Eleanor answered in a tone suggesting that she wasn't going to let Stella's response pass as a valid comment.

Timidly, Stella replied, "It just caught my eye, it's like a kid's thing, you know?"

"Oka:::y" Eleanor said, annoyed.

Misty, Eleanor's best friend laughed as she blurted out, "She can do it really fast!"

"I'm not going to" Eleanor quipped staring Misty down.

Wanting to keep things moving, Ms. Barrett called on another student.

"I think that Ickle Me Pickle Me Tickle Me Too, that the "too" in there is including you too. Saying like, tickle *me*, too" Hayes said trying to take the conversation somewhere.

"Yeah, like *also*," Windsor added in agreement.

The other students were still talking and laughing, and Ms. Barrett tried to quiet things down by threatening new seating arrangements. Hearing this, Marley jumped in with an attempt to salvage the discussion.

"I think the last line was kind of," Marley began, "like it gets—it talks about someone who kind of got lost in their dreams, and then never really came back from them. Or maybe it's someone that got lost on the way to their dreams and never made it there." She continued, "I think the poem is someone working up to something they've wanted their whole life and never tried getting it before."

This was promising. Marley was engaging with the poem and making metaphorical sense of shoe flight; yet too much distraction was in the air, and most people, adults included, were having a hard time focusing.

Grabbing onto Marley's comment, Ms. Barrett added, "I think there's always more to poetry than we think. And Eleanor's is right. It's children's poetry. But interestingly enough, some of his poetry has been banned. Did you know that?"

Annie picked up this thread saying, "And the first poem I ever memorized was a Shel Silverstein poem." This comment seemed to set things back to the starting place. This discussion just wasn't getting off the ground. Eleanor seemed to be a little self-conscious about her choice of poems. In her preface to the poem she mentioned a younger audience but did not elaborate about the appropriateness of this particular poem. Three people just flew off in a shoe never to be

seen again. It's funny to read, and it's funny to say, and it is obviously fantasy. But it's not funny to think about. That's some scary Grimm brothers horror.

Eleanor was nerdy and quirky and proud of it, or least fine with it. She wore cat-eye glasses and Joan Jett and the Blackhearts t-shirts. She scored a 30 on the ACT by the time she was in ninth grade and was definitely prepared for academic greatness. She was properly credentialed. The silly attitude of the class seemed to catch her off guard. There was a serious note in her voice, signaling that she wanted more from her POMO than empty comments and funny rhymes. Accepting failure on this poem, she decided to try a second poem, one that she said connected to *Lord of the Flies*, which the class had been reading.

"And there's another one in this book called "The Generals," and I think it's a lot like what we're reading now" she said.

Ms. Barrett asked, "Do you want to share that one?"

"Sure" Eleanor said a little indifferently and began to read the second poem,

Said General Clay to General Gore,
"Oh must we fight this silly war?
To kill and die is such a bore."
"I quite agree," said General Gore.

Said General Gore to General Clay,
"We could go to the beach today
And have some ice cream on the way."
"A grand idea," said General Clay.

... (Silverstein, 2004, pp. 150–151)

The poem depicts a discussion between two generals who have grown tired and "bore[d]" of fighting but who cannot come up with a better way to spend their time. General Gore suggests a trip to the beach with ice cream, but General Clay talks him out of it by posing the thought of the sea being closed and the sand blown away. Back and forth, the conversation continues with

one fear sparking another—the closed beach, the blown away sand, the sea spray, drowning.

Eventually General Clay provides the excuse of having a “slightly” torn bathing suit which serves as reason enough to skip the holiday at the shore and continue fighting their war instead.

The last stanza reads,

Then General Clay charged General Gore
As bullets flew and cannons roared.
And now, alas! There is no more
Of General Clay or General Gore. (Silverstein, 2004, p. 151)

After she finished reading, Eleanor looked up at the class and said,

I think a lot of it is kind of like this perspective of littluns [referencing the collective name for youngest boys in *Lord of the Flies*], and um they’re kind of carefree, and they want to just go play by the beach and build sandcastles. But then at the end, they just got mixed up in a really bad fight, and they both end up dead [referencing Simon and Piggy, two older boys who died].

“Good, that’s good stuff” Ms. Barrett said before calling on Stephen.

“Does Ickle have a meaning or is he just trying to rhyme with the other words?” Stephen asked referring to the first poem.

Gillian answered, “I thought Ickle was the Captain.”

“Oh, okay” Stephen said.

In a defeated tone Eleanor then said, “I mean take what you want from it, it’s a—it’s really just out of the blue random stuff.

Picking up on Eleanor’s tone, Ms. Barrett brought things to a close saying, “Good job, alright let’s go on to the next thing” as Eleanor walked back to her seat.

With “Good job,” and no more discussion about the connections between “The Generals” and *LOTF*, the POMO was pronounced dead on arrival. The next activity began as abruptly as the first one ended.

Interlude

For Deleuze, difference *in-itself* is what is repeated, not difference *from* some prior identity or sameness (1994a). At its heart, this is a critique of representational logic that has fueled much of Western thought. In days of upheaval like the one I just described, daily routines were disrupted by the testing, room changes, and shortened periods, and it is hard to resist the pull to see this day as different *from* ordinary rather than through Deleuze's philosophical concept of positive difference, difference *in-itself*.

I saw this day as different, but I did not see it as *difference*. I was conditioned to see difference as exceptional rather than ordinary, but as Deleuze explained, we must press this by asking,

On what condition is difference traced or projected on to a flat space? Precisely when it has been forced into a previously established identity, when it has been placed on the slope of the identical which makes it reflect or desire identity, and necessarily takes it where identity wants it to go—namely, into the negative. (p. 51)

There were structures in the rhizomatic assemblage that worked hard to keep the “slope of the identical” operating and ever re-stratifying the assemblage in the plane of organization. Bells, units, standards, grades, credits, degrees. These structures also contributed to the visibility of difference on that day as opposed to the difference that was in actuality, every day for as Deleuze explained, “the depth of difference is primary” (p. 51).

Perhaps this is easier to see when focusing on one of these entities—bells. Bells were a relatively consistent part of the rhizomatic assemblage of Southfield. They rang daily and usually at the same time. These similarly ringing bells created a standard by which negative difference could be noticed. However, thinking with difference in itself shows that each ringing of the bell was unique. The position of students when the bells rang never repeated. Students slowed down to say hello to a friend, dashed off to the bathroom between classes, and ran back for a forgotten

homework assignment. It is different every time, we simply fail to see this behind the facade of repetition. It is only when difference is viewed as negative—when it is held up to a long-set standard that it is perceived, and in this perception, it always comes as negative. Colebrook (2002) explained,

Life itself is difference and synthesis. We cannot even say that each ‘point’ of life differentiates itself in its own way, because life is not a collection of different or distinct points. It is continuous difference, and between any two points that we might locate on this continuum of difference there is an infinity of further difference, each different in ‘its’ own way. (p. 29)

Sameness, which is impossible, should be what catches our attention. Difference is ordinary. But we are so deeply stuck in the image of thought that difference appears as other than. It is not until we are able to see differences *for itself* instead of difference *from* that we begin to see the vast potential in all experience.

Different bell schedules increased the Southfield students’ capacity to act. Some bells repressed while others released. With one bell students were released to follow their desires for food, romance, a mental break, and a good joke. With the next bell those desires were followed or deserted but at different speeds. When I was teaching at Cedar Knoll, my fellow teachers swore that the students acted “wilder” with full moons. Back then I dismissed these notions as hooey superstition, but now I ask, “Why not?” If the moon is capable of changing ocean patterns, couldn’t it also impact people? Bells were part of the assemblage, and as they shifted, the rest of the assemblage shifted, too. Repetition doesn’t increase our capacity to act, difference does.

Thinking now of difference in itself, it becomes easier to see the other ways difference and repetition clashed in the classroom. Most other days, Eleanor’s first POMO, “Ickle Me, Pickle Me, Tickle Me Too,” would have stood out dramatically. On this day, however, silliness was already in full bloom and her funny poem simply added to the swift moving current of

giggles. “Ickle Me” simply added gas to the fire. Though Eleanor may have had different intentions for how she entered the poem, when prompted she shared that it was “just really funny,” a statement that did nothing but reproduce what had already been established. Eleanor had a hard time drawing the rest of the class into a different reading of the poem.

As an activity, poetry moment was incredibly well-suited for illustrating the ways that difference and repetition work. Students were asked to draw connections to the poems, asked to describe where and how they “entered” each one. Thinking back on Deleuze’s two ways of reading a book, these tasks summon the idea of book as machine. Students were welcomed to have totally different ways of reading the poems, and all were awarded participation points. No one reading was promoted as right. The repetition of difference. With Ms. Barrett’s full permission, students were encouraged to plug the poems into their assemblages and share what was produced. For Eleanor, “Ickle Me” produced humor that was more of the same. For Marley, “Ickle Me” became a metaphor for getting lost in our dreams. Stuck in the image of thought, Stephen and Stella made comments that were typical “participation point” answers, those habitual ways of responding that didn’t seem to require thinking.

Eleanor’s second poem, “The Generals” again illustrated the planes of immanence and organization at play. Reading *Lord of the Flies* caused Eleanor to think anew about an old favorite poem. She had read the *Where the Sidewalk Ends* countless times in her youth, but as she read the familiar poems through *LOTF*, newness was produced. The silly poems took on fresh meanings and connected to different ideas. In childhood, “The Generals” had made her laugh, but now she questioned its humor, the silliness of the class adding to the contrast between the poem’s absurdity and the sadness it now compelled from Eleanor. She plugged an old poem into a new assemblage and created a new way of reading the book, the poem, and the world.

“The Generals” wasn’t just a silly poem anymore. In the assemblage with *LOTF*, it became a text commenting on the innocence of children and the travesty of war.

While the poem seemed to be working to produce newness for Eleanor, the “slope” of sameness kept others from making new literary or life connections. It was furiously circling the routine but couldn’t break through. Deleuze and Guattari explained that forces like this poem “steer the flows down lines of positive deterritorialization or creative flight” (1987, p. 190). For Eleanor, the poem offered a line of flight, a chance to deterritorialize, but for others, POMO was just about getting points and moving on. The whole class was literally deterritorialized to the new classroom with the whiteboard walls. Adding the poem to the assemblage, Eleanor found a line of flight that deterritorialized former readings of the poem as well as her perspective on *LOTF*. But the flow carrying her off was subsumed by the ever-centering pull of doing school, of the DRIVE, of grades and worksheets. Writing about moments like these in relation to neoliberalism in their own work, Strom and Martin (2013) advised,

Both of us came to the realization that to truly be change agents in our classrooms, we have to continue seeking lines of flight that interrupt neoliberal thought and practice, but also recognize these lines of flight will have to be repeatedly constructed in our daily practice. (p. 11)

POMO had been a major deterritorializing force, but that day it was reterritorialized into the routine. It wasn’t being used as a way of seeking lines of flight, rather it was being reduced to a check in the box—comment and get credit. All of the differences that day that in their own ways created deterritorialization, here came together to strengthen the pull back towards a normalizing center. It isn’t enough for something like poetry moment to create opportunity for deterritorialization once or even a dozen times. In order for this force to work, it must be recognized and “repeatedly constructed” each day (Strom & Martin, p. 11). Otherwise, sameness

wins out. The sharp newness of POMO was worn flat like a tire tread, and flat tires get us nowhere.

What grips me most about this particular encounter is how unnoticed it went. I was purposely on the lookout for opportunities like this and I *still* missed it. In fact, I missed it several times. It wasn't until I changed my way of looking at the data that I saw Eleanor solitary deterritorialization. In an effort to unclutter my data binder, I decided to create a section with all of the POMOs in chronological order. When I came to the Silverstein poems, I was dumbstruck. I remembered the "Ickle Me," but I had no recollection of "The Generals." I saw for the first time the powerful connection we missed when we failed to plug into the poems.

Reflecting on the idea of deterritorialization, Colebrook (2002) wrote, "Life creates and furthers itself by forming connections or territories" (p. xxii). Eleanor had done that—formed a connection and entered a new territory. But the rest of us were so pulled by other desires—for points, for a laugh, for good data—that we neglected to connect. Re-watching the video of that day, I wanted so badly to reverse the clock and give Eleanor something affirming. Her assemblage that day was buzzing with new connections emboldening her to voice a concern for a better future. Difference in itself makes life-furthering creativity possible, and we had missed the opportunity to grab hold.

CHAPTER FIVE: WAYS OF DEPARTURE



Figure 5.1. Humming a break-up song.

Prelude

When I think back on my experience at Cedar Knoll, I have to wonder how many de/territorializing literary encounters I missed (or thwarted) before the one that started me on this journey. It is helpful to think of the tension I felt in that encounter as the plane of organization and the plane of immanence (also referred to as the plane of consistency) working to undo each other (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). As Deleuze and Guattari explained:

The plane of organization is constantly working away at the plane of consistency, always trying to plug the lines of flight, stop or interrupt the movements of deterritorialization, weigh them down, restratify them, reconstitute forms and subjects in a dimension of depth. Conversely, the plane of consistency is constantly extricating itself from the plane of organization, causing particles to spin off the strata, scrambling forms by dint of speed or slowness, breaking down functions by means of assemblages or microassemblages. (p. 270)

I knew nothing of these ideas at the time, but I knew that something was afoot or adrift. Now, with help from Deleuze and Guattari, I can see how encounters like this come to be in moments when the tension between the planes stirs up rocky seas.

Reading Deleuze and Guattari has productively forced me to think about de/territorializing literary encounters and how we learn in them and from them. The data narratives and interludes shared in the last chapter are tellings of those encounters. In a more traditional fourth chapter I would have offered a succinct list of data organized into identifiable findings. However, I chose to weave data narratives with interludes of emerging and ongoing analysis. The data were never there to be found but to be produced via continuous agitation of thought (Springgay & Truman, 2018). These narratives do not recount the data, they produce them.

Barad's description of earthworm at work is a better analogy for this inquiry than seemingly separate practices of collecting, analyzing, and reporting findings. Like Barad, I have been trying to "work the soil over and over—ingesting and excreting it, tunneling through it, burrowing, all means of aerating the soil, allowing oxygen in, opening it up and breathing new life into it" (2014, p. 168). Writing has been my means of toiling in the soil, and it is difficult work. As Deleuze and Guattari explained, "It's not easy to see things in the middle, rather than looking down on them from above or up at them from below" (1987, p. 23). But working from the middle makes it possible to draw entryways and ways of departure allowing this inquiry to stay open to "coming and going rather than starting and finishing" (1987, p. 25). Knowing this, my task here is not to provide a conclusion but to run lines and draw circles of convergence. Doing so, I offer provisional responses to the questions I posed in chapter three before considering implications for continuing theoretical and pedagogical practice.

1. What relations contribute to the unfolding of de-and re-territorializing literary encounters in secondary English classrooms?
2. How are knowing subjects produced through de- and re-territorializing literary encounters in secondary English classrooms?

What I discuss here is not the whole story, as I have said before, because this work is partial and always becoming. These lines of departure, however, shine light on some of the things teachers and students and books (...and...) are doing (and not doing) amidst literary encounters that open us up to surprise and conflict (Ahmed, 2000).

Lines as Multiplicities

Initially, I thought it would be productive to explore the different ways assemblages worked to de/territorialize by presenting separately drawn lines showing how deterritorialization was kept at bay, resisted, and welcomed in. This proved challenging because as multiplicities lines are constantly merging and breaking apart—they resist categorization. Forgetting this, I fell again into the bad marriage of Cartesian binaries—open/closed, welcomed/resisted, order/play. Deleuze and Guattari foretold this trouble, contending, “mental correctives are necessary to undo the dualisms we had no wish to construct but through which we pass” (1987, p. 20). They make it sound as though my mistake was a necessary rite of passage. Their answer to this of course is “Don’t be one or multiple, be multiplicities!” (1987, p. 24). Doing so, I repel the categorization that originally attracted my focus and instead attempt to show the constant push and the pull of assemblages in the flux of merging and diverging molar, molecular, and lines of flight.

Molar Lines

Molar lines are to be expected. They are always there with molecular and flight lines, too. But the dominance of molar lines extending from the plane of organization can tip the assemblage toward arborescence. In the midst of ongoing flux, territorial assemblages reach a point where they coalesce and momentarily congeal, and we need to ask, “What holds things together?” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 327). Deleuze and Guattari’s answer to this is the “formalizing, linear, hierarchized, centralized *arborescent* model” (1987, p. 327). This does not

suggest that absent of these, rhizomes would fall apart, but that congealing makes it difficult for movement to occur—like walking in knee-deep mud. These relations that contribute to the lack of deterritorializing literary encounters are clung to because they offer comfort. Deleuze and Guattari identified “the great molar organization” as “our security” which “gives us a well-defined status” (1987, p. 227). Once aggregated, arborescence tends to maintain its power within the territory, and though elements may be added that are fun or creative, they do not pose much risk in upsetting the comfortable consolidation of the territory. This is how harmful sets of relations keep reconstituting themselves with small differences—how pernicious relations that produce racism also lead to stale, efferently focused study guides in ELA classrooms.

Maybe it should have always been obvious, but the most glaring take-away from my time in the field is just how frequently schooling got in the way of learning (Patel, 2016b). The kind of thinking that requires “wide-awareness” (Greene, 1978, p. 42) and departs from “known automatic practices” (Patel, 2016b, p. 397) was hard to find. Whenever the potential for fugitivity tried to make a run, it was quickly caught back up in the usual doing of school. Molar lines worked hard to keep the conveyor belt of school moving from August to May. But it genuinely surprised me how much efferently-focused readings dominated the ELA classrooms (Rosenblatt, 1938, 1986, 1995). Even though I had done the same thing myself!

English language arts was continually reduced to a relentless search for right answers as engagement with the texts kept students reading literature like subway schedules. The texts themselves were full of potential for deterritorializing encounters, but where engagement was concerned, the right direction often led us through question packets that reduced literary encounters down to representational logic, to nuts and bolts, to efferently read plot points which could be stored for later use on quizzes and essays and almost exclusively positioned readers as

miners whose job it was to extract efferent gems (Rosenblatt, 1938, 1986, 1995). While their styles resulted in molar lines with different tones, every teacher had some version of a study guide that was always the same basic producer of order. These guides kept literature on the “four-lane government-sanctioned highways” making sure students were on task (Patel, 2016b, p. 400). Instead of drawing connections to the ongoingness of the world or engaging “the intensities and possibilities of a present moment” these collections of questions and scripted answers kept literature sealed off as a work of the past providing content for quizzes or fuel for jokes, but usually in the same way (Albrecht-Crane & Slack, 2007, p. 105). These rigid lines made it more difficult for thinking occur and they worked hard to reconstitute students as those who could/couldn’t find preordained answers.

Seeing these molar lines, it is not surprising that in the first three data production sites, I only experienced one instance of deterritorialization in relation to the literature being studied. There were non-literary deterritorializations, of course, such as pep rallies, fire drills, and standardized testing that siphoned the tanks of learning to fuel other pursuits. But as for the literary kind—the fugitive kind—only Ms. Bowling’s imaginary plant acted as a cutting edge of deterritorialization, offering potential to alter who students were and how they engaged with the world. I hope this kind of literary learning did occur more frequently, but if that happened, it did so below the level of classroom expression. I can’t report about those times, obviously.

What I witnessed with the regularity of a train schedule (or school bell schedule), were these rigid lines herding teachers and students continually back into more officially sanctioned spaces, corralling rogue forces, and containing thinking. Set priorities snapped everyone into straight lines for a while, often until a new priority arrived or the former abandoned a different official reason. Perhaps that’s how many parents and administrators wanted it. Fugitive learning

wasn't as valuable as a well-taken PSAT test (Patel 2016b), the well-followed Southfield DRIVE, or the ubiquitous study-guides at all four sites. Furthermore, disrupting entrenched inequalities such as racism or discussing when life begins always produced unwelcomed molecularization that felt like discomfort, risk, and the fear of losing cherished beliefs, respect, and jobs (Boler, 1999; Britzman, 1998).

Once I knew to look for them, molar lines were everywhere—in obvious places as described above but in inconspicuous ones as well, even in pretend play, sorting hats, and POMOs. Although students enjoyed the engaging activities, the work they did led to no apparent epiphanies or cutting questions erupting into the general classroom atmosphere. There was no pursuit of “How does it work?” Everything was already “named” for them, as Dewey would say (with Bentley, 1949, p. 98). The engagement kept student interesting in doing their work. In this way, following molar lines still felt like movement, but as Deleuze and Guattari wrote, “They have a future but no becoming” (1987, p. 195). While none of these molar lines could outright prevent perilous thinking or literary deterritorializations from happening (nothing could do that!), they certainly kept everyone moving in the “right” direction.

Stultifying structures, routines, and parameters are useful for keeping order by thwarting “outbursts and crackings” from coming into the open (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 199). Desire dies in such circumstances. Closed off from flows, order kills it. “Once a rhizome has been obstructed, arborified, it's all over, no desire stirs; for it is always by rhizome that desire moves and produces” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 14). Molar lines extend from arborescence, and the curriculum set up this way often acted like a death-sentence for desire. Deleuze and Guattari explained, “Whenever desire climbs a tree, internal repercussions trip it up and it falls to its death” (1987, p. 14). The “internal repercussions” arise by boxing desire into individual

psychological states that can only express lack, such as in psychoanalysis, instead of understanding desire as the production of positive difference (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983). This was obvious when Ms. Bowling shut down the plant discussion until “another day” and the way we tiptoed toward Emmett Till’s photograph. We were tripped up by repercussions related to job performance, classroom censorship, and the need to cover standards. The molar lines holding court in these ELA classroom assemblages largely worked to produce students as knowing subjects who should be compliant and content to copy verbatim the “correct” answers from the study guide or DRIVE. To ensure their continuing compliance, there would be some creativity, fun, or jokes thrown in, but not the kind designed to invite in difference in itself. These activities did little to produce knowing subjects as multiplicities, people who can become different than they already are, people who can “lose faith in our present moment in order to maintain the hope of a different future” (Kuntz, 2019, 1–2).

Molecular Lines

Molar lines, though perhaps easiest to see, were *sometimes* broken up by or joined with molecular lines. Molecular lines vibrated with a different tone, they picked up speed and rode in with more affective intensities: shock, curiosity, humor, enthusiasm, and silliness. Sometimes the molecular lines were part of the planned curriculum as was with the case with the sorting hat in Mr. Fisher’s classroom, and the Taylor Swift activity in Ms. Barrett’s. In these instances, molar and molecular lines “cross[ed] over into one another” as happened with Ms. Bowling’s creative activities (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 203). Though more engaging activities felt more like reading with love than study guide activities, they still positioned students to open boxes and count packing peanuts even though they were encouraged to do their counting with magic

markers and poster paper. These activities punched holes in routine norms, but they still didn't do much toward producing deterritorializing literary encounters.

The running jokes arising from the readings in Mr. Grant's class were a good example of this. Though the content of these jokes depended upon the literature at hand, as a concept they still fit in as an extension of the class's usual antics. In making these jokes the students practiced literary allusion by interacting with literature and demonstrating their knowledge of it but in a playful way as opposed to the ways provided through the study guide questions. All semester I heard Mr. Grant and his students make the jokes about "eating babies." In *The Road*, *Dracula*, *A Modest Proposal* children found themselves in harm's way and with each encounter, fuel was added to this running joke. Each of these offered a molecularization in the discussions of literature, making a crack where something new could come through. But not once did the class take up this recurring motif to discuss why the separation of a child from his parents provided the authors the horror or absurdity they needed to make a point. There were no discussions of what it meant in the literature much less what it meant on the shores of Syria or the borders of the Rio Grande. Rather, the molecularizations led to brief brain breaks and a more relaxed classroom environment, all meaningful deterritorializations, but none openly fueling inquiries that might intervene in immigration practices that are a little less outrageous than eating babies.

Most of the time, molecular lines erupted spontaneously during encounters with literature, creating opportunities for molecular cracks to form in previously rigid places. This happened when the humdrum of the *TKAM* reading guide occasionally led to moments where students were positioned to ask questions like "What about the African Americans?" The study guide itself didn't have the answer because it knew nothing of this question, but in meeting up with other flows in the assemblage, the molar guide became molecularized. Rigid segmentarity

depends on binaries that make things seem right or wrong, but unplanned molecular lines offered supple cuts allowing for overlap, entanglement, potential complexity, and “fragments of lines of reasoning,” not unlike the overlapping schemas of Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau and Thoma (1999, p. 301). These molecularizations produced cracks, but they rarely widened into breakthroughs. Rather, they were co-opted by the pressures of the molar lines.

Ms. Bowling’s encounter with the seed showed this when wrong answers and pretend play helped literary study intervene to produce thinking. As soon as Ms. Bowling began to pat the plant’s head, students tuned in from across the room. Deleuze and Guattari wrote that lines “are constantly crossing, intersecting for a moment, following one another,” and that was happening in this encounter (1987, p. 203). The students threw out lines of curiosity in response to Ms. Bowling’s line of play creating molecularizations throughout the assemblage. She wanted to harness their attention for as long as possible, and since playing pretend had opened the flow, she continued, even past the point where the students came up with the “right” answer.

The “bundle of lines” making up the classroom assemblage in this encounter demonstrated practices where “A line of drift intersects a customary line,” working to produce a relative deterritorialization but eventually reterritorializing and returning to order (Deleuze & Guattari 1987, p. 203). Once students posed the question of how pre-life works, Ms. Bowling closed down the molecular line before it could take further flight, vaporizing the pretend plant in a snap and with it any potentially troubling and discomfort-producing questions of when human life begins. It was too much that day to invite in discomfort and unpredictability, too much “to engage in the messiness that is the human experience” (Jarvie & Burke, 2015, p. 80). Engaging play usually kept her students on task, but this day’s curious play threatened to carry them off completely.

While moments of molecularization often leaned into more aesthetic ways of being with literature in the assemblage, they weren't usually the kinds of aesthetic responses that would lead to more virtuous ways of being. Aligning virtue with the disruption of the status quo, Kuntz explained, "affirmative ethics generate through the extension of difference as creative, a coming-into-relation that results in more than was previously possible" (2019, p. 69). Each text as an operator in classroom assemblages potentially might engage students in inquiry, working "to confect the conditions for acts of refusal, challenges and interventions to the status quo that remain necessarily driven by a decidedly ethical claim that we must make a potential future" (Kuntz, 2019, p. 80). Each text can do this, but this wasn't usually the case.

Lines of Flight

At times the molecular line took flight, blasting into the molar lines and offering the assemblage glimpses of something different. Deleuze and Guattari described lines of flight as "causing runoffs, as when you drill a hole in a pipe" and in this way, there were some lines of flight drawn that diverted the flow away from the official curriculum, occasionally even deterritorializing along literary lines (1987, p. 204). Ms. Barrett's mountaintop experience did this for her, but students too would occasionally throw out lines of as they connected to the poetry. Though perhaps pushed along by me, this happened with Marley's discussion of the Emily Dickinson poem as literature moved out of the box of the 1800s and plugged into current discussions of gun violence. It happened too with Devon's "At least we ain't dead" comment—offered with a laugh and new understanding. His remark landed hard on me, producing a line of flight I am still on. Desire moves through these holes opening us up to newness. "Sprout[ing] up somewhat by chance, from a trifle" (1987, p. 202), the literature worked to get the line of play flowing, but once this line was drawn, the flow it produced often became less and less about the

literature. Discussions of seeing in the dark got tangled up in talk of streetlights and details about Emily Dickinson's life, Mr. Grant's jokes stopped at the punchline, and Devon's remark got pulled away by discussions of symbolism. Though they were few and far between and always got tangled in other flows, these lines of flight give me hope that unseen others were happening, too. The unanswered questions during the showing of Emmett Till's photograph make me think so.

Merging & Diverging Lines

When I began writing this chapter, I tried to focus on one kind of line at a time. As I explained above, this was the wrong move, but still a productive rite of passage. In trying to follow these lines, I did okay for a little while, but as soon as one line merged into another I got lost. As with the Northwest Ordinance that appropriated indigenous lands, it is possible that a line flowing in one direction produces something affirmative but in the other direction something harmful. One component of the assemblage attracts as another repels. As multiplicities they make it possible for de- and re-territorialization to "be relative, always connected, caught up in one another" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 11). Realizing this, the work became not about capturing or representing stable lines (image of thought) but giving in to the push and pull. This meant taking Deleuze and Guattari's advice to think about literary encounters as connections in the assemblage by asking "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" (1987, p. 4).

The encounter with the plant in Ms. Bowling's room showed a molar line flowing with fear and uncertainty as it connected to Ms. Bowling but a molecular line flowing with curiosity and intrigue as it connected with the students. When the plant beckoned for the students to

proceed to the territory where Bradbury's story offered exploration of pre-life, the molar line worked quickly to draw up a blockade which worked to divert the other flow away from the new territory. Resistance on Ms. Bowling's part was fueled by training to avoid trouble, stick to the objective, keep the peace, do the job, and continue the separation of church and state. This blockade shut down the flow that moments before had let the class make collective cuts in beliefs about life beginning at conception. All part of the same assemblage, a continuous flow of becoming channeled this way and that, becoming through its various connections.

Thinking in the sum of variables, a molar line pushed Ms. Bowling to stop the discussion even as the molecular line pulled the students toward deterritorialization. Like a dance, they stepped back and forth. They got close to a collective discussion, but it was saved for "another day" that never came. As Deleuze and Guattari described, "There is no question that the two lines are constantly interfering, reacting upon each other, introducing into each other either a current of suppleness or a point of rigidity" (1987, p. 196). Because of this, molar and molecular lines blurred but they became more visible in their tension.

All lines are multiplicities that can affect us; sometimes productive in creating opportunities for deterritorialization and sometimes counterproductive. This is how flows operate. Deleuze and Guattari explained that flows may be "created, exhausted, or transformed, added to one another, subtracted or combined" (1987, p. 219). Poetry Moment shows this well. At the beginning of the year POMO offered such a relief from the rigid monotony of the DRIVE. As an activity without right answers it invited student to plug in to poems instead of opening them like boxes. It worked as a molecular line that helped students think and wonder, providing opportunities for "emergent listening" (Davies 2014, 2016; Jones & Spector, 2017). But the daily pattern of it soon became molarized. Even though some students seemed content to make

superficial connections to get their participation points, questions could still drill holes into the encounters making it possible for thinking to leak through.

A good example of this was Eleanor's encounter with the Shel Silverstein poetry. Most days when students were lulled to complacent agreement to the desires of study guides and quizzes, a funny poem would have energized them, stirred them. But on this particular day, it blended in for everyone but Eleanor. Deterritorializing forces of the non-literary kind were so abundant. For Eleanor the playful poems offered a line of flight via the juxtaposition between humor and horror as it connected to her recent reading of *Lord of the Flies*. As Eleanor read, the poetry produced molar and molecular lines of play that bounced and struck with each verse channeling flows away from Eleanor's attempted deterritorialization.

In this encounter, Eleanor became a visible relay point or junction box for many intersecting lines flowing through the assemblage. The poem she chose was meaningful in her experience, but the nonsense words made it hard for her to cut into a molar order drawn in the assemblage of hours spent testing, the post-lunch sugar rush, and a new setting. The poem offered both familiar comfort and new difference. She was standing alone like a child lost in the woods, needing to find or build a new home. Encountering this intersection of new and old, Deleuze and Guattari explained, the child "finds something he or she lost" an action "not quite belonging" to any of the lines coursing through the assemblage (1987, p. 203). Flows were coming and going, merging and diverging, and Eleanor was caught in the rip tide.

She offered up "The Generals," perhaps thinking this would return some order to the classroom assemblage—diverting flows away from silliness that was becoming routine and toward flight taking seriousness. But the pull of silly play continued for all but Eleanor, as her new poem was never really attended to by others, including classmates, Ms. Barrett, and myself.

Deleuze and Guattari wrote that “it is quite possible that one group or individual's line of flight may not work to benefit that of another group or individual; it may on the contrary block it, plug it, throw it even deeper into rigid segmentarity (1987, p. 205). Reading with love produced a line of flight for Eleanor. It produced a knowing subject poised to ask: Why is it so easy to dismiss the dead boys in *Lord of the Flies*? Why is fighting easier than peace for the generals? Why do we allow children to be the casualties of politics? Perhaps Eleanor posed these questions silently to herself. I hope so. For the rest of us, the combination of lines offered deterritorialization but not of the literary kind, just of a general diversion-from-school-as usual-kind.

Perhaps the most vivid encounter with the push and pull entangling occurred on the day of the Emmett Till presentation. The build-up to the image brought in flows that both beckoned to the students while at the same time warned them to stay away. There was excitement, fear, courage, disgust, bravado, humor, anticipation—so many tones in the flux. Presentations were a familiar practice, but this particular one seemed to energize the assemblage more than others had. As the photo was shown, the assemblage cranked out different intensities that swirled through it. Superficial connections to *TKAM* were expected, but other connections were making themselves known: parents, administrators, Mamie Till, recent events of harm to young Black men. Multiplicities were working themselves into the presentations and channeling flows. Deleuze and Guattari explained,

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. (1987, p. 100)

The presentations could have freed us from the order of the DRIVE. But how did they work? What did they produce? With Emmett Till’s lynching as our example, we saw something disgusting play out in our own classroom. Just as the murderers made Emmett Till pay for

overstepping his bounds, forces of authority were imagined as ready to make Ms. Barrett pay if she overstepped hers. “If you don’t want to look at it, you probably should not.” Ms. Barrett made sure that reprimands weren’t going to happen, and I assured her Mamie Till approved our efforts. In this encounter, Emmett Till was revictimized because his image was shown, but no one seemed to learned how to think differently about the relations that made it possible in the first place. The push and pull showed these negotiations as we approached the slide. The image pulled them in even further, and then the business of school pushed them back to a place where a lynching somehow formed connections with daily grades and essay prompts. These things made it difficult for the photo to transmit its intensities, made it difficult for the image to converge with the other slain Black youths in the students’ own era. This literary encounter seemed to produce knowing subjects who might be disgusted or outraged, but who were not thereby better equipped to materialize different, more life-affirming and equitable relations in the future.

This was an attempt toward reading with love. Ms. Barrett tried plug *TKAM* into the outside world, but limited connections to the past, not the ongoing present. Approaching the forces warring at the tree, we pre-ordained what kind of response the students could have. Some shock was appropriate, but nothing that would amount to a phone call or a delay in the day’s other presentations. In terms of difficult knowledge (Pitt & Britzman, 2003), the topic was sad but the engagement with it didn’t need to be unnecessarily difficult. Outlining the conditions for aesthetic readings, Rosenblatt said, “In actual life constructive thinking usually starts when there is some conflict or discomfort or when habitual behavior is impeded and choice of new paths of behavior must be made” (1995, p. 216). Reading with love requires new paths and new people. As Boler explained, “Our responsibility in testimonial reading lies in our response to the crises of truth: How to recognize and put to use the information offered by the text” (1999, p. 168).

“The assemblage negotiates ...” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 100). I am struck again by this choice of words. The negotiation here meant coming to an agreement regarding what is exchanged in the production of the encounter. Emmett’s photograph to enter in under the terms that it would comply with the order, so to speak. Nobody was forced to look. There would be no “parent phone calls.” Testimonial reading was clipped in the negotiation. Now, I cannot help but see how Emmett’s story could work in other ways—reading in connection with Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, and Laquan McDonald. Emmett’s picture threatened to bring in more than efferent information, it held the potential for collective absolute deterritorialization, especially if we could have discussed the tree of racism at the center of the field where all the warring forces converge. We did not do that day.

Rigidly segmented flows in assemblages worked hard to keep lines of flight at bay—either “blocking” or “diverting” them (1987, p. 134). Looking into our words and actions from that class demonstrates how much blocking and diverting was taking place. Boler called the pedagogy of discomfort a “call to action” and the presence of Emmett Till’s photograph in the classroom certainly began that call (Boler, 1999, p. 176). You can see it in the students’ initial responses and the few questions they asked. Once the flight lines began to appear, the potential they carried for surprise, disruption, and new ways of being made it difficult to predict what would happen. Rather than welcoming that potential in, we sent it away—changing the subject like the teachers in Garrett’s study (2011) or avoiding it altogether like in Jarvie and Burke (2015). We blocked and diverted the flows trying to make this happen by not picking up questions, by making jokes, and by making superficial connections between Till’s story and the plot of *TKAM*. We kept chaos at bay. We kept positive difference at bay.

Thinking through this encounter, I can still feel the battle playing out within the assemblage. Resistance and acceptance, pushing and pulling, collectively engaged in a test of strength. Emmett Till's disfigured face arrived at the assemblage "too late or too early" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 259). Molar lines held fast to their order while molecular lines of flight threatened complete re-composition of the assemblage. Re-composition was needed to produce subjects who asked questions like "how does a tongue get choked out" and explored the hierarchical image of thought that in 1955 made it possible for two white men to torture and kill a young Black boy and the continuing legacy of that thought that makes it possible for two white men to gun down a young Black boy while jogging in our own day or to kneel on the neck of a handcuffed man for 8 minutes and 46 seconds. Re-composition didn't happen. Our collective actions, arose from the plane of organization trying to "stop or interrupt the movements of deterritorialization, weigh them down, restratify them" (1987, p. 270).

Even though the assemblage didn't appear to deterritorialize that day, "there is always something that flows or flees" "perhaps only a tiny trickle to begin with, leaked between the segments, escaping their centralization, eluding their totalization" (p. 216). At the time, I was attuned to see the big cracks in molar segments, but not necessarily the fissures of the molecular flows. The assemblage was too molar, but small negotiations slowly molecularized it, and with each foray out, even if the lines looped back in, they changed the territory. While horror over Emmett's murder didn't blast the molar, perhaps it worked at the molecular level. We were now "all stirred up, molecularized, poised to flee" (Spector & Guyotte, 2019, p. 225).

Productions of the Push and Pull

What are the implications for resisting deterritorializing literary encounters when they threaten to overturn the applecart of order? Encountering Emmett Till, push and pull were caught

between the status quo of racial violence being enacted once again with the photo and the positive difference of awakening to ongoing racialized relations. While we were awake to the force of seeing Till's photo, the conditions of the viewing limited how far that force could lead down the path to fugitive or perilous thinking (Dewey, 1925; Patel, 2016b). Perilous thinking required a journey on rocky seas that we just weren't willing to take. The security of a safe place of learning offered comfort that was too strong. This is the pushing and pulling of flows on a rolling sea through which the assemblage continues to become and through which knowing subjects are produced. These forces compose subjects that congeal for a time in particular ways. As de Freitas (2012) wrote, when thinking with the rhizomatic assemblage, "subjectivity is formed by way of discontinuity, rupture, and multiplicity" (p. 561). Pondering what that means for this data, I return to Deleuze and Guattari's questions: "When should this relation to life be a hardening, when submission? At what moment is rebellion called for and at what moment surrender or impassibility?" (1987, p.110). Deterritorialization is needed for the production of new subjects capable of discerning these answers.

Molar Productions

Deleuze and Guattari don't suggest that molar lines are bad, even writing that they include "much tenderness and love" and draw up "well-determined, well-planned territories" but that they are the lines that "always seems to prevail in the end" (1987, p. 195). Molar lines, like all lines come with danger. Specifically, Deleuze and Guattari explained, binary-producing and rigid molar lines are marked by the danger of fear. They wrote, "The more rigid the segmentarity, the more reassuring it is for us. That is what fear is, and how it makes us retreat into the first line" (p. 227). In the segmented space of efferently guided questions, neatly

answered study guides, and multiple-choice quizzes, teachers don't have to risk upsetting the binaries that keep images of thought and thinking in their respective corners.

Literary encounters dominated by molar lines make it difficult for deterritorialization to happen. These assemblages produce subjects who give Civil Rights presentations but do not feel compelled to ask "How is race produced?" or "How is this happening to Black children then or Black children now?" They produce subjects who are not yet ready to meet the obligations of "witnessing" this lynching (Felman & Laub, 1992). They produce subjects who can live with Ten Commandments that don't overlap or make jokes about fictional dead babies even as new stories show real ones daily. They produce subjects content with the assembly line input/output system of school and study guides that keep the lights turned off. Molar lines produce subjects content with binaries—right is always right, and wrong is always wrong. This can happen with rigid study guides just as easily as it can happen with play that offers students controlled and engaging reterritorialization.

Molecular Productions

Subjects produced in assemblages marked with molecular lines have their own dangers. Specifically, the danger of molecular lines is clarity, "the distinctions that appear in what used to seem full, the holes in what used to be compact; and conversely, where just before we saw end points of clear-cut segments, now there are indistinct fringes, encroachments, overlappings" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 228). The clarity offered to students who deterritorialized on the molecular lines of intrigue and curiosity threatened to show cracks in what moments before had been solid. This is dangerous to assembly lines, but necessary for the production of subjects who can read Dickinson and see how easy the government makes it for children to be slaughtered in their schools. Molecular lines made it possible for Carly to realize that the Ten Commandments

could be pitted against each other. They made it possible for Eleanor to read children's poetry and use it to make a statement about the innocent casualties of war. Molecular lines do the work waking us up (Greene) and of "fitting our vision" as Dickinson said so that we can look at Emmett Till and see the systems that made his death possible *and* the systems that made the deaths of George Floyd, Tamir Rice, and Breonna Taylor possible too. Molecular lines have tones of intensities needed to produce subjects who raise questions and refuse to be satisfied with prescribed answers written with zero regard for them or the worlds in which they live.

Poetic Interlude: Flows Meeting Flows

Wonders scattered by swift winds
settle on soft ground
where dandelion puffs grow moments
to float on unseen currents

rushing in and rolling out
sowing seeds and sentiments

flows meeting flows

flipped and flipping
blocked and blocking
merging and diverging

always moving
speeding up and slowing down
but always moving
and becoming

Figure 5.2. Original poem, "Flows Meeting Flows."

Emerging Implications & Next Steps

Pedagogical

Black holes of chaos are certainly not what educators should strive to produce, but neither are rigidly molar classrooms which do little to break habits of thought or awaken students to “an encounter with the unthought” (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 94). It seems that a necessary ingredient for thinking and for “profoundly positive” escapes from territorializations are molecular lines (Albrecht-Crane & Slack, 2007, p. 107). Warning of the dangers these lines pose, Deleuze and Guattari advised that it is an error to think “a little suppleness is enough to make things ‘better’” (1987, p. 215). This work is not about simply casting doubt, but of providing as Ellsworth described, “places in which to think about “we” without knowing already who “we” are” (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 95). Deterritorializing lines of flight were continually being pulled back in—this is not something that we can settle for on occasion, it requires ongoing commitment.

I have learned through this inquiry that deterritorialization is not as rare as I once thought. We allow disruption into our classroom in so many ways. State testing in particular dominated deterritorializations—we spent so much time working to fulfill this very narrow thing that was continually offered up as the goal of our pursuits. Why should that kind of deterritorialization be privileged when those that force us to think and to produce more virtuous ways of being in the world were continually pushed out? It was so hard to go off on a literature-produced flight line because something else was always waiting to draw us back in—a study guide, a quiz, a grade needed in the book. We need to break up with these old patterns that are not producing difference, only sameness. When we are satisfied to equate thinking with “schooling” and to inundate students with study guides we position them to be produced as subjects who don’t know how to change the world. It takes interference for change to occur, for thinking and engagement to happen. Thinking requires deterritorialization, requires fugitivity (Patel, 2016b).

Working in the push and pull is not an easy job. Time and again I saw teachers choose the rigid order of accountability to test scores, lesson plans, standards and benchmarks over an accountability to social justice and affirmative ethics. They marshaled the forces or organization around virtuous interference and against fugitivity (Patel, 2016b). I do not place blame upon them, rather I count myself among them. I did the same thing back at Cedar Knoll.

Even if things had gone differently then, if I had moved toward openness and to deterritorialization, I would have been met with lines trying to limit frames of reference. Teachers may push students toward newness, toward thinking, but those “inscribed habits of inattention” are always drawing them back in (Boler, 1999, p. 16). This isn’t a problem, for as Rosenblatt wrote “A framework of values is essential to any discussion of human life” (1995, p. 16). Literature is helpful in moving us to “ponder” in relation with these frameworks—showing complexity in “questions of right or wrong … of justifiable or unjustifiable actions” (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 16). Or, as Felman and Laub (1992) explained, literature has the power to serve the assemblage as “estranged conceptual prisms” helping show how “our cultural frames of reference and our preexisting categories which delimit and determine our perception of reality have failed” (Felman & Laub, 1992, p. xv). We need that fail to have hope for a better future.

Like Boldt (2015), I “believe in the life-giving potential of allowing ourselves to be disrupted and moved into uncertainty by the intensities of the children/youth/teacher education students in front of us” (p. 432, in Boldt, Lewis, & Leander, 2015). Having an assemblage that is open to molecularization makes it easier for lines of flight to draw paths toward this kind of disruption and deterritorialization. Disruption produces vulnerability which produces fugitivity and wide-awareness. Disruption is needed to help our “sight adjust” as the Dickinson poem said.

Deleuze and Guattari knew this when they asked, “And what would *thinking* be if it did not constantly confront chaos?” (1994, p. 208). Dewey, too, saw the necessary peril.

Finding a balance between following the rules and expectations of schools and creating a space where learning as “peril” or “fugitivity” can also happen is difficult. Chaos and order are built around immanence. I have tried to show the many different ways that teachers worked to keep openness out, but I have also learned some of what takes to welcome it in. Because lines work as multiplicities there is no set of constants, but there are some conditions that seem to work better than others. Play helped bring about disruption in Ms. Bowling’s class, but it failed Eleanor when she read the “Ickle Me, Tickle Me” poem. A carefully curated showing of Emmett Till’s photo kept deterritorialization from going too far, but a casual plot point on social structures in *TKAM* sent waves crashing. Consistent between these encounters when disruption seemed imminent was the feeling that something was happening—something that set off warning lights. Students would catch sight or sound of these and connect their attention to the matter at hand like the seismographer who registered the waves at the edge of his maps.

In addition to keeping an eye out for encounters like these, it follows that teachers can take steps to make their classrooms more hospitable to them happening. One step is seeing literature as a machine and looking for the ways it works. Doing this, it is important to see assemblages sustained through dis/connection—dis/connections give it life, but they also require movement and change. Teachers have to make a commitment to not be lulled to sleep by the hum of the train taking us to work each day. The image of thought cannot be held up as the work of our ELA classrooms. As Deleuze and Guattari declared, “Whatever the breaks and ruptures, only *continuous variation* brings forth this virtual line, this virtual continuum of life” (1987, p. 110, italics added). It takes more than “a little suppleness” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 215).

Mr. Fisher had intentions to do this with his *Harry Potter* unit but got lulled away by the fun of the book and the hurried pace at which he was forced to teach it. Ms. Bowling saw the value of deterritorializing encounters but shied away—perhaps to stay on track but also perhaps to avoid “a level of vulnerability and unpredictability” for which she was not prepared to take on at the time (Kumashiro, 2004, p. 115). My Cedar Knoll experience seemed to echo this. Of the four teachers participating in the study, Mr. Grant seemed to be the most comfortable with the rigid order of the molar line promising safety and “well-determined, well-planned territories” (1987, p. 195). This is an attractive option. We all do this at times, but it is not the kind of move that makes thinking possible or that recognizes the obligation we have to “carry out the ethical relations implicit” in reading literature (Boler, 1999, p. 172). For this, we must be open to new patterns of interference or as Boler said, let ourselves become a “mass of contradictions and struggles”—promising, virtuous—disruptions that help us to think differently and, in some cases, to think at all (1999, p. 267). As Leander and Boldt (2018) argued, by focusing so intently on curricular ends, we fail to see those things that happen “in spite of or indifferently to the curriculum ...increasing the power and intensity of students’ specific being ... [things] deeply important for arming our students with a sense of weight and purpose in the world” (p. 36).

In the push and pull between thinking and the image of thought, nothing seemed so detrimental to thinking as what I have referred to as study guides. These surfaced in many different forms in the various classrooms—the DRIVE, study guides, reading guides, worksheets, packets. Activities like study guides or reading packets use literature to keep us (teachers and students) looking at standards when they should use literature to help us look at the world that the standards supposedly help us navigate. They are relied upon as a trusted method

for learning, but in reality, they are in no way responsive or open to the people involved or the situation of unfolding events. This requires molecularization, or as Rosenblatt wrote,

Sufficient flexibility is needed to free oneself from the stock response when it prevents a response more appropriate to the situation. This is as true of the problems encountered in our daily lives as it is of our encounters with literature. (1995, p. 99)

Study guides and packets have and likely will continue to have sticking power. Knowing this, we need to think about how we can invite deterritorialization into them—ways of sparking like Ms. Bowling did with the plant or Devon’s “At least we ain’t dead” comment—lines connected if only for a moment to the current world of the students. We need ways of molecularizing our worksheets, ways of making them more virtuous, ways for education to “surpass and surprise itself” (Britzman, 1998, p. 61). We need these ways of acknowledging the push and the pull, and “encounter[ing] curriculum as possibility” (Greene, 1978, p. 18). We need this for engaging activities to that engage only to contain and control.

Leander (in Boldt, Lewis, & Leander, 2015) called for opportunities for “emergence” in our classrooms identifying three “disappearances” that occur when curriculums like the DRIVE are depended upon. These are “the disappearance of emergence, the disappearance of actual children in relationship, and the disappearance of affect as produced over, and often against, rationality” (p. 435). In order for reappearance to occur, we must move toward pedagogical practices that are not so prescribed. I also echo Jarvie and Burke’s (2015) advice that teachers “discard answers in favor of questions” (p. 85). Furthermore, when these opportunities present as they did with the jokes in Mr. Grant’s class, we need to help them play out. Teachers worry about encouraging or even just housing discussions with “political” content, but the beauty of acknowledging the push and pull is the understanding that there is no neutral space from which to teach. Packets of right answers offer singular viewpoints and are thereby just as political as

posing questions for open discussion. Consider again the photo of Emmett Till's face. Why are we more disgusted and appalled and worried about showing the victim of the crime than we are of showing the perpetrators celebrating their victory (see Figure 5.3)?



Figure 5.3. Bryant and Milam celebrate victory.

The encounter with Till was difficult knowledge, no doubt. Students were visibly and audibly disrupted by the photograph, but what became of this knowledge? What did it produce other than the disgust (Britzman, 1998; Pitt & Britzman, 2003)? I think the photo of Bryant and Milam could have brought just as much disruption. Perhaps more importantly, it would have been a move toward “witnessing truth’s crisis” instead of just providing a momentary shock to thought (Boler, 1999, p. 172). Moreover, adding this photo to the one of Till increases the potential kinds of responses because it adds to the assemblage. And ... and ... and ... In a similar way, side by side photos of Kaepernick kneeling in protest and Chauvin kneeling on George Floyd’s neck are horrific, yes, but they also force thinking in ways many of us could not before.

Aesthetic encounters create interference that aids in the production of the subjects we need, the people we don’t have yet. These are the ways to steer toward the pull of thinking or as Patel described ways of encountering learning as answerability (2016a). Horror is just as capable of lulling us to sleep as order or play. Flows can be used both to push and to pull. Prescribed activities are also part of the production of assemblages. Even as these activities worked to close

off the potential for disruption, the potential for thinking, literature was still working to connect in aesthetic ways—not independently but in the relations of assemblage. We don't have to completely abandon the New Criticism and Deconstruction approaches to literature, rather we need to make room to welcome reading with love. Reading with love lets literature join the assemblage and cause interference. Sometimes that interference leads to thinking, positive difference, moral quandaries, and hard questions. Other times it brings about a laugh but little more. All productions of flows are being directed—some giving a release valve and others a fresh cut path or “side streets” to some unknown future (Patel, 2016b). And new literature is not required for this to happen, this potential for disruption “lurk[s] in our classrooms *all the time*” (2008, p. 428). Even when the same old texts are used, the world changes creating new ways to draw lines and channel flows. The students seemed to realize this even when the teachers lost sight. One of the oldest texts used while I was in the classrooms showed the most evidence of thinking—Marley’s interaction with the Dickinson poem. Although school forums about gun violence failed to get the conversation going, Marley found a way to speak up with a poem written at the dawn of the Civil War. Poetry moment offered molecular engagement with literature as did artful activities, open discussions, and group seating. While Ms. Barrett’s class was perhaps the most open to this kind of deterritorialization, I feel compelled to point out that she usually did a gut-check with me before proceeding too far. There was safety in numbers, and even then, it wasn’t usually enough for us to move much further. As teachers, we should support and encourage these moves when our peers make them knowing that it is with an attitude of care not carelessness that they do so. As teacher educators, we need to begin this encouragement while future teachers are in the safe communities of our classroom and we need to model

openness and reading with love. We also need to be careful as we think about molecularizing our pedagogies to remain aware of reterritorializations that always co-opt creativity and newness.

Difficulty, vulnerability, disruption, deterritorialization—call it what you may—these are all ways of thinking about sitting in the dark and waiting for something to happen. These moments require uncertainty and discomfort. We don't know what will happen in these moments until they fully erupt into the collective classroom space, but we know well that there is no shortage of things to pull us back in. Chisholm and Whitmore (2019) wrote that it takes “an act of professional courage” to approach these encounters (p. 11). We have to “think outside our training” as St. Pierre suggested (2017, p.41) and to be bold like Jones, and “resist the urge to make things comfortable” (2012, p. 151).

Theoretical

In addition to pedagogical implications explored above, I believe this work also offers theoretical implications. Specifically, I see future work unpacking how all of the different traditions of research informing this inquiry can work together in some kind of discordant harmony. We need to think through them with a fine-grained sieve in an effort to learn more about the role literature plays in our school. Deleuze and Guattari gave me the permission to use them together, and his ideas became the thread that I found running through them. Relational materialism has been helpful for me to do some of this here, but I know that theoretically speaking, this move that needs further attention.

The Stutter of Becoming

Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter. What is encountered may be Socrates, a temple or a demon. It may be grasped in a range of affective tones: wonder, love, hatred, suffering. In whichever tone, its primary characteristic is that it can only be sensed. In this sense it is opposed to recognition. (Deleuze, 1994a, p. 139)

I have leaned on the first part of this quotation throughout this work as a way of framing the difference between thinking and the image of thought. I include here the second part of the quotation because of a newly felt resonance between it and the data produced in this inquiry. The jarring relations required to “force” someone to think contribute to answering my first orienting question: What relations contribute to the unfolding of de-and re-territorializing literary encounters in secondary English classrooms? Jolts initiate a stutter that is part of becoming different, but that is far from the whole story.

I now turn to that space between a jolt that can only be sensed and the subsequent thinking that emerges within the unfolding encounter. Deleuze told us such encounters are “grasped in a range of affective tones,” and in this inquiry, I saw tones of wonder and curiosity (mostly from students) and tones of fear (mostly from teachers and myself). In Ms. Bowling’s classroom, for example, some students met “Socrates” in the sense that they encountered a philosophical query. What the students displayed in this encounter were tones of wonder, but what Ms. Bowling displayed were tones of fear. The inquiry was shut down even though Ms. Bowling acknowledged that that line of question was worthwhile. What is required of us in these encounters? How do we move from jolt-fear or jolt-curiosity to the kind of thinking that produces positive difference in our pedagogies?

Thinking only happens when concepts collapse and recognition fails, and in this moment before new thinking begins there is a movement to be made either toward or away from the new territory. This movement produces a kind of stutter in the “zone of continuous variation” (Deleuze, 1994b, p. 24). This is not a verbal stutter of speech, but of language, of thought. Describing great writers who have accomplished this in their works, Deleuze wrote,

they cause language to flee, they make it run along a witch's course, they place it endlessly in a state of disequilibrium, they cause it to bifurcate and to vary in each one of its terms, according to a ceaseless modulation. (1994b, p. 25)

Though Deleuze identified other writers as being skilled at this, St. Pierre (2017) recognized mastery of this in Deleuze and Guattari writing,

They introduce new concepts that replace earlier concepts; their concepts interact, overlap, and their meaning shifts; they create a minor language within the major language we're comfortable with so we feel like foreigners in our own language. They make language stutter and stammer. They make thought stutter. (p. 1087)

My thinking has been stuttering with Deleuze and Guattari throughout this work as evidenced by the many (re)orientations I have shared. Perhaps by including these and the interspersed QR codes, readers found themselves stuttering, too. I hope so.

In the space of the stutter, the moving toward or away from the territory can be evaluated in terms of courage. Courage here should not suggest pluck or heroism, but as Aristotle wrote in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, "Courage is a mean with regard to fear and confidence" (3.6). Jolt-fear seemed to turn teachers away from drawing out deterritorializing lines. There is no doubt that fear can be a healthy reaction, for example, in keeping us from jumping out of airplanes. Some amount of fear is necessary, but too much results in cowardice and stagnation. Aristotle wrote that confidence is also necessary, but that it can lead to rash actions. The middle-ground between these two is courage, moral vigor in perilous encounters. Working from the middle, how can we cultivate moral courage in ourselves and students so that we can draw new lines that are neither rash nor cowardly? We need to think about the pedagogical space between the jolt of thinking sensed in a range of tones and doing the next thing. Ellsworth (2005) wrote that this kind of transitional space,

gives us time and space to come up with some other way of being in relation at that moment. It introduces a stutter, a hesitation. It jams the binary logics that keep self/other, inner/outer, individual/social locked in face-to-face opposition. It is a space where the

skin-to-skin face-off between self and other has been pried apart so that a reordering of self and other can be set in motion and so that we might go on relating to each other at all. (p. 64)

The always changing world requires pedagogies oriented toward agile courage that is prepared to break up habituated practices, draw new connections, and confect fluid refusals and protests. We don't need more fear or unthinking confidence, we need the virtue of courage in the midst of uncertainty. Our classrooms may benefit from more thought-provoking worksheets and better study guides, but new and better materials will always be co-opted and pulled back into molar order. With courage we en-courage the positive difference the world needs to be less exploitative. The relations that make literary de/territorialization productive of affirmative change are courageous ones.

Stutters are noticeable because they register as a trip in the rhythm or a pitch change to an unexpected key. Things vibrate at a different level when we are open to letting something new into the system, when the plane of immanence opens to us and with courage we proceed. Deleuze wrote, “A song rises, approaches, or fades away. That's what it's like on the plane of immanence: multiplicities fill it, singularities connect with one another, processes or becomings unfold, intensities rise and fall” (1995, pp. 146-7). By placing QR codes throughout this work, I hope that the reader has playfully stuttered—endeavoring to think not just be carried on by the image of thought. We need different songs that help us stutter; we need songs that make us uncomfortable, songs that resonate with concerns that are on a larger timescale than a 55-minute class period or a single human lifetime, and songs oriented toward a more equitable and just future, whatever that may look like. We need break-up songs. Literature can help us learn how to courageously hear and hum these new songs.



Figure 5.4. Encore.

CODA: “A BLESSING”

A Blessing

a wind blowing us on
 stirring never sleeping
casting forward throwing back
 to an open sea
 a generous, loving sea
 jolting and gusting
blessing and not
 metastable at best
bracketing
 snapping
 lulling away
remembering plains and promises seeds and skies
 Maycomb and Mississippi
 and moons
and Emmett Till and his mama
 kneeling to pray and to prey
littluns with mulberry marks and
 becoming unaccustomed to light and dark and in-between
 finding a port
a wind is blowing on us
 like a blessing
 ever in motion

Figure 5.5. Original poem, “A Blessing.”

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APPENDIX A

List of QR Code Linked Content

Figure Title	Content	Link
Introductory QR Codes	The University of Alabama College of Education webpage	education.ua.edu
If Driving through Cedar Knoll were a Song	The University of Alabama Alma Mater “It’s America” performed by Rodney Atkins “My Tennessee Mountain Home” performed by Dolly Parton “Merry Go ‘Round” performed by Kacey Musgraves	https://youtu.be/4E0LZhwztOk https://youtu.be/TZBrBJseyv0 https://youtu.be/1e-9B2Qj2yQ https://youtu.be/GZfj2Ir3GgQ
Songs to Mark Becoming	“Godspeed” performed by the Dixie Chicks “Underdog” performed by Alecia Keys “Looking for America” performed by Lana Del Rey	https://youtu.be/12TkyZozl3U https://youtu.be/izyZLKIWGiA https://youtu.be/em1pHFTvK1s
Mass Shooting Data	Washington Post webpage	https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/national/mass-shootings-in-america/
Thinking Still, Not Still Thinking	“Wise Woman” performed by Caroline Herring “New World” performed by Robert Plant “Goldmund” performed by Bowen	https://youtu.be/spiQMpLtoWE https://youtu.be/rHSRC7e1-Fg https://youtu.be/sGrh9hxZ6vA
Moderation is a Four-letter Word	“Vienna” performed by Billy Joel “9 to 5” performed by Dolly Parton	https://youtu.be/wccRif2DaGs https://youtu.be/E4OzdyxbOuU
Life as an ISFJ	“Old Soul” performed by The Highwomen “Mona Lisas and Mad Hatters” performed by The Killers	https://youtu.be/8uE1ML6p3e4 https://youtu.be/18lwca-xqh0
	“My Sabbath Home” performed by Pa’s Fiddle Band	https://youtu.be/tQi2ZACGIow

Figure Title	Content	Link
(How) To Bracket My Faith	“I’ll Fly Away” performed by Gillian Welch & Alison Krauss “Be Thou My Vision” performed by Ginny Owens	https://youtu.be/lFamN-oXRMQ https://youtu.be/faBLAC6a_Fs
Lines of Books and Snuggles King’s Song	“A Bushel and a Peck” performed by Doris Day “Tapestry” performed by Carole King	https://youtu.be/HTeKfyJkCZQ https://youtu.be/tiQshgKO6Co
Theme for Ms. Bowling	“No Such Thing” performed by John Mayer “Turn! Turn! Turn!” performed by The Byrds “Circle of Life” performed by Elton John	https://youtu.be/H1W2UddURXI https://youtu.be/W4ga_M5Zdn4 https://youtu.be/0uJJRLElApk
Pepper Growing	Information on growing peppers from seed Instructional video on growing peppers	https://homeguides.sfgate.com/can-use-seeds-bell-pepper-plant-55788.html https://youtu.be/i9x51Ruf5Iw
Themes for Mr. Fisher and Mr. Grant	“Dare You to Move” performed by Switchfoot “Come Tomorrow” performed by Dave Matthews Band with Brandi Carlile “Never Know” performed by Jack Johnson	https://youtu.be/jE-Krlqi4fk https://youtu.be/ukdXJrBwGBY https://youtu.be/_j6ZEOXoNvw
Theme for Ms. Barrett Songs for the Mountaintop	“Most People Are Good” performed by Luke Bryan “Rocky Mountain High” performed by John Denver “Up to the Mountain” performed by Patty Griffin	https://youtu.be/liqktLC7xR0 https://youtu.be/eOB4VdlkzO4 https://youtu.be/az4DGPSiSFg
Songs of the Drive	“Goodbye Yellow Brick Road” performed by Sara Bareilles “This Is Not A Test” performed by She & Him	https://youtu.be/eAti8JNmJi8 https://youtu.be/_tNYHGFBp8A
Songs of the Tree	“At The Purchaser’s Option” performed by Rhiannon Giddens “Strange Fruit” performed by Billie Holiday “The Ballad of Emmett Till” performed by Bob Dylan “Glory” performed by Common & John Legend	https://youtu.be/6vy9xTS0QxM https://youtu.be/Web007rzSOI https://youtu.be/Y2-DIJFJayc https://youtu.be/HUZOKvYcx_o

Figure Title	Content	Link
On Hearing “At Least We Ain’t Dead”	“An American Trilogy” performed by Elvis Presley “America” performed by Abraham Alexander	https://youtu.be/cfseABMnwTc https://youtu.be/CJThpc8oxqQ
Songs of Seeing Darkness	“Bang Bang” performed by The Avett Brothers “Hands” performed by Jewel “Pumped Up Kicks” performed by Foster the People	https://youtu.be/c-bwzDMSOk8 https://youtu.be/AfsS3pIDBfw https://youtu.be/rnO-MflYxCw
Lines Left	“Little Liza Jane” performed by Elizabeth Mitchell “Well May the World Go” performed by Pete Seeger	https://youtu.be/qr0L8RwRPyE https://youtu.be/mc_w9Bvce5I
Humming A Break-Up Song	“Let It Be” performed by Timothy Mitchum & Carol Woods “Renegades” performed by X Ambassadors “Time for Me to Fly” performed by REO Speedwagon	https://youtu.be/ShNnEDb4wFA https://youtu.be/8j741TUIET0 https://youtu.be/rMMXoCuwcOM
Bryant and Milam Celebrate Victory Encore	Photo of Milam and Bryant celebrating with their wives (housed on the PBS American Experience webpage) “The Times They Are A-Changin’” performed by Bob Dylan “Blowin’ In The Wind” performed by Bob Dylan	https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/emmett-trial-jw-milam-and-roy-bryant/ https://youtu.be/90WD_ats6eE https://youtu.be/G58XWF6B3AA

APPENDIX B

Classroom Literary Texts Referenced

Title	Author
Number the Stars	Lois Lowry
Stargirl	Jerry Spinelli
Heartbeat	Sharon Creech
“The Monkey’s Paw”	W. W. Jacobs
“Raymond’s Run”	Toni Cade Bambara
“The Highwayman”	Alfred Noyes
Night	Eli Wiesel
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone	J. K. Rowling
“The Sniper”	Liam O’Flaherty
“Harrison Bergeron”	Kurt Vonnegut
“The Tell-Tale Heart”	Edgar Allan Poe
“A Sound of Thunder”	Ray Bradbury
Othello	William Shakespeare
The Canterbury Tales	Geoffrey Chaucer
Dracula	Bram Stoker
1984	George Orwell
The Road	Cormac McCarthy
A Modest Proposal	Jonathan Swift
To Kill A Mockingbird	Harper Lee
“Black Men and Public Spaces”	Brent Staples
In Cold Blood	Truman Capote
Breakfast at Tiffany’s	Truman Capote
Go Set a Watchman	Harper Lee
The Odyssey	Homer
Romeo & Juliet	William Shakespeare
“We Grow Accustomed to the Dark”	Emily Dickinson
East of Eden	John Steinbeck
Lord of the Flies	William Golding
“Ickle Me, Pickle Me, Tickle Me Too”	Shel Silverstein
“The Generals”	Shel Silverstein

APPENDIX C

Harry Potter Reading Guide/Worksheet Example

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone Chapter One

Characters: As you read, write down the names and any descriptions of at least three characters. Please include both physical and behavioral traits.

Character	Physical Traits	Behavioral Traits

Vocabulary: As you read, write down three (non-magic) words that are unfamiliar, as well as the sentence in which they are used. Next, look up the definition using your desk dictionaries.

Word	Sentence	Definition

New Name: This chapter is called, "The Boy Who Lived." Create a new title for the chapter and explain your thoughts in at least one sentence.

Reading Questions: After reading, review the chapter by answering the following questions.

- 1) Where does Harry live? Why does he live there?
- 2) What happened to the cat that was lurking around Privet Drive?
- 3) What is a muggle?
- 4) What was unique about Dumbledore's watch?
- 5) How many streetlights did Dumbledore put out?

6) What kind of vehicle does Hagrid drive?

Fast Finisher: Turn the page over and begin making a timeline of main events.

APPENDIX D

IRB Approval



July 22, 2019

Elizabeth Murray
Department of Curriculum & Instruction
College of Education
The University of Alabama
Box 870232

Re: IRB # 17-OR-271-R2 "Difficult Knowledge and Troubling Possibilities: A Look into the Moral Landscape of the ELA Classroom"

Dear Ms. Murray:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your renewal application. You have also been granted the requested waiver of documentation of informed consent. Your renewal application has been given expedited approval according to 45 CFR part 46. Approval has been given under expedited review category 7 as outlined below:

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

The approval for your application will lapse on July 21, 2020. If your research will continue beyond this date, please submit a continuing review to the IRB as required by University policy before the lapse. Please note, any modifications made in research design, methodology, or procedures must be submitted to and approved by the IRB before implementation. Please submit a final report form when the study is complete.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Carpantato T. Myles, MSM, CIM, CIP
Director & Research Compliance Officer