Feral Objects in a Classroom Ecology

by

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Abstract

While it has become a generally accepted idea that humans have been endowed with authority over all that exists on this earth, this thesis will argue that, at times, this is not the case. Belief in this sort of authority proves to be problematic in a classroom environment as *things* assert alternative ways of being, challenging a human centric environment and what may be the guiding believes of the educational system. I begin by establishing the classroom as a space endowed with purity, affiliated with domestic life referencing the Deleuzian concept of arboreal thinking. Turning to several writers of object oriented ontology, I then examine examples of feral objects that prove to be monstrous when introduced to the domesticated environment of the classroom. These feral objects not only challenge established hierarchies but also suggest that humans may not be in absolute control. In conclusion, this thesis examines the power objects hold within the ecology of the classroom and the potential these objects hold to suggest alternative ways of being in our world.

Preface

Things can be troublesome. Objects once served a purpose to humans, following a transcendent tradition of people as the beings superior to all, but they can resist this hierarchy, fleeing their domestic usefulness. This resistance can be likened to an object gone “feral”. It is a rearrangement of the object’s hierarchical role, its existence, and influence.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1

AN ONTOLOGY OF FERAL OBJECTS IN THE CLASSROOM

Things can also be troublesome to teachers. Hierarchy has become important in a classroom, particularly to the teacher. Thacker (2011) suggests, "This world often bites back, resists, or ignores our attempts to mold it for us" (p. 4). Man has been said to govern nature; in a classroom, a teacher attempts to govern the structured environment. However, at times there are slips in the established order of power. In a classroom, specific things have specific purposes attached to them; they are there to reinforce order, routine, and regularity. When things resist their usefulness in a classroom setting, the established order is threatened between all those enmeshed in the ecology of the classroom. In this thesis, I will map out problems and opportunities for a pedagogy of ethics that may arise in a schooling setting when things pose a threat to the teacher order in the domesticated space of a classroom. I will demonstrate the problems that come amongst the classroom and the hierarchical order in this space. I'd like to speculate what might happen when "wildness" enters this domestic domain by engagement with feral objects, stories and characters. I will examine several disruptive things, particularly, the ways these things interact with other things, people, and systems of order at work in a classroom setting.

The way things interact can be described as an assemblage following Deleuze. Furthering Deleuze's work, in Bennett's (2010) explanation she points to confounding factors in an assemblage, "Assemblages are living, throbbing confederations that are able to function despite the persistent presence of energies that confound from within" (p. 23-24). One only needs to briefly observe a junior high classroom to confirm it as this sort of assemblage. A junior high

classroom functions, for the most part, but then there are slips in the flows of knowledge exchange.

In my first chapter, following this introduction, I will begin by examining zines and the subculture that initiated these counter-culture objects. I will examine what took place when zines were introduced into my classroom setting, the struggle between the teacher's desire for authority and the obvious ways zines are oriented towards subversion. I will look to Piepmeier (2009), as well as DeGravelle's (2011) excellent dissertation to explicate the history of zines. Drawing primarily from Deleuze, Morton, Joy and Colebrook, I will study zines as subversive and feral objects in the domesticated setting of the classroom. In their subversiveness, zines hold the potential to disrupt a classroom or, using Bennett's (2010) word, "confound" the assemblage of a classroom.

My second chapter will briefly examine the effects of a storybook introduced into a classroom setting, to further my thinking of the monstrous and the potential of monsters in the classroom through an objected oriented ontological reading of *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963). Here I will look to Deleuze's (1989) plane of immanence to understand the deterritorializing power lurking within the influence of a children's book. Once again, while a teacher would stand as a symbol of authority, the implications of the Wild Things suggest a line of flight for anyone who would hope to escape the established order, even if temporarily.

My third chapter will once again look to a fictitious story to conceive how humans might react when objects refuse to lie down and die. Shaun Tan's *Stick Figures* (2008) swiftly contrasts the steadfastness of an ecological anomaly in the face of human efforts to wipe them out. While the author's intentions of what might be learned from his story are rather obvious, I choose to question the reaction of my students when they read this counter-cultural story. I look to Bennett

(2010) and Bogost (2012) primarily to understand the vitality of these stick figures, as well as Bauman's (2004) commentary on the civilized perception of waste.

In this introduction, I draw on several scholars who have examined the concepts of the wildness, feral children and resistant objects, including Jeffrey Cohen (2012) as well as Kahn and Lewis (2010). I explore these concepts and propose my speculative concept of "feral objects" in relation to what is expected in the classroom and objects' powers to deny these expectations. What was once under control evades the previous exertion of power by the teacher as an object functions subversively.

Concepts

Thing Power

Beginning with Bennett, her concepts of vitality and "thing-power" help to better imagine and speculate how an object holds this ability to disrupt the environment and the other things an object is in contact with. Bennett (2010) writes, "a lot happens to the concept of agency once nonhuman things are figured as actors" (p. 21). As a starting point, Bennett finds Bruno Latour's (2005) speculative philosophical strain, "Actor-Network" theory, helpful to move from understanding things simply as tools to understanding them as possessing agency to interact in a given environment. Her term "vibrant matter" is an attempt to demonstrate the agency for objects to influence the flows of activities beyond the initial intentions of the people using these things. She works off her term "thing-power" to suggest and speculate how materiality is a force capable of doing things. Bennett does not shy away from confounding energies either; in fact, this is what is worth observing in any given assemblage. These tensions are present even within the most sterile or controlled setting. Bennett's (2010) question lies close to my hope to examine the confounding presence of feral objects in a school; she asks, "and how would an understanding of

agency as a confederation of human and nonhuman elements alter established notions of moral responsibility and political accountability" (p. 21)? While teachers hold moral responsibilities and are politically accountable, the "vital matter" in the classroom does not always support what the established notions work towards.

Flat Ontology

An adoption of "flat ontology," which perceives everything with an equal ontological status as opposed to placing a superior interest in the ontology of humans, will also guide my work. Flat ontology is a concept used by Bryant in his book *The Democracy of Objects* (2011). This speculative ontological concept strives to acknowledge the "being-ness" of all objects, encompassing sentient and non-sentient beings. This said, it seems impossible to pull humans out of the network of interactions when considering most objects are human-made. However, for Bryant, in this philosophical venture, discussing humans must be kept in perspective; just because they are often the creators, they are of no more importance than the objects they have created and what humans have created can impact them (Bogost, 2012). Books and literature can far outlast their creators. There are also objects that exist without humans creating them, yet remain influenced by sharing territory with humans. Trees, mountains, oceans, and lakes are all impacted by being used by humans. Yet, these things also impact humans, such as in the case of a natural disaster. The forest threatens humans' way of life when it is uncontrollably on fire. At that point, humans do not lord over the forest; instead, humans find themselves at the mercy of the fire, fuelled by trees, which once served them as a "renewable resource".

Object oriented ontology is a speculative philosophical stream that observes flat ontology. The initial writings can be attributed to Harman in his early work, notably *Tool Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects* (2002) and later clarified in *The Speculative Turn:*

Continental Materialism and Realism 2011). In these works Harman offers an alternative to most other post-humanist philosophers by reintegrating humans as objects within his speculative realist thinking. While Harman's thoughts were vital to philosophy stepping in a different direction than other post-humanist writers, much of my research will draw from the new perspectives developed by other authors since Harman's early work, such as Bennett (2010), Bryant (2011) and Bogost (2012).

My research question draws from the image of thought, and longstanding assumption that man governs nature. This assumption is a particularly problematic way of viewing the world. Drawing from Deleuze, scholars have taken interest in the ontology of things (objects) as well. object oriented ontology has taken on the post-humanistic task of examining the substance (Bryant, 2012) of objects and the potential capacities held in our world alongside sentient beings. However, some, such as Bennett (2010), would argue for the sentience, or at least vitality and agency of objects. I will use the same reasoning regarding ontology to address concerns around objects entering a classroom environment, their displacement or disposal, and the thwarting of their capacities in conflation with the structure of schooling.

Object Meditation

I will also refer to Bogost's (2012) book, *Alien phenomenology: What it is like to be a thing*. It is worth looking to Gram-Hanssen's description of phenomenology as Bogost repurposes the philosophical traditions of phenomenology in order to speculate and assess the interactions of specifically assembled objects. Gram-Hanssen (1996) takes interest in phenomenology because "in its very essence demolishes the subject-object dichotomy" (p. 89), a great reference to flat ontology. Gram-Hanssen (1996) writes, "The phenomenological method is about 'bracketing' all assumptions, forgetting the theory and thinking behind one's own interest

in the object. It is a contemplation without any preconditions. It is about describing, not analysing or explaining" (p. 94). In her writings, Gram-Hanssen (1996) is interested in the capacity for phenomenology to provide "an enlargement of the notion of our capacity to sense our environment" (p. 100). A careful observation of not only the conflated assemblages and teacher in a classroom but the objects as well will prove for new understandings of the pedagogical tasks at work in the classroom environment.

Bogost (2012) asks the question, "Why is it so strange to ponder the experience of objects?... What if engaging in this way holds important clues about a future in which the boundaries between things are fast dissolving?" (p. 2). Drawing on Deleuze's insistence of ontologies ever in flux, Bogost insists that an object's ontology is also in flux and is multiple as it exists as many beings at once. He introduces tiny ontology as a way of expressing that "being is various and unitary all at once" (p. 19). This argument proves to be very important as it references the background Deleuze laid as an alternative existence in the world. This way of understanding ontology then allows for an examination of the variety of assemblages present taking place amongst objects at any given time. Bogost writes, "units operate... things constantly machinate within themselves and mesh with one another, acting and reacting to properties and states while still keeping something secret" (p. 27). The task of the philosopher is to ask: what is being machinated? What influence is one object having on another? How does the reaction to this influence lead to new ontologies?

These questions become particularly critical when thinking about the feralness of objects in the classroom. Are they simply feral from the human perspective because they are not meeting the teacher's needs? Or do these objects become feral because they stray from other objects in their likeness? How does a feral object interact with its domesticated, tamed, and obedient

counterparts? How does the feral object disrupt the other objects? How does it threaten the pre-existing arrangements of the things, including people, in the classroom?

With these writers in mind, I will attempt to demonstrate the agency for objects to influence the flows of classroom activities beyond the initial intentions of the teacher's predetermined usefulness of these things. Functioning neither in their intended purposes, nor easily welcomed in a "teaching moment," I will contemplate what might occur when predictable things re-purpose themselves in a classroom setting. A hierarchy, once established, is now threatened by the very things humans did not want to admit held agency.

The Pure Classroom

Schools are charged with great responsibility to the public and this is passed on to teachers who are expected to establish environments of routine, respect, and domestic purity. In *Bitter Milk*, Grumet (1998) outlines a historical perspective of the goals of schooling children. She begins by looking at maturation rituals of the Ndembu community, suggesting these rituals somehow transform a child who has drawn from the natural instincts for survival into a logical participant in the moral society. Grumet draws a comparison to our schooling. Schooling then serves as a means of passing on the cultural values and morals in what Grumet identifies as a liminal space in which students negotiate their integration into the lawful public. The "public institutions and patriarchal identifications" with the moral society furthers the imposition of the domestication of a student with the intention of taming them (Grumet, 1988, p. 32-33).

Grumet (1988) offers this insight in her description of the expectations of the role of a teacher as she describes how teachers were predominantly women during the era of industrialization as one of the few acceptable employment during that time:

> The rationale for [women's] presence in the classroom replicated the sentimental rhetoric of child nurturance... absorbed by the institutional paternalism that substituted the discipline of the state, of the school day, its language, rituals, and coercion, for the moral responsibility of the family. Women were not asked to create this moral leadership in either the home or the school, but they were expected to be the medium through which the laws, rules, language, and order of the father, the principal, the employer were communicated to the child. Their own passivity was to provide the model of obedience for the young to emulate. The self-abnegation and submission to universal principles of morality, decorum, and beauty constrained teachers, as they had artists, from developing a style of practice with which they were personally identified and for which they felt personally. (1988, p. 84)

In this description we see not only the expectations of the teachers to tame their students but a domesticating and taming of the teachers themselves. Teachers are not encouraged to exert independent agency in the process of schooling; instead, the classroom becomes an environment where upholding strict parameters of acceptable conduct and lawful thought are emphasized in order to maintain societal order.

Grumet (1988) looks to the industrial revolution as an era of the urban society and social normalization through schooling emphasized during this time. Interestingly, Lewis and Kahn (2010) also look to a case study from this same time period: the wolf-boy captured January 9, 1800 by Jean-Marc Itard. Lewis and Kahn (2010) provide a helpful narrative of the domestication and taming of this young boy. They describe Itard's behavioural therapy imposed on the feral child and the insistence that the boy learn to speak:

> There was in Itard's pedagogy a desire to make Victor's body speak the normalistic language of the burgeoning bourgeoisie and thus to supplant the inarticulate and savage body of violent gesticulations with the codified and orderly body of middle-class society.... In this sense, language produces innovation precisely by negating the animal within the boy, a negation that produces a certain surplus of affect that cannot easily be cured through the dialectic of immunizing pedagogy. (Lewis & Kahn, 2010, p. 52)

Lewis and Kahn (2010) do not aim to contrast the wild with the socialized culture; instead, they are interested in the truth of the ever-present wild within culture:

> Instead of purity, we are positing the ontological priority of the monstrous, of the contamination and indetermination that emerges when we suspend the distinctions of nature versus culture that Rousseau presupposes. Thus instead of purity as an ethical mandate, we will advocate for a critical theory of disfiguration that lies at the very heart of our collective social, political, and economic worlds. (p. ix)

While they tell the story of Itard's attempt to tame Victor, the wolf-boy, they also expand on Itard's aim to bring the wild child to a place of participation in the society of his day, hoping Victor would reject his feral past all together.

The case of Victor and Itard offers an example of the tensions present with schooling which socializes, when a threat of wildness enters into a tamed society. It is the monstrous nonhuman being that interests me. Each term holding weight: "monstrous" as sitting outside the societal norms, "nonhuman" as an emphasis on things and objects, and "being" as I begin to consider the ontology, vitality, and agency of things. Cohen (2012) writes,

> In an acknowledgement that a politics inheres in our relations with objects (relations not necessarily premised upon human supremacy and matter's mere utility) can found a

> politically and ecologically engaged ethics in which the human is not the world's sole meaning-maker, and never has been. (p. 7)

When we acknowledge the agentic power of a thing in our classroom, we open up the potential of the monstrous thing to passive-aggressively sway the assemblages to Bennett's (2010) "confounding assemblages"; however, humans almost always attempt to submit these things to their own agency. This is worth observing, as Bogost (2012) writes, "*That* things are is not a matter of debate. *What it means that something in particular is for another thing that is:* this is the question that interests me" (p. 30). Objects, stories, worksheets, and lesson plans are supposed to assemble to achieve curricular goals, a process of normalization. However, when a story assembles with alternative ideas outside curricular goals, how does it function still within the previously described assemblage? It confounds; it challenges.

The Feral Invades

There are several ideas on which my thesis will rest and continually draw from. What does it mean to be feral? In its wildness it assumes a way of being free from the restraints of societal expectations, such as Victor in the example from Lewis and Kahn (2010). It acts independently of law. This may be to seek out a new location, a new purpose, or as a resistance to what it was before. Feral beings are unkempt, ugly, disorderly.

The concept of a "feral object" is necessary to my research question. After reviewing the literature, "feral" appears to be a unique term to myself in order to describe an ontology only specific to some objects; while others suggest that objects "resist" (Thacker, 2011), "machinate" (Bogost, 2012), enter into "becoming" (Deleuze, 1980), "act" (Latour, 2005), and "confound" (Bennett, 2010). While object oriented ontology is interested in the interaction of objects, my

question does not seek to observe and describe a mundane interaction instead an interaction in which objects resist what they *should* have previously been according to a hierarchical tradition. When objects find another way of being this wildness frustrates previous or current interactions by upsetting the previously established order. As I review the literature I seek the origins of this trend of philosophical thought and, at the same time, I seek useful contemporary examples of feral objects asserting themselves in our world, specifically in a classroom.

The classroom, in fact, is essential to identifying feral resistance because the same object observed in an alternative environment may not present the same sort of resistance because the same social expectations and normalizing exercises may not be present. What categories might be found in a "litmus test" to identify a feral object? How might a feral object demonstrate "interobjectivity" as a means of exhibiting its effects in a classroom? In this thesis I look to the three examples: zine literature, the story *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), and the stick figure characters.

Thacker (2011) focuses on the relationship between philosophy and horror, which lends well to understand the monstrosity of these wild thing and stick figure characters, as well as a zine's potential. Thacker unfolds a post-humanist thread of discussion without ever referencing the specific term of feral objects, nor object-oriented ontology. Rather, Thacker attempts to think existence in the world in an alternative way to having humans as the center to the discussion, placing monstrous things there instead. Most useful to my argument is his concept of the "world-in-itself" (Thacker, 2011, p. 6). He begins to describe a world that exists without human presence. He claims that as soon as one would try to think about this world it meets its destruction as humans have then interceded in it. However, this does not negate its existence. Thacker brings forward several useful examples of when humanity is reminded of this world,

such as during natural disasters or the threat of extinction. When a natural disaster takes place everything else in proximity is caught off guard. Here humanity must acknowledge that there are other interactions taking place beyond the saving grasp of human intervention.

Thacker's (2011) concept of the world "biting back" (p. 4) is intriguing. Here the world, as Thacker describes, becomes the planet instead, a unit on its own, functioning on its own. When objects bite back they are asserting this independence, their own agency without attachment. In subsequent chapters I explain this further as zines boast this agency as their counter-cultural images and rants continue to have an impact long after they leave the hands of their creator. In the film *Where the Wild Things Are* (Jonze, 2009), the Wild Things quite literally bite back as the evidence of their previous kings reveals itself as a pile of bones. And, Tan's (2008) stick figure characters do not die each time the human residents of the suburb beat them; instead, they resurrect, detached from their taunting impact. Feral objects refuse the endowment of being initiated by humans; they exist as something else, in an unexpected way.

We might also look to Cohen's (1996) analysis of monsters as cues to be taken in order to understand the monstrous aspect of a feral object. Cohen offers seven theses regarding monster culture and, as these are compared to objects, a rich ontology is painted of "rebellious" things. The simple exercise of replacing Cohen's monster with the term "thing" reveals an important description of these objects and humans are left with seven familiar offerings of certain foreign things we encounter in a classroom:

1. The Thing's Body Is a Cultural Body
2. The Thing Always Escapes
3. The Thing Refuses Categorization/ The Thing Is the Harbinger of Category Crisis
4. The Thing Dwells at the Gates of Difference

5. The Thing Polices the Borders of the Possible
6. Fear of the Thing Is Really a Kind of Desire
7. The Thing Stands at the Threshold... of Becoming (Cohen, 1996)

By understanding a feral object as a monstrous thing, a great deal of agency and activity becomes evident in the interactions of the feral object with other things (including people).

The Thing's Body is a Cultural Body

The things we are surrounded by in a classroom are products of our culture and our time. We can take the example of classrooms, once filled with desks independently aligned in rows to facilitate independent study, one might now observe classrooms (especially in the younger grades) filled with tables (or desks arranged in groups) to promote collaboration and community; this has been a trend since the 1960's (Kutnick & Blatchford, 2014). The things used to arrange the seating of students, in proximity to each other, the teacher, and the other classroom supplies, demonstrates the values of those arranging the objects. As cultural values or community values shift, the things with which we surround ourselves also change to reflect these values. The desks themselves hold a monstrous power, "The monster's body quite literally incorporates fear, desire, anxiety, and fantasy,... giving them life and an uncanny independence" (Cohen, 1996, p. 4). It is this "uncanny independence" (Cohen, 1996, p. 4) that calls attention to the vitality of a thing in a classroom. Independent of the events taking place in a classroom, a desk exerts its power to shape bodies, limit vision, permit proximity, or deny proximity. Other objects in a classroom may contribute to a stress inducing environment, a surveilling environment, or an imaginary production environment.

The Thing Always Escapes

Cohen (1996) writes that the monster's "threat is its propensity to shift" (p. 5). The awe in acknowledging the vitality of the objects sitting in our classrooms can quickly shift to uneasiness as people must acknowledge they are not the only acting agents in the room. What happens if the projector used to display lesson images refuses to power on? Or what if during the lesson, the screen displaying curriculum oriented information also displays an advertisement or crude images? Can these items be trusted? My thesis speaks to the interdependence and reliance one thing has on another and how the power in one object to "become feral" threatens the dynamics of the entire assemblage. Not only does the feral object indulge in a shifting ontology but all other things assembled with that object are forced to respond, alter and rearrange.

The Thing Refuses Categorization/ The Thing is the Harbinger of Category Crisis

A feral object is one that inherently thwarts attempts at categorization. That is because it is not what it should be. Cohen (1996) writes, "The monster always escapes because it refuses easy categorization" (p. 6). While it may look like a typical object of its type, it manifests wildly. Or it may operate within the domestic setting of the classroom, all the while denying the normalizing intentions of its environment. Cohen (1996) notes:

> This refusal to participate in the classificatory 'order of things' is true of monsters generally: they are disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bodies resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration. And so the monster is dangerous, a form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinctions. (p. 6)

For example, while a teacher may be tempted to place a zine into the literary genre suited to their current unit of study, the feral nature of zines will respond: "I can be whatever I want to be," as the format of zines transverses various genres and various intentions in its contemporary conception.

The Thing Dwells at the Gates of Difference

Feral objects demonstrate their wildness by being found useful to a classroom setting without relinquishing their true characteristics in the outside world. In my second chapter, I will explain further how zines originated out of the punk rock movement as a means of self-publishing, distributing anarchist ideas and are inherently political and counter-culture. As Ducombe (1997) writes, zines define "themselves against a society predicated on consumption, zinesters privilege the ethic of DIY, do-it-yourself: make your own culture and stop consuming that which is made for you" (p. 2). When a teacher introduces a zine into the domesticated classroom setting they are introducing a monstrous object with a wild history. While a zine might be watered-down, its message palatable rather than political, its monstrous history lingers. We can think these things (zines and others) as Cohen (1996) describes the monster "come to dwell among us. In its function as dialectical Other or third-term supplement, the monster is an incorporation of the Outside, the Beyond..." (p. 7). One might ask if it is appropriate to bring such counter-cultural objects into a setting intended to adapt its subjects to cultural norms. While students may be assigned to create zines in compliance with social norms there is always the potential for a zine to reveal otherwise, incorporating challenging topics from outside the classroom walls. The question of appropriateness takes on an urgent appeal when feral objects exhibit the potential for both domesticated and wild attributes.

The Thing Polices the Borders of the Possible

Students understand that the domesticating role the classroom serves in society. They understand the duality of their own lives: while you may not swear in the classroom, you fit in better if you do swear when failing to land a trick at the skate park. Objects also exhibit a dual (or multiple) ontology depending on the settings in which they are positioned. How mildly a

skateboard can rest, leaned against the back wall of the class boot room, with little indication of its engagement with wild associations. Along with feral objects, "every monster is in this way a double narrative, two living stories: one that describes how the monster came to be and another, its testimony detailing what cultural use the monster serves" (Cohen, 2011, p. 13). To some, that skateboard is a means of transportation or an artifact of cultural association, yet to others it is a symbol of disrespect and rebelliousness. Skateparks are constructed next to police stations indicating the need for constant surveillance. "No Skateboarding" signs are posted in precious cultural locations for fear of the concrete being shredded by the metal trucks of the board. Skateboards are loud, abrasive, and fast, working against the quiet, docile, and patient traits a classroom might encourage. Thus, a skateboard in a classroom behaves with different attributes, while its true, feral potentials vibrate throughout the school day. A skateboard may appear drastically out of space in the classroom, "the monster prevents mobility (intellectual, geographic, or sexual), delimiting the social spaces through which private bodies may move" (Cohen, 2011, p. 12). A glance towards the skateboard in the back of the room distracts from daily tasks. The rough, sparkling grip tape, graffiti-like stickers, and bold colors call out. Yet, students also know what riding that skateboard might imply. While it is "safe" in the classroom, the board brings students into the culture of skateboarding with all its injuries, competitions, parties, and artistic influences. The physical and social risks associated with skateboarding are know by most students, "its position at the limits of knowing, the monster stands as a warning against exploration of its uncertain demise" (Cohen, 2011, p. 12) should a student choose to engage with this object. The object in the classroom is a traveller; it's as if it says: "I can tell you about it; you don't need to go where I've been."

Fear of the Thing is Really a Kind of Desire

Drawing from Cohen (1996), Lewis and Kahn (2010) explicate the threat feralness poses to the classroom:

> the feral [object] is a pathological monster tainted or infested with animal gesticulations and desires that rupture the divisions between human and nonhuman producing equal mixtures of fear and desires that rupture the divisions between human and nonhuman producing equal mixtures of fear and desire that haunt the ontological purity of the community. (p. 15)

Here is the risk taken when things intended for life outside of the classroom are brought into the classroom: those things may suggest further exploration into a culture outside the norm. Zines expose outspoken counter-culture views. Skateboards can suggest a life of movement rather than settling down. Monsters in storybooks suggest a power held in contentious behaviour. As Cohen (1996) suggests, "the same creatures who terrify and interdict can evoke potent escapist fantasies; the linking of monstrosity with the forbidden makes the monster all the more appealing as a temporary egress from constraint" (p. 17). These feral objects suggest other means to get what one wants; it is a risk to introduce other means in a classroom set to limit behaviour to acceptable standards. These objects point to an escape out of the standardized but at what cost. Cohen (1996) warns, "Escapist delight gives way to horror only when the monster threatens to overstep these boundaries, to destroy or deconstruct the thin walls of category and culture" (p. 17). When the object introduced to the classroom oversteps its usefulness as an example of "real life," becoming a part of the classroom life with its wild sensibilities, a real threat is introduced as a blurring of acceptable standards of behaviour (or thought) cannot be strictly exclusive to the cultures with which these objects associate with.

The Thing Stands at the Threshold... of Becoming

These objects are invited into the classroom out of necessity but are often found unwelcome when they express their true wildness is expressed and impact the surroundings. In his final thesis on "Monster Culture" Cohen (1996) beautifully expresses what these monstrous objects pose to us. He writes:

> And when they come back, they bring not just a fuller knowledge of our place in history and the history of knowing our place, but they bear self-knowledge, *human* knowledge--and a discourse all the more sacred as it arises from the Outside. These monsters ask us how we perceive the world, and how we have misrepresented what we have attempted to place. (Cohen, 1996, p. 20)

We could speculate that these vibrating objects, as Bennett (2010) would express, pose a threat because of the imposing questions they suggest, pressing for introspection, jolting an honesty beyond propriety of what is truly taking place in the classroom. By the end, "the monster, as a sublime excess, must be dominated or tamed through colonial force or pedagogical intervention" (Lewis & Kahn, 2010, p. 6) and become something else inside the classroom. To remain in that domesticated space requires that a fixed ontology become fluid, capable of flux.

Moving on from Cohen (1996), Lewis and Kahn (2010) develop a method referred to as "exopedagogy" with the hopes of creating new narratives of absolute democracy and new practices of post humanist politics. By pointing to the research of Victor, the wolf-boy, they explain the "monster, as a sublime excess, must be dominated or tamed through colonial force or pedagogical intervention" (Lewis & Khan, 2010, p. 6). Not only does a feral object intervene in a classroom setting but it is also being intervened upon, as an attempt to draw the challenging

object into the discourse of civilized enlightenment. However, the monstrous object can never be completed tempered in enlightenment. Lewis and Kahn (2010) reference Cohen's work writing:

> Jeffrey Cohen (1999) argues that a little bit of the 'species-mingling flesh' of this creature 'is always found staining the 'domain of the subject' because 'the proximity of the monster is a formal necessity to keep in motion the identity-giving process of its continued exclusion'. (p. 6)

The feral object must always be kept at arm's length, should it be tempered, it is no longer the temptation and titillation it once was on the fringe of normality.

It is an "education out of bounds" that Lewis and Kahn (2010) are trying to determine. How can a pedagogy of purification could shift to an exopedagogy of encountering the exceptional, an education out of bounds? How does the monstrous function in a pedagogical setting and what transformation occurs to this space when wildness is introduced? They suggest their "exopedagogy" exists as the beyond, "whose location resides at the very limits of the recognizable... It is, in other words, a pedagogy that concerns the sudden appearance of 'strange facts'" (p. 11). The objects introduce new information along with their presence. The purity of the classroom pursuits can no longer be limited, however, these pursuits may still strive to purify the monstrous through pedagogical routines such as redescribing or re-ascribing new qualities to the object. Lewis and Khan (2010) write:

> Pedagogy is the re-presentation of the example (the model citizen, the fully humanized subject, the revolutionary proletariat, or the student) whereas exopedagogy is the *representation of the exceptional* (the monster that emerges from the uninhabitable hinterlands of the community). (p. 12)

The Classroom Accommodates, Yet Domesticates, the Monstrous

While the power of the feral object may be apparent, when it enters a classroom space the feral object is only one of many things assembled to complete the pedagogical pursuit of socializing students. The classroom space itself needs to be examined as an assemblage of many "ad hoc groupings of diverse elements" (p. 23-24) as Bennett (2010) would describe. She writes, "Assemblages are not governed by any central head: no one materiality or type of material has sufficient competence to determine consistently the trajectory or impact of the group" (Bennett, 2010, p. 24). This is why there is constant tension maintained around a feral object. It has been brought into the classroom, yet there is an uneasiness about its presence. Its influence has yet to be determined. Its potential to be influenced (its fluidity) is also yet to be determined. As the domesticating project unfolds upon the object, its wildness may succumb or assert its ontological otherness. Even though the energies of all subjects and objects within the domesticating process may be confounded, the classroom functions, even if it has been distorted.

When Lewis and Kahn (2010) describe their exopedagogical curriculum they are trying to account for the monstrous and its impact. It is the attempt to organize the exceptional. They write, "Schools betray the monstrous multitude as an unruly beast that must be tamed and gentrified through either sacrifice or separation" (Lewis & Khan, 2010, p. 11). However, rather than tame these objects that introduce students to wildness, Lewis and Kahn imagine a classroom where the monstrous finds an assemblage in which it fits. They embrace the contamination and the dynamic forces that accompany these objects. They celebrate the dislocation these objects may introduce to a static and settled pedagogy. As noted by Lewis and Khan (2010), "The exopedagogical 'classroom' (whether imaginary or material) is a home, but not a 'safe' or 'comforting' retreat where the human subject can find privacy and repose with other likeminded

friends and family against the noise of the rabble outside" (p. 13). Instead, the classroom becomes a dynamic situation where what is known and expected becomes unknown and unexpected. It becomes a network of challenging encounters in which all things must accept the changes encountered by which other things might bestow on them.

The feral object presents a conundrum in the classroom. Although its disruptive nature within the structure of a lesson brings a certain appeal, there is a line of trepidation where the feral object becomes problematic, where its allure and wild nature is revered by the students beyond the simple object lesson. Citing Bonnie Honig (2003), Lewis and Kahn (2010) write, "the community needs the myth of the foreign founder to unify citizens under the law, this unity is also threatened by the existence of the foreigner--or in our case, the existence of the nonhuman animal (creaturely life) as the final residuum of the monstrous stranger" (p. 43). The allure of the foreign is what entices us to introduce these objects into a present assemblage. However, its threat to manifest its wild nature is real and often our reaction is an attempt to soften its harsh edges prior to introducing it to the students. It is as though we attempt the exorcism on the object Lewis and Kahn describe. By placing them in a classroom, perhaps the true intent is to exert the social immunization not only on the students but also on the things they may encounter in the "real" world. There will always be an attempt to re-domesticate the object in an attempt to re-establish the hierarchical order of humans and things, with humans "in control" because of their uniqueness. Here I turn briefly to McLean-Ferris (2013) in her critique of the inability for objects to care in an attempt to reestablish a hierarchy of ontologies. She critiques the various object oriented fascinations at the 2013 Venice Biennale in her article "Indifferent Objects". However, both Bogost (2012) and Bennett (2010) would argue that objects do possess agency. Objects do hold the capacity to influence what/whomever the object interacts with, agency must be

understood in this basic ontological rearrangement. Agency is not necessarily indicative of power or a hierarchy. Humans are still susceptible to powers outside of their control, events or interactions, "acts of god", all these must be acknowledged as possible moments where human agency is not hierarchical.

Others would look to language as a tool of domestication (Lewis & Kahn, 2010) and a distinctive characteristic of what possesses influence in a domesticated environment. That which possesses language possesses the power of persuasion. Verbalization is equated to the ultimate evidence of domestication. Lewis and Khan (2010) write, "[Itard] insisted Victor verbally speak, for to speak was to enter the human and expunge the wolf" (p. 51). In an attempt to domesticate a thing, we offer codified language to it. We speak for the thing, analysing and categorizing. In fact, a thing must cross the boundaries we have codified in order to be considered by humans as feral, returning to wild ways. In a classroom, we, as teachers, want students to write and articulate affective responses to these feral objects as mean of domestication and "making safe" the foreign object in the world.

Others (Baudrillard, 1983; Clark, 1996) would see the lack of language as the precise tool a feral thing might employ to subvert a hierarchical imbalance. Without the use of language "things have found a way to elude the dialectic of meaning, a dialectic which bored them: they did this by outmatching their essence, by going to extremes, and by obscenity which henceforth has become their immanent purpose and insane justification" (Baudrillard, 1983, p. 185). Things employ an "insane," monstrous, wild, feral way of being outside of articulated rationale which disrupts our coded, articulated way of understanding the world. I will further discuss this in my coming chapters, as zines can rely on images, rather than text, to elicit reader response. The

Wild Things often resorted to roaring their "terrible roars" and the Stick Figures are mute, but not without power.

If one is able to exorcise an object, this immunization only serves as a temporary suppression of the unmanageable. However, Lewis and Kahn (2010) wisely point out what this truly does is create a "fault line between the positive power of normality/abnormality and the negative power of sovereignty that defines the immunization paradigm" (p. 49). These things become divided and, one might ask, if the subjects engaging with these objects in such a sterilized environment also enter into a divided knowing of them. In the case of the wolf-boy, "...the ban [on the wolf-boy as a site of indistinction between human and animal both sustained and disavowed by the anthropological machine] remains within the biopedagogical through which the subject of education becomes a divided subject (a melancholic werewolf)" (p. 48). However, in the case of the exopedagogical classroom, this division may not be as pervasive because the ban of the negative would not be supported. Engagement with a feral object would simply become an extension or morphology of one's ontology.

The remainder of this thesis paper will offer several meditations, or a strategy of "ontography" as Bogost (2012, p. 36-38) would suggest, in hopes of examining the "confounding" (Bennett, 2010) assemblages in a classroom. Each of my ontographical meditations will select one object of interest and map out the relations, transformations, and activities present in the classroom in regards to this object's agency. Bogost (2012) notes:

> Like a space probe sent out to record, process, and report information, the alien phenomenologist's carpentry seeks to capture and characterize an experience it can never fully understand, offering a rendering satisfactory enough to allow the artifact's operator to gain some insight into an alien thing's experience. (p. 100)

CHAPTER II

ZINE MACHINES

Zines

Zines have shifted in format and intention over the years. For now, any small-format, self-published work could be identified as a zine. Images, as well as written text, comprise pages which are easily, and cheaply, reproduced. According to deGravelles (2011):

> Zines are notoriously difficult to define because their range of textual and physical forms is broad, and much of what makes a zine a zine is embedded in the circumstances of its production, which may or may not be visible in the final product. (p. 70)

This difficulty in categorizing zines helps to maintain their subversive nature. The subculture and/or community they emerge from point to the social forces at work through this object.

In order to demonstrate to my students what a zine is in a classroom context, I present them with a variety of over fifty zines brought into the classroom from my own home library. As they read through them, students are asked to identify common traits or approaches to communication observed, with the task of creating their own zine in mind. Beyond the content of the zine, students observe the aesthetic make-up of the zines. For example, students identify the use of images and words, or different modes of binding and how this impacts the aesthetics of the zine. My students know their zines will be political in nature as it will connect to a topic further researched after reading the novel *The Breadwinner* (Ellis, 2000). This novel is set in Afghanistan during the Taliban regime. It is my hope their zines will function as a practice of re-imagining the future of Afghanistan through a hopeful lens as students research the innovative thinking emerging in Afghanistan over the past few years such as contemporary artist Aman Mojadidi (2012), Olympic runner Robina Muqimyar (2004), or inventor Massoud Hassani

(2013). Just as deGravelles (2011) suggests, "Through this oppositionality and presentation of an alternative, all zines are tied to a project of critique and a re-envisioning, or world-making, that makes them public, political acts" (p. 73). The design of my students' zines are required to be easily reproduced so that their research and opinions on a specific topic can be distributed to those in their circles of influence. Rather than presenting a typical North American perspective of a war-torn Afghanistan, students are required to dig deeper and reimagine what Afghanistan could become with the influence of positive innovations. The importance of these zines as classroom objects is that they work towards connections between the students' experience in Leduc and what they have learned about life in Afghanistan by researching their own topics but also by reading each other's zines as they exchange them. According to Piepmeier (2009):

> In an age of electronic media, when the future of the book itself is often called into question, and when the visual and textual landscape is dominated by an increasingly voracious culture industry, zines endure... Zines instigate intimate, affectionate connections between their creators and readers, not just communities but what I am calling *embodied* communities, made possible by the materiality of the zine medium. (p. 58)

For some students living in Leduc, the creation of a zine functions as a movement away from their own ignorance regarding Afghanistan as their zines connect them as readers and creators. Peipmeier's embodied community extends beyond Leduc; the medium of zines making a further connection possible. As deGravelles notes (2011), "Abstract political issues like globalization, gentrification, censorship, and the consolidation of media are made concrete through anecdotes and personal responses" (p. 74). The students' zines remain as concrete representations of past conflicts, present-day realities, as well as hopes for the future. The author's imprint on a zine, the

scrawl of their writing, the personalized drawings, each small touch is sensed from the time the zine was created to the present. Peipmeier (2009) notes that the zine,

> is an object that communicates and conveys generosity and kindness, and that function is inextricably connected to the zine's vulnerability. It isn't an art object or a consumer item, kept at a remove from the human body; rather, it is supposed to get 'dirty and ratty and torn' in someone's pocket, get warm and worn. The reader can revisit it, and although the text will stay the same, the artifact itself will change in subtle ways, like a body itself. (p. 76)

Origins of Zines

The history of zines is enmeshed with the history of self-publication because, at its most basic, a zine is a piece of literature, writing and illustrations combined, which is self-published. This makes the object of a zine inherently political and intentionally enigmatic. deGravelles (2011) cites everyone from Martin Luther, 18th-century American pamphleteers, the Dadaists, and Soviet dissidents all as setting the precedence for self-publication. Beyond this, deGravelles (2011) explains, "The most standard history, and the one that explains the name 'zines,' links the medium to a tradition of science fiction 'fanzines' dating back to the 1930s" (p. 64). These were publications created by fans and cultural producers, sent to each other as a means of further discussing the science fiction novel worlds. This bit of historical information is important as the term "'zine' short for 'fanzine' implies an evolution of a distinctive, independent form that grows out of a particular personalized relationship with cultural products— and a challenge to who has the authority to create cultural products and for what purposes" (deGravelles, 2011, p.

65). Self-publication is really about the common person holding the power to produce ideas meaningful to them, regardless of the appeal of their message to the broader public.

As they exist in public spaces, zines have traditionally been placed in a space outside of the mainstream. Being a self-published medium they often provide opportunities for ideas and expressions that would be hard pressed to find commercial publication for the general publishing industry. From political manifestos to punk and queer communities, zines have traditionally found a following from the niche margins of social groups. As described by Batey (2010):

> The term 'zine' (short for magazine or fanzine) became popular during the 1970s and is used to refer generally to self-published pamphlets, magazines and leaflets. They were brought to prominence during the '20s and '30s with many science fiction fanzines being produced. Zines became a way for groups and individuals sidelined by mainstream publishing to communicate with each other. There are examples of 'zine' like publications appearing from the 18th century onwards. Zines currently are still often assumed to be associated with punk, riot Grrrl or science fiction. (p. 4)

However, there are now an abundance of zines to be found in art galleries and stationery shops as well. Although the zine-culture has been gentrified over time, the profundity of the potential power of self-publication remains in every zine produced and distributed.

In the 1970s, this became even more significant as the Punk movement began to grow. As deGravelles (2011) notes, "Punk rock music and culture in the 1970s introduced new interest in amateurism through the philosophy of "do it yourself" (DIY)... fans of punk adapted the format of sci-fi fanzines and began creating fanzines about bands, documenting, participating in, and even creating this underground culture" (p. 66). Zines became mediums for large, counter-culture movements to express their ideas regardless of how (un)popular these ideas were. In their

origins, this was the power zines held. As they have popularized since the 70s, the question becomes, can they still hold this same untethered freedom of expression? Particularly in a classroom, what are the problems that come with introducing the feral object of a zine to an environment where all things are to pass as "school appropriate"?

There is a space, between the students' work and what the reader gains from the zine, that Morton (2013) calls *interobjectivity*. With this term, we are able to examine not only the function of zines, but the function of the ideas inside the zines as objects themselves, as well as the mind and physical brain of the reader as they processes the ideas presented in a zine. Morton (2013) takes interest in the physical brain and its responses in the context of inter objective relations, including ideas. Morton (2013) distinguishes the two terms with "intersubjectivity as a concept excludes the media that organize and transmit human information, such as classrooms, cell phones, and markets. Or paper and ink and writing" (p. 82). Zines can be understood as inter objective systems of words, images, paper, pencil and ink that work to produce ideas. Here, zines become an ideal example of ideas manifesting independent of the intersubjective interpretations at any moment in time. In this sense of intersubjectivity (Morton, 2013), I would like to examine: What potential does the act of self-publishing offer to students' within the ecology of a classroom?

The Deleuzian Machine

In addition to Morton's (2013) concept of interobjectivity, I will also work with the Deleuzian concepts of assemblages and machines, specifically literary machines, in an attempt to describe a zine-machine by which a flow of new ideas might be produced in tangible forms. In *Proust and Signs* (2000), Deleuze writes, "From the moment *it works*: the modern work of art is

a machine and functions as such.... Why a machine? Because the work of art, so understood, is essentially productive--productive of certain truths" (p. 145-146). Zines function as literature and art and are designed to produce truths, political or otherwise. They function in subcultures as a method of truth distribution and idea sharing. Zines are machines in the way that each time they are read and encountered a truth and perspective is produced for the reader. The zine-machine functions when a particular zine is assembled with a particular reader and produces a certain affect. The effect produced can differ each time. Nixon (2012) argues:

> The term 'machine' functions to allow Deleuze (and Guattari) to analyze and understand the productive material connections that exist between elements and components that may otherwise be theorized separately, or rely on a problematic subject/object dualism in which the human subject is treated as a transcendent master. (p. 109)

In the case of the zine-machine, the concept of the machine allows the zine to be thought as a powerful object unto itself. Its power to produce ideas, whether read or not by a human subject, can be further analyzed. Nixon (2012) further notes, "the concept of 'machine' opens up the possibility of understanding production without relying on a theory of the subject" (p. 109). What is important to understand about zines is that they exist as objects themselves, with potential held within, regardless of how often they are read or by whom. Joy (2012) argues for the sentience of texts, "Texts are, in some sense, *alive*, while at the same time they are, even while produced by humans, utterly inhuman" (p. 163). Their existence alone introduces new potentials for those things that would assemble with them.

Zines and Socio-material function

What streams are zines flowing in according to Deleuzian thought? How does the social ecology surrounding a zine affect its potential flows of energy between one thing and another? The zine is a product of "social forces not the biological" (Bryant, 2015, p. 12). In order for this freedom of expression and circulation to flow, an ecology with minimal social constraints must be present in a classroom setting. While the zine machine generally functions within its own subculture, something is disrupted when that same object-as-machine is introduced to the ecology of a classroom. One must recognize the classroom as very different from a zinester's living room, an artist run centre, or a zine fair held in the basement of a bar. These secular spaces are unregulated and uncensored environments where zines exist freely and can be read and exchanged freely; a zine machine is not limited in how many things it can assemble with. The ecology of a secular zine-exchange is not laden by commercial expectations of profitability. Collections of zines may fill a table, zinesters and non-zine authors may peruse through the zines initially, mingling to discuss the content of the zines but also turning to the broader topics introduced to the environment by the zines. Old friends catch-up and new acquaintances are made. It is a place of personal connections and assembling with other things.

Classrooms exist, however, as their own sort of ecologies, assemblages upon assemblages. An intricate web of desks, chairs, shelving, whiteboards, posters, students and teachers make up this ecology. Its continuous connections can be studied as a social ecology; however, the subjects present only make up part of this web, as the things in this classroom must also be taken into consideration. What's interesting about this particular ecology is the way it attempts to prevent certain things or ideas from entering. A tame equilibrium is eagerly maintained as ideologies that might challenge this domestic balance are carefully blocked out.

Websites containing inappropriate material are blocked, t-shirts depicting illicit material are banned, and books containing questionable ideas are not to be found in the docile classroom. While all these things do exist in the secular world beyond the classroom, this learning environment functions as an insular web. When it comes to designing, writing, and creating zines, this implied requirement of "school appropriate" ideas complexifies a medium that has generally been used as a support to social liberation. But, in comparison to secular venues, how much liberation is possible in the constricted ecology of the classroom?

In her book *Zines in third space: Radical cooperation and borderlands rhetoric*, Adela Licona (2012) discusses how "a focus on third-space zines illuminates the sites, subjectivities, and (discursive) practices of resistance undertaken to generate alternative knowledges" (p. 3). While the concept of third space is useful to understand these zine-machines as operating outside the mainstream, one must acknowledge there are more than simply first, second, and third spaces. In fact, the Deleuzian (1989) assemblages, that create these zine-machines, imply/necessitate a multiplicity of "spaces" where assemblages branch out and the zine-machine continues to produce new flows. The indeterminate nature of a zine implies that it can shift or assemble with other objects to move throughout an ecology, becoming new renditions of a zine-machine. These spaces "are both indeterminate and constructive. They are constructed by and they construct geographies, histories, embodied subjectivities, and borderlands rhetorics" (Licona, 2012, p. 12). In Licona's description we see that the zines she has determined in a third space are very ready to become a part of various new ecologies as they assemble with a variety of topics, rhetorics, or dialogues. In this paper, I will take the term "third space" not to imply a binary understanding of a zine's function within an assemblage of other fixed things, but I will use the term to imply the potential of a zine to move beyond an anticipated fixed identity into a

space of multiple potentials dependent upon an open ecology in which the zine may assemble with a variety of other things (objects, topics, ideas, aesthetics) to create new zine-machines. Zines function as material aspects of subcultures that remain even as a subculture wanes in popularity or social acceptance.

Adding to this potential is the fact that the format of zines has never been defined; in fact experimenting with the format is apparent in the creation process. There is an understanding that a zine will be made by the author and bound with care. Those are the only constraints. deGravelles (2011) explores this liberty by interviewing several "zinesters". She confirms:

> [I]n addition to a space in which zinesters experience freedom and control, [Angela] Asbell describes zines' "radical space" as a critical space… 'because commercial/mass media does not represent our reality, zines create a space for subversive ideas.' Again, this connects to counterpublics as places where, in Fraser's definition, participants 'formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs.' (deGravelles, 2011, p. 102)

For the creator, a zine becomes a space of exploration, experimentation and re-imagining. It is an opportunity for ideas to be legitimized without remaining static.

Zines become spaces where personal experience and status quos are questioned. Whether it is a Punk manifesto suggesting an alternative way to live or my students questioning the denial of education for girls living in Afghanistan, zines advance new lines of flight away from the status quo. As feral objects, they resist popular publications that would suggest narrow ways to understand the public policies and war in Afghanistan. Massey (2005) points out, "Space is a relational production, which is to say a product of social relations and thus necessarily political. Space emerges through active material practices. It is never complete, never finished" (p. 11). In

this way, Massey points to the active practice of creating and making zines, many zines. Constantly changing, the relations brought about by interaction with zines continually shifts, as Morton (2013) would suggest through his concept of "interobjectivity". An examination of the physical aspects of a zine might serve to point to the potentials it may hold.

Zines in my Classroom

A classroom can be thought as a place where students become better future citizens. It is a place that supposedly enlightens them to the "good" in our world. There are, then, many topics that are unwelcome in a classroom because they are considered inappropriate to this sanitized setting. Sex and lawlessness are examples of prevalent topics in our pop culture that become sanitized when placed in a classroom. Sex is discussed clinically in school using charts and graphs while it is discussed glamorously or violently in our pop culture with metaphors of lollypops, anacondas, and other explicit lyrics. Lawlessness, in an unregulated and uncensored environment, exists simply as people cheating on their taxes or smoking illegal substances. Rarely are these people prosecuted. There is a social expectation that classrooms should be domesticated from this sort of wild, secular world.

In my example of my students' zines, I offer a zine-machine introduced into the ecology of a classroom by a teacher. What tension is produced by this sort of introduction? A classroom culture is often defined by its restraints with students consistently held accountable to rules. Furniture is set to direct where students' focus is expected to be. Visual aids poster the walls with checklists as reminders of elements essential to include in assignments. Due dates cover the whiteboard, reminding students their labour is accountable to specific time frames. Rubrics specify the parameters of students' creative work. The teacher's collection bucket and marking

roster signify the exchange of currency as students' labour, object production, and assessment converts what was produced into the abstract currency of percentage grades, letter grades, and transcripts. What new flows does this machine begin to produce? The ecology of a classroom functions quite differently.

Rather than a fluid potentiality, a general creative project may hold, projects created in classrooms often become fixed into an assessment assemblage. A rubric predetermines and fixes what the project must become. Rubrics create a market exchange, as any other capitalist exchange occurs, in the way the project connects with rubrics in exchange for grades, resulting in a zine-machine of repetition. These classroom-centric zine-machines earn grades as currency rather than money, however, much of Colebrook's (2006) reasoning around money, capitalism and labour rings true, "In capitalism labour is exchanged for money, and to this extent human time becomes *measured by money*, so that it is a measure of time" (p. 86). In a classroom, time becomes measured by grades. Time in a classroom is spent, primarily, completing fixed tasks required as a generalized project. Colebrook (2006) writes, "Money allows the temporal deferral of exchange and value--no longer what they are in themselves or according to my needs, but what they might be worth for all others entering the system" (p. 86). In contrast to interactions and responses to zines presented at a zine fair or exchange where relational and affective responses are created and valued, the zine as a classroom project is valued only according to the criteria of the assignment. It's no wonder, as Colebrook (2006) writes, "we no longer subject our lives *to* some value, becoming slaves of the despot, for our lives *are* the only value: so many hours of productive life, with desires for nothing other than the flows of capital" (p. 86). How might zine-machines still work to produce the freedom that would follow from a secular zine-exchange within the constrained ecology of a classroom?

One of the most powerful depictions of domestication is through the rubric created to assess a zine created in a classroom setting. Along with this rubric, a heavy reliance on text is often insisted upon. While zines generally consist of both images and words, sometimes using the two in powerful juxtaposition, image-based expression is often unwelcome or demoted as a lower form of communication when assessed for educational purposes. It should be considered, while images can serve as art, they can also serve as visual communication, which rely on images as signifiers. Images as signifiers are somewhat easier to assess traditionally as symbols; however, their affective power may be lessened by the need for explicit communication.

Lewis and Kahn (2010) have done some interesting work on the correlation between verbalization (explicit communication) and domestication. While zines may enter into a classroom as powerfully wild objects, unrestrained by cultural norms, a rubric can quickly tame them to engage in a "socially acceptable" manner described by Lewis and Kahn (2010) in their analysis of the wolf-boy Victor. Describing the doctor working to domesticate the wolf-boy they write, "He insisted Victor verbally speak, for to speak was to enter the human and expunge the wolf" (Lewis & Khan, 2010, p. 51). A similar desire may be expressed in a rubric for a zine assignment. In an attempt to domesticate an object, we offer codified language to it. We speak for the object, analysing and categorizing it through the lens of a rubric. In fact, an object must cross these domesticated boundaries we have codified again in order to find a feral power. It is this profundity that I want to explore. Why does the profundity seem to evaporate, becoming mundane, as soon as this medium is commodified as a pedagogical project? Why does the potency of a writer's message lose its strength when submitted to an educator to be marked? Is it possible for these *things* to maintain their independence and agency within traditional school walls?

Bryant (2015) suggests objects "satellite" around "bright[er] machines" (p. 22). By introducing a zine to the context of a classroom, the zine ceases to function as what Bryant deems "rogue machines" (p. 23) as one might observe, for example, in the setting of a secular zine fair. In a classroom setting, the zine is held in orbit by the gravity of academic achievement throughout the reproduction of assigned criteria. Thus, some of the free flow of ideas present in the interactions at a zine-fair are restricted in the setting of a classroom. Of course, the (potential) pedagogical benefits do not come without risks to the ecology of a domesticated classroom and this is important to consider, as it may lead to an understanding as to why the temptation to domesticate the truth-telling power of zines in the classroom hovers over these projects.

Presenting itself not without complications, this transformative power can be found in another example of when my junior high students created zines about the challenges of immigration within the context of my Language Arts lessons. In order to collect information for their zines about the topic of immigration, students were encouraged to explore their surroundings and imagine it from the point of view of an immigrant. Students also had the opportunity to interview five students from their own community and collect these responses along with other artifacts to include in their zines. While students were fully engaged in the interviews, the collecting, and the assembling of ideas and artifacts, their final publications lacked something: their own ideas. The constraints of the research assignment had left students with little inspiration to speak to the issue themselves. In the end, they begged to work with zines more often in the classroom but with the desire to use them as a way to express their own viewpoints and experiences. deGravelles (2011) explains this tension:

> Zine pedagogy, which I define here as reading and creating zines in the classroom, becomes in these works both a radical possibility and an ethical problem, representing

> both the power to create alternative worlds and the threat of neutralizing that power by containing it within an institutional setting. (p. 184)

While the research assignment students engaged in was a beneficial practice, asking students to encapsulate their findings in a counter-culture medium limited the work.

What is lost in the domestication of the craft? In my students' experience, it was the loss of their voices; the creative medium lacked creative expression of their own ideas as their research assignment limited their own perspective. A simple extension of the assignment to include their perspective on how the immigration process could be improved or humanized may have led to greater social awareness or potential subversion of conventionally accepted thought. The need for the physical and human connection without fixed criteria as a method of domestication becomes apparent.

Zine Machines

How does one ask questions regarding the "beingness" of ideas, abstract thoughts embodied and manifested in the form of a self-published zine? How does engaging in this work liberate the pupil? Is "liberation" really possible in the constraints of an educational assignment? Morton (2013) suggests the theory of "interobjectivity provides a space that is ontologically 'in front of' objects in which phenomena such as what is called *mind* can happen... the way in which nothing is ever experienced directly, but only as mediated through other entities in some shared sensual space" (p. 85-86). The zine can function in this way as a mediation for students' ideas. It is a system of the reader's brain, the reader's eyes, coming into contact with the images and words bound in sequence by pages carefully arranged by the zinester's hands and mind.

While some are, most zines are not made for commercial gain and often cost more for the author (or collective) to make them than for their sale price. Zines are often traded within a community of other zine makers. As Peipmeier (2009) notes, "Many of these factors--a personalized human connection, informality, the evidence of the creator's hand-come together in ways zines are transferred from the zinester to the reader..." (p. 74). Zine-machines, connected by the collage of personal touches to paper, draw on their author's flows (Bryant, 2015, p. 7), physically and intellectually, as they are created. Zine-machines draw on a new reader's flows as the reader turns the pages, taking in, not only the new ideas, but also as their fingers graze the photocopied pages, the patterns and textures of the text stimulate the reader's eyes, provoking and eliciting the affective responses of the reader.

What distinct potential for interobjective relations is held by zine-machines in various ecologies? Zines are not simply representations of abstract ideas. Rather, as Deleuze and Guatarri (1987) note:

> A text is a sentient object... Contrary to a deeply rooted belief, the book is not an image of the world. It forms a rhizome with the world, there is an aparallel evolution of the book and the world; the book assures the deterritorialization of the world, but the world effects a reterritorialization of the book, which in turn deterritorializes itself in the world (if it's capable, if it can). (p. 11)

The physical components of the zine-machine embody a physical experience linked with abstract ideas. While this format of text and images presents some information, other ideas are, at the same time, always implied as being withheld. Peipmeier (2009) writes,

> Clearly, when we read books, we really read *books*--that is, we read the physicality or materiality of the book as well as and in relation to the text itself. Literacy, then, may be

> said to include not only textual competence but material competence, an ability to read the semiotics of the concrete forms that embody, shape and condition the meanings of texts. Bindings, illustrations, paper, typeface, layout, advertisements, scholarly introductions promotional blurbs--all function as parts of semiotic system, parts of the total meaning of a text. (p. 61)

The materiality of a book or zine speaks to its own ontology, independent of a person; a zine does not need a reader in order to contribute to the ecology of a classroom or to function within an assemblage in an educational setting.

Why does the profundity of the potential of a zine seem to evaporate, becoming mundane, as soon as this medium is commodified as a classroom project? What new states or becomings are produced in a zine machine that is created within an ecology of a classroom? The counter-cultural pursuits of a zine become complicated the moment it enters into the ecology of a traditional classroom. Here the counter-culture power held by a zine is called into question as soon as it must submit itself to the regulated classroom experience. Zines hold power not just through the physical experience they offer but also through the countercultural ideas they generally put forward. Many of my students choose to create zines questioning the limited rights of girls and women living in Afghanistan; some students go as far as to question the ideals held by the Taliban. Inspired by what they have read in novels and news articles, these students promote ways of thinking counter to the religious culture lived out by many in Afghanistan.

Ideas are also things and Morton (2013), very helpfully, unpacks how these ideas function through *interobjectivity* and, one can imagine, the interaction of things within the ecology of a classroom, which contains both abstract information and students' minds reasoning through this information and ideas. Morton (2013) states:

> What is called *intersubjectivity*-- a shared space in which human meaning resonates-- is a small region of a much larger interobjective configuration space. Hyperobjects disclose *interobjectivity*. The phenomenon we call intersubjectivity is just a local, anthropocentric instance of a much more widespread phenomenon, namely *interobjectivity*. (p. 83)

The ideas prompted in zines are hyperobjects that hold influence over a subject's mind and, possibly, the subject themself within the greater ecology of a plethora of interactions in the classroom. Morton (2013) further argues, "What is called a *subject* and what is called *mind* just are interobjective effects, emergent properties of relationships between enmeshed objects" (p. 84). Once a student has read a zine, those ideas can become enmeshed within their mind and can also hold power to affect a subject's body or what they understand as their own self. As an attempt to grapple with the objectification of ideas, Joy (2012) writes:

> Texts are objects that possess vibrant materiality; they are 'quasi forces' that posses something like 'tendencies of their own.' They possess thing-power, and as much as they are able, they strive in the words of Spinoza, to 'persist in existing'. (p. 162)

Joy suggests acknowledging an ethic of interdependence amongst all objects present. Rather than acknowledging only the impact of human-to-human interaction in a classroom, one must also acknowledge the multiple interactions present.

CHAPTER III

WILD THINGS IN THE WILDERNESS

While books sit on the shelf they appear to be harmless. Students are often surprised to learn how many of the books in their tame classroom were once censored for content, feared to be too explicit for children to engage in. As soon as students learn about the history of censorship it would seem a dare is set; while it inspires some risk takers to engage wholeheartedly with the story, other students engage with hesitation. I will focus this chapter's meditation on the impact of Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963) on my grade seven students. This children's picture book sits on the shelf of my classroom unassumingly, its spine barely showing amongst the rows of age-appropriate novels. Yet, it was once lobbied to be censored and pulled off of the bookshelves of homes, libraries, and schools (Lanes, 1998, p. 104) due to the portrayal of the protagonist, Max's, unruly behaviour and the scary nature of the monsters. When I reveal this history, some of my students question, "Do we dare read a book so controversial and disruptive?" To read the book implies aligning oneself with the disruptive power that was feared would "induce nightmares in children or be psychologically harmful in other ways..." (Lanes, 1998, p. 104). Such a provocative object can become a tunnel to an alternate ontology; it can become a necessary source of interaction to an alternative way of being.

In this chapter, I argue that *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963) serves as a potentially subversive transport from fixed ontologies, and a known world, to a plane of immanence where becoming, and the new potentials it enables, is possible. It is my claim that this book functions not as a transcendent system of thought, instead, it exists, in our materiality, as reference to a sort of plane of immanence as described by Deleuze and Guattari (1987). The book exemplifies immanence in the Deleuzian sense, where objects and their function are

regulated through desire and deterritorialization from the educational institution by which it is initially introduced to students, including my own.

Immanence in the Art

When we look beyond the human participants to the participation of the things in the classroom, how can Deleuze's concepts of immanence and difference help to reveal some of the interobjective (Morton, 2013) engagement? As a Language Arts teacher, the participation of books in the classroom is of great interest to me. Not only do the characters and stories live on in my students' memories, but the physical book sits on my shelf year after year and each time it is opened its potential to affect change is within reach. A book may be fixed in time, what is printed on the pages does not change, however, its influence is continually pervasive, returning to each new group of students to offer new influence in the context of their lives. It can remain on a shelf for a period of time, undiscovered, waiting with potential to evoke a powerful deterritorialization in the identity of a reader. The book's potential occupies a space in the classroom which becomes more pervasive as more readers access its pages. Stories such as *1984* (Orwell, 1949) or *The Crucible* (Miller, 1971) suggest new ways of being in the world by portraying characters who become nomadic, wandering far from the condoned normative behaviour of their setting. In this chapter I focus on *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963) as a story that holds potential to influence its reader by depicting illustrations and a narrative about Max, a boy, who leaves his home life behind him to pursue a new way of being among Wild Things. I argue his journey to the land where the Wild Things are is one of Deleuzian (1987) deterritorialization. Max transitions through the production of what Delueze (1987) would describe as holey space, "a preparatory zone for all kinds of bodies-in-becoming" (Wallin, 2010, p. 131). From his striated domestic home, Max transitions to "a smooth space for escape"

(Wallin, 2010, p. 132) alongside the Wild Things. Referencing the longtime philosophical debate between transcendence and materialism, I argue Sendak's story palpates a plane of immanence as part of Max's journey in the land where the Wild Things are.

Before I think through the deterritorialization of a reader's mode of thought, it is important to acknowledge Deleuze's (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) critique of, what he called, an arborescent schema in relation to the philosophical debate regarding transcendence, materialism, and immanence:

> Immanence and transcendence are terms about the relations that hold at the heart of different metaphysics. Are the privileged relations in a philosophy of the form of a relation 'to' something, or of a relation 'in' something? If it is 'to' then it is philosophy of transcendence. If it is 'in' then it is immanence. Deleuze is radical about immanence, that is, his philosophy is to be thought strictly in terms of relations 'in'. (Williams, 2005, p. 126)

When thought through an arborescent schema, it's understandable why elements of Where the Wild Things Are (1963) were considered controversial as Max's journey is truly one of chaos typical of a plane of immanence. This chaos serves as a direct threat to the order moralistic modes of thought strive against. If we were to consider that literature should imbue morality, the generally accepted idea of Sendak's day, we could think moral education as at the top of an arborescent schema. The arborescent schema contains "typically, at its top, some immutable concept given prominence either by transcendental theorising or unthinking presumption" (Stagoll, 2005, p. 13). Moral literature could function as an immutable concept that may have led to the assumption that children's literature should be wholesome, not scary. With the idea in mind, the expectation might be a story book should produce a life lesson, suggesting how

children ought to behave. Thinking through this arborescent schema, the child would be immovably positioned as a body which does not act beyond what is socially or morally acceptable. This moralizing schematic operates within many children's books, imposing moral values on behaviours and informing cultural attitudes for how children ought to behave. As Stagoll (2005) notes, "The individual... is conceived as less important, powerful, productive, creative or interesting than the transcendent" (p. 13) placing morality as a virtue all literature must appease. This, of course, would prove to be a narrow view of children, since there are many who do not take their moral cues from books.

The typical children's book does not perform against its role as moral education and guidance for children. This is what was particularly disconcerting in Sendak's work, his story opened his readers a potential line of flight by depicting a child who was disrespectful or "out of control" (Jonze, 2009). Sendak's character's behaviour is what gives this book its undeniably unpredictable, or chaotic, potential. Lewis and Khan (2010) note, "Maurice Sendak's iconic book *Where the Wild Things Are* (1964) presents the story of Max, King of the Wild Things, who dresses in wolf's clothing in order to cross the sacred boundary that separates men from beasts" (p. 42). This is what sets the storybook and film of *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963) apart as feral in the assemblages of a classroom, or as Bennett (2010) would term the "ecology" of a classroom as "an interconnected series of parts, but not a fixed order of parts, for the order is always being reworked in accordance with a certain 'freedom of choice' exercised by its actants" (p. 96-97). Typical children's literature maintains within the bounds of an arborescent structure of socially acceptable behaviour and works to produce well-behaved children, however, it has been argued *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963) does not.

Introducing an illustrated children's storybook into a junior high Language Arts classroom is controversial as literature is often categorized as high and low. High literature, with hundreds of pages of text and no illustrations aside from the front cover, would be suitable to academic work. Low literature would include items such as graphic novels, comics, zines, and children's books, which are fine reading for pleasure, but are often not taken seriously enough to devote time in the academic calendar for their study. Schooling is concerned with a somewhat linear progress as students move from simplistic literature to low literature to higher forms of literature in their development of literacy skills. Within this arboreal schematic, low literature becomes marginalized as students' literacy skills develop past these literary forms. The content and language are deemed below a certain developmental capability and are thus marginalized. There is often a hierarchy to literature in the classroom and illustrated children's storybooks that do not present an example of moral behaviour fall far short of traditional accepted academic works.

We could think moral education as part of an arborescent transcendental tradition, which would value the acquisition of knowledge and the rationalization of life, Deleuze's plane of immanence seeks an alternative to this image of thought, transcendent in nature, which is "essentially dogmatic and moral" (Marks, 2005, p. 278). Situated in the historical philosophical debate of values between transcendence and materialism, Deleuze presents an alternative to the dichotomy with the plane of immanence and attempts to describe its products, because, he explains, it cannot be addressed directly (Deleuze, 1980). It is the movement of the infinite, or rather, the flexible milieu required for experimental elasticity of concepts themselves" (Shields & Vallee, 2012, p. 88) which becomes an important alternative to deeming all things and actions exist only in a transcendent realm or as material exchanges. Deleuze critiques the transcendent

separation of human rationality from matters of the earth where the mind is hierarchically installed above the planet and is concerned with distinguishing matters of the mind being superior to material things.

Instead, Deleuze offers a plane of immanence. It is unrepresentable, which leaves it to exist without being qualified or characterized, leaving no need for distinction. Williams argues a hierarchical binary leads to a devaluation of one thing over another such as: God over man, mind over body, or human over creature (such as a Wild Thing) (Williams, 2005, p. 126). Rather, Deleuze chooses to draw heavily from Spinoza, referring to his work on immanence and Nietzsche's "doctrine of eternal return," he describes how "difference returns to transform identities... Deleuze always insists that only difference returns and not the same" (Williams, 2005, p. 126). Acknowledging the plane of immanence at work allows for flux to be possible. Difference indicates that identities can be fluid and, therefore, must maintain the same degree of importance regardless, such as the fluidity of Max's own identity. In Sendak's (1963) book, Max continues to be the central character as he fluxes in the elasticity of a plane of immanence between becoming-boy, becoming-king, and/or becoming-Wild Thing. Immanence, that moment before awareness maintains connectivity to the material world.

Without giving over to a transcendent escape, avoiding all of the natural world, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) try to address a space of realization/revelation, the unthought before thought. Not rejecting the actual in the natural world instead, they situate this space, a plane of immanence, amongst the actual *and* virtual. Immanence participates as neither an escape, nor a rejection. Immanence is not fully situated in the material either as it serves as the unthought, before an understanding materializes:

> The task is to begin with the power to think, and then the ways in which that power is actualized by minds. This means that [Deleuze] does not begin with an actual explanation... By contrast, Deleuze begins with the virtual. We know that there are powers *to think*, and that this is a power for forming relations; biological life is also created from powers of forming relations. Virtual explanations are immanent because they do not assume a first term from which relations emerge. (Colebrook, 2006, p. 72)

Thus, a plane of immanence becomes impossible to address directly and is better understood by what it produces (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Thinking pedagogy through a lens of immanence gives space to understand students' learning processes realistically as non-linear; it also offers a new way to consider Max's chaotic journey to the land where the Wild Things are.

I believe that the storybook (Sendak, 1963) and film (Jonze, 2009), in the lived space of the classroom, palpates a plane of immanence as described by Deleuze and Guattari (1987). Sendak (1963) presents a story in which the protagonist engages with processes of differentiating and re-identifying himself within his family context. Deleuze (2001) writes:

> There is something wild and powerful in this transcendental empiricism that is of course not the element of sensation (simple empiricism), for sensation is only a break within the flow of absolute consciousness. It is, rather, however close to sensations may be, the passage from one to the other as *becoming*. (p. 25)

In the story, we are presented with a young boy who is engaged in the challenges of his family and his own loneliness in his material world. This is made all the more poignant and evident in the film (Jonze, 2009) which presents Max's actuality to be one of isolation, abandonment, and escape through imaginary play. The film demonstrates the effects of Max's sister, Claire, growing into adolescence, becoming disinterested in the childish play Max longs for her to join

him in. Both children are grappling with their parents divorce, moving from one home to another on weekends, as well as getting to know their mother's new boyfriend. After a confrontation over Max following his mother's directions, Max journeys to the land where the Wild Things are. Through this passage he finds himself free to explore a potential transition of becoming-boy to becoming-animal (becoming-wild thing). This unconscious flow of sensations takes place as Max sails through the ocean, and explores the island and forest along with Wild Things.

It could be argued that Max's time spent with the Wild Things is one of transcendence as his journey would appear to be one of escape from the material world to an otherworldly experience; or, perhaps, because the land where the Wild Things are can be read as another arborescent hierarchy in which Max becomes king instead of his mother as an authority. However, I read Sendak's work to be an examination of a plane of immanence, rather than an abandonment of Max's own reality. In the story, the land where the Wild Things are (Sendak, 1963) is not a place of escape from harsh materiality but serves as a new materiality in which new assemblages produce new potentials for Max. Max does not engage in escapism, nor is he tethered to the "real" world. Instead, he finds himself engaging a holey space communicating between his striated bedroom, restrained by four walls and a door he is not permitted to pass through by the "law" set by his mother's household authority, and the smooth space of the ocean and the open land he roams with the Wild Things. In the film (Jonze, 2009), the Wild Things serve as nomadic parallels to people in Max's own life, such as Carol and KW who reflect a brother-sister dynamic. The Wild Things have also established a sort of family with similarities to his own relationships with his mother and sister. For Max, "it is in [his] specificity, it is by the virtue of [his] itinerancy, by virtue of [his] inventing a holey space, that [he] necessarily communicate[s] with the sedentaries *and* with the nomads" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 415).

As Max transverses this space he finds things that may be familiar to his sedentary home life but lived out differently by the Wild Things; a morphology in order to access a new image of thought.

Emphasizing the "connectivity between relations and not between different identities" (Williams, 2005, p. 127) such as with Max, we must carefully observe the connections between the Max (becoming-boy) and the Wild Things (becoming-animal). In order for Max to achieve a creative flux as a dualistic wolf-boy, his own ontological stature and understanding must shift from the traditional arboreal way of thinking his world as man being superior to beasts, and instead, move into a rhizomatic view of the Wild Things and the land as additional actors in his journey away and back home. Conley (2005) writes:

> Deleuze puts in question traditional concepts of space that, as *res extensa*, served as a passive background against which humans staged their dramatic actions. When arborescence gives way to rhizomatic thinking, space can no longer be separated from human actors. (p. 259)

Because his reality seems to be entrenched in the hierarchy of his mother's domination over his actions, Max's journey serves to produce a holey space by which he might seek out a smooth space of immanence giving way to non-arboreal ways of being.

Holey Spaces

Sendak's story produces a holey space, transitioning his character and his readers from the striated space of the domestic home, encompassing normalizing rules of conduct, to the smooth space of an unknown forest filled with potential. In the potential filled forest, Max discovers he can be creative in how he interacts with the Wild Things and, in the film (Jonze, 2009), he can creatively identify himself however he chooses. At one point in the film, Max calls

himself a viking, in another part, he accepts their endowment of himself as king of the Wild Things. Never having to relinquish one identity before taking on another, Max is able to traverse this space and negotiate his relations in beneficial ways.

We see Max pursuing an alternative style of living by drawing, as Deleuze (1987) would say, a line of flight from his current situation. Buchanan and Marks (2000) explain, "In Deleuze, a line of escape is never a 'running away', but instead is a fleeing to [something]" (p. 72). Max begins to move to the land where the Wild Things are. His movement is of particular interest because his flight occurs by sailing through the smooth space of open waters to a world in which his own wildness can correlate with that of the non-human creatures living on a wild land. As identified previously, living on the wild land becomes a temporary practice in nomadism or, more accurately, what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) posit as itinerant movement. It is neither the static way of life Max is familiar with in the structure of his own home, nor is it the nomadic life associated with the Wild Things always on the move as in their wild rumpus, or as shown in the film (Jonze, 2009) when they destroy their homes and rebuild them and destroy them again. This new nomadic way of living suits Max as an engagement with holey space, settling in with the Wild Things temporarily, creating a fort, a temporary home, literally made of tunnels and holes, as Deleuze and Guattari would say, "turn the earth into swiss cheese" (p. 413).

In the film, Max directs a Wild Thing, named Ira, to dig tunnels for their new fort because of his skilled hole making. Holes are featured consistently in the film (Jonze, 2009) as they are found in the centers of trees throughout their forest. The fort, once it is built, also consists of tunnels and caves. This holey space best describes where Max encounters a rest, where the results of a plane of immanence becomes apparent as Max vacillates between becoming-Wild Thing and becoming-boy because the "holey space itself communicates with

smooth space and striated space" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 415) of Max's situational dilemma following his new line of flight. At the same time, the familiarity of his family within the walls of the striated house awaits his return in the background of this adventure. For Deleuze and Guattari, "The geographical is never a given, but instead is always constructed through the establishment of relations" (Buchanan & Marks, 2000, p. 71) and it is up to Max to determine which relations he would like to remain attached to.

A Transitory Space Between the Smooth and the Striated Spaces

It would seem the land Where the Wild Things Are (Sendak, 1963) might be conceptualized as a holey space communicating between striated structure and the smooth chaos on the plane of immanence. As Cliff Stagoll (2005) writes, Deleuze uses the concept of a plane as a way,

> …to explain a type of thinking that mediates between the chaos of chance happenings... on the one hand, and structured, orderly thinking on the other... how we deal with such chaos: by imposing structures, creating hierarchies, conceiving of things as 'the same' from one moment to the next. (p. 204)

This echos Sendak's (Lanes, 1998) claim that his books are to be used cathartically to mediate the child's becoming in the myriad symbolic regimes of the symbolic order through childhood. As Stagoll suggests, the land Where the Wild Things Are (Sendak, 1963) "both explains the relationship between these two ways of thinking and reveals more fully the creative potential evident in thinking about the world" (p. 204). Sendak created a world where his character, Max, could access a creative space unbound by the structure/chaos binary as part of one's identity. As Stagall (2005) notes, "On this plane, all possible events are brought together, and new

connections between them made and continuously dissolved" (p. 205). Where the wild things are, they are free to identify without binaries as they are made up of many types of animals. The Wild Things suggest to Max many new options in becoming Wild-Thing, becoming-king, becoming-animal, even becoming-wilderness. Sendak has created a story where Max establishes a line of flight out of the structured striated space of his home, as well as his own wild feelings, in order to produce a holey space capable of communicating across them.

Max's becoming-Wild Thing endows him with new powers of magic and authority, however, he does not become invincible to the burden popularity brings. In the film (Jonze, 2009), the Wild Things taunt him about favouritism; they gripe about his inability to truly mold the land into the fort he declared he would build. The owls to whom Max is introduced baffle his intellect. And his friend Carol loses faith in Max's ability to lead. In the end, the hardships of the island defeat Max and he readily abandons becoming-Wild Thing for becoming-boy again, returning to his home hungry. I would argue that Sendak's (1963) *Where the Wild Things Are* is not only depicting Max's move to the forest and back home, but also a differential movement in his own ontology.

At the beginning of the story we see Max's behaviour in a structured and domesticated world at which he seems to be at odds. He behaves wildly, simultaneously creating his own chaos (smooth space) by chasing the family dog with a fork, yelling at his mother and behaving in a generally deviant fashion. Lorraine (2005) would point out:

> The various rhythms of the human subject's components and their relations to interior and exterior block of space-time become territorialized into the sentient awareness of one organism living in the 'striated' space of social life, cancelling out anomalous interactions among milieus in the process. (p. 253)

The expectations of obedience presented in the striated space of his home have become problematic and Max explores the ideas of a wilder way of life bringing catharsis or escape. The momentary persistence of the smooth becoming holey space that overtakes Max's room by the forest growing, generally progresses back to the striated space of a tidy bedroom.

Education and the Wilderness

The significance of the forest growing into Max's bedroom as well as across the pages of the book cannot be overlooked. Lorraine (2005) writes:

> Smooth space haunts and can disrupt the striations of conventional space, and it unfolds through 'an infinite succession of linkages and changes in direction' that creates shifting mosaics of space-times out of the heterogeneous blocks of different milieus. Deleuze and Guattari are interested not in substituting one conception of space with another, but rather in how forces striate space and how at the same time it develops other forces that emit smooth spaces. (p. 254)

It becomes evident how Sendak's forest can palpate a plane of immanence and make way for new becomings. This forest is an invasive forest, a smooth space disrupting and creeping into Max's striated, domestic life until the wild is all that is left and the comforts of Max's bedroom are no longer present. Max then finds himself encountering a smooth space in the land where the Wild Things are, where a smoothness allows for a plane of immanence, "not immanent to some *thing*, but to itself as a movement of pure variation within the thing" (Shields & Vallee, 2012, p. 88) as Max's wild nature brings a variation to the boy he lives as in his own home.

Not only the human character, but the plants, the monsters, and the habitat speak to fluctuation, distortion and change. It was necessary that Sendak access all the connotations that

come with the wild waves of the sea and the darkness of a forest. As the book begins, before any text, we see the overgrowth of a colourful, jungle-like forest, a two-page spread covered in psychedelic leaves, similar to those that grow on palm trees, but instead they cover the forest ground and sky. These leaves are not pure bursts of colour but seem to embody the shade itself. Sendak employs crosshatching as a means of distributing an eerie shadow across the spread of leaves. For its evocation of an untamed world, the opening pages of the book seem to evoke trepidation and curiosity.

Many of my students hold vague memories of the story and the curiosity appears to still be present for many of the twelve-year-olds. They gather on the floor at my feet, just as they would have in kindergarten. I read the story very slowly, leaving ample time for them to take in the illustrations and voice their "gut reaction," their affective response to the rousingly colourful and imaginative work. As I reveal the first page in the book, the students do not know what sits on the other side and beneath those leaves and we discuss the uneasy feeling we are left with as we notice the dark space between the leaves and the crosshatched shadows cast on top of each leaf.

While these palm leaves' colours entrance the reader with a quality of anticipation, it does not come without a guardedness towards the unknown. As I continued to read the story, the students noticed how the blank, white spaces of the pages containing text are slowly filled with greenery until the characters begin the wild rumpus and there is no more space for text, an affective and open interpretive experience, engaging with one illustration to the next, is what the reader is presented with. Students leaned in, carefully observing just what, exactly, a "wild rumpus" is, because a visual depiction is all that narrates this part of the story. While the reader

is told the characters are partaking in a "wild rumpus," the reader needs to interpret what this is through visual representation. As Lane (1998) notes:

> By contrast, the picture book is a form unto itself, a special mix of text and art, in which the pictures are vitally needed to fill in what the word leaves unsaid; the words, in turn, are indispensable to moving the narrative forward during whatever time--or space--gaps exist between illustrations. In a picture book, neither text nor pictures by themselves can tell the story. They comprise an equal and totally interdependent partnership. (p. 85)

Sendak's illustrations can serve as an affective encounter for the human reader in the land where the Wild Things are.

As a method of leveling the hierarchy between man and nature, long-established by a transcendent philosophical tradition, Bryant (2015) takes great speculative interest in the notion of the wilderness:

> First, wilderness signifies the absence of *ontological* hierarchy in the order of existence. While there are indeed assemblages where some entities are more dominant over other entities than others, there are no lords or sovereigns of being. Humans are but one type of being among others. (p. 22)

While Max is named a sovereign, it is not in the land of humans but of Wild Things. Rather than maintaining the hierarchy between humans and animals, Max's position is one which bridges the dichotomy. Max enters the land Where the Wild Things are as a Wild Thing himself, dressed in a wolf suit, deflating after an escalated argument with his mother. His dominance over the Wild Things is quickly and ironically established through an act of performing a magic trick. Lane (1998) notices, "Undaunted on meeting the monsters--who are, once again, a Sendakian blend of menace and make believe--Max has no trouble charming the terrible beasts by staring

unblinkingly into their terrible eyes" (p. 87). He is still a Wild Thing but one who possesses greater power to act than the others. The land Where the Wild Things are becomes a place where Max fits in as both boy and Wild Thing. This fitting in is better explained by Bryant's (2015) idea that "wilderness signifies the refusal of a binary opposition between nature and culture" (p. 22). In the land Where the Wild Things Are (Sendak, 1963), Max participates as a boy-animal.

I return to Bryant's (2015) concept of wilderness ontology "emphasiz[ing] the distinct agency of the many entities that populate the universe, refusing to locate agency only in humans" (p. 22) as a way of understanding the agency of the land itself, where the Wild Things live, as influential to Max's journey. The agency of the land itself acts as a plane of possibility or potential for Max to take on roles as he would like. Bryant (2015) writes, "Wilderness ontology invites us to encounter the agency of nonhumans, to adopt *their* point of view, and to encounter these entities not in their identity to our concepts, but rather in their alterity" (p. 22) such as the way the forest grows over Max's room, transporting him to this new land. The forest claims Max for a while, floats him away to a new land where Max can become a little less human himself. This forest creeps across the pages of the story book, consuming the negative space on the page as well as transforming the other objects in Max's bedroom into things of the wild. Bryant (2015) writes, "Culture is one more formation in the wilderness among others, not an ontologically unique domain outside of nature" (p. 22). Once Max reaches the island, there are no things he once had in his domesticated life. Instead, in the film (Jonze, 2009), the Wild Things' sleep in piles and their homes resemble nests, emphasizing their animal nature rather than the use of domestic furniture.

The Wild Things are familiar, similar to our own world's animals, but never had they been seen until Sendak drew these exaggerated, mismatched creatures. There is a bipedal

chicken-monster and one that resembles a furry, human-footed bull. The other creatures are combinations of fur, stripes, and scales. It is of specific importance that these characters are non-human because they point to the sublime experience beyond realism. Crocket and Robbins (2012) write, "The sublime results when imagination overwhelms understanding, and pushes representation to and beyond its limit, giving rise to a feeling of disorientation and negative purposiveness" (p. 58). Rather than perpetuating the attempts of domestication Max encounters in his home, these creatures existence affirms an alternative way of living. These Wild Things live on a whim, sleep on the land, and crown and eat their own kings (in the film). It's an emotionally charged place where the Wild Things' fervor and intensity determines the events of the day.

The monsters presented in Sendak's work transform from offensive brutes to embodiments of darker emotions as they are encountered cathartically in Spike Jonze' (2009) film rendition by my twelve-year-old students . We see this when the characters continually change their minds throughout the story, further depicted in Spike Jonze' film version. When the Wild Things first meet Max, they are ready to eat him and are swayed, instead, to name him as their leader. As Robbins (2013) notes, "The materiality of social practices, by which we will a self. Not a fixed or given essence or nature but one that has been ingrained by our very own actions, willed before willing, etched in plastic". The Wild Things fluctuate in loyalty and selfishness within their friendships and within decisions regarding how they ought to live. This fluctuation also occurs in the classroom as this "children's book" is encountered as a profound cathartic exorcism in the real (not the transcendent) when read by a more mature audience. Within the land where the Wild Things are, Max enters an environment where he is not relating *to* the Wild Things as an outsider. His experience is *in* their land, *in* their group/family, *in* their

behavioural and emotional interactions. In the story, Max is depicted as a Wild Thing himself, in fact, he is King of all the Wild Things, the *greatest* Wild Thing.

In the book, Sendak (1963) transitions his protagonist to another world, the land where the Wild Things are, by having a forest grow in Max's bedroom and then having him step into a boat to sail across an ocean to a new land. The fixed walls of Max's bedroom transform into a massive expanse of land, ocean and, finally, the island of the Wild Things. Max's boat arrives at the shore where he is greeted by Wild Things who "roared their terrible roars and gnashed their terrible teeth and rolled their terrible eyes and showed their terrible claws" (Sendak, 1963, p. 21). Once Max has tamed the Wild Things with a magic trick, he joins them on the island where they name him king and, all together, commence a "wild rumpus". The land where the Wild Things are is depicted as lush, with trees and plants everywhere. There are plenty of places for Max to run and gallivant in the wilderness. Sendak illustrates these scenes with rich, bold colours, using dark crosshatching to produce shadows across much of the landscape. There are no other people or animals present, just Max and the Wild Things on the land. The unrestrained nature of this land is further depicted in the film by including a dark forest, a hot desert, a sandy seaside, and windy cliffs with the raging ocean waters below. These spaces are obviously undomesticated and undeveloped, quite the opposite of Max's civilized home. The land where the Wild Things are is a place where Max is met by inhuman characters who accompany him through a perspective-changing experience immanent to their exchanges, tensions, and mutual desires that ultimately allow him to re-engage in his reality of familial tensions and feelings of loneliness.

In this new context, the things in the forest that are familiar to Max serve to emphasize the wild nature of Max's escapade. Williams (2005) writes, "Deleuze's philosophy of immanence emphasises connections over forms of separation. But this connection must itself be

a connectivity between relations and not between different identities" (p. 126). Max's identity does not change as he is a Wild Thing both at home and in the fantasy (virtual) land. However, his relations to others change as he passes from a submissive/oppressed son to the dominant and creative King of the Wild Things. As Williams (2005) writes, "A creative relation of affirmation does not depend on negating things, though it may emerge out of past negations" (p. 126). When Max accesses the land of the Wild Things he is in search of affirmation. The land awaits as a space for reality to be suspended and new connections to be formed for Max. He is not split between boy and animal, he exists as both. We could compare Max to Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) understanding of metallurgists as,

> necessarily doubled, that they exist two times, once as captured by and maintained within the apparatus of the oriental empire, again in the Aegean world, where they were much more mobile and much freer. *But the two segments cannot be separated,* simply by relating each of them to their particular context. (p. 417)

In the context of the forest, Max holds great power as a Wild Thing; in the context of his domestic life, Max struggles for dominance.

Max's journey is one of creativity as his line of flight away from his domestic trappings allows for a creative expression of himself as a Wild Thing with new capabilities of dealing with some of the emotions and barriers he once experienced at home. As this book is available to my students in a pedagogical context, it can also serve as a line of flight. Schools are quintessentially striated spaces made up of rules, boundaries, cubicles, and classrooms. They are intended to bring order to the smooth movement of students as they move about it in their adolescent chaos. Here, this book holds the potential to suggest an alternative way of being, one where human and

creature coincide in the wilderness. Perhaps this suggestion is enough to encourage students to seek holey spaces and indulge a plane of immanence.

My inquiry into zines asked, what is the power of a book in the ecology of a classroom? How does this object, this *thing*, sitting on a shelf, possess agency to assemble with other things in its environment to evoke change? Does reading a book guarantee a shift, or deterritorialization, in the ideological climate of the classroom? Bryant (2015) writes:

> In short, the work of art does not so much reinforce human meaning, the closure of human meaning in which all entities reflect us, as it *interrupts* human meaning. The frame decontextualizes entities from their horizon of meaning and familiarity. (p. 25)

Books in a classroom hold the potential to disrupt the previous understanding of life's meaning, particularly picture books which function as literature and artworks, such as Sendak's illustrations and book. Making a book available in a classroom implies students can be trusted with its contents. I believe this is precisely what Sendak's book would aim to do, coaxing children out of the familiar realm of their domestic lives to a land where kinship with non-humans is possible.

Can a boy be both human and animal at once? Can a boy find new powers to influence those who surround him? Sendak's work exists in milieus accessible to children. In the classroom the scary story book suggests a new agency and capacity of children to manage their emotions and identify/embrace chaos and uncertainty, and perhaps even overcome feelings of powerlessness. How does this work? I would argue that Gilles Deleuze's concept of immanence serves as a means to understand the function of *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963) as studied in a classroom, offering students a pedagogical opportunity to reimagine their place and participation in the world.

CHAPTER IV

ADORNMENT, DESTRUCTION, DENIAL

Adornment: we make the earth prettier by fashioning it into manicured suburbs.

Destruction: we bulldoze anything that might stand in the way of our manicured plans.

Denial: we live happily, landscaping our yards without giving thought to the untamed lush foliage that once extended over this very plot of land.

Again, I ask, what thing-power (Bennett, 2010) does a story hold? What kind of potential does a piece of fiction summon? And why present this particular story to the particular students of my Leduc classroom? Shaun Tan's (2008) short story, "Stick Figures," presents a community not unlike the suburb in which my students are growing up; with similar values of expansion and consumption attributed to large houses on larger plots of land. Development is highly valued as more families move to the city of Leduc. Most move there to work in the energy industry, their sprawling neighbourhoods overtaking the farmland that was once Leduc's primary industry. It would seem this is the change of the future: farm town turned urban; well, more like suburban, as density is the least of this community's goals, unlike what we might find in the inner city. Suburbia places fewer people on larger plots of land.

It took me three years, teaching in Leduc, to gain a sense of the culture of the community as I lived downtown Edmonton and hold a certain bias towards promoting density in urban centers, rather than encouraging suburban sprawl. Many of the students in Leduc are bussed in from the surrounding acreages and farms. However, an equal number of students are bussed to school because their newly developed neighbourhoods are too far to be considered walking distance from our school. I began to wonder how aware my students are of the controversy regarding suburban sprawl, considering many of them were "born into it" rather than having

chosen this lifestyle for themselves. If students were presented with a counter narrative to the domesticating agenda of suburban consumerism, would they engage? Tan's (2008) story could serve as a way to enrich the conversation regarding the plight of natural landscape alongside an ever-expanding suburbia. The story opens the potential for its readers to question the drive to dominate and domesticate the naturally wild landscape.

"Stick Figures" opens, in medias res, by describing the various ways the citizens of the imaginary community deal with Tan's stick figure characters, swerving around them or trying to drive them away. He explains, "they are not a problem, just another part of the suburban landscape, their brittle legs moving slowly as clouds. They have always been here, since before anyone remembers, since before the bush was cleared and all the houses were built" (Tan, 2008, p. 65). While the narrator states the stick figures are not a problem, the story continues by describing the complacent reactions of adults, playful reactions of children, and the violent reactions of teenagers towards these immanent characters. The stick figures are active, but not interactive, and absorb these reactions without response. They are mysterious beings, overstepping the conventional passivity of plant life by walking to where they want to be, undeterred by roads, homes, or suburban development. The townspeople are used to them, not remembering a time when the stick figures did not exist. At the same time, the townspeople are baffled at what to do with or about these animate objects. Their existence is as unexplainable as their history, "the only response is the sound of dead branches falling from trees on windless evenings, and random holes appearing in front lawns, darker sockets where clods of earth have been removed during the night" (Tan, 2008, p. 68). The stick figures are made of sticks and "clods of earth" assembled to resemble a human frame. They stand on two legs and walk slowly around town.

Tan's (2008) narrative offers little plot, instead, simple illustrations and descriptions are accompanied by echoing questions from the humans and the stick figures, "Who are you? Why are you here? What do you want?" (2008, p. 69). How often do we consider these questions about natural landscape? This is what I asked my students as we studied Tan's understated work. In the story, Tan attributes a sort of perception or mindfulness to the stick figures. How can endowing natural landscape, through a character like a stick figure, allow for us to empathize with non-human entities?

In this chapter I will look at how Tan (2008) suggests a sort of sentience for these trans-specied stick figures. Tan writes a short story, situating his stick figure characters amongst the humans in a suburban neighbourhood. I will use the reactions of the humans in the story as a structure for this meditation in regards to what these stick figures suggest to us (and my students) regarding our consideration of natural landscape in the context of suburban sprawl. It was my hope that, by introducing my students to stories such as these, a new thought, or perhaps a Deleuzian line of flight could be explored. A direction of thought in which students could recognize themselves as one of many sentient beings on this earth without conceit. Tan's story encourages its readers to look more closely at natural landscape before it was manicured and domesticated by human development; even though these things may be silent, it does not mean they are inactive. I appreciate the steadfastness of Tan's stick figure characters in a community full of contempt for them. This story speculates on the agency of the non-human actants within the man-made setting. It challenges my students to engage in a new democracy of objects and humans, or the planet Earth and humans. I will examine the counter-culture story presented by Tan and ask: What is the desirable interaction humans might have with the wild's smooth space of the Australian brush, a step away from the striated suburbia?

Fear and Wild

Natural Landscape as Marginalized

Removed from busy streets, crowded sidewalks, glaring skyscrapers, looming billboards, and noisy traffic, Shaun Tan sets his story in mellow suburbia. Suburban life offers what might appear to be the opposite of the smooth chaos of urban bustle. The community in Tan's story is quiet, spacious, open, and free from the intensity of the constant barrage of people and messages. A typical striated space of carefully planned and developed civilization. Here, isolated space is the ideal strived for. This is where Tan sets his counter-culture story; this is where he lays out his social commentary. Not in the wildness of the city (which could be likened to the smooth space of the Australian outback or bushland), but in the manufactured, paved, and striated alternative. Suburbia serves as the ideal setting for Tan to pose his questions regarding humanity's anxiety around natural landscape and the redundancy of the natural in the planted, cultivated world of landscaped gardens and mowed lawns. Tan (2016) writes:

> Stick figures'... relates to my feelings about the rapid, large-scale clearing of bush-land to make way for fresh roads, homes and shopping malls. Too often things seem to be built without a proper acknowledgement or empathy with the natural landscape – it is simply swept aside as if it never existed, replaced by an amnesiac culture. (para. x)

Elsewhere, in one of his essays, Tan (2016) describes how he grew up in a suburb situated at the edge of city limits, side-by-side with undeveloped land. There is an irony in the way suburbia must bulldoze a natural landscape in order to develop an artificial suburban landscape. This is further exasperated by the replanting of trees and shrubs where they once grew naturally.

Tan's treatment of suburbia is not willing to simply write it off as a debauched landscape, but addresses it as a space of trepidation, so close to the natural world, yet anxiety presents itself

when an occasion to interact with the stick figures (associated with the natural world) occurs. Much like Bennett (2010), who takes on Latour's offer of a case study of:

> …the puzzling presence, about ten meters into the rainforest, of trees typical only of the savanna. The soil under these trees is 'more clayey than the savanna but less so than the forest.' How was the border between savanna and forest breached? Did 'the forest cast its own soil before it to create conditions favorable to its expansion,' or is the savanna 'degrading the woodland humus as it prepares to invade the forest'? This question presumes a kind of vegetal agency in a natural system understood not as a mechanical order of fixed laws but as the scene of not-fully-predictable encounters between multiple kinds of actants. (p. 97)

Tan is interested in that edge, that border that would seem to exist where suburbia ends and the bush-land begins. However, Tan does not offer answers or possible solutions to finite problems; he merely opens a window through which the reader may observe these stick figures' encounters. The setting may be familiar but the problem is at once literalized and fantasized in a simple description of human and non-human interaction. Tan establishes the non-human as human-like by creating *stick figures* that serve as natural landscape personified: a body, arms, and legs built out of fallen branches, the head a clod of earth. They exist in the town with no definitive purpose or pursuit discernible by the humans living there. The humans are not sure what to do with them. In a brief commentary on his work, Tan (2016) describes the inspiration for the stick figures coming from:

> …a large outdoor installation by the side of a highway in Lapland called 'The Silent People'. It is a crowd of several hundred scarecrow-like figures in a field, each made of a cross of wood, dressed in second-hand clothing, with a clod of grassy earth for a head

> stuck on top. The effect is both amusing and eerie, like whimsical ancestral beings or puppets. (para. x)

He also compares them to the crows that would stand around, "as if waiting for something to happen" (Tan, 2016, para. x). Drawing from these two sources, Tan develops a sort of trans-species character, blurring our comprehension of how to categorize the stick figures, baffling the humans in his story in how to react to them. They are not as easily dismissed as the dead branches normally raked up and bagged in orange plastic along with fallen leaves in autumn; however, they are not treated with the democracy suggested by Bennett (2010), nor the companionship proposed by Blake (2012).

Blake (2012) raises some important questions regarding plants:

> …regarding companionship between human and non-human partners on the molar and the molecular levels, requiring a constant search for the best ways to relate to our non-human companions, not all of which are pretty flowers like Edunia[s]... plants are alive, and they realize their own interests as best as they can under the circumstances that we ourselves may be part of; such plant-human chimeras thus raise questions about trans-species companionship awaiting us in the future. (p. 13)

These become the questions navigated by the humans in "Stick Figures": how ought one relate to natural landscape with an acknowledgement of its agency?

Tan's fascination with the actions of natural landscape proves to be more than fantasy writing as a trend amongst those philosophers who make things (Bogost, 2012) have turned to exploring the relation between humans and non-humans in the world. Tan is using the imaginative potential of literature to explore this relation,

> accepting the position that to view plants as entirely disposable objects is to do them an injustice... we are now rediscovering plants and, as a result, the concept of 'speciesism' is returning in response to new contexts created by biotechnology that are re-shaping human-plant relations. (Blake, 2012, p. 9)

While Tan employs natural landscape as a problematic to human development in his story, he also, passively, suggests humans ought to consider that they are irrevocably interconnected with the natural world. Even though humans might hope/choose to exercise domination, the assemblage of humans, natural landscape, trans-species, and suburbia is in fact more egalitarian than humans may be willing to admit. As Bennet (2012) notes:

> This assemblage is an ecology in the sense that it is an interconnected series of parts, but it is not a fixed order of parts, for the order is always being reworked in accordance with a certain 'freedom of choice' exercised by its actants. (p. 96-97)

Tan's endowment of "freedom of choice" to his stick figure characters offers the central conflict in his story. The denial of the actual agency of the stick figures addresses the challenge our current culture faces, a subtle suggestion to my students that this will be a question for their generation. This serves to baffle some of the people in the fictional suburban community of Tan's story and, as we will see, the people respond to this "flat ontology" (Bogost, 2012) with a variety of reactions, their own versions of speciesism.

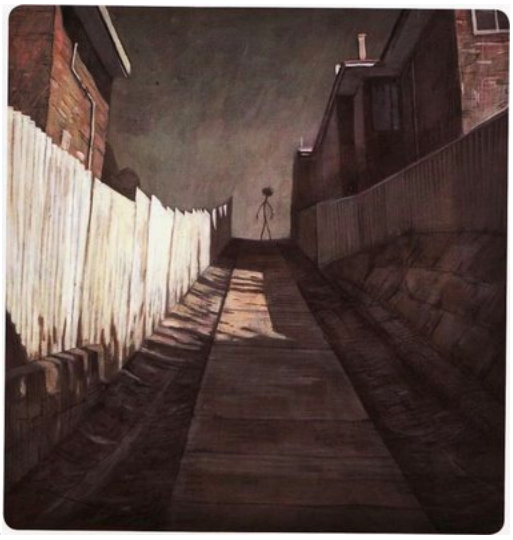
What had to unavoidably occur, in order to reach this ideal vision of a subdued suburbia, was for the wild natural foliage to be tamed into workable, usable material. It is this attempt to control the natural landscape that Tan (2008) is most interested in. In this non-traditional narrative Tan personifies natural landscape in the form of literal stick men and refers to three humancentric approaches to controlling natural landscape: adornment, destruction, and denial.

He depicts each of these attempts through a specific generation, beginning with the children who choose to adorn the natural landscape, humanizing it to be recognizable to their own human likeness. The second generation is the adolescent males, with their attempt to control natural landscape is by destruction; however, their attempts are thwarted by natural landscape's undeniable ability to renew itself. The third generation depicted is that of the adults in the community; their approach is simply to deny the natural landscape's constant presence, represented here by the stick figures. They ignore it and live around it. With each generation, Tan narrates the human reactions, subtly implying the threat natural landscape plays to the organized, predictable, and striated lifestyle established in the suburban community.

The Problem

"And sure enough there they are again, standing by fences and driveways, in alleyways and parks, silent sentinels" (Tan, 2008, p.68).

The stick figures are incessant. Tan presents humans living in suburbia, a setting closely linked back to America's grand push towards the hyper-consumerist ideal of the 1950's. Natural landscape itself was consumed as a cost of sprawling expansion. Here is where the problem lies: in the choice to create/consume an ideal lifestyle in which the natural wilderness was required to be removed, flattened, poured, paved, and, where ideal, replanted and landscaped to serve the needs of the consumers. In the process of conceptualizing ideal neighbourhoods, natural landscape was commodified. Cleverly, then, Tan (2008) sets up a less than ideal situation when he presents these stick figures as a literal, personified, bipedal representation of the formerly natural landscape. They are not human, nor are they trees; they are an imaginative trans-species representation. The suburban citizens are at quite a loss as to how to interact with the un-bulldozable, irremovable stick figures, insusceptible to their usual means of wilderness

management. Similar to Bennett's (2010) comparison of worms, the stick figures present a political dilemma as described in asking "the hard question of the *political* capacity of actants... Can worms be considered members of a *public*?... Are there nonhuman members of a public? (p. 94)?" The stick figures' persistence and steadfastness would suggest they are there to stay as a part of the public of this community. 

In creating a suburban landscape, natural landscape must be recreated to re-fill what was removed. The presence of the stick figures proves the fill-in to be redundant or, vice-versa, like a dandelion that persists through cracks in a concrete sidewalk. Thus, the humans are unsure what to do when wild, personified trees roam their land. There are replanted trees that already line their yards and streets. The people do not need natural roots arriving in unpredictable locations. Their constructed, neutral, and predictable landscape has no room for wilderness. When the stick figures appear, "staring" the people in the face, the reactions are of adornment, destruction, or denial.

"Are they here for a reason? It's impossible to know, but if you stop and stare at them for a long time, you can imagine that they too might be searching for answers, for some kind of meaning. It's as if they take all our questions and offer them straight back: Who are you? Why are you here? What do you want?" (Tan, 2008, p. 69).

The stick figures pose a threat, not just an inconvenience. Their presence forces questions regarding the importance of the humans. Here the reader sees the stick figures take on a monstrous role, introducing the notion of the inescapable other. Uncomfortable as it may be, Tan (2008) concludes with questions leaving readers to their own interpretation of the culture they have just witnessed; leaving readers to position themselves where they may in the setting. The result is space for the reader to respond to the story in a variety of ways: with sympathy, anger, or compliance. The reader can align herself/himself with the children, the adolescents, the passive adults, or the stick figures.

Adornment

(The Children)

"Young children sometimes dress them in old clothes and hats as if they were dolls" (Tan, 2008, p. 65).

Certainly the assumption can be made that the children of Tan's suburbia are unafraid of the stick figures because they have never experienced the "real" dangerous wilderness, only the replanted and landscaped representations of nature. The children, being born and bred into a suburban lifestyle, can have no real grasp of why this subdued landscape exists; why the older generations intentionally created a landscape removed from the unpredictability of the wilderness. The children interact with the stick figures in the only way they know how, likening them to dolls and snowmen, with little awareness that these beings are formed in the night from falling branches and clods of earth from front lawns. They are a part of the historical narrative within a contemporary description of Tan's suburban community.

How are the children represented in the story, in contrast to the adolescents (fear), or the adults (apathy)? The children interact with the stick figures in a humanizing way; it is an

interaction between the animate and less-animate. The children acknowledge the stick figures *being-ness*. What must be kept in mind is that these children did not choose to live in the suburbs but their experience knows little else. They are left without resentment of the urban bustle, nor the awareness of life in the wilderness. Their approach is to meet the stick figures with curiosity, without a reference point for "real" natural landscape, so they do their best to conform the stick figures to a recognizable state: the children's own likeness. By dressing the stick figures, they emphasize a human element to the interspecies inhuman being. The children allow themselves to interact without fully comprehending the other. This is not a risk others in the community are willing to take with the stick figures. Even for instrumental reasons, "we have finally started to realize that in terms of ethics it is something really strange, or even deeply wrong, to respect only our own species and protect non-humans merely for instrumental reasons" (Blake, 2012, p. 14). The children acknowledge the similarities the figures hold compared to their own. To draw upon Bennett (2010), the stick figures "close the gap between human and nonhuman" by "the affective, bodily natural landscape of human responses" (p. 100). The children find common ground and interact with the stick figures in a non-utilitarian way.

Anxiety/Boredom/Destruction

(The Male Adolescents)

The male adolescents' violent reaction against the passive stick figures serves to contrast the description of the careful attention of the children. Because the stick figures do not initiate any interaction, it can only be assumed that the teenagers are driven by an internal angst. The frustrating incomprehensibility of the stick figures purpose, presence, or awareness of the teenagers' actions continues to provoke the teenagers anxious actions. The stick figures offer no contribution to the space they occupy. They are the result of fallen branches and earth; discards

mysteriously embodied. The stick figures are neither consumers nor producers, positing them as inutile. Bauman (2004) argues that redundancy is the greatest liability in modern living. He explains, “There is no self-evident reason for your being around and no obvious justification for your claim to have the right to stay around.... redundancy shares its semantic space with ‘rejects’, ‘wastrels’, ‘garbage’, ‘refuse’--with waste” (Bauman, 2004, p.12). The stick figures cannot participate in “the society of consumers” Bauman describes and so are redundant to the suburban community. Plagued by their own implication as consumers, the humans meet the stick figures with anxiety recognizing non-consumption as a threat to their suburban system.

The boys’ reaction is violent. Boredom has repressed any imaginative ideas of how to deal with the stick figures. They resort to physical destruction, a literal attack, clearly thwarted by the existence of the stick figures. Tan (2008) writes, “This can go on for hours, depending on how many the boys can find. But eventually it stops being amusing. It becomes boring, somehow enraging, the way they just stand there and take it” (p. 67). Passivity provokes violent frustration. The boys are the first to crack; they lose their tempers. This is where the crisis hits, and the adolescents must acknowledge their entrapment in the system of consumption. These adolescent males are literally trapped in an environment and system they did not choose but cannot yet leave. Their anxiety is inevitable as they stay and participate in the community; but, at the same time, great anxiety is also attached to leaving the community. What they have been raised in is a controlled environment. The stick figures resistance and uncontrollable existence only exacerbates the fear held in the adolescent boys. As Bauman (2002) notes, “Waste is simultaneously divine and satanic. It is the midwife of all creation-- and its most formidable obstacle. Waste is sublime: a unique blend of attraction and repulsion arousing an equally unique

mixture of awe and fear" (p. 22). The boys take it upon themselves to deal with the refuse of the stick figures through violent maintenance.

In a humancentric view of the world, humans are intended and expected to maintain power over their environment. Bogost (2012) points out that even environmental philosophy and post-humanism still posits humanity or living creatures as a "primary actor". Domination and/or preservation of earthly resources ensure survival of the human species. But should this really be the perspective taken? It is difficult to avoid, as anthropocentrism is, perhaps, our most prevalent subjective point of view; as Bennett (2010) notes, anthropomorphizing helps us underscore the differences between ourselves and the objects around us--it helps remind us that object encounters are caricatures. Returning to Bogost (2012):

> Maybe it's worth running the risks associated with anthropomorphizing (superstition, the divinization of nature, romanticism) because it, oddly enough, works against anthropocentrism: a chord is struck between person and thing, and I am no longer above or outside a nonhuman 'environment'. (p. 65)

Tan falls into the temptation of anthropomorphizing his stick figure characters. Is this intentional because he questions his reader's ability to empathize with a character too different from herself/himself? Or has he succeeded in suggesting a democracy of all things involved?

To illustrate the tension between the adolescents and the stick figures, the stick figures being *unmasterable*, Bauman (2004) identifies an issue in how humans construct their own world:

> Each of us constructs a stable world in which objects have recognizable shapes. Then comes the effort to raise the 'really existing' world (that world which is so tangibly, stubbornly, weightily and all-too-painfully present around and inside us precisely for

> being messy and anything but perfect) to the level of the vision; to make it as straightforward, pure, legible as the vision is. It is the vision that presents the world as amenable to moulding, kneading, squeezing and stretching--just the right object for action. (p. 18-19)

Tan's suburbia, and the humans existing within it, represent a systematic way of life, the ultimate mastery of natural landscape, consuming it and replacing it with an orderly replica of what existed previously. The stick figures, while capable of being destroyed temporarily, persistently reappear, frustrating the apparent power the adolescents attempt to assert, revealing the lack of control humans actually possess. It becomes a cyclical response and exertion of dominance. No mention of chastisement from the adults in the community would indicate the boys are doing something others do not question. Perhaps they are the young ones with energy to "keep up the fight," to maintain the waste. Initially, the boys may assume the stick figures to be something to be feared and conquered. Fear, along with desire, pushes the adolescent towards confrontation. Perhaps what is so attractive about what is feared is the stimulation out of boredom.

"What are they? Why are they here? What do they want?" (Tan, 2008, p. 67). A lack of origin. A lack of purpose. A lack of pursuit. Bauman (2002) points to Douglas' astute observation that the concept of waste (the extraneous natural world) does not exist until there is a human design to identify the extraneous as "waste". Have the boys realized this themselves? Do the stick figures mirror the experience of the teenage boys in suburbia? Is that what is so enraging? However, the stick figures do not seem to resent their own existence in that place; they have not migrated elsewhere.

Apathy/Denial/Consumerism

(The Adults)

"'Just don't,' they say sternly" (Tan, 2008, p. 65).

While the adolescents experience both rage and boredom, the adults seem to be without reaction. The adults' response is one of apathy having accepted the presence of the natural. Without allowing the stick figures to put roots down, the adults tolerate the stick figures' presence, using passive means to discourage interaction. Tan (2008) demonstrates this apathy, "Turning your sprinklers on will discourage them from hanging around the front of your house; loud music and smoke from barbecues will also keep them away. They are not a problem…" (p. 65). This statement is contradictory; adults are doing their best to keep from interacting with the stick figures. What makes them want to avoid the stick figures? The adults' energy is spent finding ways to maintain distance and avoid interacting with them.

Tan (2008) writes, "Adults pay them little attention" (p. 65). But this is an intentional avoidance, a refusal to give any attention to something literal standing in their path. The adults of this community are the ones who know "the whole story". They are the ones aware of how their modern community distinguishes itself from the cramping of urban living and they travelled to the rural outskirts of their ideal community. Bauman (2004) points to Douglas' positive description of contrived communities. He writes:

> For all practical intents and purposes, things excluded – thrown out of focus, cast in the shadow, forced into the vague or invisible background – no longer belong to 'what is'. They have been denied existence... this was a creative destruction. 'Eliminating', Mary Douglas famously said, 'is not a negative movement, but a positive effort to organize the environment.' (Bauman, 2004, p. 18)

For the adults of the suburban community, they have worked hard to create the environment in which they now exist. It is as though the stick figures remain the one last resistance: a natural existence. A flaw in their system, it is easier (more cost effective?) for the adults to simply ignore and tolerate their nuisance.

The adults were the ones to flee to the suburbs. Their own act of resistance against confines of an urban lifestyle was in the creation of an isolated oasis. But the adults maintain this in their own creation, placing themselves in power rather than the authority figure they fled. After fleeing and rebuilding, the adults find themselves in the same position of control they had once resented. Settled and committed, they find they are no longer the elusive, transient ones who were once inspired to flee. Their flee became an act of consumption locking them into the striated lifestyle. Bauman (2002) writes:

> They are the maintenance men confronted with the responsibility of dealing with the waste. Waste is the dark, shameful secret of all production. Preferably, it would remain a secret. Captains of industry would rather not mention it at all--they need to be pressed hard to admit it. And yet the strategy of excess, unavoidable in a life lived-towards-a-design, the strategy that prods, invigorates and whips up productive effort and so also the output of waste, makes the cover-up a tall order. The sheer mass of waste would not allow it to be glossed over and silenced out of existence. (p. 27)

The stick figures are irremovable. While considered useless amongst those participating in the consumerist system, the fact the stick figures have been around before anyone can remember suggests an indestructible longevity to them, an unending challenge to those who would design communities around them.

The Stick Figures

While the humans in the community would prefer to distinguish themselves from other living/natural things, the stick figures refuse to succumb to this control. The stick figures serve to challenge the humancentric beliefs of the community. The humans must accept/recognize the problems that could arise if other beings were regarded as "peers". This would resign their power, their say in what is or is not valued. One may ask if the humans in this community would ever be ready to shift their view of the stick figures. Bennett (2010) suggests, "The task at hand for humans is to find a more horizontal representation of the relation between human and nonhuman actants in order to be more faithful to the style of action pursued by each" (p. 98).

In the Western pursuit of modern progress, humans chose to isolate themselves in hyper contrived communities. In order to establish these communities, they literally "broke ground" removing any part of the growing world in order to build, without natural obstacles in place above the ground. Ignorantly, humans replanted a version of the natural world that existed before, but only from the consumerist perspective that natural landscape exists to serve their needs and desires. The natural world is only worth having if it contributes to consumerism. This has, damagingly, severed a relational understanding of humans' connection with the rest of the living and nonliving species on our planet. Humans are no longer able to interact with, or sometimes even cope, with the presence of natural landscape. Natural landscape becomes an inconvenient part of life, a threat to the idyllic lifestyle. It must either be humanized, destroyed, or denied in order to maintain the control a suburban community implicitly wishes to maintain over the land they possess and are surrounded by. With this dilemma in mind, Tan (2008) leaves his readers to deliberate on the purpose, utilitarian or not, for the wild, natural landscape's resistance to extinction.

There is an alternative, as we have seen through writers such as Tan (2008), Bennett (2010), and Blake (2012). We could think personification in a different way:

> Here a human antibody that evolved to be hostile to strangers becomes integrated into a foreign body. Hence, this is not a case of competition between life forms, but of togetherness, as the gesture of transferring one's own genetic material to be fused with a plant as triggers a change in the human partner. (Blake, 2012, p. 11)

Those who choose to interact with the stick figures choose to view natural landscape on an even landing.

While Tan leaves his story without resolution, the reader is also left with an uneasiness all humans experience in the presence of the stick figures. It is the forced acknowledgement of a shared space that humbles the humans in the story. Their community is more out of their control than they would like to admit. Tan's story leaves the reader to ask what it means to be human. Bogost (2012) writes:

> Whether or not the *real* radical philosophers march or protest or run for office in addition to writing inscrutable times--this is a question we can, perhaps, leave aside. Real radicals, we might conclude, *make things*. Examples aren't hard to find, and some even come from scholars who might be willing to call themselves philosophers. (p. 110)

Tan takes on a great responsibility in speaking directly to the community he was brought up in, as a philosopher. His story has also become a setting for my suburban students to attempt to analyse their own existence in relation to the planted/cultivated natural landscape in their own community.

It is my hope that the students I teach in Leduc welcome this story's disruption to their everyday suburban existence. I hope this story invites my students to consider where they are

from, just as the character's in Tan's story. As they mature in an ever-expanding community, will they hold to the value that it is their god-given right to occupy as much space as they please? Or will they begin to understand themselves as only part of a community, coexisting with the tameable and untameable nature? How will this piece of counter cultural literature challenge my students' understanding of what it means to be human? As Colebrook writes:

> [A story's] ongoing existence through time allows for the release of contrary senses. A text may always be re-read, re-framed, and reiterated without being anchored definitively in an intentionality or originating context. The literary would then present explicitly a potentiality for mobility and futurity that haunts all presence. (p. 6)

It is my hope this story lives as its own *thing* with influence far beyond the photocopied pages in my students' binders.

CHAPTER V

SYNOPSIS

The purpose of this thesis is to ask how problems introduced by wildness might disrupt the established order. I demonstrate that schools have become environments where routine, lawful respect, and domestic purity are expected in order to perpetuate social norms. Teachers are expected to tame students, emphasizing lawful compliance and social propriety. However, when a feral object is introduced to the classroom this domesticated space is problematized; the hierarchical order is threatened. I speculate and examine the problem of feral objects through three types of literature: counterculture zines, *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), and *Stick Figures* (Tan, 2008). I examine this by invoking the question of what is risked when outside things enter the classroom.

In order to better look at these things and their role in the classroom, I turn to several scholars regarding the agency and the speculative ontology of objects, as well as the potential of the monstrous. Bennett's (2010) concept of vibrant matter shows the agency objects have influence to the flows of activities beyond the initial intentions of the people using these things. Bryant (2011) demonstrates how a flat ontology might situate humans as no more important than the objects they have created. Thacker (2011) suggests that objects bite back when humans attempt to treat these object utilitarily. Finally, Cohen (1996) offers a description of monstrous traits to better help us understand traits of a feral object. Objects can bring about an honesty, beyond social propriety, making them a risk due to what they may reveal.

I began my inquiry on wildness in education by looking at the established order and subversive literature in zines. In this chapter I highlight the struggle between the teacher's desire to maintain order and the potential for subversive literature to question this order. A zine is a

mesh (or system) of words, images, paper, and more that produce a meaning which might be thought of as interobjective, that is to say in between the gaps of the words and images, and everything else in a zine, resides the meaning (Morton, 2013, p. 83). Zines come with the history of self-publication, immersed in a counter-culture. I introduce the Deleuzian (1989) zine-machine by examining what might be produced in the assemblage of a zine, with all its written and visual parts, and a reader. There are many potential flows of knowledge and being for zines to function within the ecology of a classroom. A zine holds potential to move beyond a fixed identity into a space of multiple potentials as the reader's mind decodes and interprets the zine, serving to confirm or question what a reader knows to be true. Zines hold a feral power by crossing out of the boundary of codified language by incorporating images and collages of mixed media. Unfortunately, in a classroom, zines are also enveloped into a capitalist exchange of labour for grades; the use of rubrics indicate the market exchange taking place. This influences what sorts of zines become permissible and available in a domesticated space where participating in socially popular and acceptable thought is often valued more than alternative ways of thinking, undermining the historical traits of a zine.

I continue by examining what a line of flight out of an orderly striated space might look like via *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963). This book is provocative because of how it presents a character engaging in wild behaviour contrary to the social norms of the time it was written. Deleuze's (1991) concept of immanence becomes an important way to explain how the book functions. Some may read Max's experience as one of transcendence, but I argue his experience is one of deterritorialization as the land where the Wild Things are serves as a plane of immanence, "the movement of the infinite, or rather, the flexible milieu required for the experimental elasticity of concepts themselves" (Shield & Vallee, 2012, p. 36) that Max is

attempting to comprehend, mapping out the striated and smooth spaces Max encounters in the story. The students' affective response to the book demonstrates the potential influence it has in a classroom. The Wild Things serve to describe an alternative way of being and living. Max finds a line of flight from the striated space of his structured bedroom to the smooth space of his journey sailing on the flowing ocean and of the uninhibited, uncoded forest. In running away, Max pursues an alternative way of living. Max's movement is in difference to his own ontology, unrestricted by the human/animal dichotomy. Instead, his journey is rhizomatic. With his identity in flux, his relations to other beings change.

Finally, I read Shaun Tan's (2008) story, *Stick Figures*, as a study of objects' resilience. I ask: how might objects stand their ground and assert their agency in the face of human maltreatment? Teaching in Leduc, I observed an unawareness in the inhabitants regarding the cost of suburban development. I explain the irony of bulldozing nature to beautify the suburban landscape. Tan's (2008) story is of stick figure characters who wander a suburb evoking a variety of threatened reactions from the humans who also live there.

Referring to Bennett (2010) and Bogost (2012) speculative work, I look to answer this question: how can endowing the natural landscape, through a character like a stick figure, allow for us to empathize with non-human entities? I introduce Blake's (2012) companionship between human and non-human partners. I ask: how ought one relate to natural landscapes with an acknowledgement of the land's agency? Following Bennett's (2010) questions, I ask: are the stick figures considered to be members of the public? The stick figures are a threat, not just an inconvenience. I refer to Bauman's (2004) important observation that redundancy is the greatest liability in modern living. Bennett (2010) and Bogost (2012) note how anthropomorphizing actually helps to empathize with objects. Some believe the natural world is only worth having if

it contributes to consumerism. This way of thinking has severed the relational understanding humans once experienced with the rest of the living/non-living things. The story leaves the reader with a forced acknowledgement of a shared space that humbles the humans.

Concluding Thoughts and Further Questions

What is made possible by teaching feral objects in these ways? Often, objects enhance our lives. When we assemble with a thing, more can become possible; however, particularly in the case of feral objects, there is a risk. Risk may be necessary to good pedagogy. Students who assemble themselves with zines, as readers, experience a connection to the ideas presented. They may agree or disagree with the ideas, but a trajectory is set in motion. Like Max in *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), students are presented with lines of flight away from a normalizing center of power. Students may realize they are capable of being the kings of their own lives, finding agency themselves, or might choose to find guiding representations open to being modified by encounters with other objects, books, zines, and other feral objects. Beyond this, they are then open to the surprises interacting, or assembling, with what an object may bring. Latour (1999) writes, "There is no object, no subject.... But there are events. I never *act*; I am always slightly surprised by what I do" (p. 281). By choosing to read and interact, this event opens the possibilities of what may follow, what inspiration might grow, but also what this literature might affect next. As identified earlier, feral objects are on the sidelines. Giving such attention to them in a classroom setting makes them noteworthy and, hopefully, as Bennett (2010) has pointed to, encourages empathy. It is a hope that I not only teach artistry within the literature in my classroom, but that a profound respect might also come about for those things created as they take on a life of their own.

In my introduction I point to the task of the teacher to create, and maintain, an insular learning environment where students are sheltered from ideas and things that might lead them away from maintaining social norms. The presence of a feral object in the classroom can become problematic in such a sheltered environment. What good, then, does it do to introduce students to fictional feral beings in the ecology of a classroom? By introducing these monstrous things, a teacher risks threatening the domesticated order previously established. Some students chose to create zines depicting racist perspectives. After watching the *Where the Wild Things Are* (Jonzes, 2009) film, some students adopted Max's strategy of growling in my face when asked to follow through on a learning task they did not want to complete. As a teacher, this was difficult to deal with, especially knowing I had invited the potential for this into my classroom. However, according to Bennett (2010), the potential harm that may follow the introduction of a feral object does not need to be a terrible thing.

Through Dewey's (1927) *The Public and Its Problems*, Bennett (2010) strives to correlate all things (humans and objects) as a political public. She writes, "Dewey presents the members of a public as having been inducted into rather than *volunteering* for it: each body finds itself thrown together with other harmed and squirming bodies" (Bennett, 2010, p. 101). This concept of a public is reminiscent to what I have witnessed in my classroom as class lists cumulate a web of personalities and bodies into the ecology of a classroom. Each year, a new set of students assemble, along with the literature and things I present to them. This literature, with the feralness it brings, introduces a shared experience of discomfort, potential harm, and, as Dewey (1927) terms it, a problem to unite the students and objects into a public, temporary as it may be. The problems I have described, with zines fervor being compromised, Wild Things being a potentially negative influence, or the stick figures passively challenging a suburban way

of life, function to unite and form a public consisting of my students and these objects. And this discomfort is necessary, for learning takes place in the presence of problems and challenges. Possibly, learning could not take place without these feral objects suggesting alternative ontologies. A student may choose to maintain the suburban lifestyle they are exposed to, but with the stick figures in mind, this is no longer engaged in with ignorance. Bennett (2010) writes, "Problems come and go, and so, too, do publics" (p. 100). At the end of the year, students disassemble from each other, from the desks, and from their binders full of stories and notes. However, they have been reshaped, just as their bodies continue to grow taller and rounder, their brains have also been reshaped by the challenges of these feral objects. While interacting with feral objects in the classroom might be as uncomfortable as growing pains, this discomfort can lend to learning.

Bennett (2010) continues to look at this public in a political way with every(one)thing still invested in their own interests. She insists, as humans, there should be great interest in the power objects can hold over us. I believe this is where the discomfort in engaging with feral objects emerges from. It's disconcerting to acknowledge a flat ontology (Bogost, 2012), knowing these feral objects may lead away from the routine domestication many of us depend on. In the classroom, a teacher must decide which things will meet the needs of the students; welcoming feral objects means students may not associate their classroom as a safe place to be. It may become a place where what they thought they knew to be true about their world gets called into question. It may also become a place where they are asked to decide for themselves what the truth is about their world, rather than what they have been told to believe. What students once thought experiences a sort of violence as new objects call it into question.

In *Proust & Signs*, Deleuze (2000) explains how it is often assumed that people naturally pursue truth. However, he claims, pursuing an understanding of the truth about our world is not natural but is a pursuit induced by violence. Deleuze (2000) writes, "We search for truth only when we are determined to do so in terms of a concrete situation, when we undergo a kind of violence that impels us to such a search" (p. 15). It is my belief that when feral objects assemble with my students, within the ecology of our classroom, they provoke these sorts of concrete situations. Many students undergo a sort of violence to their previously arborescent view of the world and through this they seek truth, "an encounter that would guarantee their authenticity" (p. 17). Feral objects serve as signs, Deleuzian signs of sensibility, that open up thought and create opportunities for possible lines of flight to be explored. In this, possible new becomings are also explored. Children, whose family income is provided by work that excavates the landscape, are challenged to respond empathetically to the stick figures, opening potential for each of them to become one who nurtures the land, rather than capitalizing from it.

In Leduc, as in much of the world, the economy is often discussed. People pay attention to what is happening and many are of the belief all actions should serve the enhancement of the economy. The feral objects I bring into the classroom suggest there are other priorities in our world, an unpopular idea. Beyond the risk of students questioning the teacher's judgement, a teacher who chooses to use objects to suggest a reprioritization of world values risks the questioning of colleagues and supervisors. Administrators are weary of phone calls from parents claiming the indoctrination of students to liberal values. And, as I experienced, many colleagues are also weary of discussions regarding what is just or what is true trickling into their math and science classes. Colleagues whose spouses work in the energy industry or who serve in the armed forces may find themselves caught off guard by twelve year olds questioning their ways

of life. They may become frustrated with the feral objects unsettling the harmony in the school and may seek to insist these are removed from the domesticated school. At worst, the teacher may be at risk of being accused as feral, too wild themself, and be removed from the school. When a student experiences "an encounter with something that forces us to think and to seek the truth" (Deleuze, 2000, p. 16) their passion may percolate or stream out, their thoughts assembling in other classroom ecologies, new events may occur and more becomings appear possible, but unpredictable and fickle.

Should there be limits placed on the sorts of feral objects brought into the classroom? Certainly. A teacher is mandated to create a learning environment within the boundaries of the program of studies. Feral objects, like monsters (Cohen, 1996), live on the borders of society; while they may be able to cross into the classroom, their potency may need to be tamed. For example, while sexual reproduction and sexuality may be discussed in a classroom, discussions around desire, sexual techniques, seduction, and deviance are avoided, deemed inappropriate to the purity of the educational setting. Therefore, objects such as the kama sutra, foreplay tips from popular magazines, or pornographic films will not make it into the classroom. The risk acting outside of professional mandate and of being fired is too great for a teacher to cross these sorts of boundaries.

So, how does a teacher determine which feral objects are worth the risk? Taking advice from Deleuze (2000), "the Search is always temporal, and the truth always a truth of time" (p. 17). What are the truths of our time? Which things in our world are screaming for attention? Quite obviously, our planet. Not a day goes by that we do not hear of the rising temperature of the overall planet and the consequences of putting our planet at risk. War between nations and the lack of socio-political peace fills our headlines. As of late, the civil unrest between the police

and people of minority races in the United States has intensified globally. As well, not to be forgotten, the identities and bodies of our own students continue to produce aggravating questions to their experience in our world as they grapple with personal development. Objects connected to these issues work as signs, piquing a want "to interpret, to decipher, to translate, to find the meaning of the sign" (Deleuze, 2000, p. 17) and serve the pursuit of truth. Feral objects connected to these issues become necessary to our students exploration and understanding as these objects offer a deeper consideration of these issues than the generally accepted knowledge. For our students' generation, the risks of the feral object may not be as important as the potential truth. Bennett (2010) warns:

> These harms will surely provoke some 'events' in response, but it is an open question whether they will provoke people to throw their weight toward a solution to them. Humans may notice the harm too late to intervene effectively, or their strategies of intervention may be ineffective, or they simply may deem it *unnecessary* 'to systematically care for' a harm, as we regularly sacrifice some actants for the sake of ourselves. For while every public may very well be an ecosystem, not every ecosystem is democratic. (p. 103-104)

Our students will find themselves a part of many ecosystems, ecologies, and assemblages. To an extent, their participation will be their choice but, at times, they will have no choice as to how they are affected. What is important is that our students understand they are simply one actant in association and proximity to many others. They are not helpless, but they are not always in control.

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