

The production of the academicwritingmachine

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Abstract:

The organisational territory of academia has become heavily gridded by consuming requirements to produce publications that ‘count’. To survive, the scholar must plug herself into this machine – a heaving, monstrous academicwritingmachine. She must invest libidinal energy into the process of counting if she desires to be counted. This troubles us, who write for both ‘work’ and ‘pleasure’, who write to seek connections with one another, with our sense of unknowns, and with ways people learn in communities.

Taking as a starting point the concept of the academicwritingmachine, in this paper we attempt to collectively explore and interrogate our own investment, our own repression, and our own desire to be produced within this machine. We seek to explore how this well-oiled machine captures flows of desire and how the vulnerability and sensuality of writing risks being flattened out to achieve ‘results’ that can be measured as ‘research outputs’.

In a production of synergetic collaborative writing, we explore the innards of the academicwritingmachine, following the tubes, cogs, and wheels, the pulleys and levers, to examine the series of machinic arrangements that construct and constrict those moments of presenting, rewriting, reviewing, rejecting, resubmitting. We see this as a process that propels us out and away from our individual scholarly commitments to the machine, and into a myriad of imaginative, creative and joyous collective experiences. We take back the joy of writing, and make visible our shared attempt to open/break the machine through writing which experiments with ‘the openness required for the condition of constant becomings and the value of uncertainty and questioning’.

Key words: Academic writing. Collaborative writing. Vulnerability. Writing becoming writing.

On machines

We shrink, we grunt, we heave and moan as we desire to be a part of the hyper-quantified machine of the neoliberal university. We connect to this machine, desiring to be counted and recognized as an academic within the hyper-individualized neoliberal university.

Machines
 Machinic
 Everywhere it is machines
 A writing machine driving other machines
 Couplings and connections, disjunctions and flows
 Cogs, wheels, pulleys, and levers,
 Wounds, scars, ruptures and breaks
 Lines of connections
 Intensities
 Singularities
 Virtual possibilities
 Corporeal markings
 Between present and past
 Between places and spaces
 Territorialized and re-territorialized
 And lines of flight
 This is the academicwritingmachine

The academicwritingmachine shapes who we are as academics. We necessarily have to be literate with the workings and conventions of academic writing-publishing-performing if we want to be counted and recognized as legitimate. But what does it mean to be a cog, a wheel, a lever or a pulley intricately caught up in this machine?

To think with Deleuze and Guattari (1983) about the Goldberg Machine¹ of academic publishing allows us to move from internal meanings and processes concerned with the work of academic publishing where ‘what counts’ is all that matters. They provide us with a ‘tool box’ – a collection of machinic concepts that can be plugged into other concepts and put to work. Becoming-academicwritingmachine shifts our thinking about the work of academic publishing from one of internal meanings to being able to think about surface effects, intensities and flows. The concept of becoming ruptures the all knowing ‘I’.

So here we attempt to explore disjunctions, to unpack the machine, but not to explore how it is made, but how it can be broken. Taking a Luddite hammer to the Goldberg contraption, smashing the levers and uncoupling the connections, we provide here a series of machinic arrangements, not in a linear temporal sequence, but a series of ideas, bits of writing, that connect/disconnect. The writing is about writing an academic paper, of our desire to become academicwritingmachine, we make visible our desire to be this machine.

¹ A Rube Goldberg machine is a contraption, invention, device or apparatus that is deliberately over-engineered to perform a simple task in a complicated fashion, usually including a chain reaction. Over the years, the expression has expanded to mean any confusing or complicated system. See Bogue (2007).

Writing for publication is never-ending and never-beginning. Publication plans developed and submitted. Journals scanned and critiqued. Is it on the 'list' and does it meet the quantitative requirements to compete in the processes of counting? Counting publications, counting outputs, counting citations. We have become counting machines. We are machinic.

Why is it not enough to be beginning, to be contemplating, to be working through ideas. No one talks about one's efforts to begin within the never-ending, never-beginning process of writing-publishing. It's only the endings that matter in the neoliberal university, not "the silences and elisions" (Clegg, 2010, p. 22).

'[Senior University Person] is watching us like a hawk to see our outputs. We have to make our time count. He's got his accountability, too. Your future contract depends on this'... This is what was said. This is what I took away; my takehome message, 'You're a small mouse, only light brown in colour and easy to pick up and throw away. And you will be. We'll just keep saying it. That will make it real and scary. Then you'll act'.

Human Resources determine our moves. It creates the templates upon which we quantify ourselves. We must count, we must be counted. Quantify your publications, your grants, your teaching. Nothing must escape the counting. What is your monetary worth? You are fodder to the machine if you do not come up with the numbers.

This is about fear. If we threaten through constant mentions of 'watching your outputs' and 'we really need to see publications here' everyone will believe this to always be the case. There won't have been any other way.

Even those who find the act of writing a pleasure- to sit quietly and write and think for extended periods; whose dissertations did not kill them or the spark of writing but helped them reach deeper, to think, even those people we will poison. Even those who think they can chug on, we'll get them too, hold them by the ankles with sharp incisors and tear their tendons. And a Stephen Spielberg quote comes through Instagram: "if we don't have a generation of readers, how can we have a generation of writers?" Read it differently to say, if we don't have a generation of writers, thinkers and teachers, who will teach reading and writing that transforms? Did someone poison the waterhole? Was it when we turned away?

But we are embedded in this cycle. Deleuze and Guattari (1983) say, "Desire and its object are one and the same thing: the machine, as a machine of a machine. Desire is a machine. Desire is a machine, and the object of desire is another machine connected to it" (p.26). We can't recall turning it on. Did we want to turn it on? Did we want to get caught up in this mad process of never-beginning, never-ending? Writing, submitting, waiting, receiving feedback, receiving rejection, receiving success – yes, we will be counted for this one! But no, not good enough for this one. Deemed inadequate. We must write again, beginning again, re-enter into the process of never-beginning, never-ending.

We cannot separate ourselves from this machine. We are not outside of the machine. We are an intricate part of the machine. We are "incapable of making movement except as part of the machine" (Deleuze & Parnet, 2002, p.104). This academicwritingmachine is not something impacting on us as academics, crushing us and wounding us. As academics within the neo-liberal university it is us making the movements. We are necessarily imbricated in the machine's assemblages:

Machine, machinism, 'machinic': this does not mean either mechanical or organic. Mechanics is a system of closer and closer connections between dependent terms. The machine by contrast is a 'proximity' grouping between independent and heterogeneous terms (topological proximity is itself

independent of distance or contiguity). What defines a machine assemblage is the shift of a centre of gravity along an abstract line. (Deleuze & Parnet, 2002, p. 104)

A machine then is that which does not act mechanically. It relies on disjunctions, rather than couplings. Shores observes about Goldberg machines:

What we note from the machines is how comically unrelated are the conjoined parts. They are more like disjunctions than conjunctions, but they are mechanical, because they affect one another; or we might say the resulting transformations are always implied yet never coherent. What we see is the production of differences on the basis of differences.

(http://piratesandrevolutionaries.blogspot.com/2010/12/moved-function-of-disjunction-rube_31.html)

Our work and our collaboration, in its ‘failings’ or ‘fallings-short’, is a machine because it works through what does not work – rejections, not-attending conferences, different rates and direction in flow in our lives and careers. Yet we struggle/strive to create couplings and in the effort, the failings, the out-of-time nature of our communication, we work together. We work because of the disjunctions:

This is the function of disjunction. It's funny in this case, but it is quite common in our everyday experiences. Our lives do not function on account of sensible harmonious conjunctions. They function on account of a monstrous assemblage of differential mechanical relations, like a giant infinitely complex Goldberg machine. Often times our strongest motivations to succeed come from functional disjunctions.

(http://piratesandrevolutionaries.blogspot.com/2010/12/moved-function-of-disjunction-rube_31.html, emphasis added)

On the academicwritingmachine

This would be true for us. We are highly motivated to produce papers through participation in cycles of academic games (submit abstract for conference, write paper, attend conference, write notes, re-write paper, etc). In one rupture, we gain the greatest momentum for our project. Why do academic failures or missteps give us so much to work with and why is it so much easier when we do this in a group?

Are there other spaces in academicwritingmachine?

Can we be other?

Can we, borrowing from Mountz et al., (2015), be counted differently?

How can we be

Counted

Differently?

Our connections with this machine, a structure of which we are afraid and in awe, while also a part of, illuminate vulnerabilities. For example, a new early career academic on short-term contracts who works, as do we all, within “the fast-paced, metric-oriented neoliberal university” (Mountz et al., 2015, p.1236). Or, an early career researcher working at keeping all the wheels and cogs turning in order to be counted at the cost of living a life. Counting has become her life. Or, the late career researcher being called to give ac/count of her outputs ... her numbers ... her worth. We try to make sense of the passing feeling of comfort and security experienced in conformity, in conforming successfully to the tasks and

identities required and expected as an academic producer within a matrix of production hidden behind a staff number ... connected to databases... graphed and quantified ... overseen by a team ... reported to the Dean ...

Sense cannot be made of this constant need to call oneself to account but sensing is possible. In this act of sensing we shrink from the grunt and hiss of the hyper-quantifying machine of the neoliberal university and desire to be part of its bulk. In-between-these-two, part way between constant anxiety caused by unending "compression of time and space" in academic life (Acker & Armenti, 2004, p. 7), and skipping with delight because of a job in academia. We love being able to submit a paper, revise it, have it accepted. We speak in code. There's a feeling that others know how to send 'their' papers (never 'the' paper) to the 'right journal' to ensure success. "It's nice to talk like everybody else", write Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 3), which we say when our writing is accepted.

We wait for feedback. We produce. We are produced as inadequate, passable. We write. We must write. Things are written. We desire to publish. We are published. We make a submission. We have submitted (become submissive?). That's not enough endless.

Disjunctions are central to its mechanics rather than neatly defined relational parts. We write. We need to write. We want to write. We want to be counted. We tuck ourselves away in our offices. Bury our heads into our computers. We desire to do the work of the academicwritingmachine. Our embeddedness, our desire to be part of the constant grunt and grind of these movements: "Desire and its object are one and the same thing: the machine, as a machine of a machine" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p.28). We are produced; we are producing as cogs within this machine. Our actions write us into the machine and our movements become-machinic.

We are multiple and there are so many of us writing. Can we find ways of moving differently that allows for new connections – disjunctions rather than couplings?

We wonder why academic life is defined by binaries: work-life, success-failure. What are we doing when we work so hard at this never-beginning, never-ending work of the academicwritingmachine? Why do we allow this machine to define-determine the binaries? We can take pride in our skills in navigating the machine's workings: journal rankings, teacher evaluations, university journal lists, ROPES, SCImago, FOR codes, ERA, Scopus, Google Scholar

This year I'm a '2'. I'm supposed to reach '2' which seems low but perhaps that's because I'm a first-year ECR. I search under my own surname in Endnote and use my records to tally myself up. My website staff profile and the Symplectic database from which my public record draws reveal me as someone being monitored. I see on staff notices: It is my responsibility to create an ORCID code as, I assume, yet another way of 'capturing' all that makes me count. I see myself in black and white.

Let me count it up: 0.3 (can I sneak some more decimal points if I'm first author over second?) +1 (does a book chapter equal a journal article?) + 1 (lucky! an article that was 'published' a few years ago now enters as a 2015 online publication; I'm not complaining) + 0.5 (are all journal articles equal? It's not a highly ranked) = 2.8 (Do I round myself up? Did I get the sum right? Will my excess carry over? Can someone place me in credit... please?)

We share graphs and tables, even when we have no idea what they mean:

Baffle her with numbers! I have no idea what these mean - also I think Linda found a ranking.

Yes, in SCImago it has it as a Q1 & Q2 in 2013 (see figure 1).

I have been told I need to publish only in Q1 & Q2 otherwise I will ‘pull down the rankings’.

I know!! It’s like a never ending bickering you hear in your head. I have to admit I couldn’t find CSMC on the SJR Imago site I was on. But glad there’s an alternative out there so a ranking is not missed! The research person here advised me that rankings over 0.5 in SJR are what ‘we’re aiming for’.

So the thing is.... Academics need to publish, so you get something written and think ‘tick’, then you send it to the most appropriate journal and think ‘tick’, then you check the ranking and think oh no it’s 0.324. I’m not going to think about it anymore. I might just go home now.

Look at the language we use – numbers, acronyms. The temporality of the tick, ticking the boxes becomes also the ticking clock: tick, tick, tick goes the academic clock. Always counting. Always predicting what’s ahead. Always determining what will be.

The machine of academic writing involves becoming part of bodies of language and plugging into conventions in our fields. As students learn, molar landscapes of order words teach that there is a way to write, reference, cite, spell, hyphenate, organise and that there are bodies of work learners should imitate in order to ‘talk like’ as we, through submission, become accepted. The academicwritingmachine has ways of doing things, including in poststructuralist contexts, which result in corralling academics even as they reveal individual histories and subjectivities. It appears that in academia, we need one another, we need universities and publishing companies. We work with inter-connections in order to produce our work and produce ourselves as academic writers. Graham Badley (2011, p. 483) identifies the writer, “the textor”, as one who is “text-between” and “intertextual”, who composes by weaving new texts together from the ‘threads’ of other texts.

Becoming unpublished

Things have been working differently lately. Binaries have come crumbling-tumbling down. A

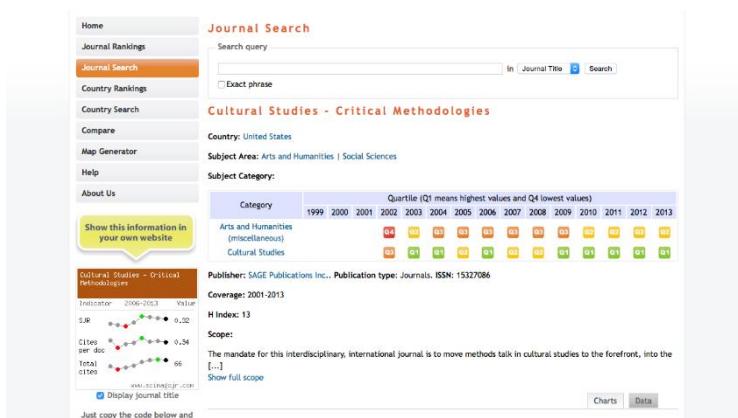


Figure 1

series of events each with their affective forces and a declaration ‘Stuff them!’ when the

decision to publish in a ‘non-countable’ journal is made. We became un-publishable, unsuccessful, a failure in the rigid, stratified, quantified counting of the academicwritingmachine.

A publishing plan for a paper-video-performance-presentation. The creation of an output to plug into the academicwritingmachine. We explore, we write to each other, we rarely talk, never on the phone, sometimes one-on-one, never until a conference in 2015 were we even in the same physical space. Linda and Eileen² presented together, Sarah and Eileen³ presented together, then last year, we think yes, we plan a symposium together, the three separate and connected through a symposium abstract that claimed so much and offered a chance to be together in the same physical space, failed to eventuate. The Sarah-Linda of the Eileen-Sarah-Linda assemblage were captured by the striations of the machine. That left Eileen to present as three with a virtual performance from Sarah and Linda⁴.

Something happened in that paper-video-performance-presentation. Words flowed, touched, impacted, resounded, resonated and wounded: “we are voids – there are huge gaping holes in our credibilities as academics and we spend our days and nights, hours and hours trying to plug up the holes” (Honan, 2014). At the end someone in the audience said that what had taken place was a Deleuzian event where something happens that shifts us so we cannot go back – “incorporeal transformations that subsist over and above the spatiotemporal world, but are expressible in language nonetheless” (Stagoll, 2010, p.90). Someone said we needed to read Deleuze’s writings on wounds and scars: ‘don’t just complain because the machine will eat you up’. We were told: ‘you have to publish this’. Where? We did not know but that’s what we tried to do.

And so.

We worked to create a production, the production of an academic paper, replete with references, carefully formatted, typographically fashioned to the rules of compliance, a perfectly acceptable paper for publishing. We thought we had nailed it. Along the way we also nourished each other and cultivated our writing through emails/dreams/meetings. But at the same time, in the same moment(s) of dreaming and collectively nourishing our acts of creation we were becoming academicwritingmachine. We consider a venue for publication, with a link to the ‘aims and scope’ page of the journal we determine is worthy of our submission:

Let’s aim for Cultural Studies - Critical methodologies, it counts:

http://www.uk.sagepub.com/journalsProdDesc.nav?prodId=Journal201379&ct_p=manuscriptSubmission&crossRegion=antiPod#tabview=aims

We review the layouts, think about timing, write about structure:

² Honan, E., Henderson, L., Riddle, S. (2012). Troubling methodological conventions and the (re)presentation of data. Symposium presented at the Joint International Conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education and the Asia-Pacific Educational Research Association Conference. University of Sydney: Sydney.

³ Honan, E. Loch, S., Sellar, S. (2013). The thesis as a minor literature: Reterritorialisation of research conditions. Symposium presented at the Deleuze. Guattari. Schizoanalysis. Education Conference. Murdoch University: Perth.

⁴ Honan, E., (Loch, S., Henderson, L. – in absentee) (2014). The production of permission within academia. Symposium presented at The Joint Australian Association for Research in Education and New Zealand Association for Research in Education Conference. Queensland University of Technology: Brisbane.

Eileen just sent a paper from this journal that we are thinking about in terms of layout. The paper is also in our Dropbox folder.

In terms of timelines we are thinking that Easter week (beginning April) having it ready for submission.

Our two videos: we have discussed the possibility of having them uploaded onto YouTube and hyperlinked in the paper. How do you feel about that?

In terms of the text we have talked about keeping it fluid and playing with the words and sentences. See example from paper. We will need text before the video clips and after: elaborating on dot points but not necessarily sentences, maybe even poetry.

We are authors. We appear authoritative. The online dictionary defines this as: "having or proceeding from authority; clearly, accurate, knowledgeable". We are authors, going on the business of authoring. Etymology of author includes: "originator, creator, instigator, enlarger, founder, master, leader," literally, "one who causes to grow," "to increase".

We know what we are doing. We're a little nervous but excited whilst still finalizing our authoring processes: word length, referencing, we play, we feel, we enjoy the process:

Am I right in feeling not masses needs to be done but we're getting it publication ready while keeping its assembled feeling?

I guess we are trying to work within the confines of a print journal while still playing around with textual features of our paper.

In terms of the length, the instructions for submission does not mention a word limit for articles. I think we should aim to keep it at around the length that it is (5200) knowing that most journal articles are around 6000.

Well I think we are ready to go –Nervous about sending this out but hoping 'they' will like it- feel free to add/delete/change anything in this final version.

We have become academicwritingmachine!

And then.....

We become one with the cogs and wheels as we engage with numbers and quantitative measuring outputs when pangs of doubt creep into our authoring processes:

Thank you both for this coming together. It was a pleasure working on this.

Weirdly, I was just reading Eileen's email to say she'd submitted it and I was delighted, when my boss mentioned publications. I said I'd actually just submitted something with writing colleagues (so happy to say that!) and she asked what rating the journal was as we needed more in 'top education journals' (so yeah.....not exactly top ... welcome to Monday). But it remains a pleasure to have put this together with you regardless of any other dimension of why we do it.

We set aside this niggle, and bask in the sunny spot of submission, our doggy legs cocked to allow our bellies to be stroked by the neoliberal apparatus of electronic journal submission.

Momentarily...

The opportunity to review your manuscript has been greatly appreciated. Although your work deals with an important topic, I regret to inform you that I cannot accept your manuscript for publication in its current form. (Email communication)

Rejection. Failure. In our rush, in our shock to quickly find a home for our poor lovely manuscript, we run back to the numbers. Our doggy legs no longer seeking belly rubs, we smartly roll back over and stand to attention, we seek security in the numbers, not belly rubs. We become metric maximisers. We document "...everything, reveal [ing] nothing" making ourselves "calculable rather than memorable" (Ball, 2012, p.17, cited in Mountz, 2015, p.1242):

You know, I think I don't know how to read this stuff - the feminist ones I just looked up in SJR are all Q3-4. But then I looked this QRJ up and it is Q4 as well (lowest) but it used to be 'A'. What about this one below?

Critical Inquiry ranks more highly (I feel icky mentioning this, but it gets a SJR score of 1.02 over Women's Studies Forum at 0.38).

- a) xxx is not 'alternative' enough. I've had a paper rejected from there because the reviewers couldn't find the 'findings' of the 'study'.
- b) One of my feminist colleagues argues that Deleuze is just another dead white male and I worry that while the paper is about our lives as women academics it is not 'overtly' complete with feminist theories.
- c) The xxx looks interesting but Sarah and Linda are you sure you don't have to publish in journals that are included in the Education Field of Study code? I would double check that.
- d) The other journal xxx is also a possibility but I don't think it 'counts'. Do check that you can publish outside of the education field of study before we keep looking though!

We count. We are counted. We must count. We must learn to count. The quantified academic is what counts. To be counted you have to plug into this quantified machine. Learn its numbers, its functions, its mechanics. We do so to be successful, to be counted. To fail is to be uncountable, unpublishable.

On Experimenting with failure, cracks and ruptures

No, no more! "Stop! You're making me tired! Experiment, don't signify and interpret! Find your own places, territorialities, deterritorializations, regime, lines of flight! Semiotize yourself instead of rooting around in your prefab childhood and Western semiology" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 587). Stop with the counting, and turn to experimentation. We will be failures.....

Under certain circumstances failing, losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing may in fact offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world. (Halberstam, 2011, p.3)

Failure. A place of in-between. A place to experiment. A place to engage with the process Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p.161) outline so eloquently when they say that we must:

Lodge [ourselves] on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialisation, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment, have a small plot of new land at all times.

We use failure here as a process of activism, rather than a ‘pitstop’ to success (Burford, 2015). Failure is not the dichotomous lack relational to success, but a rejection of the “hollow meaning” of success (Burford, 2015, p. 3). “Failure, for these authors, is neither a dead end nor a pit stop on the path to success but a generative, unsettling and revelatory force. Together, they reckon with the fraught and isolating affective experience of failure, so often disavowed or dismissed” (O’Gorman & Werry, 2012, p. 1).

“Failure’s promise lies in its capacity to unravel the certainties of knowledge, competence, representation, normativity and authority. Failure ... is the inevitable and critical counterpoint to modernity’s empty promises” (O’Gorman & Werry, 2012, p. 1).

Celebrating failure, and actively encouraging a failure to publish, is an act of activism, a way to succeed in resisting the “measure and mantra of the corporatizing university” (O’Gorman & Werry, 2012, p. 3).

“It is leaking; there is always something that deviates from and escapes a structure or a system” (Olsson, 2009, p. 24) – our failures, missteps, not-counting- we are not failing but leaking from the system to find our own ways through, and doing this again.

Our paper is an open-ended machine that affords a continuing line of flight – conference paper-to published paper-to emails-to conference-to dreams-to publishing-to thinking-to writing-to connections-to disjunctions. Others can plug into it at no particular point but only at the surface level – where it affects and is affecting, nodules of intensities, find their own line of flight to continue the conversation. This is a highly ethical act – so whilst our once unpublizable paper is now a publication (Honan, Henderson, Loch, 2015⁵) deemed a ‘failure’ according to processes that count – we argue otherwise. This act of failing is an ethical act - an ethical shift from the neoliberal individual competing against colleagues to the collective subject findings ways of being otherwise. Experimenting with ways of being otherwise. Finding means of connecting with others that allow for encounters that permit us to “act effectively in the world” and to be “more capable of joy” (Davies, 2014, p.8). In this way thought can be free and open to encounters and thus, capable of creating and re-creating more ethical spaces other than the spaces of the university that is tying thought down to a set of rules and regulations, demanding thinking to obey. Only when thought is “free” will it be vital and when vital, “nothing is compromised” (Deleuze, 1988, p.4).

We re-think what we experience as a furnace-like academicwritingmachine and our relationship to it. Like others writing in this space (Clegg, 2010; Hartman & Darab, 2012; Whelan, Walker, & Moore, 2013, Wyatt, et al, 2011), we wish to find a more sustainable approach to “the audit culture ... of contemporary academic life” by “consider[ing] what we want to see being valued and how” (Klocker & Drozdzewski, 2012, p. 7) and explore the “political potential” of creating “self-determined work lives” through slower, more mindful scholarship (Mountz et al., 2015, p.1249).

⁵ Just to be clear, the ‘failure’ lies in the publication in a journal that does not ‘count’- it does not appear on any of the journal rankings recognised at any of our universities

So what would it be, this academicwritingmachine that is plural; is ‘we’ not ‘I’; is slow, not quickly burning out against a dying light; is celebrating failure rather than success; is working/writing to a different slower rhythm?

What if we moved a little more slowly? We ask of academia. What might it mean “to bring the slow movement to scholarship?” (Mountz et al, 2015, p.1247). Central to the argument of the slow scholarship movement is that intellectual work takes time and space and that only “by slowing down – to listen and read what others have to say, to expand our experiences by getting out of offices and classrooms – we can do our best scholarship, teaching and mentoring. We learn by living” (Mountz et al., 2015, p.1247).

We are connected. We are part of many other assemblages of other people’s (academic) lives where we interrupt and encourage each other’s work. There are also disconnections. The sting of feedback, from re-submit emails, flushes of anger, wounds and failure “with its endless interruptions, accidents, breakdowns, flops, misfires, deadends and surprises, moodiness and messiness” (O’Gorman & Werry, 2012, p. 2).

An email accidentally sent to the wrong person. A night of TV viewing instead of writing, and the ensuing feelings of shame and guilt. Saving work to run outside to get the washing off the line when it begins to rain. Put it in the dryer. Enjoy writing days for “a moment like that, a haecceity” (Wyatt et al., 2014, p. 409).

We stumble across storysharing conversations on Instagram, only three paragraphs long, its rhythm is different/something other. Rhythm is difference for Deleuze (1994) – it is the in-between, the middle. Milieus and rhythms he says are created from chaos, and from milieus and rhythms territories are formed. Every milieu is in contact with other milieus – vibrating in a rhythmic movement, but not a rhythm that is regular, nor homogenous. Heart, lungs, brain, liver, stomach, intestines, eyes, ears, nose they are all milieus each with their own rate of rhythmic repetitions. Each is sensitive to alterations, in breath, in heart rate, in smell, in sight, in sound, in temperature. They undergo processes of transduction and transcoding, refusing to be pinned down to a specific measure and rate, but instead, remain supple and open to change. When open to sensing this process an awareness washes over, that the ‘I’, who gets trapped into thinking she is a stable subject is nothing more than a multiplicity.

We consider a feminist ethics of care, in an attempt to connect with this sense of rhythm and to locate some of the “multiple entryways and always new beginnings” (Löytönen, Koro-Ljungberg, Carlson, Orange, & Cruz, 2015, p. 40), which can encourage noticing and mindful inquiry. We become conscious that “Sometimes one overdoes it, puts too much in, works with a jumble of lines and sounds” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 343). We don’t want to flood the engine of the machine. It sometimes happens.

What is this machine?

We feel we are within, and within many machines that get writing happening. We feel belonging; “producing, a product” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, p. 7) even as we stutter and re-start because our body is organized, as Deleuze and Guattari write, to continually break down and suffer. We take on Valerie Hey’s (2004) caution about our “persistent (over?) commitment to intellectual labour” (p.33) by acknowledging that when one is desperate to belong, to become subsumed, be a part of it, desiring; our motors can overheat. Machines “must be plugged in in order to work” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 4) but machines break down because that is how they are made. The textor, the supervisor, the academic – these positions offer us “power-points” to which we connect and disconnect to build a “sort of academic life” (Badley, 2014, p. 981).

Breakdowns are vital, they are cracks. A crack is an encounter with forces, that through such encounters thought arrives only ever as a sensation. Cracks are affect, and they hold potentiality for something new to emerge. Deleuze (2004, p.178-179) accepts that the surface is already always cracked, and asks if it is possible to prevent life “from becoming a demolition job” and if it is at all “... possible to maintain the inherence of the incorporeal crack while taking care not to bring it into existence, and not to incarnate it in the depth of the body?” But cracks need not be resisted or feared so long as:

...the body is not compromised by it, as long as the liver and brain, the organs, do not present the lines in accordance with which the future is told...If one asks why health does not suffice, why the crack is desirable, it is perhaps because only by means of the crack and at its edges that thought occurs, that anything that is good and great in humanity enters and exist through it.

(Deleuze, 2004, p.182)

To prevent the machine overflooding ... cracking up ... meticulous experimentation is necessary. Connections and disjunctures will bring forth flows of intensities. We must connect. We must “see how [we are] stratified at the place where [we] are, then descend from the strata to the deeper assemblage... [we] make diagrams, not signified programs. And wherever [we] are [we] ... gently tip the assemblage so as to pass it over to the side of the plane of consistency” (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p.161).

We embrace our wounds inflicted from the academicwritingmachine for we are part of it and our wounds are an event. They are not something inflicted upon us by something out there. Wounds are both temporal and transcendental. They are never actually happening but “always that which has already happened, or is going to happen” (Reynolds, 2007, p. 145).

Thinking with failure and wounds we ask then, how were things working that allowed for ‘failure’?

What happens when one wonders what it means to allow yourself to be defined by strict binaries that determine what counts, who can count, who is in, who is out? What does it mean to open oneself up to the flow of forces that uncouple these binaries and send them racing? How is it even possible to think what it means when time becomes so pressed with the need to check, constantly check that you are being counted, going to be counted, going to be deemed legitimate - authoritative.

To be open to the affective forces that are capable of opening up the strict binaries that have come to define academic life makes possible the ability to think otherwise.

We have become tied to the academicwritingmachine in unhealthy ways. Valerie Hey (2004) notes how we have been so “powerfully reworked ... that we have become instrumental in our own exploitation” (p.33). She goes on to ask: “What is going on below the level of the obvious regulation and what surplus value is being extracted from our own punitive pleasure in what we do?” (p.33) In answering this question she notes the tensions that arise from the imperatives for the need to publish. We compare self to others we want more – to get that publication, get it in the right journal, to be recognized by the institution as a researcher, to be deemed legitimate - authoritative. And all the while our frames of reference are slowly captured into desiring this very thing, and thinking there is nothing outside of this academicwritingmachine.

But Deleuze and Guattari (1983) tell us otherwise. We know this academicwritingmachine is just that – a machine. But it is a machine that has allowed itself to become trapped in the

dominant order, however there are other machines, other ways of working. And that way of working is by understanding that a machine for Deleuze is the assemblage. A machine that does not work by rates but by rhythms. It works through associations, not sets of cogs and wheels tied to certain rates and quantities. Its associations are like that of the refrain – melodic landscapes – a song, a home but also an opening, the circle, a crack (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). It is the in-between. We keep in mind Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) instructions to keep just enough of the organism to reform each morning, just enough subjectification to prevent collapsing into a black hole. And when the circumstance emerges, and demands, a momentary affective response, the 'I', which is nothing more than a multiplicity, can cry out – 'Stuff them!' For as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) say: "What qualifies a deterritorialisation is not its speed (some are very slow) but its nature" (p.56). It is not some beyond or what comes after the academicwritingmachine, but it is the in-between. It is the getting out of the office, it is the collaborations we choose to form, it is the stepping in between the work-life binary we hold so tightly, and it is an ability to connect with life in all of its fullness. For the machine is more than lines of writing – writing that 'counts'. If we are to write 'lines of writing' the lines must "conjugate with other lines, life lines, lines of luck or misfortune, lines productive of the variation of the line of writing itself, lines that are between the lines of writing" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p.194).

Nicholas Tampio (2015) argues that becoming-political "means generating new ways of thinking, acting, feeling, and seeing" (p.69). For us becoming-political is about embracing our failure and wounds for it is only through failure and wounds can we begin to "think about how to construct a joyful order, one that has enough stability to make possible enchanting lines of flight for those who wish to take that risk" (Tampio, 2015, p.85). It means experimenting with being otherwise in order to connect in ways that permit us to be in the world, not acting on the world. Only then can we find joy and friendship in our work. But for this type of friendship there must be a willingness to embrace what Deleuze (Stivale, 2008, p.47) describes as a "new community"; a community that is always in processes of becoming and where there is an active commitment by all to enlarge possibilities. Only through the enlargement of possibilities are we able to embrace each other within "folds of friendship" (Stivale, 2008, p.47) capable of creating joy in our work. Making friends in the writing machines of academic circles is not always the goal of those who work in academic spheres. Our coming together as friends happened through stepping outside our positions as 'student', 'supervisor', 'advisor' and 'presenter' and seeing what happened next. A shared philosophy and interest helped, but most important is our ongoing willingness to journey the journey and respect our lack of control over anyone else's decisions. We experiment with what it means to be academics and to be friends. We are learning to do this in our collaborations (in becoming-LindaEileenSarah) whilst located with/in the academicwritingmachine.

Therefore, through becoming-LindaEileenSarah we find a joyfulness in the writing-creating-drawing-thinking-dreaming-connecting-disconnecting process. We learn that writing is the art of conceptual and perceptual colouring, rather than some act of cognitive penetration (Bradotti, 2010). We think about dogs on a beach creating maps. They don't follow any predictable path but instead create tracks that are impossible to trace. Yet, they recall the location of a dead bird or fish discovered a few days ago and run off to that exact same spot before continuing on with their experimentation of mapping of the space of a beach. It is this type of experimentation that we choose to engage in. This is experimentation that Deleuze and Guattari (1987) ask us to engage in. The type of experimentation we need to engage in as we work the in-between spaces of the academicwritingmachine.



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