

Lisa Tan

For every word has its own shadow

Sunsets
Notes From Underground
Waves

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Waves

And my eyes would be fixed on this white background and find enough to observe there, for every word has its own shadow.

–Clarice Lispector, “The Obedient,” *The Foreign Legion* (1986), translated by Giovanni Pontiero

And my eyes are glued to this white background and find enough to observe there, for every word has its shadow.

–Clarice Lispector, “The Obedient (I),” *Selected Crônicas* (1992), translated by Giovanni Pontiero

And on that white background my eyes would be riveted with quite enough to see, for every word has its shadow.

–Clarice Lispector, “The Obedient Ones,” *The Complete Stories* (2015), translated by Katrina Dodson

Clarice Lispector, “Os obedientes,” originally published 1964 by Editora do Autor, Rio de Janeiro

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Abstract

Title

For every word has its own shadow: Sunsets, Waves, Notes From Underground

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Liminality permeates this doctoral project's questions: how can an experience of the liminal exist as an artwork? What things and experiences can orient us towards affectivity and states of becoming? Lisa Tan relates such concerns to Clarice Lispector whose writing renders becoming(s) visible. Coupled with Maurice Blanchot and his literary discourse on dispossession and the outside (analogous to becoming), Tan's inquiry is critically engaged inside a moving image practice. A suite of videos: *Sunsets*, 2012; *Notes From Underground* 2013; and *Waves* 2014-15, stand as the primary output of this dissertation. Drifting between day and night, above and below ground, land and sea, they exist as movements towards the fulfillment of the promise of the liminal: transformation.

In *Sunsets*, the sun converses with the force that is Clarice Lispector. The video documents the audio of a casual translation of an interview with Lispector from 1977. This recording forms the video's soundtrack. The visual footage is comprised of scenes that were filmed at 3 o'clock in the morning during the summer or 3 o'clock in the afternoon during the winter in Sweden. *Notes from Underground* connects the Stockholm metro and Susan Sontag's sojourn in Sweden with a cavern system 5,000 miles away in New Mexico. The video suggestively links this journey to experiences of liminality, narrating varied intensities of geological time and strata of personal and cultural history. Departing from Virginia Woolf's novel *The Waves*, Tan's video *Waves* imagines how consciousness forms in relation to society and its technologies, but also to expressions of geological and hydrological processes. Filmed at the threshold of land and sea, a conversation forms between disparate hydro-relations, such as Woolf's prose, Courbet's paintings of waves, Google's data centers cooled by the Baltic Sea, invisible jellyfish, and transoceanic cables.

The dissertation includes the videos, a doctoral thesis, and an artist's book, containing: illustrated transcriptions of each video; a documented solo exhibition; texts by Mara Lee, Lauren O'Neill-Butler, Natascha Sadr Haghghian, and Lisa Tan. The artist's book both documents and reflects on the research performed and involves the voices of others, providing a critical, intersubjective understanding of liminality.

List of components in the dissertation

Artworks

Sunsets

2012

HD video, sound

22 min. 45 sec.

Notes From Underground

2013

HD video, sound

23 min. 45 sec.

Waves

2014-15

HD video, sound

19 min 12 sec.

Solo exhibition of video installations

Lisa Tan: For every word has its own shadow

Galleri Riis, Stockholm, Sweden

January 14-February 21, 2015

Artist's book

Lisa Tan: Sunsets, Notes From Underground, Waves

Editor: Joshua Shaddock

Publisher: Archive Books, Berlin, 2015

Doctoral Thesis

Lisa Tan

For every word has its own shadow: Sunsets, Notes From Underground, Waves

Doctoral dissertation in Fine Arts at Valand Academy, Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts, University of Gothenburg

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Introduction

A literary reference initiates this doctoral dissertation in its title: *For every word has its own shadow*. It is lifted from a story by Clarice Lispector originally published in 1964 that begins with the narrator contemplating how she should arrive at expression—knowing that meaning is found neither in words nor the paper they rest on, but somewhere in between both: “... my eyes would be fixed on this white background and find enough to observe there, for every word has its own shadow.”¹

This dissertation radiates from this somewhere between language and its absence. Lispector’s strange, highly philosophical writing is of the in-between itself. But how can an experience of the liminal exist as an artwork? How should one invoke liminality as an aesthetic encounter? What things and experiences can orient us towards affectivity and states of becoming? From which experiences do these questions arise? These key questions are answered in the dissertation’s suite of three videos, titled *Sunsets*, *Notes From Underground*, and *Waves*. Each piece builds on the previous, and as a group they cross-fertilize the search that each performs individually towards a liminal ontology. They narrate my engagement with liminality, threshold, and becoming, through three enigmatic writers: Clarice Lispector in *Sunsets*, Susan Sontag in *Notes From Underground*, and Virginia Woolf in *Waves*. The writers’ respective personae and their thoughts on life and creativity are structuring elements anchoring my inquiry of the in-between, as I drift toward the affective realms of specific personal, geological, and cultural histories.

Meanwhile, this written component is representative of a textual method, apt for reflection on ideas resonant within the artworks. The inverse applies as well but in a slightly different manner. Making art is a process through which I not only think through certain concepts—written or otherwise—but also *feel* them.² The search for an embodied engagement with ideas through art practice is nothing less than my most consequential method for thinking. But the process of writing as reflection is important for how it deepens my thinking and informs stages to

follow. Therefore, the space between moving image practice and textual reflection is a generative liminal space in itself.

Because the videos are the fundament of my critical engagement of liminality, this introduction is followed by reflections on *Sunsets*, *Notes From Underground*, and *Waves*—all of which are documents of their own method. In other words, elements of my research working method are visible in the works themselves—as content. This self-reflexivity is connected to the manner in which I involve multiple contexts and relationships, including the institutional framework under which this project is performed. The sighting or recognition of this—or any other attunements—is duly contingent on any given viewer. But it’s within this doctoral thesis that I make a selection of these arrangements known, and hopefully in a manner that does not stifle interpretations of the works that are vitally those other than my own.

Departing from the videos, I then move on to textually document the solo exhibition in which the videos were presented in installation format (the preferred format over screenings). Next, key research concepts of liminality and threshold are named, together with the principal references: writers Clarice Lispector and Maurice Blanchot. I then go on to describe the methodological context, reflecting on the setting in which the project is made and how this influenced artistic decisions. Here, I relate to other existing modes of address, such as the essay film and other artists’ works that also involve literature. Finally, a lengthier section on liminality, threshold, and becoming, accelerates the textual method described in the previous paragraph. I close with an introduction to a new concept that is developing specifically out of the research performed by this project: *the provisional as an aesthetic*.

1. Clarice Lispector, “The Obedient,” in *The Foreign Legion: Stories and Chronicles*, trans. Giovanni Ponteiro (Manchester: Carcanet, 1986), 81.

2. Elizabeth Grosz, *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution, and the Untimely* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 197. See the section on Henri Bergson for more on the relationship between intellect, instinct, and bodily knowledge. Grosz relates how Bergson, “distinguishes between our knowing the material world intellectually and our living in it bodily. We live the world in a manner much more complex and more integrated with matter than our conceptual apparatus is able to comprehend, ...”

1. Document of its own method

Sunsets (2012)

Landscapes appear throughout *Sunsets*. But I'm not interested in nature as such, just in its affects. Take note of the video's images, how most of them are tightly framed, reflecting an addled me, trying to grasp the concept of winter and summer in Sweden—where the extreme light conditions play with my mood, work schedule, social life, and creative abilities. The video documents its own methods, so the viewer follows my research of a 1977 interview with Clarice Lispector—the Brazilian writer whose work I've been socializing with for several years now. During this same period of reading and reading about Lispector, I was setting my phone's alarm for three o'clock in the morning, at the height of summer, getting out of bed to film.

At this latitude a day's illumination can fade in a glorious, seemingly endless manner or in one that's disconcertingly fleeting. Either configuration offers an experience of radical alienation, felt mostly outside of any social order, and it's both wondrous and destabilizing. I surveyed the quality of light and thought about the activities that occur—or don't occur—at this time. And when summer ended, I waited for the winter solstice, which would signal my next call-time: three o'clock in the afternoon. Inside that dimly lit season, I was also spending parts of every week with a friend. She agreed to translate Lispector's interview for me, over Skype, connecting her apartment in Brooklyn—or her studio in the city—with mine in Stockholm. I recorded our sessions, not knowing that they'd end up being the life force of the video, its driving poetics.

Sunset is a time that elicits a more unstable experience of the world. At the threshold of light and its absence, feelings of displacement, loneliness, fatigue, and anxiety can seep in, as the end of the day ushers in the unknown of night. Will we wake to see another day? Anthropologist and writer Michael Taussig talks about it as a time for rituals—such as happy hour, when we imbibe half-price cocktails, easing our trepidation

of any day's end. In tipsiness, we can forget about how our individual consciousness will soon abandon us in our sleep. Yet we're also attracted to the end of the day, not just wary of it. Taussig cites the way people gravitate to sunsets, particularly in places where the horizon line is visible, better able to witness the orb perform its descent to the underworld.¹ In that instant, some see the flash of the green ray, as the last bit of light meets the retina.

Tacita Dean, who documented the process on 16mm film, relates the social and relational pull of sunsets.² “The evening I filmed the green ray, I was not alone. On the beach beside me were two others with a video camera pointed at the sun, infected by my enthusiasm for this elusive phenomenon.”³ But in fact, Dean's naked eye didn't catch the ray. It was revealed to her only later that while her body could not register the phenomenon, her camera's film could. According to art historian Kaja Silverman, this is precisely what the photographic (filmic) apparatus does: it reveals the world to us. It is not a matter of indexicality or representation, both of which are tied to a view of the world centered on human thought and action.⁴ It also goes to show how threshold experiences can elude us if we remain our fully conscious selves. According to Taussig, thresholds solicit the experience “when consciousness pulls the switch on itself,” momentarily giving us access to all manner of things and relations that we don't usually recognize.⁵ We cease to be moths, fatally lured to the bright lights of thought, and are fleetingly more open to “appreciate a type of journey from animal awareness to crossing centuries of civilization in a second.”⁶ Past works of mine have used background performative methods to cultivate the pulling of the switch.⁷ *Sunsets*, and its method of directly engaging spatiotemporal threshold experiences, accelerates that search, for which transformation is reward.

I started filming after waking in the middle of the night to pee and noticing my laptop in screen saver mode. It had never been more interesting to me than in that singular moment when I realized it was doing nothing, just lazily rotating through images of the cosmos. Jupiter fading to Saturn, Saturn fading to Earth's moon, and so on. In this liminal state, I registered the thing's thingness, its materiality anew. I continued this nocturnal schedule. Flipping the times for productivity is an ever-so-slight social transgression in this part of the world, where norms around work and recreation schedules are rigid. Misbehaving was pleasurable.

Questions quickly arose. What state of consciousness is needed for creativity, and when does it occur?

In Lispector's interview, she takes on questions about when she works and what happens between writing books. She philosophizes about death, how it occurs during her creative process. And when speaking about the end of a period of writing, she ponders aloud, "Let's see if I'll be reborn again."⁸ Her speculative resurrection talk is self-aggrandizing for certain; nevertheless, she could reach the most radical of transformations, and somehow, metaphysically still be able to write about it!

But the winter's light affects similar life and death questions. Will I survive to experience spring, summer, ever again? Did my friend know that the activity of our translation sessions, our loving chitchats, were not only helping my flailing research, but also mediating my loneliness and displacement in my new, darkened surroundings? Consistent with the piece's vulnerable, casual beginnings, the translation in *Sunsets* is in no way "professional." Even though Portuguese is her mother tongue, my friend is from Portugal and Lispector was from Brazil, so there's a dissonance there, compounded by Lispector's strange manner of pronunciation.⁹ As I mentioned before, I didn't anticipate that the recording would end up being the soundtrack for this work—nor did my friend. This explains why she sounds so very free in her task, why there's hardly a trace of self-consciousness. Her uncertainty, hesitation, searching, is generative, closer to the essence of what translation is.

I edited the recording and images to create transient moments of alignment. The first is when we see the screen savers of my workstation's dual monitors in my studio. The following image is the same setting—only now the camera is closer to the monitors, closer to Lispector's interview as it streams on YouTube. "It doesn't alter anything. It doesn't alter anything. It doesn't alter anything."—Lispector responds this way when she's asked whether or not her work induces political change, in reference to an article she had written on murderous police brutality, inflicted upon a notorious criminal in 1960s Rio de Janeiro, named José Miranda Rosa, alias "Mineirinho."¹⁰ I'll excerpt her article here because it's stunning.

That is the law. But while something makes me hear the first and second shots with the relief of security, it puts me on alert at the

third, unsettles me at the fourth, at the fifth and the sixth covers me with shame; the seventh and eighth I hear with my heart beating in horror; at the ninth and tenth my mouth is quivering, at the eleventh I say God's name in fright, at the twelfth I call for my brother. The thirteenth shot kills me—because I am the other. Because I want to be the other.¹¹

Lispector repeats that her article doesn't alter anything. The translator then says it to me, again and again. An immensely valued colleague of mine, the poet and novelist Mara Lee, wrote about this passage in *Sunsets* in terms of the movement that language and voice induce. "But when a single meaning has travelled between two languages six times, then something is altered. The displacement of the repetition and the translation enacts a minimal linguistic defiance, a resistance against the finality of Lispector's words."¹² She continues, "The translation introduces otherness, but also movement, uncertainty that constitutes a counter language against the vestiges of death in the language of Lispector."¹³ Words shift into activism, and the politics of Lispector are re-enlivened and *enlivening*.

It's within this passage that the translation momentarily aligns with the on-screen interview, just as Lispector lights a cigarette. The igniting match not only lights the writer's tobacco, but also sets aflame the origin of the voice. There's something that happens within these alignments that may be a primary vehicle for the video's poetics. But this is elusive, just as it is closer to the source of the work, but I suspect it's what makes the video an experience of translation itself. Translation creates new language in its liminal ontology. Walter Benjamin tells us, "The basic error of the translator is that he preserves the state in which his own language happens to be instead of allowing his language to be powerfully affected by the foreign tongue... For to some degree all great texts contain their potential translation between the lines."¹⁴

Film's capability to reveal some truth—in the way a good translation does—is completely dependent on editing. The sensibility required is new to me on a practice level; *Sunsets* was the first video I edited myself. But it's not new to me on a lived, embodied level. Real life deprives just as much as it gives, and unfolds within a logic where every image threatens to disappear. Filmic images cut, fade, and bleed into other images, but

they always end. It is a contingency known only through experiences of becoming, when forms are not fixed. The task of the editor is to make this becoming ring true.

I end with the beginning. The video's first scene introduces the source of Lispector's interview, the scratchy internet call commences, typing, transcribing, the translator assumes her role. Journalist Júlio Lerner poses the question, "Rilke, in his letters to the young poet, asks 'if you couldn't write, would you die?' I transfer this question to you." Lispector answers, "I think that when I write I am dead."¹⁵ *Sunsets* is titled in the plural because there are several sunsets in the piece—winter's and summer's—but also Lispector's own death, which would happen the same year. In the interview she says she is tired, and seems irritated and uncomfortable, engulfed by an enormous brown leather armchair, as each drag on a chain of cigarettes seems to fuel her hazy, enigmatic responses.

Notes From Underground (2013)

In *Notes From Underground*, Susan Sontag's voice is translated into a grainy, undulating soundwave. I was doing research at the library, listening to an interview with Sontag that was broadcast on Swedish radio on the occasion of the publication of her book of short fiction, *I, etcetera* (1978), when a small window appeared on the database's screen, framing a soundwave moving along to the ebb and flow of her voice.¹⁶ It's how the database is programmed—though I still don't know what purpose it serves, other than giving the ghostly feeling of seeing Sontag *move*.

I decided to film the jagged soundwave because it also reminds me of the silhouette of a mountain range, or the outline of stalactites, or a cardiograph, or an elevation drawing of the path of a subway traveling above and below ground. The movement seems to correspond with multiple velocities, temporalities, frequencies. It diagrams the negotiation of a border against an imaginary median line that we're conditioned to see, even if it might not exist.

Borders likely attract me because I grew up on one. *Notes From Underground* (abbreviated here as *Notes*), contains distinct horizontal and vertical movements that narrate an unlikely connection between the Stockholm underground and Susan Sontag's sojourn in Sweden, with a

cavern system 5,000 miles away, roughly a three-hour drive from where I was raised in Texas, on the borders of Mexico and New Mexico.

Carlsbad Caverns National Park was one of a handful of places in the region that served as a destination for sightseeing day-trips when my family hosted an out-of-town guest. Other options included a quaint adobe town called Old Mesilla, where Billy the Kid stood trial for murder, and where a restaurant called La Posta used to thrill with its collection of caged parrots, macaws, and toucans. Another destination was White Sands National Monument, impressive for its vast undulating gypsum sand dunes. It's where Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster made her dystopian film *Atomic Park* (2004), aware of its proximity to the first nuclear test site.¹⁷ But it's the caverns that resonate most with the place I live today.

Sontag lived in Stockholm on two separate occasions, for a total of over two years, during an important time in relation to her personal politics, having arrived to the Swedish capital directly after successive trips to Hanoi and Paris in the spring of 1968.¹⁸ She indulged in the generous practical, financial support allotted to her creative work—and made two films, *Duet for Cannibals* (1969) and *Brother Carl* (1971). She was the same age I was when I moved to Stockholm in 2010. Of course, I find myself here at a very different time, but for similar work-related reasons.

A scene from Sontag's *Duet for Cannibals* recurs in my *Notes*. A man and woman walk through a subway station in the city center. The protagonist, a young political activist, reflects admiringly on how the art in the station—a whitish concrete frieze by Siri Derkert—makes him believe in the progress of humanity.¹⁹ But seconds later, his idealism totally collapses, when his lover takes out a gun and proposes he kill her husband, an exiled German Marxist intellectual, for whom he works. Today, the scene reads humorously. It truly looks ridiculous, but still it struck me for the bleak outlook Sontag seems to convey in writing and directing it, as if to say: humans are irredeemable, no matter their politics. A very similar message is found in Fyodor Dostoyevsky's novella *Notes from Underground* (1864).²⁰ Like Dostoyevsky, Sontag seems to convey that no amount of utopian social advancement can release us of our insufficiency. In her diary from this time, she jots down some notes after returning from Stockholm.

Dialectic of the relation between conscious and consciousness:

—function of language (language promotes consciousness / an increase of consciousness is not only philosophically debilitating (cf. Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground*, Nietzsche), but, more importantly, morally debilitating)²¹

Sontag, whose life revolved around all things literary, is keenly aware of the notion that language facilitates our own blindness. We are “able to relate only to things which turn us away from other things” (Blanchot).²² But there's more to say on this. In an interview that appears in the first half of the video, Sontag states how she thinks we're capable of inflicting “unimaginable cruelty and wickedness” on each other, and that recognizing this is the start of one's “moral adulthood.” She excavates deeper, telling the interviewer how it drives her “nuts” when people are “surprised by atrocities—saying how can this happen? How could people do this to each other?”²³ She wants us to understand that life is nothing if not total contingency, and so it shouldn't surprise any of us when violence befalls the most innocent, the most desperate among us. This is an example of how I use Sontag as a conveyer of moral questions—questions posed by her answers that I found in a web-archived interview from the American news channel C-SPAN, conducted on the cusp of the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, not long before her death in 2004.²⁴ She's really angry—about all of it.

For anyone who's come across Sontag's essay, “Letter From Sweden,” it's abundantly clear that she experienced a strong sense of disappointment and confusion, despite, or probably as a result of, her high expectations for it being an advanced social welfare state.²⁵ She's pretty down when she returns home. Her diary from this time reveals her contemplating loneliness—how it affects her creative ability to form new ideas.²⁶ For obvious reasons, I was reading about Sontag's time in Stockholm with particular personal interest.

I thought about her experiences and concerns and then felt my own. The time in which *Notes* was made stands between the Swedish general elections of 2010 and 2014, when the far right anti-immigration party garnered enough votes to reach parliamentary representation for the

first time since the party's founding. It was such a letdown. It resonates in my everyday encounters with varying intensity, but is always felt in relation to the affective experience of my displacement, which is shared with others and other things. And I can't help but recode the scene from *Duet for Cannibals*—of the foreign woman and her murderous demand on her white, Sweden-born lover—through this moment's own iteration of insidious violence and racism.

The scene is filmed on Stockholm's red line. But the *blue line* plummets even deeper. Literally. To reach its subway platforms, commuters must descend what seems like an excessive depth for a single escalator. Along with Carlsbad Caverns, South African gold mines flash through my imagination. The line starts in the city center at a stop named Kungsträdgården, meaning “King's garden,” and extends northwest to the largely immigrant-populated outskirts. Waiting commuters can hear a sharp, rhythmic snapping sound. It's an orienting signal for the visually impaired, informing them which track will receive the next incoming train. The sound is appealing in the way a metronome is—or a lover's heartbeat. I pair it with the sound of dripping water in a cave, and as one transforms into the other, blindness and the passage of geological time momentarily share the same frequency.

For several months, I repeatedly traveled the city's complete transit network to its terminal stations, but kept returning to the blue line. It heads in a westward direction, and so I kept heading even further west, onward to the desert, until I arrived at the caves in New Mexico. For if one wants to court an experience of liminality and untether subjectivity in order to re-enter it and the world more knowingly, then Deleuze and Guattari have a formula: “This is how it should be done: Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, 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.”²⁷ They go on to say how such meticulousness is what's necessary in reaching beyond the strata that precedes deeper assemblages.²⁸

Halfway through *Notes*, the sharp slicing click of my camera shutter abruptly shifts one image to the next. The first image is of a moiré-pat-

terned screen, displaying an image from inside a cave looking up at the light. The next image is of the same site and framing, but without the moiré-pattern. Within the instant between the images, we inhabit the act of looking itself. Thought is absent in that moment, and we cross centuries in a second.²⁹ Marguerite Duras enacts a similar crossing in her film *Les mains négatives* (1978). She captures Paris in the early morning hours as a voice-over narrates the film through a love letter of sorts. It's for someone who lived 30,000 years ago, whose pigment images—the film's titular *negative hands*—were painted in the Magdalenian caves, next to the Atlantic Ocean. Duras's film is a meditation on the expanse of time through the collapse of time.

The association of prehistoric underground spaces is sealed in Freud's structural model as the strata of consciousness that forms before the ego and superego. The pre-linguistic, unmediated part of the self that's responsible for instinct: the *id*. But if we take leave of psychoanalysis for neurobiology, we find that the brain's frontal lobe is supposed to deteriorate with aging, making way for uncensored thoughts to be exposed, unmediated by good sense. When Sontag was given the terminal results in her final battle with cancer, she is said to have yelled out a long and loud blood curdling *no!*³⁰ When Clarice Lispector, hospitalized in her final days, was prevented from leaving her room, she screamed at the nurse, "You killed my character!"³¹ Life resists capture for anyone who wants to be closest to it. Loss ensues. But to be sure, I consult Lispector in her last book, *The Hour of the Star*. "What I write to you is a dank haze. The words are sounds transfused with shadows that intersect unevenly, stalactites, woven lace, transposed organ music. I can scarcely invoke the words to describe this pattern, vibrant and rich, morbid and obscure, its counterpoint the deep bass of sorrow."³² I held this strangeness close to my gut while making *Notes From Underground*, and ended up with something so aggregated that it totally refuses excerpts. It can't be easily summarized.

But in this way, it's like Maurice Blanchot's writing, it needs to be experienced as a whole. Lydia Davis has written on her experience of translating and understanding Blanchot, saying it was *physically* demanding: "It was in the nature of Blanchot's argument to resist summary. The experience of reading had to take place moment by moment; one's understanding proceeded like a guide's flashlight, illuminating

one by one the animals painted on the wall of an ancient cave."³³ Davis is attuned to Blanchot's notion of *primordial obscurity* as something that exists beyond the realm of thought.³⁴ It's in this darkness we feel the desert as an ancient sea that has distanced itself from its former boundaries.

Waves (2014-15)

Waves engages Virginia Woolf and her seemingly intuited novel *The Waves* (1931). I narrate her influence on me, as I find my own way of depicting consciousness in relation to society and its technologies. Much of the work is filmed in between, or at the meeting of land and sea. Such locations are a way to relate the piece's structuring liminal relationship, while multiple hydro-relations are set into play. Yes, this includes waves and the distances they traverse, but other things are considered as well: jellyfish, professional big wave surfing, Woolf's persona explored in the literary criticism of Gilles Deleuze, Courbet's paintings of the sea, transoceanic cabling, homesickness—and how the Atlantic Ocean is both image and material to measure the distance between where I'm from and where I live today.

The logic at play in the video stems from my attachment to a single thought sighted in Woolf's diary: "I am writing *The Waves* to a rhythm not to a plot."³⁵ Stream of consciousness may instantly come to mind. But notice how scholar Kate Flint reassigns the writing style away from the linear flow of a stream to that of waves. She explains, "the images of waves, with their incessant, recurrent dips and crests, provides a far more helpful means of understanding Woolf's representation of consciousness as something which is certainly fluid, but cyclical and repetitive, rather than linear."³⁶ Why it is that a narrative mode of circularity over linearity hasn't been more widely considered seems strange. But the video at hand takes leave of categorizations and asks what happens when metaphor swapping ceases altogether.

In an interview conducted about *Waves*, I'm posed the question: "Culture commonly uses natural metaphors to discuss contemporary technology, and frequently I hear terms like 'oceans of data,' or 'sea of information' used to describe the internet. If we could extend those metaphors,

what do you see are the waves within those oceans and seas?"³⁷ The seas, as well as global networking, are already obscured in this use of language, and so the desire to extend the metaphor seems problematic. A song I like pops into my head, "Wave of Mutilation" by the Pixies—and I start to answer the question by talking about it, "...that song isn't a metaphor for the proliferation of internet technology... But actually, maybe it's still relevant—and much more interesting."³⁸ The tune is about a spate of murder-suicides in Japan in the late '80s. Husbands were driving off of piers into the ocean with their wife and kids in the car. I describe this and then say that's "... such a profound image of the ocean's fatal force and powers of attraction. But those metaphors are actually something I'm trying to open up as material realities. There are 'oceans of data'—as in—the oceans do consist of data—in the way of an ever-increasing number of undersea fiber-optic cables. And there is a 'sea of information'—certainly seas that are affected by information."³⁹

In *Waves*, I speculate on how the activity of looking at Gustave Courbet's painting *The Wave* (1869) in the Städel Museum in Frankfurt on the internet today connects me to Google's data center, housed in what was once the Summa Mill, a seaside pulp factory in a town called Hamina, in Finland.⁴⁰ ⁴¹ Its thousands of servers generate a great deal of heat, and Google has taken pains to exhibit how effectively it channels the nearby frigid seawater as a cooling source. Thus the material connection between Courbet's painting and the Baltic Sea is nothing less than spectacular. Gaining "access" to the painting online, we come into contact with the sea itself—which is connected to the very thing that Courbet painted on the Norman shores of Étretat. And "I am heating up that same sea by looking at it online."⁴²

I convey meetings like this—those that take place over vast spatiotemporal distances, absurd displacements, and multiple durations—by using Google's *own* aesthetics. Its 'Cultural Institute' employs similar capturing technology as 'Street View,' which we've become rapidly familiar with to such an extent that the program's awkward regulated zooms and jagged panning movements are just a part of the way we experience place. To mimic this phenomenon, I film using unorthodox camera movements. I look odd doing it, and people in the vicinity stop and stare, but when this Street View movement is applied directly to the physical space where the painting hangs in the museum is when I really see this way of seeing.⁴³

Courbet made several wave paintings. There is one that really moves me: it hangs in a corner next to a window in the Alte Nationalgalerie in Berlin. It's rough, puffy, and very physical. One can sense the ocean's force while standing in front of it. At the same time, the image is approaching abstraction, and it doesn't really look like an actual wave. Art historian Linda Nochlin points this out too, thinking about Courbet's waves against the iconic Katsushika Hokusai woodblock print *Fuji at Sea*.⁴⁴ She sets both next to Gustave Le Gray's well-known photograph taken from the beach, and compares them with her own experience of looking out at waves from the shore.⁴⁵ She brings along an image of one of Courbet's waves to beaches on Long Island and Normandy, holding it out to compare against actual waves. Nochlin decides that the painting still does not look how waves look, writing that, "Courbet's wave is more forceful, scarier, in short, more 'wavelike'—akin to the wave fixed in our imagination—than any actually viewed wave."⁴⁶

The wave painting in the Alte Nationalgalerie reminds me of a Rothko. It has distinct yet blurred rectangular forms, which constitute the sky, sea, and shore. It might be obvious, but it's worth noting that Courbet is a relevant artist here, not only for his wave proclivities, but also for the histories his oeuvre engages, namely that of art as witness to the society in which one is living, making this life visible as a matter of personal liberty from any institution.⁴⁷ ⁴⁸ *The Wave* was the cover image *Artforum* selected for its issue on the fortieth anniversary of May of '68!⁴⁹ But along these lines, Nochlin shares one "brilliant and politically hopeful" historical reading of Courbet's wave paintings and then swiftly shoots it down. She quotes art historian Klaus Herding, who writes how the wave paintings, "...attempt, through exact observation of nature, to collect experience which could be fed back as imagery into society, in conformance with Courbet's desire to work through art for individual freedom and finally for democracy."⁵⁰ If there is such a thing as a respectful guffaw, Nochlin seems to issue it here, as she turns away from Herding's ambitions for Courbet and narrows in on the artist's pull towards the thingness of the thing itself, offering that "what we might call the 'primordial form' of the natural object, whether it be tree, wave or grotto, an image, however naturalistic in some respects, which is at the same time true to the felt reality of the motif in question."⁵¹

Thus, the connection goes far deeper than tasking art with the service

of politics or sociality. This potently resonates with me. Courbet's painting contains within it so much sensation that it edges towards *non-sense*. It exists as an experience of the unknowable natural phenomena that is simultaneously an experience of being-in-the-world. And within the painting's ability to describe this unknowable thing, it reveals the material force and ontology of the very thing it depicts.⁵² The video, *Waves*, aspires to lend this experience, too. Or, likewise to do what Lispector's writing does, in how she uses language to disassemble language, and in doing so, speaks closer to the truth.

Again, Virginia Woolf's statement: "... I am writing *The Waves* to a rhythm not to a plot."⁵³ It's in her diary (also in a letter to a friend), and it's part of a passage that seems to indicate Woolf feeling productively cast off from subjectivity. "I am not a writer: I am nothing: but I am quite content."⁵⁴ I follow her lead. Loosening my grip, allowing questions to emerge from the subject of inquiry itself, not the other way around. A leveling out occurs, a democratization of ontologies. It's not only Woolf's novel *The Waves* that informs the video, because there is no real origin, merely intersections, shadows—such as an indiscriminate, albeit undoubtedly algorithm-determined, selection of surfing videos I lazily watched over an entire summer, burned out after finishing *Notes From Underground*. The binge proved just as consequential to my process as any active research activity up to that point. *Inordinate* amounts of my time went to gazing at *Teahupo'o*, a surf break whose namesake belongs to the village in Tahiti it rushes toward. The wave's shape is tied to the dramatic configuration of the reef below it.⁵⁵ Sending off a deep barrel with a crest bearing a lip so thick and weighty it's like no other in the world. I continue to look at this wave every now and then, in pursuit not of *the perfect wave*, but rather of conditions equally intangible. Moving-images of *Teahupo'o* not presented in slow motion and/or not distorted by a too wide-angle lens are elusive. *I just want to see the wave as a wave*, but I only get subjectivity.

Late-summer idleness between one work and another, things were shapeless, mutable. Deleuze is interested in the in-between for this reason. He says that as opposed to what modern philosophy ascribes to, this space doesn't limit movement in reaction to origins. He explains this through sports. Sports of the modern era extended from the human

body as the source of movement, specifically as it reacts to something else—basically, think of any track and field sport. But what he calls *new sports* (in 1985)—surfing, windsurfing and hang-gilding—are different.⁵⁶ They possess no real start or finish. They take form in an already existing movement. Waves. He explains, "There's no longer an origin as starting point, but a sort of putting-into-orbit. The key thing is how to get taken up in the motion of a big wave, a column of rising air, to 'get into something' instead of being the origin of an effort."⁵⁷ Deleuze's claim is for unrestricted movement in philosophy, out of a drive to create things, not merely reflect on them.⁵⁸ This resonates acutely with what I've designated in this text as Woolf's dictum, *rhythm over plot*, and it's the driver for all of the videos of this trilogy. But her *rhythm over plot* is far riskier than most any other alternative. And I have a hunch that unending risk belongs to the realm of the *impossible*, Blanchot's (and Bataille's) idea of an unattainable limit where contact with the divine resides.⁵⁹

Woolf makes her own incisive invocation of the impossible when asked the question of what literature is. Her answer is outright resistance to fixity: "To whom are you speaking of writing? The writer does not speak about it, but is concerned with something else."⁶⁰ Woolf's *something else* is the liminal, pre-linguistic space of affect, involved in processes of becoming, and not unlike Lispector's *it*, or her *whatever is lurking behind thought*. It exists beside a longing for what is far afield from intellect. *The Waves* is a novel as countermovement to finalism. "... life itself is an utter contingency: it need never have emerged, and there is no particular explanation for why it developed in the forms it presently takes on earth," explains philosopher and feminist theorist Elizabeth Grosz, writing on Henri Bergson.⁶¹ Woolf's Bergsonian plot-free alternative approaches a more materially felt understanding of the way duration makes every thing and every experience differentiated from the previous and the next. Producing another kind of knowledge that Bergson regards as intuition, not intellect. Or as he writes, "... our intellect [is] solely preoccupied in welding the same to the same, intellect turns away from the vision of time. It dislikes what is fluid, and solidifies everything it touches. We do not *think* real time. But we *live* it, because life transcends intellect."⁶² Grosz instructs that Bergson does not dismiss intellect, but rather that it, in combination with intuition and/or other forms of knowledge, is best when harnessed *together*.

Departing from the preceding videos—where I use the voices of Lispector to structure *Sunsets*, and Sontag for *Notes From Underground*—for *Waves* I use my own voice and writing out of necessity.⁶³ I write, re-write, and read aloud portions of a self-authored script of sorts that began to take shape over the Atlantic Ocean. Suspended between the continent of my birth and the one I live on today, between zones of assimilation, conscientiousness effectively slackens. Since the video is a document of its own making, viewers see and hear the always-provisional work forming. I decide on word tenses, stumble around my limited vocabulary, my own lame metaphors. It's embarrassing. But in the process, I hear something other than writing or thought—*through* writing and thought (and towards the production of images). Perhaps it's like putting a nautilus to one's ear to hear not the inside of a shell, but rather the sound of the sea. Thus, video-making becomes an alternative measuring tool used to grasp distances between relations. Searching for intimacy.

What's more, my sense of homesickness comes to exist as such, in the process of researching the sea, filming waves in different locations over a year, trying to figure this work out. Reading books and articles about invisible jellyfish, the laying of the first trans-Pacific internet cables, wave mechanics, species extinction, cruise ships, philosophical concepts tied to the sea, watching films on the global shipping industry, morbid documentaries about sea-related natural disasters, people who jump from the Golden Gate Bridge, re-watching a swath of French New Wave films—so many of them ending with a solitary man overlooking the ocean.⁶⁴ I read *Memoirs of Hadrian* by the formidable novelist Marguerite Yourcenar, because she is the first translator of *The Waves* into French. Could she connect to something? With a Blanchotian sensibility, her heroic protagonist loved sleep, because, like death, he thought of it as the great equalizer of men. I read the novel at a point when I was flailing about, really suffering for lack of a structuring principle for the video, and grasping for some connection between my displacement and that of Yourcenar's, from her native Belgium to a place in Maine called Mount Desert Island. What a name—each topographical word of it merges towards solitude! It all goes to say that the most daunting task of working with the sea is to find a representational register that can stand up to its countless imaginings (it is also exceedingly difficult to film a scene of waves that is not clichéd).

To enter into any project about waves—or sunsets, or the under-ground—is to face a formidable, protracted lineage of thought. Yet assigning the sea as a symbol for consciousness is hard to knock down for a reason. Primordial reasons. *Oceanic feeling* was an idea introduced to Sigmund Freud by Romain Rolland, a writer, musicologist and mystic—and his most-revered pen pal. Freud initially rejects oceanic feeling on the basis of rationality. But he eventually succumbs, acknowledging that there must indeed be *some* “physiological source” for a “primordial connectedness to other creatures and things,” and he “knew this feeling to be the only possible basis for social cohesion.”⁶⁵ This is explained to me by art historian and theorist Kaja Silverman. She continues that oceanic feeling, “is ‘imposed’ upon us as a ‘fact,’ and it is a ‘sensation’ instead of a thought—the sensation of the ‘contact’ between ourselves and other beings.”⁶⁶ What is boundless is not us, but the totality that we are merely a part of.

Woolf ends her experiment, *The Waves*, with a single italicized sentence: “*The waves broke on the shore.*”⁶⁷ It marks the death of a character named Bernard, and with it an image of a breaking wave is applied onto individual finitude. But like any wave, the writer knows that it's a double movement—and then some. Other waves will break, fulfilling their own unwritten paths, and life does not cease without us. The writer tracks a continuum that will go on, as I say in *Waves*, with or without us.⁶⁸ The *us* is not any given individual, but the human species itself.

1. Michael Taussig, “When the Sun Goes Down: A Copernican Turn of Remembrance,” Lecture, Monash University, Victoria, March 10, 2010, <http://www.digitalpodcast.com/items/7696283>. Thank you to Natascha Sadr Haghghighian for letting me know about Taussig's lecture.

2. Tacita Dean, *The Green Ray from the Sun Quartet*, 2001.

3. Fondazione Nicola Trussardi, “Fondazione Nicola Trussardi Presents Still Life the First Major Solo Exhibition in Italy by Tacita Dean,” Press Release, May 12, 2009, <http://www.fondazione nicolatrussardi.com>. This quote is pulled from one of several texts that Dean wrote on her individual films, all included in materials accompanying her 2009 exhibition in Milan.

4. Kaja Silverman, *The Miracle of Analogy, Or, The History of Photography* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 11. Silverman reconceptualizes photography away from indexicality and representation and instead towards analogy. “When I say ‘analogy,’ I do not mean sameness, symbolic equivalence, logical adequation, or even a rhetorical relationship—like a metaphor or a simile—in which one term functions as the provisional placeholder for another. I am talking about the authorless and untranscendable similarities that structure Being, or what I will be calling ‘the world,’ and that give everything the same ontological weight.”
5. Taussig, “When the Sun Goes Down.”
6. *Ibid.*
7. See the works: *One Night Stand (Paris)*, 2006, and *Moving a Mountain*, 2008, <http://lisatan.net/archive.html>.
8. Lisa Tan, *Sunsets*, 2012, 00:21:00.
9. Benjamin Moser, *Why This World: A Biography of Clarice Lispector* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 7.
10. Yudith Rosenbaum, “Ethics in Literature: Reading Clarice Lispector’s ‘Mineirinho,’” *Estudos Avançados Estud. Av.* 24, no. 69 (2010): 174, <http://www.scielo.br>.
11. Moser, *Why This World*, 277.
12. Mara Lee, “The Shadow Is Just as Tangible as the Origin,” in *Sunsets, Notes From Underground, Waves*, by Lisa Tan (Berlin: Archive Books, 2015), 15.
13. *Ibid.*, 15.
14. Walter Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator,” in *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 81-82.
15. Tan, *Sunsets*, 00:00:35.
16. “Lars-Göran Bergquist Intervjuar Amerikanska Författare. Susan Sontag,” interview: Lars-Göran Bergquist, *Sveriges Radio*, 198-, <http://smdb.kb.se/catalog/id/000111576>.
17. Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, *Atomic Park*, 2004, http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x8bey8_atomic-park_shortfilms. The end credits of Gonzalez-Foerster’s film read (in French and English): “The White Sands desert is located near Trinity Site. It was here, in July 1945, that the very first atomic bomb was tested. The voice of Marilyn Monroe, in John Houston’s film *The Misfits*, can be heard in the distance. Arthur Miller wrote the script.”
18. Susan Sontag, *As Consciousness Is Harnessed to Flesh: Journals and Notebooks, 1964-1980*, ed. David Rieff (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012), 239-321.
19. Siri Derkert’s public artwork is in the Östermalmstorg metro station in central Stockholm. It was made between 1961-1965.
20. Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes from Underground*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993).
21. Sontag, *As Consciousness Is Harnessed to Flesh*, 271.
22. Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1982), 134.
23. Lisa Tan, *Notes From Underground*, 2013, 00:06:38.
24. “In Depth with Susan Sontag,” *C-SPAN*, March 2, 2003, <http://www.c-span.org/video/?172991-1/depth-susan-sontag>.
25. Susan Sontag, “A Letter from Sweden,” *Ramparts*, July 1969. I received this essay from an expatriate artist living in Stockholm. The version he gave me was transcribed from the *Ramparts* article as a Word document. I suspect that at the time, it was not easily available online as it is today.
26. Sontag, *As Consciousness Is Harnessed to Flesh*.
27. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 161.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Taussig, “When the Sun Goes Down.”
30. “Regarding Susan Sontag,” Dir. Nancy D. Kates, *HBO Documentaries*, 2014.
31. Moser, *Why This World*, 383.
32. Clarice Lispector, *The Hour of the Star*, trans. Giovanni Pontiero (New York: New Directions Books, 1977), 16.
33. Lydia Davis, *Proust, Blanchot and a Woman in Red*, The Cahiers Series (London: Center for Writers & Translators, The Arts Arena, Sylph Editions, 2012), 31.
34. Maurice Blanchot, *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader: Fiction & Literary Essays*, ed. George Quasha, trans. Lydia Davis, Paul Auster, and Robert Lamberton (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill/Barrytown, 1999), 385.
35. Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf: Volume Three 1925-1930*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew MacNeillie (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), 316. Full sentence: “This rhythm (I say I am writing *The Waves* to a rhythm not to a plot) is in harmony with the painters’.” Woolf’s sentence in parenthesis is from a letter dated 28 August 1930 to Ethel Smyth.
36. Virginia Woolf, “Introduction,” in *The Waves*, ed. Kate Flint (London: Penguin, 2000), xi.
37. Nicholas O’Brien, “Lisa Tan: On Literary References, ‘Wave of Mutilation’ and Oceans of Data,” *WAX Magazine*, 2015, 8.
38. *Ibid.*, 8
39. *Ibid.*, 8.
40. Gustave Courbet, *The Wave*, 1869. Oil on canvas, 63 × 91.5 cm.
41. Pertti Jokivuori, “Workers React to Threat of Closure of Paper Pulp Mills,” *EurWORK*, March 3, 2008, <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu>. This article reports the closures of the paper manufacturer Stora Enso in 2007 with 1,100 job losses. How fitting that Google’s data center is housed one of these former paper mills, reducing the number of employees to a fraction of what was once required in the building. Google itself describes another interesting aspect of the building’s history: part of the facility is housed in a former machine hall designed by Alvar Aalto.
42. O’Brien, *WAX magazine*, 11.
43. At the time of my visit, Courbet’s *The Wave* was being restored in advance of a loan for an exhibition elsewhere in Germany. I knew this before my trip to Frankfurt, having contacted the museum to gain permission to film. I refer to the painting’s absence in the video, “... but on a sunny day in Frankfurt, *The Wave* wasn’t hanging in its handsome blue fridge.”
44. Katsushika Hokusai, *Fuji at Sea*. Woodcut, *One Hundred Views of Mount Fuji*, vol. 2, 1835.
45. Gustave Le Gray, *The Great Wave, Sète*, 1857. Albumen silver print from two collodion-on-glass negatives, 33.7 x 41.4 cm, 13 1/4 x 16 5/16 in.

46. Linda Nochlin, *Courbet* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007), 203.
47. T. J. Clark, "Introduction," in *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1973). The introduction alone provides important insight into Courbet's art in terms of its implications on society and politics at the time.
48. "Wie Die Nazis Den Maler Hans Thoma Vereinnahmten," *Die Welt*, July 5, 2013, <http://www.welt.de/kultur/kunst-und-architektur/article117753925/Wie-die-Nazis-den-Maler-Hans-Thoma-vereinnahmten.html>. In place of Courbet's *The Wave* at the Städel was a stiff-looking self-portrait by 19th century German artist Hans Thoma. Looking at that painting, I wouldn't have guessed that Thoma and Courbet had met, in Paris. Courbet's effect was so great on Thoma that he went on to paint subjects that reflected the people and things around him, feeling liberated from the Academy. For more, refer to the Städel's Hans Thoma exhibition from 2013.
49. Paul Galvez, "Inner States," *Artforum*, May 2008, 346. This issue of *Artforum* includes a text on Courbet by art historian Paul Galvez. He writes about the paintings in a way that seems to me to resonate with Nochlin's reading of a "felt reality" and "primordial form" in the wave paintings. Galvez: "Courbet worked the paint so that to perceive a mark is to understand the object anew." He continues, "This successive unfolding has an erotic component as well. Objects release their inner states of being in a kind of convulsive birth of form."
50. Nochlin, *Courbet*, 203-204.
51. "Ibid., 204. T.J. Clark might agree. "I do not want the social history of art to depend on intuitive analogies between form an ideological content—on saying, for example, that the lack of firm compositional focus in Courbet's *Burial at Ornans* is an expression of the painter's egalitarianism..." T.J. Clark, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, 10-11.
52. Kaja Silverman, *The Miracle of Analogy, Or, The History of Photography*.
53. Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf: Volume Three 1925-1930*, 316.
54. *Ibid.*, 316.
55. "Teahupo'o," Wikipedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teahupo'o>.
56. Gilles Deleuze, "Conversation with Antoine Dulaure and Claire Parnet L'Autre Journal 8 (October 1985)," in *Negotiations, 1972-1990* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 122.
57. *Ibid.*, 122.
58. Karl Palmás, "Bodies without Bodhis," *Eurozine*, November 13, 2009, <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2009-11-13-palmas-en.html>. Thanks to Göran Dahlberg for pointing me to this text on the movie *Point Break* and Deleuze.
59. See: Section 6. "Liminality, Threshold and an Ethics of Becoming" in this text.
60. Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 6. Please note: Deleuze does not cite from which source Woolf's statement is from in his text.
61. Elizabeth Grosz, *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution, and the Untimely* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 215.
62. Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (Lanham: University Press of America, 1983), 46.
63. "Rare Recording of Virginia Woolf," *BBC News*, July 9, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-28231055>. I wanted to use only surviving recording of Woolf in some way for the video, but I just couldn't make it work.
64. Casey Dunn, "A Marine Magician's Vanishing Act," *The New York Times*, May 28, 2014. Neal Stephenson, "Mother Earth Mother Board," *Wired*, December 1, 1996. Fredric Raichlen, *Waves* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013). Elizabeth Kolbert, "Annals of Extinction, Part 1 and 2," *The New Yorker*, December 13 and 16, 2013. David Foster Wallace, "Shipping Out: On the Comforts of a Luxury Cruise.," *Harper's Magazine*, January 1, 1996. Kaja Silverman, "The Oceanic Feeling," in *Flesh of My Flesh* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009). *The Forgotten Space*, dir. Allan Sekula and Noël Burch (2010). *The Bridge*, dir. Eric Steel (2006). *Contempt*, dir. Jean-Luc Godard (1963). *Pierrot le fou*, dir. Jean-Luc Godard (1965). *The 400 Blows*, dir. François Truffaut (1959). *Point Break*, dir. Kathryn Bigelow (1991). *By Brakhage*, dir. Stan Brakhage (1955-2003). Listed in chronological order of the listing in my sentence that this note belongs to.
65. Kaja Silverman, "The Oceanic Feeling," in *Flesh of My Flesh* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 34.
66. Silverman, *Flesh of My Flesh*, 29.
67. Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1931), 297.
68. Rosi Braidotti, "The Ethics of Becoming-Imperceptible," *Deleuze International*, February 28, 2008, 29, <http://deleuze.tausendplateaus.de/wp-content/uploads/2008/01/trent-final.pdf>. I owe this thought to Braidotti who writes of *becoming-imperceptible*. Hers is an affirmative take on death, "Life will go on, but it is *Zoe*, not the rational conscious, sovereign individual. It will go on in the superior generative powers of a Life that is relentlessly not human in its power to endure, in its obscene capacity to fulfill the vitality that animates it."

2. Notes on an exhibition

For every word has its own shadow

The exhibition component of the dissertation took place at Galleri Riis, a Norwegian owned commercial gallery specializing mostly in contemporary art from Nordic countries, along with outlier Dutch, Japanese, and British artists whom they also represent.¹ The gallery's Stockholm location is situated in a seventeenth century former palace in the city center, now housing the Royal Art Academy of Fine Art. In my analysis of the gallery space, with its high ceilings and elongated windows, I requested a time-slot of January through February, when natural light is most dim. It would then be possible to raise the window shades for large portions of each day of the exhibition, enabling a conversation between the projected videos and the city setting beyond.

The walls were painted and carpet was installed throughout, both in a shade of blue evocative of twilight. As with other video installations I've done for the individual works, the projection screens were hung low, just above the floor. Somehow this creates an intimate feeling. And I suspect that it has something to do with the position of a viewer's body, head slightly lowered. It's gentler on the neck, but also similar to a position taken when talking to a child or to a domestic animal. The low height of the screens, along with their respective positions in the middle of the gallery's two exhibition rooms, followed the logic of a landscape to be traversed by the exhibition's visitors. The space's low windowsills were used as seating to avoid adding furniture that would hinder flow. Sound came from low-hung speakers set to a hushed volume. People were drawn to a particular piece—or not—catching fragments of something uttered. They could decide to don headphones for more dedicated viewing.

These were decisions made towards achieving the most open, relational, and unfixated installation possible, given the specific technical requirements and existing conditions of the gallery's space, and while staying faithful to the experience of the videos themselves.

In lieu of a more conventional press release, I wrote the following text for distribution:

These days I live in Stockholm. A place surrounded by water. So I think about the desert a lot. I grew up in one. As a child, the high elevation would set off repeated murder scene-like nosebleeds. I'd lie flat on the kitchen floor waiting for the metallic flavor to stop coating my throat. Now that I think about it, I realize it's that same kitchen floor where I first discovered mercury from a broken thermometer. Mercury is a transition metal. This has something to do with oxidation states and loss of electrons, but I just want to fixate on the idea that transitions, by definition, exist inside processes of change. They're in between phases, gaps in classification.

The three videos in my exhibition try to give form to the liminal. They narrate my own process of trying to gauge distances of all sorts. I'm probably homesick, yes. But my work is also part of a long chain of experiments that try to make visible the complex processes of consciousness—that unfold in relation to experience and language. Adorno wrote admiringly of Benjamin, “[his] thoughts press close to its object, seek to touch it, smell it, taste it and so thereby transform itself.”² In the videos, which were made over a period of nearly four years, I speak through—and have conversations with—enigmatic writers, with close friends, with histories still felt, and with technologies and geographies that I know—in order to mediate those that I don't. I've filmed in places and at times that exist at some threshold. Like where sea meets land, and while traversing above and below the surface of the earth, and during the time when day gives way to night.

- Lisa Tan, Stockholm, January 6, 2015³

1. Lisa Tan, *For every word has its own shadow* (exhibition at Galleri Riis, Stockholm, Sweden, January 14-February 21, 2015).
2. Theodor W. Adorno, *Prisms* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983), 240.
3. Galleri Riis, “Lisa Tan For Every Word Has Its Own Shadow January 14 – February 21, 2015,” News Release, January 14, 2014, <http://galleririis.com/exhibitions/186/>.

3. General overview of principal concepts and references

Liminality and threshold are often used synonymously to describe a radical intermediary relation. But in this project, I differentiate the two: the liminal is assigned to abstract, obscure, and/or not easily locatable relations; while threshold is reserved for relations that involve more tangible material, and/or durational properties. For example: a state of becoming is something liminal. The time between day and night is a threshold.¹

This differentiation arose shortly after making *Sunsets*. It was then that I listened to an archived talk online about the sun and bodily knowing, by anthropologist and writer Michael Taussig. Earlier in this text, I cite how he regards threshold as a productive time because it can pull the switch on consciousness and momentarily open up a different vision of the world and of each other.² Threshold experiences are rare. He emphasizes this in offering a short inventory—by way of Walter Benjamin: birth, death, “ebbs and flows of conversations,” and “sexual permutations of love.”³ For Taussig, threshold isn’t the setting sun as a natural phenomenon. It’s rather the *influence* of the sun’s varying light on falling asleep and awakening. Sunset is oriented towards human activity, which makes sense within the field of cultural anthropology. After its initial assignment, Victor Turner expands on the term’s definition in the late 1960s, to describe members in a community who are between one classification and another.⁴ Turner writes that “Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, conventional and ceremonial.”⁵ Other thresholds include invisibility, darkness, the wilderness, eclipses—but again, the focal point narrows in on the affect of such thresholds on people and cultures.⁶

The liminal as it applies to philosophy seems to be a relatively recent designation. It can be traced to Jacques Derrida in his work on the deconstruction of limit and his idea of the *arrivant*—an experience of threshold and an apprehension for what unknown thing “comes to the shore or turns up at the door.”⁷ The liminal can also be traced to a socio-spatial ontology in Michel Foucault’s *heterotopias*, the places in

society that are structurally and temporally disjuncted. Prime examples of these are museums, libraries, and cemeteries.⁸ Or, a final example of the liminal is found in Paul Virilio and his concept of the *littoral*, which arises from the interface between air, land, and sea—a concept that he says took seed from having been raised in Brittany in northern France and during the Nazi invasion of the 1940s.⁹

My own connection to the liminal is from the literary theory of Maurice Blanchot, specifically his writings on the possibilities within literature to reach a liminal state. “Another name for the ‘space of literature’—*l’espace littéraire*—may indeed be liminality, a space that calls a reader beyond ordinary orientation—the bilateral, the binary, the dual—and towards radical orientation—the radial, the plural, the mediate.”¹⁰ The radical orientation of the liminal is what Blanchot also refers to as the *outside*.¹¹ ¹² This outside is analogous to becoming.¹³ Everyday use of language obscures any true experience of being-in-the-world, and inhibits transformative becoming(s).¹⁴ Blanchot’s theoretical *modus operandi* is to conceive of language as indeed what distances us from liminality, states of becoming, and being-in-the-world, but it is within language’s own enacting of this loss (through language itself) that language is paradoxically revealed as an ontologically liminal space of its own.¹⁵ But this is exceedingly difficult to harness, difficult to make visible. That is why I assign threshold to more material relations that can then orient a person or a thing towards the affective state of becoming (liminality).

My intake and comprehension of Maurice Blanchot is crucially enlivened by the work of the writer Clarice Lispector. Lispector composed her novels, short stories, and her popular weekly column for *The Brazilian News* at the very edge of subjectivity, sentient in her recording of the alienating complexities of being alive, of consciousness. It’s difficult to approach Lispector, the result of an overabundance of details, which, if related, would overtake my endeavor at hand. She was staggeringly interesting—her and her family’s history, life experiences, mannerisms, her unlikely conventional haute-bourgeois lifestyle, and her mighty, uncategorizable writing. All of it assembled towards a distinct language of limit and strangeness. In her posthumously published work *Água Viva*, Lispector writes the Blanchotian dispossessed experience of the *outside* by issuing one utterly weird sentence after another.

An example:

“I’m after whatever is lurking beyond thought.”¹⁶

Or this:

“I don’t think but feel the *it*.”¹⁷

For feminist writer and philosopher Hélène Cixous, Lispector’s writing was the most exemplary form of *écriture féminine* (feminine writing).¹⁸ It is a definition as well as a literal re-writing of patriarchal order by way of the authoring of embodied social relations, informed by non-hierarchical experiences of encounter with other people, things, or moments in the world.¹⁹ While Cixous is credited for introducing Lispector’s work to readers beyond her native Brazil, where she stands as a veritable literary icon, I started reading Lispector on the recommendation of a Portuguese-speaking girlfriend, a decade ago.²⁰ I didn’t think about Lispector’s writing in relation to *écriture féminine*, but rather associated it with Blanchot and his aforementioned discourse on liminality and the outside. It seemed to me that if Blanchot framed the notions of limit, then Lispector was limit itself.

Linking these two figures under the auspices of an artistic research project was frankly a cavalier, mostly intuitive proposition on my part. It wasn’t until I began the project in earnest that I learned how Cixous specifically joined and analyzed Lispector and Blanchot herself.²¹ ²² Their respective fascination with a true experience of the now-time is a shared pursuit, but their methods were not. Cixous pits one writer against the other, “In Blanchot we find models of tactics of avoidance... In Clarice Lispector, the positions are always in movement.”²³ Indeed, reading Lispector has helped my thinking to move beyond the realm of the linguistic and gradually, haltingly engage a more materialist and eco-social position in relation to becoming. I think this can be detected in the videos where all manner of things—the voice of a famous intellectual, an air-conditioning unit, a drive during twilight—all play roles in shaping consciousness. The videos of this dissertation ask the viewer to consider plurality on these grounds.

A final note in this overview: when I read Blanchot’s non-fiction, I freely substitute the words *literature*, *writer*, and *writing*, for *art*, *artist*, and *artmaking*. This artistic license goes towards testing a parallel analysis of

the Blanchotian task of literature—but assigned to visual art and a moving image practice.²⁴ ²⁵ Thus, in this project I’m using the word *writer* to indicate one who writes, but I’m simultaneously using the word to indicate an artist (me) contending with representation and the production of images with serious poetic and philosophical intent (definitely not to be confused with art that is serious), in order to evoke the latter’s common concerns with the former, under Blanchot’s theory of literature.

The reader/viewer, who in turn must translate this overriding switch on their own—one discipline for another discipline—may indeed feel my experimental analogy, provisional stance, liminal position—in action, in movement—negotiating between written and visual language.²⁶

1. I conceive it this way: moments of becoming are most apt to occur inside of a threshold experience, which can orient one towards the liminal and affectivity.

2. Michael Taussig, “When the Sun Goes Down: A Copernican Turn of Remembrance,” Lecture, Monash University, Victoria, March 10, 2010, <http://www.digitalpodcast.com/items/7696283>.

3. Ibid.

4. Victor W. Turner, “Liminality and Communitas,” in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969).

5. Ibid., 95. Turner continues, “As such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions.”

6. Ibid.

7. Nicholas Royle, *Jacques Derrida* (London: Routledge, 2003), 111. I read Derrida's *arrivant* as relating to becoming and in being that which is nothing other than itself. Royle, explains that "Derrida is concerned with trying to think of the arrivant...as what 'does not yet have a name or an identity,'... The arrivant does not come to a place named or determined in advance, but rather 'affects the very experience of the threshold'..."
8. Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," in *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff (London: Routledge, 2002).
9. Paul Virilio, "Landscape of Event Seen at Speed: Interview with Pierre Sterckx," in *Virilio Live: Selected Interviews*, trans. C. Penwarden, ed. John Armitage (London: SAGE Publications, 2001).
10. George Quasha and Charles Stein, "Afterword," in *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader: Fiction & Literary Essays* (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill/Barrytown, 1999), 519.
11. Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. Susan Hanson (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 45-46.
12. Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1982). In this book, Blanchot's invocation of the *outside* often literally means "outdoors."
13. Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, 45-46. He writes: "Shall we call it becoming, the secret of becoming? A secret that stands apart from every secret and that gives itself as the diverging of difference."
14. Susan Hanson, "Foreword: This Double Exigency: Naming the Possible," in *The Infinite Conversation*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), xxvi-xxvii. In the introduction, translator Susan Hanson succinctly presents the hierarchical problematic that language initiates, "...each time I speak I affirm my power to do away with what I name, by naming it I master it, and cause it to disappear. My speech thus attests to the secret violence that haunts it, and that it sets loose in the world."
15. Ulrich M. Haase and William Large, *Maurice Blanchot* (London: Routledge, 2001).
16. Clarice Lispector, *Água Viva*, trans. Stefan Tobler, ed. Benjamin Moser (New York: New Directions, 2012), 7.
17. *Ibid.*, 30.
18. Hélène Cixous, *Reading with Clarice Lispector*, trans. Verena Andermatt Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990).
19. Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," *Signs* 1, no. 4, 1976, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/3173239?ref=search-gateway:ff-5174fa0ae46e90c5e704f3011efa05>.
20. Lispector has gained increasing attention for an English language readership through the work of her biographer Benjamin Moser, whose "Why This World: A Biography of Clarice Lispector" was published in 2009. After this, New Directions Books released five of Lispector's novels in 2012, all edited by Moser (for *The Hour of the Star*, Moser served as translator as well). *The Complete Stories* was published in August 4, 2015. Thus in the short course of my doctoral research more recent translations have been made available.
21. Hélène Cixous, "Chapter 3 Apprenticeship and Alienation: Clarice Lispector

and Maurice Blanchot," in *Readings: The Poetics of Blanchot, Joyce, Kafka, Kleist, Lispector, and Tsvetayeva*, trans. Verena Andermatt Conley (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992).

22. This is one passage where Cixous refers to the writer by her full name "Clarice Lispector," but she more often uses "Clarice." As for her male counterpart Cixous refers to him strictly by his last name "Blanchot." I estimate that Cixous's use of Lispector's first name is to identify the writer with the peculiar intimacy that Lispector produces with her reader. Indeed, this the most remarkable effect of Lispector's writing: one feels as if she is speaking directly to you at the breakfast table. So while I think there's an argument for this inequity in proper names, the more general and widespread deployment of men referred to by their last name and women by their first, is a big pet peeve of mine.

23. "Cixous, *Readings: The Poetics of Blanchot, Joyce, Kafka, Kleist, Lispector, and Tsvetayeva*, 82.

24. Maurice Blanchot, "The Essential Solitude," in *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader: Fiction & Literary Essays*, ed. George Quasha (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill/Barrytown, 1999), 402. I admit it's lofty to take this on—and it may even be a bastardized reading of Blanchot. For while he plainly states the two disciplines, art and literature, in the same breath: "... the work—the work of art, the literary work—is neither finished nor unfinished: it is," it seems he's typically designating literature as *an art*.

25. Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1982), 221-233. Blanchot uses the terms *artist* and *work of art* throughout his writings, but he assigns it to men such as Rilke, Breton, and Valéry. When he does assign it to artists, such as Rodin or van Gogh, their work isn't necessarily treated with the same demand.

26. Utilization of concepts within philosophy and literary theory, which is not my field of activity or formal education, allows for two pointed benefits. The first is straightforward: it allows me to research, fail, and recuperate with more freedom as an artist. Second, it safeguards from the creative stoppages that often occur when work is made in relation to other artists—historical or otherwise—who are closely tied to one's own concerns, processes, and outputs.

4. Methodological context

This research project critically expands on Lispector and Blanchot's respective literary engagement of the liminal, but through visual language and specifically a moving image practice.¹ The purpose of *Sunsets, Notes From Underground*, and *Waves*, is not to merely illustrate liminality, threshold, or becoming in the works of Blanchot and/or Lispector (or any other references). It is rather to create a work that ontologically fastens itself to the liminal itself. Stated differently, it's not my aim to make a piece *about* threshold, I want to *do* threshold itself. The ethics driving this stance is that the former is an inherently hierarchical position that speaks over a subject, mastering it. As for the latter, it's a nuanced, plural position that seeks connectedness. Abandoning a mode of speaking *about*, I turn instead to speaking *with* a subject, or *through* it. Even though bypassing "about-ness" is not actually achievable, mapping it as an aspirational destination is far closer to Blanchot's entire project with language—and Lispector's *is of thing*.^{2,3}

Allow to me to explain my use of with and through and not about, by relating it to filmmaker and writer Trinh T. Minh Ha's concept of speaking nearby.⁴ Trinh describes it as a position that "does not objectify, does not point to an object as if it is distant from the speaking subject or absent from the speaking place."⁵ Describing what a film is when it does not merely illustrate information, knowledge, or thought, she astutely continues to say that it leads to:

A speaking...whose closures are only moments of transition opening up to other possible moments of transition—these are forms of indirectness well understood by anyone in tune with poetic language. Every element constructed in a film refers to the world around it, while having at the same time a life of its own. And this life is precisely what is lacking when one uses word, image, or sound just as an instrument of thought.⁶

I identify strongly with what she says here. However, I have to differentiate speaking with and through to Trinh's speaking nearby because in my work—which is vastly different from hers—there is an uninvited intimacy. An example of this is found in *Waves* when I describe wanting to "hold hands with what she [Virginia Woolf] says"—referring to Woolf's aims for her novel to be "of some continuous stream, not solely of human thought, but of the ship, the night, all flowing together."^{7,8} Such handling is not Trinh's more considerate speaking nearby, it's rather a more violent gesture of imposing a relationship onto Woolf. But there's an obvious difference between Trinh's subjects and mine, and it's a matter of working with living and non-living individuals and the levels of power available to them. I reconcile selecting and utilizing Lispector, Sontag, and Woolf in the ways that I have, because they're all deceased. But also because none are vulnerable figures, they each occupy eminent positions in the fields of art and literature. This conscientiousness pertains to any other voice that appears in the videos other than my own. And it reveals why I do not easily include other living subjects in my videos, as a matter of taking on a responsibility that would lead me elsewhere.

Voice-overs in the videos are all mediated in some fashion. They usually arise as secondary and tertiary recordings—as opposed to a singular or authoritative one. The only instance of a clear voice-over is in *Waves*. It is my own voice and its delivery is part of my method of documenting the video's own making. But it also shows the viewer a specific performative shift between the video's script as I write it and its more finished articulation. It's through this treatment that I can feel each mode more critically. The voice-overs do not fall within the conventions of documentaries or essay films. That voice usually speaks *over* its subject—physically hovers on top of a film's images rendering the viewer a passive consumer of content, whereas the videos of this dissertation require an active viewer. While they may possess essayistic qualities, they consciously break with essay film conventions for the way image/sound hierarchies are critically dispensed. This makes the works less easy to categorize, but closer to the becomings they seek.

Whether considering the treatment of a human voice or not, interaction between things in the videos is conversational. Conversation *is* threshold, or as Blanchot puts it, "It is between us, it holds itself between, and conversation is approach on the basis of this between-two: an irre-

ducible distance that must be preserved if one wishes to maintain a relation with the unknown that is speech's unique gift."⁹ Blanchot is writing here about his conversations with Georges Bataille, analyzing the nature of his good friend's ability to be present through his speech, no matter its content and form.¹⁰ For Blanchot, this presence is life itself or a "dialogue of existences."¹¹ Thus, I too socialize with Lispector, Sontag, Woolf—and also with the sound of other intensities.

To place *Sunsets*, *Notes From Underground*, and *Waves* within a category surely runs counter to the project's ethos. But within this particular research context it's helpful to do so in order to locate the project's contribution within the discipline of Fine Art. Thus, in addition a critical engagement with liminality, I should also note that a highly generalized contribution is how the videos of this dissertation expand on the work performed by artists who render literature's philosophical concerns, or even specifically Blanchot and/or Lispector's work, or Sontag's, and/or Woolf's, in dialogue with visual art. In any of the examples that follow, my project resonates with those that create new thinking, as opposed to existing merely as literal illustrations of written thought or literature.

Of the latter, take for example a body of work by artist Roni Horn based on Clarice Lispector's *Água Viva*. In an interview with Hans-Ulrich Obrist, Horn's remarks reveal her own high regard of Lispector's language, but rather than in-between-ness, Horn seems to be interested in its simultaneity. She says, "The way that Lispector puts together language and arrives at an image ... or a context for the viewer to rest in through her language, is a place that is always ... half-language, half/physical/metaphysical world. I think that continual acknowledgement of this dual real ... that Lispector's language is about a process of consciousness and ... of being physically present and entwining those two sensibilities. So in this sense, I feel very close to her ... in the work."¹² Horn's *Rings of Lispector* (2004), consists of rubber floor tiles inlaid with a selection of sentences from *Água Viva* and installed wall-to-wall in the finely wood-paneled gallery space of Hauser & Wirth in London. Lispector's text appears on the floor in ring-like patterns. To glean anything, the viewer would have to navigate in a circular manner. As with any sculp-

ture, the movement that an object in space prompts serves as an index for the body itself and of general spatial experience. The press release states, "The work embodies a sense of the dialectic between architectural space and poetic force, encouraging one to experience the rubber physically underfoot and to view the words from above. This act of location addresses inner emotions with the idea of landscape."¹³ Even if this is so, what does Roni Horn do with Lispector in this piece other than literally lay her at our feet as a symbol for "inner emotions?"

Current and far more interesting to me, and in relation to my project, is the application of Maurice Blanchot in the work of artist Ed Atkins. Atkins cites Blanchot when describing his work, which is marked first by what it is: computer-animated video works that usually feature a white male. In *Ribbons* (2014), a three-channel HD video installation, the main figure is a self-loathing, slumped-over mess; he is simultaneously completely of this world and not, because Atkin's character and the video itself is only a deathly composite, volatile in its very uncertain material existence. Yet here it is among us. Atkins pushes high-definition into the space of death, as laid out in Blanchot's writing, not merely illustrating this space but doing it. Death is when any one of us is revealed as our true selves, our thingness, yet the fact that we can never experience our own death is a source drive in this work. The outcome is an approximation of this death as played out in and of the HD form, for how it appropriately marks the work as what it is and also what it seeks to address. In other words, the artist is confronting Blanchotian questions through the work itself, evidenced by an assembly of decisions, not the least of which is Atkins's thoughtful choice of the medium, saying: "HD is only possible in the fantasies and dreams of the immaterial. The index of the HD image—and of truly contemporary digital data in general—is impalpable. There is no body to inscribe, no document to consign to history. The HD index is always provisional; it can be erased and reformed without leaving the tiniest trace of what was there before."¹⁴

A varied and small sampling of other current artists and works, who and which have prominently used literary sources or notions, include several pieces by Spencer Finch that draw directly from Emily Dickinson, such as *Sunlight In An Empty Room (Passing Cloud For Emily Dickinson, Amherst, MA, August 28 2004)* (2004), and *366 (Emily Dickinson's Miraculous Year)* (2009).¹⁵ Both try to recreate some aspect

of, or something specifically described in, Dickenson's writing into a physical experience of her labor or vision. Another is Lisa Oppenheim and her double film projection titled *Cathay* (2010). It takes an imaginative translation by Ezra Pound of a work by eighth-century Chinese poet Li Bai, and vitalizes it even further in creating another living translation of Pound's, by way of images of New York City's Chinatown interspersed with Pound's words, sidelining the contemporary scholarly translation of Li Bai's poem.¹⁶ It is poignant and at the same time, it speaks to subversion as an imaginative, productive stance. A final example is Thomas Hirschhorn whose work is identified with its discontents within late-capitalism. Hirschhorn has prominently used an all-male cast of philosophers and their writings as carriers of ideas/ideals. He uses their texts as actual physical objects in building materially and textually dense installations. In *Spinoza Monument* (1999), *Deleuze Monument* (2000), *Bataille Monument* (2002), and *Gramsci Monument* (2013), he uses the provisional logics of makeshift altars, hot dog stands, and the spontaneous sites of social gatherings.¹⁷ Hirschhorn's monuments have always been placed in working-class neighborhoods of different cities.¹⁸

1. In the past, I'd try to unravel subjectivity and heighten my sense of alienation. Before moving to Sweden, I lived in New York from 2005-2010 and held a demanding day-job. I devised a plan to maximize what precious free time I had to make art. It would have me traveling to a far-flung foreign city, where I'd walk around in the middle of the night alone and return home the very next morning. Under the influence of discombobulating jet lag and displacement, what would the world reveal to me? Subtle variations of these tactics were used in this project. For instance, the bone structure of the script for *Waves* was written on a flight over the Atlantic Ocean, between the continent of my birth and the one on which I live today (I explain this in the previous section on *Waves*).

2. John Gregg, "Blanchot's Suicidal Artist: Writing and the (im)possibility of Death," in *Maurice Blanchot and the Literature of Transgression* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 35. For instance of the unachievable nature of it, in Gregg's description of Blanchot's regard for the suicide victim does not master his/her own death. Gregg writes that it's similar to the writer wrongly thinking she/he has control over a work: "The more they write and the farther they advance into the literary space, the less clear their original project becomes. Writing involves a pact made with the night and cannot be equated with any mundane task to be accomplished in the realm of the day."

3. Clarice Lispector, *Água Viva*, trans. Stefan Tobler, ed. Benjamin Moser (New York: New Directions, 2012), 3.

4. Nancy N. Chen, "'Speaking Nearby': A Conversation with Trinh T. Minh-ha," *Visual Anthropology Review* 8, no. 1 (1992).

5. *Ibid.*, 87.

6. *Ibid.*, 87.

7. Lisa Tan, *Waves*, 2014-2015, 00:00:36.

8. Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume Three 1925-1930*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew MacNeillie (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), 139.

9. Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. Susan Hanson (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 212.

10. *Ibid.*, 212.

11. *Ibid.*, 213.

12. Roni Horn, *Roni Horn Aka Roni Horn* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2009), 26.

Note: the frequent ellipses are in the full quote itself, they are not mine.

13. "Roni Horn Rings of Lispector (Água Viva)," *Hauser & Wirth*, News Release, November 17, 2004, <http://www.hauserwirth.com/exhibitions/>.

14. Ed Atkins, "Some Notes on High Definition with Apologies to M. Blanchot," *Arnolfini*, 2011, <http://www.arnolfini.org.uk/whatson/film-exercise-symposium-what-can-the-image-do/ed-atkins-notes-on-hd/view>.

15. Spencer Finch, <http://www.spencerfinch.com>. Follow links to: "Installations" and "Mixed Media."

16. "Lisa Oppenheim. *Cathay*. 2010," *Guggenheim Collection Online*, <http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/collection-online/artwork/27425>.

17. "Thomas Hirschhorn," *ART21*, 2015, <http://www.art21.org/artists/thomas-hirschhorn>.

18. Kari Rittenbach, "The Gulch Between Knowledge and Experience: Thomas Hirschhorn's Gramsci Monument," Review, *Afterall Online*, November, 2014, http://www.afterall.org/online/the-gulch-between-knowledge-and-experience_thomas-hirschhorn_s-gramsci-monument/#cite10397. Rittenbach explains the choice of locations as: "Absent any purpose besides offering raw 'experience' to those involved, then, the artist frames his attention to the 'othered' communities in which his monuments are situated – in every case among marginalised groups, and often in the midst of housing projects – as a neutral provocation."

5. Liminality, threshold, and an ethics of becoming

A critical engagement of liminality appeals to me for how it can potentially shape political consciousness toward nuanced and imaginative lines of thought and resistance, amidst individual and collective human self-interests that generate persistent suffering, destruction, and desire to possess all that exists on Earth and beyond.¹

For the principal sources of the dissertation, the in-between experience of becoming(s) is activated in the deathly space of writing with literary intent (a reminder to recall how I exchange writer for artist).^{2 3} Lispector and Blanchot both use language to engage what is *other than language*. This concept is inherently paradoxical. The two passages that follow convey this paradox, as well as the writers' respective preoccupation with an experience of the world outside of the boundaries of human consciousness, outside of word and image. In one of Blanchot's key works, *Literature and the Right to Death*, sentence after sentence could serve to exemplify this, but I select the passage below for its nearly audible pangs of wanting, which seem to be so bodily and materially felt.⁴ Blanchot evokes the soft of a cat, the hard of a pebble, and the wet of the ocean, which in its evaporation renders salt visible to us.

Something has disappeared. How can I recover it, how can I turn around and look at what exists *before*, if all my power consists of making it into what exists *after*? The language of literature is a search for this moment which precedes literature. Literature usually calls it existence; it wants the cat as it exists, the pebble *taking the side of things*, not man, but the pebble, and in this pebble what man rejects by saying it, what is the foundation of speech and what speech excludes in speaking, the abyss... Literature says: 'I no longer represent, I am; I do not signify, I present.' But this wish to be a thing, this refusal to mean anything, a refusal immersed in words turned to salt... Literature learns that it cannot go beyond itself towards its own end...⁵

Now Lispector. Here, she expresses just about the same thing, but through what is at once the most unlikely and yet the most apt example imaginable. Ever existential, she embeds her words in an ovum and inside of a child's originary question: *which came first the chicken or the egg?* It is profoundly fitting that Lispector's life ended due to ovarian cancer.⁶

In the morning I see the egg on the kitchen table. I take in the egg at a single glance. I immediately perceive that I cannot be seeing an egg. To see an egg never remains in the present. No sooner do I see an egg than I have seen an egg for the last three thousand years. The very instant an egg is seen, it is the memory of an egg—the only person to see the egg is someone who has already seen it. Upon seeing the egg, it is already too late: an egg seen is an egg lost. To see the egg is the promise of being able to see the egg one day. A brief glance which cannot be divided; if there is any thought; there is no thought; there is the egg. Looking is the necessary instrument which, once used, I shall put aside. I shall remain with the egg. The egg has no itself. Individually, it does not exist.⁷

The passages above are of desire and of struggle. "What troubles my existence is writing," and with this, Lispector expresses the desire for something unendingly thwarted by thought.⁸ Likewise, Blanchot explains, "Such is the human condition: to be able to relate only to things which turn us away from other things."⁹ While he laments this limitation, he also affirms how even though language disables being, it's also the very thing that makes our existence knowable to us at all. "When it names something, whatever it designates is abolished; but whatever is abolished is also sustained, and the thing has found a refuge (in the being which is the word) rather than a threat."¹⁰

I often use the word *enlivening* in terms of these concepts. It's a way for me to focus on the life-giving potential of something that could so easily prompt stasis in its overriding futility. The last sentence of the script-of-sorts that I wrote for the video *Waves* states, "Enlivened, Woolf said, 'I am writing *The Waves* to a rhythm, not to a plot.'"¹¹ When language—and the loss it produces—is run through an affective and material perspective, loss turns into vigor and rhythm—into affirming life itself through action and imagination. This is what is transferred to me as a

reader of Blanchot and Lispector: that language, not as language alone, but in and of its affects, has the ability to shift our position from passive vessels of our own blindness into active participants in the making of “the invisible into the always more invisible.”¹² In other words, the endeavor is to make what is obscure even more obscure through deeply conscious thought, in order to be powerfully affected by the world. Because it is in this liminal, provisional space where relations are most apt to shift. Earlier in my research, I’d notice myself becoming dumber and more absent with each passing day in the making of *Sunsets*. It was a worrying state, especially for someone supposed to be rigorously engaged in “knowledge production” as a new doctoral researcher. But the value of that dumb or departed mental space—which I highly suspect is also a space of creativity—makes perfect sense within the logics of the concept at hand.

For Blanchot, death is the excessive and non-attainable experience that gives access to things as they are. Because death is a wholly impersonal space connected to a *primordial obscurity*.¹³ The primordial is something we all know in our bones, to borrow from anthropologist Michael Taussig.¹⁴ It has little to do with us as individuals. Death is when we finally cease to perceive everything in relation to ourselves. This goes to the core of Blanchot’s theory of literature as that which requires existing in the space of death. It’s a contradiction; it’s not possible for any of us to experience our own death, and he duly assigns it as *the impossible*.¹⁵

As friends, Georges Bataille and Maurice Blanchot conversed often over their shared *outside* discourse.¹⁶ Bataille was desirous too of the source of things, and he theorized too that it resides in the impossible.¹⁷ ¹⁸ He was more insistent and focused, however, on transgression as a means to reach it. Non-knowledge is a necessity in achieving *l’extrême*—extreme limit. He explains, “What I must *excrete* today: voluntary ignorance, methodological ignorance by which I have come to search for ecstasy.”¹⁹ He continues, “All profound life is heavy with the *impossible* ... ‘non-knowledge communicates ecstasy.’”²⁰ Bataille then explains how the book he’s writing, *Inner Experience* (1943) and its discourse, fails to achieve that ecstasy for so many reasons, not the least of which is that it has thoughts. It’s not emptied out enough. He is still there.²¹

The real gift of dispossession of the self and of the world is that it

offers true access to both, when things are, as Blanchot writes, “out of use, beyond wear”—they “are not in our possession but are in the movement of dispossession which releases us both from them and from ourselves”²² Just as insistent on dispossession’s potency, Bataille writes, “indeed we must, respond to something which, not being God, is stronger than every right, that impossible to which we accede only by forgetting the truth of all these rights, only by accepting disappearance.”²³ Disappearance reveals the type of access to the world that animals and things have, even human children have, but that we do not. This paradox is passed on as mine to contend with in the videos: highly conscious thinking, the thinking necessary for writing with literary intent comes forth when one loses their consciousness as usual. This radically runs counter to the sense that is supposed to be imparted within a general research context. But the position to be made through Bataille and Blanchot is that what constitutes a true achievement of knowledge is *non-knowledge as knowledge*. It has nothing to do with information or with the construction of disciplines or subject areas. In this technological moment, access to information as knowledge is widely, instantly accessible. The true achievement of a dispossessed space of non-knowledge doesn’t involve us specifically, or we as individuals. As Deleuze noted, life isn’t personal.²⁴ Yet it comes from an affective experience in and of relations, which are closer than anything for anyone. Unhinging consciousness is to lose a grip of language/image and thought and to enter into boundless primordial obscurity.

In order to put this in tactile movement, in action, I consult Lispector again. Her methods lay in de-familiarizing language within language, to achieve the potent impotence advocated by the aforementioned men. She creates something that feels like a *provisional language*—as if it’s always ready to break away from legibility at any moment. She’s even literally used the provisional as a way to start a novel. *The Hour of the Star*, begins with all the things it could *also* be, in addition to what it is, “THE HOUR OF THE STAR.” She writes a list of or’s in assertive all-caps: “OR,” “LET HER DEAL WITH IT,” “OR,” “THE RIGHT TO SCREAM,” “OR,” “AS FOR THE FUTURE.”²⁵ The multiplicity continues on, and in its accretion we realize that deciding on a fixed title does not suit the author. She refuses to play by the rules.

In *Água Viva*, the reader becomes a witness to Lispector as she loses her language—right in front of us! But in doing so, says something closer to any truth about being alive than could be revealed in familiar or more coherent language. Examine these two strange short sentences:

“What I’m writing you is a ‘this.’ It won’t stop: it goes on.”²⁶

She delivers the specific through the vague: merely a *this* and an *it*. Yet what is expressed is the vastness of Lispector’s idea of now-time in perpetuity. Her way of writing conveys something that feels totally intimate to the reader, and I think that it is due to a strangeness and vulnerability in its liminality. But also in how this strangeness and vulnerability works as an aesthetic. Lispector’s language seems to me to be an enacting of Blanchot’s desire for the obscure, foreign, and other.²⁷ He writes that, “We believe that we think the strange and the foreign, but in reality we never think anything but the familiar; we think not the distant, but the close that measures it.”²⁸ What he’s saying is that that which is close to us is what requires measuring—but as for the distant, other, and foreign—these are so very, very close to us that they do not need to be measured at all. Our conventional tools are simply of no use.

This notion harmonizes with Gilles Deleuze and his theorizing of a becoming that is located in what is also foreign and other. I’ll lend a final example to this focus on limit, this time in Lewis Carroll whose works Deleuze analyzed extensively for the author’s exceptional use of nonsense, embedded in time-space bending narrative components. Of course in the example of Alice.²⁹ She loses her identity in Wonderland, signaled by how her proper name is not stable after she descends the rabbit hole. Carroll makes way for a radical alterity, a time-place when, as Deleuze writes, “names of pause and rest are carried away by the verbs of pure becoming and slide into the language of events, all identity disappears from the self, the world, and God.”³⁰ So Carroll doesn’t write a story about pure becoming; rather, what he does is write with it. He writes from the dissolved and irrelevant *I* position. It advocates for us to take on Alice’s tumble, yield to the space of becoming, and hover in between subjectivities. Why? Because, “Paradox is initially that which destroys good sense as the only direction, but it is also that which destroys common sense as the assignation of fixed identities.”³¹ The experience

of becoming that writing with poetic intent can bring on is vibrant. Deleuze writes that literature, “opens up a kind of foreign language within language, which is neither another language nor a rediscovered patois, but a becoming-other of language.”³² If it were to be achieved, it would require a highly conscious harnessing of words—turning them about in unorthodox ways and towards new language within language. Again, for Blanchot, heightened consciousness was best enlivened by death, the not-conscious consciousness. The call to writing is thus the call to an approximation of death in order to get closer to “higher or more demanding meanings—closer too, perhaps, to their source,” closer to the transformative space of becomings.³³

This all makes me think of a great book about one of my favorite artists, Robert Irwin, whose work rejects thought for pure presence. Lawrence Weschler, Irwin’s biographer, titled the book after something Paul Valéry is said to have said, “To see is to forget the name of the thing one sees.”³⁴ Irwin’s art is not about phenomena. Instead, he makes art with it, in pursuit of the source of being alive. In a voice so familiar to me for its easy-breezy Southern Californian way, he explains why he’d regularly drive out to the Mojave desert, not to camp, not out of a love of nature per se, “The Southwest desert attracted me, I think, because it was the area with the least kinds of identifications or connotations,” he elaborates “I mean, it’s hard to explain, but it takes on an almost magical quality. It just suddenly stands up and hums, it becomes so beautiful, incredibly, the presence is so strong. Then twenty minutes later, it will simply stop. And I began wondering why, what those events were really about, because they were so close to my interests, the quality of phenomena.”³⁵ Another artist might’ve photographed the landscape, and certainly we’ve all seen this, but it’s not in Irwin’s interest to possess the thing before him or index it. He makes something else. Something that has another presence born of the presence he has come to know while on his research excursions to the desert. It belongs to a nonliteral artistic handling that eludes easy description, yet is capable of communicating what is other than merely informational to a viewer.

My attraction to the literary theory of Blanchot is for how it accumulates towards dispossession in the sense that he uses the term. I think it is important to work through in this moment in time. Because the *I* asserts

the promise of each subject's unique individuality on which commodities thrive, along with a whole host of social ills. The widespread affects of such are apparent on many material levels, human and otherwise. So, a counter movement would be a release of the *I*, or towards a time when it is no longer needed. My highly simplistic tracking looks like this: liminality towards the affective states of becoming; to dispossession; to seeing the world and each other in a more complex and accountable way.

The videos *Sunsets*, *Notes From Underground*, and *Waves* explore the theoretical task of literature in Blanchot, in relation to materiality, affectivity, and of the body and mind in a constant causal process with each other. The body and its symptoms and what it endures in struggling to express a radical alterity are in plain sight in Blanchot's work. "This is an experience we do not have to go very far to find, if it is offered in the most common suffering, and first of all in physical suffering."³⁶ He is expressing how language is here to reveal the condition that creates it in the first place, whether it is suffering, joy, anger, etc.; just as "the statue glorifies the marble."³⁷ It is a simple yet easily forgotten thought. Affects need something to hang on to. In the case of the videos, the structuring subjectivities of Lispector, Sontag, Woolf—joined with others things: sunsets, subways, data servers. They're all used to disclose spatiotemporal relations, materials, and conditions, which either increase or decrease my life force, or what are known as affects. For Deleuze and Guattari "Affects are becomings."³⁸ They're related to emotions, drives and feelings, but they're not exactly the same. Affects are difficult to describe, but no more difficult than the process of becoming. They are related to, or expressed in, bodily experience. Affects become such to us when they either increase or decrease the life force of the thing being affected.³⁹ They are pre-linguistic, pre-subjective, and can be attached to ideas and things in highly unpredictable ways.⁴⁰

The particular thought line that I've been guided to, as a result of my interest in Lispector and Blanchot, and through the research process of making the videos, is firmly linked to affect, and as such it's linked to Baruch Spinoza.⁴¹ So it made sense when I read how Lispector's biographer, Benjamin Moser, devotes several paragraphs to her connection to the philosopher, alerting viewers of the existence of a copy of *Les pages immortelles de Spinoza* (1940) in her now archived library.⁴² Its back page contains Lispector's hand-written notes. She aligns her barely

twenty-three-year old self with the great philosopher's secularism, noting that what exists is revealed, not created.⁴³ Moser then makes an association between Spinoza's biography and Lispector's: "Spinoza's parents were Jewish exiles from Portugal who had arrived in Amsterdam ten years before he was born. He lost his mother when he was six and would spend his whole life mourning her."⁴⁴ Lispector's family too was Jewish. They emigrated from the Ukraine escaping the pogroms, where her mother was raped, only to die of syphilis contracted from the assault upon reaching Brazil. Her father, as with Spinoza's own, died when she was twenty. One must assign the two thinkers' fixation on an inner truth to their respective life experiences of loss, foreign-ness, and displacement.⁴⁵ Lispector quotes Spinoza from Part 2 of *Ethics*, Proposition 13, at the end of her first novel *Near to the Wild Heart* (1943), spotlighting a definition for affective processes, "Bodies are distinguished from one another in respect of motion and rest, quickness and slowness, and not in respect to substance."⁴⁶ Affects and the becomings to which they link are, in turn, ontologically connected to movement. Since becoming cannot be fixed, there is nothing that it can be other than what it is.⁴⁷ ⁴⁸ It displaces the *I*. To be clear, the *I* is the direct outcome of individual subjectivity reconciling the complex nature of *being*. It (being) is so overwhelming that we've long since displaced a true experience of it by assigning signs to all things. But becoming strips this coping mechanism bare. There is no representation within the liminality of becoming, and so absent is the possibility for possession. When the *I* is no longer needed—all manner of things move.

Philosopher and feminist theoretician Rosi Braidotti offers a more materially felt definition for the relation between subjectivity and affects towards becoming: "Affectivity in fact is what activates an embodied subject, empowering him/her to interact with others. This is the acceleration of one's existential speed, or increase of one's affective temperature is the dynamic process of becoming."⁴⁹ Again, this speaks to my project's turn from the linguistic to embodied, material dimensions and processes of consciousness that are so tricky to fully describe, but that I think the videos disclose in their ontology.

I refer back to Trinh Minh Ha, when she writes, "life is precisely what is lacking when one uses word, image, or sound just as an instrument of

thought.”⁵⁰ *Sunsets, Notes From Underground, and Waves*, all attempt to use image and sound for that which is other than thought. This negotiation is what the viewer sees and hears. It’s why I’m acutely attracted to how Virginia Woolf supposedly responded when someone asked her about literature, answering: “To whom are you speaking of writing? The writer does not speak about it, but is concerned with something else.”⁵¹ Woolf’s resistance and powerful invocation of the impossible appears in Deleuze’s final group of essays, which are all occupied with literature. The title, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, gives the first indication of the bedside manner of his approach, as being not only a matter of the analysis and criticality, but also and importantly as a matter of observing the life forces that are a part of any literary attempt. He too is referring to the increasing or decreasing of the power of a living thing to act, which informs its state at any given moment in time.⁵² Reading Woolf’s response in this light, it seems that Deleuze uses her statement for how she directs the reader far away from language and writing as an intellectual, technical activity, and instead links what she does—writing—to its very inability to express life in any true way. This loss is the inability to speak about an experience of loss. Woolf’s *something else* is itself loss and its waves, but in this application it is not merely a matter of what can or cannot be said, otherwise known as the ineffable, but rather it is the knowing that *nothing* can be said/written, yet this is the very task the writer takes on. It leaves the writer to contend with the uncertainty in in-between-ness. Particularly for Deleuze, the crux of the problem is that to write with literary intent is to eschew form, yet we are unable to do without form because that would result in something unintelligible. I think this is why the principal figures in my research write from an experience of the liminal itself. And this is why I attempt to do the same in my videos. Deleuze: “To write is certainly not to impose a form (of expression) on the matter of lived experience. Literature rather moves in the direction of the ill-formed or the incomplete ... Writing is a question of becoming ...”⁵³

As I mentioned before, he aptly invokes the Woolf response, “The writer does not speak about it, but is concerned with something else,” at the very end of an essay titled “Life and Literature.”⁵⁴ He follows the citation with his own final analysis, “If we consider the criteria, we can see that, among all those who make books with literary intent, *even among*

the mad, there are very few who can call themselves writers” (italics mine).⁵⁵ His “even among the mad” ignites. Madness is a contingency we all live with—a threat to our individual conscious subjectivity and duration. And so the philosopher designates the highest possible stature to the one who has lost her mind. While suicide is not the same as madness, it is often a conscious unhinging of consciousness. With stones in her pockets, Woolf pulls herself to the hollow of the abyss. Deleuze exits from his window several stories high. The space in between it and the ground below is life being fully lived, “A fragile and yet enduring affirmation: yes! The rest is silence.”⁵⁶

Of madness, there is Lispector’s most provocative novel *The Passion According to G.H.* (1964). The fiction writer and essayist Rachel Kushner reviewed the new, recently published English translations of Clarice Lispector’s novels. Her analysis describes Lispector as the writer of “novels that are fractured, cerebral, fundamentally nonnarrative (unless you count as plot a woman standing in her maid’s room gazing at a closet for nearly two hundred pages).”⁵⁷ Kushner’s hilarious parenthetical remark is aimed at Lispector’s novel, which is about an upper middle-class housewife, ambiguously known as G.H., and her encounter with a dying cockroach sighted in her maid’s wardrobe. She ends up eating it, leveling herself to it, and it to her, and ostensibly losing her *I*.

Lispector pulls madness near. Her protagonist explains, “And for me nothing exists unless I give it a form.”⁵⁸ She continues, “And my struggle against that disintegration is just that: is just trying to give it form. A form gives contours to chaos, gives a construct to amorphous substance... the vision of an infinite flesh is a madman’s vision...”⁵⁹ It’s Lispector’s disclosure that she’s fully aware of what’s at stake. Nevertheless, word-by-word, she balances her book on the edge of sanity, courting the infinite, “between two grains of sand, no matter how close together they are, there exists an interval of space, there exists a sensing between sensing—in the interstices of primordial matter there is the mysterious, fiery line that is the world’s breathing, and the world’s continual breathing is what we hear and call silence.”⁶⁰ G.H. releases all good sense, eats the roach, and connects to liminality, pure becoming. Unlike Franz Kafka’s Gregor who famously falls out of bed and onto his astonishing new carapace, only to contemplate his family members and thereby inadvertently

reveal that he's still inside of his own identity, G.H. gets far closer to dissolving hers by ontologically leveling her material being and that of the cockroach.⁶¹ There may not be a metamorphosis, but there is radical immanence, closer to what Lispector called "a higher plane of humanity. Or of unhumanity—the *it*."⁶² The immanence revealed is not merely in relation to oneself, but in relation to the insect that is also part of the universe. An ethics of becoming is ultimately one of inter-connectedness.⁶³

1. For example, astrophysicist Stephen Hawking advocates the colonization of another planet(s), as the human species faces extinction on earth within the next hundred years, due to human-made threats. In an interview transcript posted on the website bigthink.com in August 2010, Hawking's argument: "If we are the only intelligent beings in the galaxy, we should make sure we survive and continue."
2. Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: U of Nebraska, 1982), 134. In a section on "Literature and the Original Experience," of becoming, Blanchot writes: "And eventually all objects become immaterial, a volatile force in the swift circuit of exchange, the evaporated support of action which is itself pure becoming."

3. Gilles Deleuze, "First Series of Paradoxes of Pure Becoming," in *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester, ed. Constantin V. Boundas (London: Continuum, 2004), 3-5. Deleuze picks up on Blanchot's pure becoming as the multiple, infinite, always provisional, and as far away from fixity as possible.
4. Maurice Blanchot, "Literature And The Right To Death," in *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader: Fiction & Literary Essays*, ed. George Quasha (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill/Barrytown, 1999).
5. *Ibid.*, 383-384.
6. Benjamin Moser, *Why This World: A Biography of Clarice Lispector* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 381-383. Moser writes, "Clarice had said that 'everyone chooses the way they die,' and the way she chose was spookily appropriate. After a lifetime writing about eggs and the mystery of birth...she herself was now suffering from an untreatable ovarian cancer." At the end of the section on *Notes From Underground*, through Moser, I convey what Lispector says the day before she died. He describes how in the hospital when she incurred a hemorrhage, she got out of bed wanting to leave the room, "The nurse stopped her there. Clarice looked at her angrily and said, distressed: 'You killed my character!'"
7. Clarice Lispector, *The Foreign Legion: Stories and Chronicles*, trans. Giovanni Pontiero (Manchester: Carcanet, 1986), 47.
8. Clarice Lispector, *The Hour of the Star*, trans. Giovanni Pontiero (New York: New Directions Books, 1977), 8.
9. Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, 134.
10. Blanchot, *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader: Fiction & Literary Essays*, 385.
11. Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume Three 1925-1930*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew MacNeillie (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), 316.
12. Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, 139.
13. Blanchot, *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader: Fiction & Literary Essays*, 385.
14. Michael Taussig, "When the Sun Goes Down: A Copernican Turn of Remembrance." Lecture, Monash University, Victoria, March 10, 2010, <http://www.digitalpodcast.com/items/7696283>
15. Maurice Blanchot, "The Great Refusal," in *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. Susan Hanson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
16. Patrick Ffrench, "Friendship, Asymmetry, Sacrifice: Bataille and Blanchot," *PARRHESIA* 3, 2007.
17. Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience*, trans. Leslie Anne Boldt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 33. "I enter into a dead end. There all possibilities are exhausted; the 'possible' slips away and the impossible prevails. To face the impossible—exorbitant, indubitable—when nothing is possible any longer is in my eyes to have an experience of the divine; it is analogous to a torment."
18. Kevin Hart, *The Dark Gaze: Maurice Blanchot and the Sacred* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 99. "... the impossible, the neutral, or the Outside."
19. Georges Bataille, "The Torment," in *Inner Experience*, trans. Leslie Anne Boldt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 141.
20. *Ibid.*, 141.
21. *Ibid.*

22. Blanchot, *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader: Fiction & Literary Essays*, 141.
23. Georges Bataille, *The Impossible* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1991), 10.
24. Chris Kraus, "Description Over Plot," in *Where Art Belongs* (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2011), 111.
25. Clarice Lispector, *The Hour of the Star*.
26. Clarice Lispector, *Água Viva*, trans. Stefan Tobler, ed. Benjamin Moser (New York: New Directions, 2012), 88.
27. Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*.
28. *Ibid.*, 44.
29. Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass* (London: Penguin, 2003).
30. Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 5.
31. *Ibid.*, 5.
32. Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 5. This is delivered by way of Marcel Proust.
33. Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, 139.
34. Lawrence Weschler, *Seeing Is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees: A Life of Contemporary Artist Robert Irwin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 203.
35. *Ibid.*, 160.
36. Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, 44.
37. Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, 223.
38. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 256.
39. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, comps., "An Inventory of Shimmers," in *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).
40. Clare Hemmings, "Invoking Affect," *Cultural Studies* 19, no. 5, 2005, doi:10.1080/09502380500365473.
41. Baruch Spinoza, "Ethics," in *Complete Works*, trans. Samuel Shirley, ed. Michael L. Morgan (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub., 2002).
42. Moser, *Why This World: A Biography of Clarice Lispector*, 109. The book is a French anthology of Spinoza by Arnold Zweig. See Moser's endnote: number 1, page: 408.
43. *Ibid.*, 112.
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Ibid.*
46. *Ibid.*, 111.
47. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 232-309.
48. *Ibid.*, 238.
49. Rosi Braidotti, "The Ethics of Becoming-Imperceptible," *Deleuze International*, February 28, 2008, 7, <http://deleuze.tausendplateaus.de/wp-content/uploads/2008/01/trent-final.pdf>.
50. Nancy N. Chen, "'Speaking Nearby': A Conversation with Trinh T. Minh-ha," *Visual Anthropology Review* 8, no. 1 (1992): 87.
51. Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, 6.
52. *Ibid.*, 6.
53. *Ibid.*, 1.
54. *Ibid.*, 6.
55. *Ibid.*
56. Braidotti, *Deleuze International*, 29.
57. Rachel Kushner, "Lipstick Traces: Novelist Clarice Lispector's Radiant Nothingness," *Bookforum*, January, 2013.
58. Clarice Lispector, *The Passion According to G.H.*, trans. Ronald W. Sousa (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 6.
59. *Ibid.*, 6.
60. *Ibid.*, 90.
61. Catherine Malabou, *Ontology of the Accident: An Essay on Destructive Plasticity*, trans. Carolyn P. T. Shread (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2012). Malabou writes how Deleuze perceives Kafka's Gregor to be a "failure" in his metamorphosis, because he still becomes a form (a beetle). But she disagrees, writing, "It is not form that is the problem; it's the fact that form can be thought separately from the nature of the being that transforms itself." See: page 17.
62. Clarice Lispector, *Água Viva*, trans. Stefan Tobler, ed. Benjamin Moser (New York: New Directions, 2012), 47.
63. Braidotti, *Deleuze International*, 25. "I think becoming-imperceptible is the point of fusion between the self and his/her habitat, the cosmos as a whole. It marks the point of evanescence of the self and its replacement by a living nexus of multiple inter-connections that empower not the self, but the collective, not identity, but affirmative subjectivity, not consciousness, but affirmative inter-connections."

Afterword: the provisional as an aesthetic

Although I primarily use liminality to speak about the videos of this dissertation, it causes much hesitation. I could also designate the notion of *limit*, the liminal being the deconstruction of it; or the idea of *becoming*, an unfixed, intensive state which experiences of the liminal are party to; or *transformation*, linked to the liminal as its precursory space; or a concept of *border*, an edge negotiated in the passing from one thing to another. But upon reflection, the instability felt in using the *liminal* is what constitutes a vital part of the inquiry. And it isn't a matter of not being able to find the right word or an unwillingness to commit to a thematic—it's something else.

The word *provisional* brings to mind incompleteness, a placeholder—something to be changed later, not a final version. But as the preceding sections emphasized, there is potential in what is *not* fixed as an absolute form. What if something remains provisional? What if instead of seeking a permanent designation we allow for temporal, material, intersubjective specificities to guide us towards mutable forms that await other specificities and new positions for mapping? Could this be a countermovement to the idea of mastery that hierarchically marks out territory, stakes a claim, and solicits high visibility? If something is provisional it becomes far more difficult to brand and commodify.

Provisionality, as I am beginning to explore it, is something that opens up or makes itself available for becoming(s) and for the possibility of movement. Lispector's multiple titles for *The Hour of the Star* illuminate the provisional in action. The novel's name is this, *but it could also be this, or this, or this*. The provisional as an aesthetic has arisen specifically through the process of making the videos of this dissertation and its textual reflection. It will require further research. At present, it exists merely as a strong hunch: this is what will be done now, knowing that it is not complete, nor can it ever be complete, mastered, or overcome. A form is only chosen (*Sunsets, Notes From Underground, Waves*), because it is as ontologically provisional as possible.

Agamben in the Preface to his book on method lends a perspective that seems very appropriate here. He writes that in the "human sciences," answering a research question "should entail an archeological vigilance. In other words, it must retrace its own trajectory back to the point where something remains obscure and unthematized. Only a thought that does not conceal its own unsaid—but constantly takes it up and elaborates it—may eventually lay claim to originality."¹

1. Giorgio Agamben, "Preface," in *The Signature of All Things: On Method*, trans. Luca D'Isanto and Kevin Attell (New York: Zone Books, 2009), 8.

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