



The Quantum in the Quotidian [1]

Jessica Y. Neasbitt

University of California, Santa Cruz

Introduction

It began with a graduate seminar: Topics in Feminist Science Studies. A theoretical particle physicist housed in the Feminist Studies department of the university taught the seminar, and the course listing declared the seminar's focus would be exploring "the virtual." As a returning student who left a fifteen-year career in inpatient pharmacy (a field which falls squarely within what are often referred to as the "hard" sciences) in order to pursue a PhD in a field largely characterized as interdisciplinary, I was intrigued. Generally, my research -- which touches upon disciplines as varied as medicine, social sciences, and the humanities -- results in me being faced with an "either/or" decision every time I want to register for a seminar, publish, or speak at a conference. I have learned, as one advisor stated early in my career, that I "will probably have two versions of everything I ever write, and will have to learn to write and submit those versions appropriately." For example, my honours thesis at UC Berkeley exists in MLA form (per department regulation) and APA form (per the requirement of the more "technical" journal that published it), and most of my abstracts occur in two forms, as well: One that touts the scientific aspects of my work, and one that is focused on the humanities aspect. It was presented to me as a necessary evil, if you will -- the price of doing business in academia, where disciplinary divides are one of the foundational tools of organization...as well as one of the places where politics and related economic maneuvering play out, shaping the university and our chances for producing specific types of scholarship within it.

It was divides such as this one that were on my mind when I enrolled in the seminar. Finally, I thought -- finally, I have found a place where my research will "fit" -- where the mingling of the technical and the philosophical will not be viewed as a "cop out," as less valid, as some sort of unholy marriage of research that pollutes the purity of specific discipline. This was the promise, in my mind, of Feminist Science Studies. Like most promises, though, it was made to be broken, and reality -- when it set in (around week two) -- reminded me that the academy is an institution composed of people, and people, like institutions, can be quite resistant to change. The seminar divided, folks dropped out, the mood of the meetings changed, and, all the while, I was left contemplating what was lost in this seeming refusal to consider intra-actions; after all, it

can hardly be said, at this date and time, that any discipline exists in a "pure" state of complete independence from all others. To pretend that aspects of the world exist in bento box form, never touching or leaking into each other's realms, is to engage in fantasy; it may serve a personal purpose, but it is not the lived reality of our larger society and/or the world of academia.

Such thoughts weighed heavily upon me as the time came for me to produce a seminar paper for the course, and I decided that I could not -- or would not -- give in to the pressure and stay within the self-imposed boundaries of the seminar's participants. I thought about the ways in which Erin Manning's work on touch might inform our idea of the virtual, locating it (among other places) in the "in-between" in the beats of the tango; like a breath or a heartbeat, always there, but not always visible (or even acknowledged) ...yet, the possibilities it yields are nearly limitless, opening up entirely new spaces where both sides of its surroundings touch, bleed over, and become something not quite new -- not either/or -- but both/and. The paper I would write, I decided, would be just that: Both/And. And so, with this decision, I embarked on an experimental expedition seeking to explore the question of the potential of interdisciplinary scholarship that was at the crux of the seminar participants' division and complaints: Could I write a creative, humanities-based work that would also address the scientific aspects of the seminar? Could the myriad disciplines of my research and the seminar materials be seen as working together, in service to a greater scholarship, or were they destined to remain separate and unequal, the "softer," humanities-based work incommensurate with the accepted "reality" of the "hard" sciences? Could this "unholy" marriage be made workable...or, dare I suggest, even successful?

What follows, for your consideration, are excerpts from this exploration; tiny fragments of a piece in which form follows function, in a ten-week blog/journal format. What you will make of the pieces is up to you, because where the exploration takes you -- and what you take from it -- is always up to the explorer.

Starting – But Not "Beginning"

"This is not for you."

-- Mark Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (title page)

"We cannot solve our problems with the same level of thinking that created them."

-- Albert Einstein

exploration [ek-spl uh – rey –sh uh n]

noun

1. an act or instance of exploring or investigating; examination
2. the investigation of unknown regions (Dictionary.com, "Exploration")

Let us begin by agreeing that we are not at the beginning. I cannot say, after compiling these musings (hauntings?), that we are at an end, either -- far from it, I would argue. Let us call

this Exploration N, then, and place ourselves somewhere within; not within, as in a teleological, linear progression of explorations, some of which came "before," and some of which are to come "after." Such a predetermination of an "after" demands that we commit to a future already known, which -- in light of the readings of the seminar, and the considerations which inspired this exploration -- seems to play at one of many paradoxes that cannot begin to see an answer (or justice) attained in 15-20 pages. Instead, I suggest we wander. "Where?", you may be asking, as you read this (to which I would add, "Why not 'when,' as well?"). Fair questions, both. Perhaps we will find answers...but then, the thing with wandering is that perhaps we will only find more questions. To tell you the truth, the one suits me just as well as the other. I can only hope that you are also an explorer; an explorer, or patient. Either -- or both -- will suffice.

I suppose that "Why?" is also a valid question, although far less important, in my book. However, if you need a why, I can only offer the following: An exploration has the potential to be generative. Things come of (or is it in?) such an undertaking; things like questions, ideas, specters, hauntings, creativity, revelations. Things that change the very fabric of not only our being, but that of our being *in*, and *with* [2]. So, an exploration it is, because -- for me -- this is the most potentially generative way in which I will engage with the materials and the space of this seminar, as well as the spaces and materials it led me to (re)consider. Of course, now that I've re-read this, it appears far too simplistic, for there is more at the root of my decision than a hope for generative possibilities to bear fruit as a result of this undertaking. There is something else lurking behind the shadows, something (dare I say?) haunting this project. Or perhaps just haunting me. However, as I am the translator of the endeavour (although not necessarily its only author), the important thing, for now, is merely that we accept that the haunting exists [3]. I feel it closing in when I review the pages and pages of handwritten notes scrawled throughout my composition book and on the ridiculous hot pink post-it notes that mark my slow march through the seminar materials before me...but that, too, is not completely accurate -- because I feel it whenever I sit down to work these days. I feel it because something is amiss...

haunted [hawn –tid]

adjective

1. inhabited or frequented by ghosts: *a haunted castle*
2. preoccupied, as with an emotion, memory, or idea; obsessed: *His haunted imagination gave him no peace.*
3. disturbed, distressed; worried: *Haunted by doubt he again turned to law books on the subject.* (Dictionary.com, "Haunted")

Something is, indeed, rotten in the state of Jessica; no, not Jessica, but Jessica's options, perhaps...no, that isn't quite it, either. Let's just agree that something is amiss, and that the uncanniness surfaces always at the same moment -- the moment of writing the seminar paper. I honestly thought that this seminar, Feminist Science Studies, was the key to escaping the haunting; I expected, perhaps naively, that I would find no jarring disconnect when the time came to turn this quarter's studies into THE SEMINAR PAPER. After all, Feminist Science Studies is ostensibly *what I do* -- so there should, finally, be that moment where it all clicks into place, where my work and the work of the seminar coalesce, one in service to the other, and slide

into place in the now near effortless production of an amazing paper that forwards my research and carries me into qualifying exams and grants and accolades and conferences and wait...where are we? We've derailed. Completely. Let's back up, and see where we jumped the track...No, you know what? Let's just keep going -- we can always jump tracks again later. Who says this paper (or time, or history, or life, etc...) has to progress in a linear fashion? Wasn't the point of this seminar that it does not?

Week 2

WEEK 2: Materiality, Intra-actions, Entanglements, Relations

* Karen Barad (2007), *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, Ch.2-4, 8

Optional:

* Karen Barad (2007), *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, Intro & Ch.1 (Barad, FMST 214)

In reviewing course materials, I found the following written (by me) on the blank pages that appear at the end of the above assigned book [4]:

I am thinking of exteriority within, and of the steel pins that are holding my bones together. How do we define the body as having definitive (?) exterior boundaries when such biological hardware and prosthetics exist, and are increasingly utilized within the general population? Is your grandmother a cyborg, with her new hip and heart valve? What does it mean that my friends call me the bionic woman? As the bones in my foot grow around the steel, gripping it for strength and entangling until inseparability is reached, it seems unlikely that the steel can be viewed as apart from me. So, what does it mean when metal is a part of me -- and, an essential part, at that? Could I stand, or walk, without these pins and these aluminum crutches? No. Yet, if they were shrapnel, thrust into me by a different sort of violence -- for, surely, surgery is violence done unto the body -- a non-consensual violence, shall we say, would they then be a 'foreign object?' Are they now a foreign object? Part of this seems to be determined by the mode of introduction and purpose...or, perhaps solely by their purpose, which surely must influence their mode of introduction, to some extent. If this is true, however, and purpose dictates what becomes 'a part of,' rather than 'apart from,' what of the curious case of the suicide bomber? While not common (to my knowledge), one hears rumblings of cases where bombs are implanted within the bodies of bombers. In these cases, where the violence of implantation is consensual, and where there is a 'purpose' to be served by the introduction of hardware and/or prosthesis, can we not see such hardware/prosthesis as 'a part of?' Do intent and their service to the body banish foreign-ness? At the very least, can we not say that these boundaries are not what we thought -- indeed, that they might not exist? I am a living, walking, bionic example of exteriority

within, of boundaries that are not, of fuzzy edges that refuse to be called into the sharp focus of what people want to define as human. I cannot be the only one, and I find myself wondering if the others see in this existence the same causes for celebration that I do. [5]

(Re)reading the above, I begin to see the tracks again. I have an idea of how (or is it why?) we jumped them; the ghost (specter?) of a theory crosses through my brain, a shadow skirting the edges of my comprehension just long enough for me to see the basic shape of my quandary. Yes, I see it now: It is the boundary that confounds me. The dividing lines of disciplines; their demand (and that of the academy) that I choose -- choose and commit to a singular mode of delivery for these end-of-quarter productions. My interdisciplinary research (and heart? brain?), once again, refuses to comply, and instead leaves me balking at home plate, refusing to swing at the full count of the almost completed seminar...

An exploration, however, may just be the answer. An exploration might allow us to travel more than one track -- might even change the apparatus, allowing the feminism and the science studies, the humanities and the medical, the fiction and the fact to co-exist and co-constitute something entirely new (at least, new for me), something that would allow me to work with the haunting, instead of being frozen in fear of it [6]. What if this exploration refused the boundary-making, embraced the haunting, and refused to be all inside or all outside? Wouldn't such an exploration potentially unlock possibilities that would be stifled within the boundaries of specific genres, disciplines, etc.? Here we are, having arrived back at the generative possibilities...and I have decided. Let us make our own track. Let us stay derailed, and see where the wheels will let us travel. Perhaps we won't even need wheels at all, where we're going.

Having settled this, for now, let us call it an exploration, and commit in this one thing. I will consider it as akin to a geological survey, wherein the survey team will enter first and see if the ground beneath us will hold the weight of this theory. A little shifting is to be expected; in fact, if the ground is too solid, it might be time to worry. Shifting suggests room to move and expand; brittle, inflexible earth is the first to crack and open under our feet, so let us hope for the freedom of shifting ground to build upon.

Week 3

WEEK 3: Indeterminacy, Temporality, Causality, Memory, Hauntings, Différance

* Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, "Exordium", Ch.1 [66 pgs]

* Karen Barad (2010), "Quantum Entanglements and Hauntological Relations of Inheritance," in *Derrida Today* 3:2, pp. 240-268. [28 pgs]

* Karen Barad (2012), "Nature's Queer Performativity (the Authorized Version)," in *Women, Gender and Research* (Copenhagen, 2012) 1-2: pp.25-53. [29 pgs]

Optional:

* Derrida, "Limited, Inc"

* Astrid Schrader (2010), "Responding to Pfisteria," in *Social Studies of Science* (Barad, FMST 214)

Well, shifting we have in spades. Week three has left me more convinced than ever that this haunting is *real*, whatever that might mean; it demands to be addressed, refuses to let me skate by in the mode of read/repeat/write that seems to dominate these ten-week cycles thus far. I am now wondering if, rather than building theory, we might perhaps be engaging in a conjuring of sorts. For your consideration:

conjure [kon -jer]

verb (used with object)

1. to affect or influence by or as if by invocation or spell.
2. to effect, produce, bring, etc., by or as by magic: *to conjure a miracle*.
3. to call upon or command (a devil or spirit) by invocation or spell. (Dictionary.com, "Conjure")

Am I building, or bringing forth that which already *is*? Perhaps the connective tissue we speak of building already exists between these entities, but in some form unrecognizable (as yet) to me [7]. Conjunction, now, seems to be just as likely to me -- perhaps even preferable. I am beginning to think that the magic in the second definition is nothing more than a place-keeper; just another word to refer to the fact that there are processes that we cannot picture, relations that we do not consider, and explanations that escape us if we cannot move outside of (no, that's not right -- move laterally to, perhaps?) the traditional disciplinary frameworks most of us are expected to operate within.

Reading Derrida, I feel some concepts beginning to connect, somewhere in the furthest, darkest corners of my mind...just out of range, they are shadowy figures that I can see the outlines of, yet dissolve whenever I attempt to face them directly. They scatter back into the dark, evaporate like a puff of smoke or a cloud; I see the shapes, know that they work together to make a recognizable form...but cannot quite make out the final configuration of their assemblage. I find myself wondering if the others (in the seminar) are able to see that which continues to elude me...I feel, in these moments, the validity of some of his (Derrida's) claims, such as hauntings being neither historical nor dated; I am not as convinced, however, at his insistence that we must know the who and where of the haunting in our mourning. I find that I am haunted by the specter of the seminar that could have been, by the missed opportunities, by the constantly-felt presence of those who left in the first weeks...Their empty chairs sit across from me in silent accusation during every seminar meeting, a presence even in their vacant state. These chairs are perhaps the greatest indicator that Derrida is correct in his assertion that there can be no justice without responsibility to those beyond the (living) present; for, even while they are, for all I know, still among the living, the former occupants of those chairs are certainly no longer of the time and space of this Feminist Science Studies seminar...and yet, I know that we-who-stayed are still intimately tied to them and defined by them, at least within the context of this time and space...and so, contemplating Derrida and those empty chairs, I must ask myself:

If we are learning to live from the (absent) other, then what might we owe that "other" in the name of a just interaction/existence?

Week 4

WEEK 4: Virtuality, Infinity, Nothingness

- * Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, "Part I: The Speculative Scheme" [38 pgs]
- * Louis Althusser, "The Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter," in *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978-87*, pp. 163-207. [34 pgs]

Optional:

- * M. NourbeSe Phillip, "Os" and "Notanda," in *Zong!* [~25 pgs]
- * Karen Barad. 2012. *What is the Measure of Nothingness? Infinity, Virtuality, Justice*. DOCUMENTA (13): 100 Notes – 100 Thoughts | Book N°099.
- * Alfred North Whitehead, *Science & the Modern World*, "The Quantum Theory," pp. 129-138 [9 pgs]
- * Henry Stapp, "Whitehead, James, and the Ontology of Quantum Theory"
- * Isabelle Stengers, "Whitehead and the Laws of Nature"
- * Karl Marx's dissertation: "The Difference Between Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature"
<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1841/dr-theses/> (Barad FMST 214)

Well, this changes a lot. Not everything, but a lot. Now I am more convinced than ever that the conjuration route is the one that I should be exploring. *Zong!* opened the proverbial floodgates. Reading poet NourbeSe Philip's work as not only a project of doing justice, but also as one of conjuring, helps me to envision the possibilities for work that does not fall within "traditional" academic boundaries [8]. Beyond this, though, I find myself awed by her discussions of the hauntological, which I find echo last week's Derrida readings, and which inspire me to think the less possible [9]. Can I effectively tell a story in the "negative spaces" (Philip 2008, 201) here? I fervently hope so, for -- as I glance through my notes -- I see that they are beginning to diverge wildly from any traditional scholarship or narrative. Perhaps they are committing to a swerve of sorts. Perhaps I am merely encountering Philip's argument for there being "always at least 2 poems -- the one you want to write and the other that must write itself" (Philip 2008, 193). Perhaps it is time to surrender to whatever this is and let the exploration truly enter uncharted territory.

In her poem "Zong! #20," Philip touches upon the thing that I have been struggling with this past week, as the seminar's participants settle into a routine, arranging themselves within the meeting room in sadly familiar ways. There is a dividing line, to be sure, as well as several noticeably empty seats at the table again this week. I consider Philip's suggestion that the enslaved Africans at the heart of her project, drowned for monetary/insurance reasons, had value determined via negativity -- a "quantity of not" being one thing (worth life) (Philip 2008, 35).

While the poem speaks also to the potentiality of the same beings, who exist in "the may in become," ultimately, the enslaved peoples are defined by those in power as that which they are not -- human -- and jettisoned as such, just more cargo, sinking into the dark heart of the ocean and the starched, white sheets of an insurance claim. I am haunted not only by the specter of these human sacrifices (the story is a true one), but also by the measurement that allowed for it to happen; somewhere in time, somewhere on the way to this place, somebody (many somebodies) took stock of a situation, measured, and made a cut...and in that moment, lives became bodies became cargo became potential insurance payouts became no more...

I find that I am fascinated with how the no was proven, and cannot help but wonder: When is the becoming, and how is it measured? By time? By space? I consider Philip's words from another poem ("Zong! #): "of soon/only/& afterwards/of was and/not &/them was/slaves/not evidence (Philip 2008, 54)." Humanity granted and/or refuted in moments of decision; life acknowledged and/or taken in the same moments and places. How the weight of the measuring implicates those who measure, who take stock, who make the cuts that determine the fates of not only themselves, but those who reside within the "no that is proved" (Philip 2008, 50).

I am reminded, in a disturbing way, of those who have left the seminar...and those who now sit, sequestered, on the other side of the seminar table, literally separating themselves into categories of their own choosing. Humanities majors, philosophers dedicated to singular schools of thought, "hard" scientists wary of diluting the privileged status of their discipline's reputation...we echo the two-slit experiment, passing through a screen before each class, landing firmly in camps not of waves or particles, but feminist or science studies, instead...one camp or the other -- but never both, because the measurement always determines what is measured. In these moments, we have already decided what end result will be taken stock of, and I find myself wondering what our chances are for this seminar... with such decisions already having been committed to, is there any potential for the hybridization that I initially believed would come of this? What are we doing...and where the hell do I sit in this mess?

Week 5

"It is important to go slowly and carefully. At this juncture, we must be content with some hints of what is to come."

– Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*

Week 5 -- halfway through the quarter, and the syllabus ceases to be the most important guide in my exploration. Truthfully, I am not entirely sure what I am exploring anymore. I am rain (or electrons?) falling, letting the swerve take me where it will. I cannot stop thinking about *Zong!* and the specters hiding within Derrida; I cannot stop seeing those names, floating like so much jettisoned debris, beneath the hull of Philip's text. I think of Derrida's musings and wonder if it is actually true, that we need the body's location for the haunting...Isn't the "not here" a location in and of itself? Does it not create meaning, boundaries, fixity -- especially in the very act of defining the "here?" Are we not defined (and in no small way) by what -- or who -- we are not? What, then, might we owe those who are "not us," yet who help to define us? What is the

ethics of this -- how might we take into account all of the privilege and the peril that is implied in the making of this cut? It would seem that we are back to Bohr, back to the quandary of a physics that dictates that we are unable to measure without becoming part of the measurement, leaving us within the paradoxical limits of choosing to measure for either/or when we know that such a limitation always already sets the parameters of what we will find. We may know that light can be measured as waves or particles, and that measurement has the power to resolve the indeterminacy; however, in the moment that we make the determination, we have made a choice -- created a category or experience at the very exclusion of what we deem it is *not*, what (in our minds) it cannot possibly be...and so I must wonder: Am I not ethically bound to be just as haunted by those students who left the seminar when the cut was made? Did they not shape the path the seminar took every bit as much as the divided factions who stayed? Are we not all -- professor, students who left, students who remained -- accountable for what the seminar ultimately becomes?

I am truly haunted. I do not mind; the company is interesting, and I live alone. For the first time in four decades, I live alone. I have whole routines that center on this newfound state; I am slowly growing used to being not just by -- but with -- myself. It changes time, you know. I have time, now, that I never would have had before. Time spent working, time spent on myself, time spent exploring, as opposed to time spent being a caretaker/mother/maid/secretary/whore/daughter/entertainer/etc...it feels revolutionary, and perhaps even a little dangerous. It feels.

The point is: I live alone. I find myself, as part of my new routine, greeting my landlord's dogs each day as I walk down the driveway we share (my landlord and I -- not the dogs and I -- although, this is not entirely accurate, for I am sure that the dogs feel a vested ownership of the driveway, as well). I call out a jaunty "Hello, puppies!" every day upon my return home, even though one of the three is obviously an older dog. It's as if I have adopted my nephews' logic of small dog = young dog [10]. It occurs to me that I have carried this piece of them with me (from a place and time that feels so very far away in this moment), just as they have adopted mannerisms of mine -- such as a tendency to utter a flamboyant "Ooh, la la!" in moments of saucy surprise (much to their macho, police-sergeant-father's chagrin, I am sure). There are imprints everywhere upon us, and they are indelible, forged from close proximity and repeated exposure; they change who we are, adding echoes of who we were *when* we were *with* the other involved parties...and those echoes bounce who we *were* right back into the present [11]. Time, it would seem, is not merely repeating -- it is happening now and then -- or, is it now *as* then? With then? Food for thought, when (and if) the echoes die down enough for me to concentrate on yet another exploration.

So, about those dogs...well, really, the dogs were just a segue way, because, after saying hello to them every day for months, I changed my routine again. The next thing I added was saying hello to the house -- "Hello, house!" There is a bargain here -- an acknowledgment. It's not home, exactly, but I do love it for what it is, and thus, I greet the entity it has become as I have adjusted to this being alone...But that's wrong. I've been alone plenty...this is *living* alone, which I have *never* done, never been able to afford to do -- not counting that short stint during which I lived in my car, that is...

So, one day, while making a play on the practice of area code "shout outs," I came in and -- instead of my daily, "Hello, house!" -- jovially greeted my one-room converted garage with a, "What up, 831?" Immediately, I knew I was in the wrong. But why? This is trickier -- my house is, physically, well within the limits of the 831. In fact, it is probably smack dab in the center of the 831...and yet, I felt the fraud creeping in. I don't have an 831 (telephone) number -- never have, and probably never will -- unless you count the spotty internet access I can sometimes commandeer from my landlord's wi-fi, depending upon the weather, relative position of the sun, whether or not she's paid the bill this month, etc... I suppose that *might* be 831...but I am a 707 gal, born and raised (and everything in-between that this implies) in various parts of the area code that includes both the exclusive Napa Valley wine country and the much ballyhooded Vallejo gang territories. Regardless of where I've gone, I've kept that 707 cell number; it ties me to a place that is not home, but is not its opposite, either...and I wonder about this (potential?) end of the boundary of area code. What does it mean that my friends down the street have Brooklyn and Chicago prefixes? There is no long distance anymore; area codes are random and - - aside from being continually split due to huge increases in added phones -- are indicators of our continual global shuffle [12]. It is just as easy for me to take the 707 to Vietnam as it is for my friends from Iraq to bring their (country? area?) code here. Does this mean that the "area" of area code now means nothing, or everything? Is it some meaningless placeholder/signifier, or are we taking the space itself with us -- changing the area with each day's travels, whether they be halfway around the world or to the corner market? Is the 707 wherever I am, so long as my phone is in my pocket?

WEEK 6

Come here/
 Pretty please-
 Can you tell me where I am?
 You...you want to say something/
 I need to get my bearings/
 I'm lost-
 and the shadows keep on changing...
 ...and I'm haunted/
 By the lives that I have loved/
 and actions I have hated/
 and I'm haunted/
 By the lies that wove the web/
 Inside my haunted head...
 -Poe, "Haunted"

Zong! continues to haunt me, but it is a generative haunting. I am not afraid. Rather, I feel a pull, a sort of *déjà vu* that I only this week was able to place. *Zong!* reminds me of *House of Leaves* [13]... finally, I can put a name to the strange feeling of recognition that has gripped me in regard to Philip's work. Both works are accounts of hauntings. It is significant, I think, that

both archives *compel* their respective authors to not only render an accounting, but also to *add to* that accounting, thus turning said haunting into a generative, and evolving, exercise. While Philip gives names to the drowned Africans in *Zong!*, the introduction and appendices of *HOL* detail a narrator's journey of compulsion and obsession with bringing/piecing together a found archive in order to make sense of the haunting that appears to surround it. If we consider *HOL* author Danielewski's sister's album *Haunted* as a companion piece to the book, then we are further privy to the unnamed (in *HOL*) archive of their father's voice recordings, discovered posthumously and obviously a driving force behind both children's projects. These projects are, at the very least, intertwined, and perhaps could also be said to be co-constituted; certainly, Poe's album *Haunted* was designed to be a companion piece to *HOL*, but it also stands on its own as a discussion with the specter of her father raised by the latter's voice recordings. It is curious, in considering this, to imagine our own role in this evolution and generation of hauntings -- am I not adding to them in this fledgling attempt at exploration/examination? Surely, I cannot be the first to do so? Would these authors have expected this repetition with interpretation? Could they have realistically envisioned that it would *not* happen? [14] I decide that the only logical thing to do is to retrieve my copy of *House of Leaves* from my old house, and see if I am completely mistaken, or if there is something to this connection. It is a 220-mile drive, round trip, which brings us to

Week 7

Cucullus non facit monachum [15].

Opening *HOL* again, even after all of these years, appears to have been just as dangerous as I initially thought that it would be. I try to comb it in a scholarly context; I outline its relation to the other texts that I am working with, I flag pages that support interconnections, and (in one case, at least) the co-constitutions of those works. I try to put the mammoth tome down, and pick up the French theory that I think will best support my ideas (claims?) of textual relations...I try. I really do...but there is a monstrous siren's call that emanates from between its black covers, as if all 709 pages were calling my name, sweetly singing for me to return, to lose myself within the sea of words and ride the wave upon wave of footnotes and appendices. It haunts me -- over a decade after we last parted, it haunts me still -- and I wonder if any paper, any re-reading, any research will ever exorcize this demon.

Non sum qualis eram [16].

But is this really because of the book? I think that we both know better, although I cannot forget the warning that laced the Berkeley bookseller's glowing recommendation. I cannot forget hearing Poe explain, at a cozy little venue that one could only describe as the best of dive bars [17], how her latest album was based on this *amazing* [18] book her brother had written, and how we had to check it out. I remember that no library that I could find had the book; I remember a growing obsession, in a time before Amazon.com, with this elusive tome. I remember finally having a weekend off, traveling to the independent bookseller in Berkeley (it was a Sunday; I know this because that's the only day that parking was free -- and thus affordable -- for me). I remember it was a magnificent edifice on the corner of Telegraph and Dwight, with an amazing

glass front, and the always-valuable (but also risky) public restroom, in which (the shop -- not the restroom) I finally found someone who had heard of the mysterious text [19].

Looking back (Or should it have been forward? The time, it seems, really *is* out of joint.), I realize now (here?) that the change in his demeanor should have set off warning bells. It may sound paranoid, but I swear he looked at me differently after this request -- as though he were re-assessing his initial opinion of the ginger who walked into the bookshop in black slacks, a satin shirt, and tiny stacked heel ankle boots that the Beatles would have rolled me for in 1963. It's hard to explain (and yet I'm compelled to try), and maybe you'll think that it sounds ridiculous -- or, if you're generous, perhaps you will simply assume that I write now from the far side of multiple veils of time and space, each layer fogging my vision, softening the sharp edges of memory, distorting the matters I vainly attempt to recollect...and maybe you are correct. Maybe all of this foggy spacetime-mattering is part of life, or this story, or of nothing and everything all at once. There is, after all, always a veil [20].

Of course, all of this is beside the point, now. Rather, in retrospect -- no, in present contemplation -- which is to say that, in the thinking back in time that I do now, armed with the knowledge and experiences that came between these two spaces of time -- I can see (now?) that perhaps this was precisely *the* point. Or one major point amongst the many that we encounter (and effect) every day. Whatever. My point -- I think -- is that his [21] look changed, his eyes narrowed, and he seemed to be considering (re-considering?) me in the new light of my request. It was as if I knew the code word for the secret club in his tree house, or the doorman at the club du jour down in the Mission...suddenly, I was not only *other*, but -- perhaps -- better, as well [22]. There was admiration for such an obscure request...it was, apparently, a passkey to an elite of the ordinary.

"That's an amazing [23] book -- a truly great read!" He is ecstatic, having discovered what he assumes to be another member of his secret literary guild. "Be careful, though -- it scared the shit out of me when I first read it." He looks at all 5'5", 120 pounds of me, then continues, "So, maybe you don't read it alone?" It's delivered as half question, half warning/instruction, as if the 709 page behemoth he is taking off of the shelf and dusting off on his flannel shirt is literally too physically big and powerful for such a little woman to handle. As if it will tear me, uselessly kicking and clawing, from this world, hurling me into the darkness that eats its protagonist from the inside out (or was it the reverse? And does it matter?). As if...

Week 8

"It made me real uneasy, like I was surrounded by ghosts. Do you believe in ghosts?"

I told her I didn't know.

She smiled.

– Johnny Truant, *House of Leaves*

"I'm not afraid of being lost; being lost is really the only way I seem to learn my way around."

– J. Y. Neasbitt [24]

I am running out of time. It is the final two weeks, and the only thing I seem to be accomplishing is a trip deeper down the rabbit hole. I don't mind, but I am concerned over what will become of this paper that isn't. Well, it *is*, but it is not anything within the boundary of traditional scholarship...but the exploration is proving to be more valuable than any paper I have written (my thesis -- perhaps -- excluded) thus far, so I am forging on. I am forging ahead, based upon my discovery this week that all three of the texts that I have been studying (*Haunted*, *HOL*, and *Zong!*) contain echoes through time and space. Often, these echoes are the resonance of the haunting at the root of the respective projects; in *HOL* and *Haunted*, the echoes bounce back and forth between artists and projects, which suggests a future exploration in regards to an argument for a case of co-constitution could prove useful.

I am struck by the number of texts -- three. Three is lucky; three is the key to so much of the old religion, the one my father showed me just enough of when I was growing up to ensure that he would have one practitioner among four daughters...but that was eons ago, it would seem. That was before the Church, before he and my mother became American-Catholic instead of Irish-Catholic, before he began regaling us with dogmatic lectures and Old Testament wrath and threats. Before "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" entered our lives. Before I learned to always keep myself locked safely in the tiny closet in my heart (head?)...or maybe it was not a closet, but a hallway, leading to a maze...

Whatever the architecture, I am glad that I was able to find a way to keep somewhat safe. Looking back (or am I looking/projecting forward?), I wish that I had thought to unfurl a ball of string behind me as I went...but I suppose it really doesn't matter. There is no going back -- the only way out is through [25], and I find myself wondering, as I push ahead, if the Church (or my father) understand that they cannot have their God without acknowledging the angels who fell...for, truly, the existence of the one makes little sense outside of its relation to the other...

Week 9

...and, oh, by the way,
 When the landlord came today,
 He measured everything/
 I knew he'd get it wrong/
 But I just played along-
 'cause I was hoping
 I would fix it (uh-oh)/
 but there's only so far I can go/
 When you're living in a hallway that keeps growing...
 -Poe, "5 & ½ Minute Hallway"

One week to go, and my notes are now a jumble of journal entries, outlines, sketches, and coffee-stained pages of painful longhand riddled with the hieroglyphs of cross-outs, arrows, page numbers and parenthetical reminders to consult necessary source materials for clarification. The

exploration has generated more than I can possibly carry back -- I know that now. What to do? Plant the flag of Feminist Science Studies, or J.Y. Neasbitt, or Humanities-based research, and return later with this map of questionable origin and accuracy? Fill my pockets with as much as I can carry and call it a successful quarter? What will I have to show, when I emerge, blinking, into the sunny summer day that marks the end of the seminar? I am fairly certain that I am supposed to return with provenance, something to prove that my journey was real, and fruitful; something that assures the crown that yes, I did, indeed, produce a return on her investment...and thank you, while we're at it, for the lovely ship...although, as it turns out, after a point, the ship is useless. She sits offshore, waiting, while the dirty work of portage is carried out by the rank and file. This, however, is really nothing new, so I shall just lie back and think of academia...

Since we're speaking of intertwined authorship (or we could be, and now are), it occurs to me that this is part of all three works. There are reminders of it given by each author, but it is still easy to lose the thread of who is speaking (or being conjured), throughout each narrative. I feel myself losing my hold on it, and then regaining a grip, only to do it all over again. In *HOL*, the points of (re)cognition that this is an enhanced "telling of a telling" are most often found in footnotes by narrator Johnny Truant, who refers to the tale's initial author (as JT understands him to be) as Zampano. Without these footnotes to (re)mind the reader of the dual authorship, it is easy to become lost in the idea of the more common literary device of a single-author narrative -- which *HOL* is most definitely not. In fact, additional endnotes indicate tertiary input vis-à-vis editorial notes, which add entirely new dimensions -- and questions -- to this already incredibly layered text.

This layering is paralleled in *Haunted*, which -- in a sense -- seems entirely appropriate, given that the album was rumored to be heavily influenced -- perhaps even inspired -- by *HOL*. Interspersed with the lyrics and music penned by the artist herself are the aforementioned recordings of her father, as well as pieces of text from *HOL* transported into breaks in existing songs (sometimes read by the songwriter's brother, *HOL* author Danielewski). In addition to these intertwined layers, there are songs based on/inspired by *HOL*, some of which share titles with chapters of the book or the source materials named within *HOL* itself (most notably "The Navidson Record") [26].

I consider this entanglement, and think of the conjuring and channeling that contributed to all three pieces. All three authors tell a mediated tale; there is channeling here, a channeling and assembly of archives that drove each artist to become a medium between their own time and (creative?) space and that of the archive at the root of their individual (and yet not always individual) projects. It is as if these authors/artists are/were creating at the behest of, or perhaps as the result of, multiple, multilayered hauntings that range in location, both in time and space [27].

Week 10

...but there's more
To this story

Than I'm letting on/
 There are words,
 Made of letters
 Unwritten-
 And yes,
 I forgive you
 for leading me on...

You can think of it like this/
 when you can't resist/
 I'm in your hallway,
 standing on a cliff/
 And just when I think
 I find the trick/
 I'm tumbling,
 like an echo...
 – Poe, "5 & ½ Minute Hallway"

As I come to the end of week ten, I receive another phone call. My six-year-old nephew wants to tell me about swim lessons today. He was the only one brave enough to go in the deep end; his instructor allowed him to stay late after practice, and they went underwater together in the deepest part of the pool and it was "so deep" and "so cool," and I am missing it. Except that I am not. Because I see now that the 707 is right here, is now, is me, and I was always 707 and he was always 209 anyway. There was always distance and the lag in time. He is always calling in the present to relate the wonders of the past, and the (non-existent?) boundary of area code is not what keeps me from being present in the deep end of the pool, or in the park afterward, where he will trip and fall, embedding a long, nasty sliver of wood in his leg that he will immediately remove, opening the wound-track and releasing the small, awaiting trickle of blood that will gain in both momentum and volume as it creeps, then flows, "all the way down to my foot." Area code is not what will remove me from the moment when he cries, which I will only know in the future, when he calls to tell me about his amazing day and ends up relating how bad it hurt, how he cried, and I tell him that it's okay to cry when you're hurt, that it doesn't change that he was brave enough to get back up and pull out the splinter that opened the wound. Area code is not holding anything in; time and space and distance and love and pain and hope and the deep end stretch out before and behind me, just waiting to be explored...I have to go. It's all calling. I'm sure you understand. If not, don't worry -- perhaps it is because I didn't do my job here. Perhaps I will find a better way during this new, beckoning expedition... ...or perhaps it can be understood with a little help from the past...from

Week 8: The Politics of Touch

* Erin Manning, *Politics of Touch*, Introduction, Ch.1-4

Optional:

* Erin Manning, remainder of *Politics of Touch*

Perhaps if we, per Manning, consider "home[land]" not "as a place one could return to, unscathed, with the 'home' always nostalgically unaltered" (Manning 2006, 30), but instead embrace, in this moment, area code and swimming pool stories and voices over hundreds of miles of cable and wires as the "constant reminder that 'home' cannot be reached in any definitive sense" then we can begin to see our role in its creation (Manning 2006, 30). We can consider how, "our bodies move, and in so doing, we create temporary places we can call home, but there can be no ultimate return that does not do violence to the multiplicities created in and through our bodies-in-motion" (Manning 2006, 30)...and maybe -- just maybe -- it is this violence that is at the heart of this haunting...a co-constituted violence, a violence that comes of taking measure, of imposing and enforcing boundaries...It is something to consider, is it not, the implication of our own movements in the creation of space and time?

Right now, however, there are hauntings to be attended to, and today's hauntings are not ones during which you can accompany me. Today's hauntings require a bridge toll and a towel, and perhaps a band-aid, just in case. Today we forget area codes and cross zip codes, instead. Today, I will attempt to jettison the specters of space and time, and instead chase the *matter* of home, of co-constitution, of skinned knees and splinters and cool, crystalline pools too deep to touch the bottom of. Ooh, la la.

Week 65 (The Epilogue that Perhaps Should Have Been a Prologue)

Strange to be reading this after over a year has passed, but today I find myself considering the possibilities of Bohr's indeterminacy principle. I sense that it is relevant, especially in light of how the seminar played out, and I grasp at it with some uncertainty (not Heisenberg's uncertainty -- this uncertainty is all my own)...but I am starting to see the possibilities of an ontology wherein objects cannot be determined simultaneously because there are no determinate [28] objects prior to/outside of measurement practices. If determinately bounded and propertied objects do not pre-exist their measurement, then might we not need to re-consider our assessment of this seminar, our expectations of it, even our role in creating the very determinate boundaries that we were all reacting to? It would seem that we were exponentially increasing our complicity in the very divide we so bitterly decried, by continuing to react thusly...and yet, once things had been set in motion, I wonder if I -- as one human on the "soft" science side of the seminar table -- could possibly have commanded enough of an understanding of this theory at the time to suggest such a radical idea without further fracturing the seminar's already tenuous state? Even a year later, I still find myself haunted by the prospect of missed opportunities...

However, if Bohr is correct, and what is being measured is not the property of some independently existing object -- but is rather the "object" as it is determined in its intra-action with the apparatus, then perhaps a reconfiguration was (is?) necessary if I wanted to realize anywhere near my initial expectations for this course. I see, now, the demands for justice for those who haunted me, the specters both within and outside of the course: those who left, those who stayed, even the ghosts that reached up from below the waves of Philip's watery poems, pushing into this world from the depths of the one they were heretofore disappeared in...I know that this justice cannot be obtained by a mere re-telling, re-cognition, or any retribution...No,

more is necessary, and the Bohrian and Baradian more is rife with accounting, with taking stock, with understanding that the apparatus cannot be subtracted out of the measuring, but is instead inseparable from the phenomenon being measured -- and the apparatus, in this formulation, includes yours truly.

And so, perhaps it is always back to Bohr, in this tale...back to the ethical and ontological possibilities of quantum physics; back to the two-slit experiment designed to resolve -- even in its failure to do so -- the question of wave/particle duality. Back to the realization that we, like the experiment's light, are both, always -- but never at the same time...at least not in any measurable way...because to measure is to always already have made defining cuts, decisions of a sort that predetermine the outcome of our measurement by telling us what it is, exactly, that we plan to be measuring. This is the maddening beauty of our complicity, and it is in acknowledging that complicity that we move toward accountability, toward justice, and toward acknowledging the rich possibilities of co-constituting something wholly different.

So, in the end, perhaps the question that needed to be asked was not "What happened?", or "What went wrong?", but rather "What was I measuring when I evaluated this experience, and how was that measurement being made/what were the tools of that measurement?" Doing justice to this seminar -- and all involved parties -- requires a different sort of evaluation, one that was only possible with tools that I did not possess until after the completion of the seminar, after the exploration, and after a good deal more contemplation than the academic quarter's ten-week cycle initially allowed for. I think of Philip's words, "the complete story does not exist. It never did (196)." They seem an adequate epilogue to this exploration, the caution that perhaps should have preceded it, but could only truly be realized at its conclusion. What remains are impressions, feelings, an explanation that -- by the very act of taking stock of (measuring) -- determined the object being measured. I am not separate from the seminar, free from blame, an impartial observer to those ten weeks. I am a shaper of them, and I am one of many. This exploration was never about dutifully recording my findings in the hope of discovering -- and providing -- answers; I see now that it simply could not have been...for there were many theories and many authors, and we were all offering only the most mediated of glimpses into how the story came to unfold. In the hope of doing justice, we would do well to explore the role of each of these -- and each of us -- in the creation of the overall tale.

Notes

[1] I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Karen Barad, without whom this experiment would never have come to be: thank you for introducing me to the promise and perils of superposition and quantum physics, which I am still convinced contain the potential to heal us, even in the darkest of hours. I would also like to thank the readers of this essay for their patience and comments, which helped guide me throughout long months of edits and re-workings. Last (but surely never least), I simply must thank my nephews, the wild boys, for opening my eyes to the quantum in the quotidian -- the promise is real, it is beautiful, and it awaits us all.

[2] Consider, for instance, Barad on intra-action (especially 139-40 and 176-8) as one example of what this might "look like, " for want of a better term.

[3] To whom, and to what end, are questions that go far beyond this modest exploration. Perhaps we are dealing with ammunition for a future Gedankenexperiment in such a consideration (Barad 2007, 100).

[4] In an attempt to remain true to the text I am quoting, I have not edited this passage; it appears here -- mistakes, personal notes, cross-outs, etc. -- just as it was written in the book.

[5] "Hence the "outside" boundary, like the "inside" boundary, is not determinate in the absence of its involvement in a larger phenomenon. In other words, *there are no intrinsic boundaries*, and even what is "inside" and what is "outside" are intrinsically indeterminate" (Barad 2013, 161).

[6] For more on apparatuses, see Barad in "Meeting the Universe Halfway," especially p.145-6.

[7] I am foundering again: inside or outside? Screw or bone? Body or object? It is the brittlestar "arm," the idea of not "situated in," but "part of" (Barad 2007, 375-6).

[8] In editing this, I find myself wondering whose boundaries these are. Are these a Western academic phenomenon, or are they merely the accepted mode of scholarship in the majority of spaces and times that I am familiar with? This bears more examination, but will have to wait for another exploration. Maybe by the time we reach exploration D...

[9] Especially as concerns conjuration, as well as its use to ensure that the dead are, indeed, dead (Derrida 1994, 50-60); Philip would conjure, it seems, to give not only life -- but tangible form (the bones) -- to the dead so carelessly disposed of by history and the ugly realities of the North Atlantic slave trade of which she writes (Philip 2008, 200-1).

[10] The nephews of whom I speak are four and six years old, should the reader care to know. While I was writing this, the six year old called to tell me that: A) He lost his first tooth during dinner and, B) He bowled two spares at his girlfriend's birthday party. (I had to ask which girlfriend, for he generally vacillates between two that I know of; so I asked, "Is this Sydney or Brynne?," to which he replied in lilting singsong, "B-R-Y-N-N-E!". Did I mention that he is enthralled with his newfound ability to read and spell?)

[11] Although I am sure that these echoes don't return identical to how they were initially sent out, or heard...still, they are no doubt recognizable. Perhaps they suggest the outline, but lack the detailed shading, of the original?

[12] I am speaking here in terms of telephone practices.

[13] Hereafter referred to in this text as *HOL*.

[14] The introduction to *HOL* suggests that the author is very aware of how texts are picked up, reworked, reimagined, redistributed, and utilized (Danielewski 2000, 6).

[15] "The cowl does not make the monk."

[16] "I am not what I once was."

[17] I remember attending this show with two of my best friends at the time, neither of whom have I spoken to in years...but that's truly another story, from another life, now a world away...

[18] A key word that is woven throughout the album and artwork; Track 16 is "Amazed."

[19] The reader is free to look for this bookseller at their discretion, but full disclosure demands of me that I inform you that it closed years ago. Books are sold over airwaves and satellite comlinks now; if you go to the amazing glass building these days, you will find only a cathedral of moderately priced t-shirts and knock-off sunglasses.

[20] Perhaps the veil is a buffer; without it, we are left staring into the abyss...and the abyss, as we know, always looks back into us. Just ask Johnny Truant (*HOL*)...

[21] The bookseller's look -- remember him? Or did I lose you? It's okay -- I'm lost, too, sometimes...oftentimes...perhaps now (and then)...

[22] Did I just become a two-slit experiment? (See Barad 2007, 80-3)

[23] There's that word again -- see note 17.

[24] This is, arguably, a quote that has been the death knell for more than one of the author's relationships...

[25] Does this mean we should be throwing the string out in front of ourselves?

[26] *HOL* shares with *Haunted* not only its title, but also "Exploration B," "5 & ½ Minute Hallway," "Amazing," and "Dear Johnny," to name but a few examples.

[27] What follows, in my original notes, are pages of lists attempting to map these hauntings. Generative for future work, perhaps, but time is running out...this is, after all, **WEEK 9**. Perhaps, one day, there will be time for a second edition...with appendices...

[28] Objects with determinate boundaries and properties.

Works cited

Barad, Karen. 2007. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Barad, Karen. 2013. "FMST 214 Syllabus." *UCSC eCommons*. Accessed 13 June.

Danielewski, Mark Z. 2000. *House of Leaves*. 2nd ed. New York: Pantheon Books.

Derrida, Jacques. 1994. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*. New York: Routledge, xvi-60.

Dictionary.com. 2013. "Conjure." Accessed 14 June.
<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/conjure?s=t>

-----2013. "Exploration." Accessed 13 June. <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/exploration?s=t>

-----2013. "Haunted." Accessed 13 June. <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/haunted?s=t>

-----2013. "Specter." Accessed 13 June. <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/specter?s=t>

Haunted. 2000. Fishkin Entertainment/Atlantic Recording, CD.

Manning, Erin. 2007. *Politics of Touch: Sense, Movement, Sovereignty*. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press.

Philip, M. NourbeSe. 2008. *Zong!* Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.