

# phil 2237 feminist philosophy

## Feminist Making, Doing, & Sensing

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fall 2023 (3 credits)  
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### catalogue description

Issues in feminist philosophy and methodology. Topics may include feminist theories of knowledge and science, ethics, metaphysics, political theory and feminist methodology.

### course overview

Our course is framed by this theme: Feminist Making, Doing, and Sensing.

This theme takes inspiration from the upcoming conference, *Feminist Making, Doing, and Sensing*, that will be held at our school in mid-March this year. An ambition of our course is to orient and introduce you fully to the ideas that will be shared at this event, especially by the two keynote speakers, Qrescent Mali Mason and Natalie Loveless. If you'd like to attend the conference in March, you'll be fully prepared to engage with the activities and presentations at the event.

In addition, this theme reflects contemporary research in feminist philosophy, especially at the intersections with critical disability studies and philosophy of disability, trans studies, Black and Indigenous studies, feminist science studies, and related fields like affect studies, poetics, critical university studies, and sound studies.

This theme also points us towards questions that we will exploring and experimenting with, such as:

how do tangible and concrete activities like “making,” “doing,” and “sensing,” undertaken as feminist practices, open up ideas, create relations, produce lines of inquiry, enact political commitments, express and hail attachments, and work towards social justice.

One of our key theorists this semester, Natalie Loveless, calls this *research-creation*, a term that has become part of Canada's institutional language for knowledge projects that make use of arts-based methods. Loveless explains that “the crafting of a research question is the crafting of a story that is also the crafting of an ethics” (*How to Make Art* 2019, 95).

Given this theme, our course will integrate philosophical inquiry with arts-based, collaborative, experimental practices of “making.” We’ll seek and engage modes of resistance, creativity, and solidarity in the work of feminist thinkers, as well as in our own creative practices—as we consider many ways in which feminist “making,” “doing,” and “sensing” come up against late-capitalist systems of oppression, alienation, injustice, and predation. And while such critical considerations are essential for feminist philosophy, the collaborative and open-ended discoveries that “making” elicits are also going to be of real importance to us in this course.

## Our Places & Spaces of Learning

Our institution is located on the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy, which includes the Siksika (Blackfoot), the Piikani (Peigan), the Kanai (Blood), Tsuut’ina (Sarcee), and Stoney-Nakoda First Nations, including the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations, as well as the home of the Métis Nation (Region 3). We live, study and learn in Treaty 7 territory, a treaty signed in 1877 at Blackfoot Crossing.

Ada, this course’s instructor, grew up in Haldimand County in southwestern Ontario, on the ancestral land of many Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee Six Nations of the Grand River and the Anishinaabe Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation; her family continues to live a few kilometers away from the tract, “1492 Land Back Lane,” that Six Nations Land Defenders are seeking to repossess from developers.

Education is an essential aspect of the calls to action in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Our course will therefore include Indigenous artists and authors, as well as broader conversations about the complex and relational dynamics of institutions, higher education, and pedagogy itself.

## course texts

Our course will be anchored in three books in particular:

Christina Sharpe’s *Ordinary Notes* (Knopf Canada 2023), Natalie Loveless’s *How to Make Art at the End of the World: A Manifesto for Research-Creation* (Duke, 2019), and Maggie Nelson’s *The Argonauts* (Graywolf, 2015).

Since we are reading sections of the first two books, these sections will be available on D2L, along with additional assigned essays and articles.

We’ll be reading *The Argonauts* in its entirety, which means it’s not possible for me to upload it onto D2L; that said, there are many used copies available, and you might also enjoy listening to Maggie narrate the book in the audio version. (Likewise, you might enjoy listening to Christina narrate *Ordinary Notes*).

## course policies

### Accessibility

This course is committed to the principles of universal design in learning, which include flexibility, equitability, simplicity and transparency, tolerance for error, and productive feedback loops. You're invited to comment at any time during the semester (in person or by email) about the ways in which the space, assignments, curriculum and other key elements of the course are contributing to or impeding inclusion and accessibility. In addition, in order to access institutionalized forms of academic accommodation, you can contact the office of Access and Inclusion at 403-440-6868 to discuss academic accommodations for disability; you can also contact Diversity & Human Rights Services at 403-440-5956 if you require academic accommodations for other reasons.

### Flexibility

One of the principles of universal design is flexibility, and the assignments are all designed with flexibility in mind. You're welcome, at any time, to make an appointment to meet with Ada to talk through the course, the assignments, the classroom design and dynamics, and how we might create more flexibility if any barriers or difficulties seem to be emerging.

## course assignments & assessment

### Ordinary Notes (inspired by Christina Sharpe): 20%

(we'll each be writing 13-15 notes, with the plan of choosing 10 to submit at the end of the semester. We'll discuss as a class whether we'd like to have the option of sharing our notes, in draft or revised form with each other. Our assignment will emerge in part through our discussions and study of Christina Sharpe's *Ordinary Notes*)

### Making & Doing project (inspired by Natalie Loveless):

Encounters with the Maker Studio (in week 6): 10%

(option: Encounter with the Audio Studio)

Making: exploring new methods & practices: 15%

Making: a final project (inspired by Maggie Nelson): 25%

(as a course in *Feminist Making, Doing, and Sensing*, it's important that we each get to explore and enjoy a range of creative practices. First, we'll have a low-stakes and simple activity in the Maker Studio; second, we'll explore at least two methods/practices of making—with an exception for students who already have a committed art practice and

would like to develop this practice in our course; third, our course will culminate in a final “Making” project, in direct response to our readings and in-class lessons).

**Facilitations:** 15% each (30% all together)

(everyone will be invited to help shape our conversations in class by “facilitating” a portion of the class, either in groups or solo; if you’d rather choose an additional text or resource beyond our assigned readings, then we can absolutely explore this together. This is one way to expand the reach of our curriculum to include your own interests and commitments).

# Feminist Making, Doing, and Sensing

Mondays, 2:30-5:10 EA 1051

## Schedule for Fall 2023

Our three main texts are: Christina Sharpe's *Ordinary Notes* (sections available on D2L), Natalie Loveless's *How to Make Art at the End of the World* (sections available on D2L), and Maggie Nelson's *The Argonauts* (which we'll read or listen to, in its entirety).

All other readings will be available on D2L.

As you'll see, one week is "tba," and a few others are open for some revising, based entirely on our in-class conversations, dynamics, and interests.

If you'd like to read ahead, you can dive into *The Argonauts* at any time.

### Week 1 Sept 11

Introducing the class and each other

### Week 2 Sept 18 Hands: Thinking with our Bodies

*Readings & Audio:*

- Kristie Dotson, "Concrete Flowers: Contemplating the Profession of Philosophy" (additional readings curated by Qrescent Mali Mason):
- *Drawing Thought* by Andrea Kantrowitz: pages 44-45
- tiny excerpts from Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible* and Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*
- "Distant Touch," *For All I Care* audio project, Nwando Ebizie (full transcript available on D2L, in addition to the link to the audio essay)

### Week 3 Sept 25 Photography:

**"With Beauty, Something is Always at Stake" (Sharpe, 201).**

*Readings:*

- Christina Sharpe, *Ordinary Notes*, "Lucida" (pp 165-232)
- Online assignment:

### Week 4 Oct 2 Beauty is a Method

*Readings:*

- Christina Sharpe continued: "Notes 241-246" and "Note 247" and pages 341-359
- Fern Ramoutar, "The Forecast"

In class, during the lesson: go over the "Notes" assignment that will be handed out, and also prepare for the "Encounter with the Maker Studio" that's happening in two weeks

## **Week 5 Oct 9**

No class: Reading Week

## **Week 6 Oct 16 Encounter with the Maker Studio**

Encounter with the Maker's Studio

## **Week 7 Oct 23 Creativity**

Due: first draft of "Ordinary Notes"

*Readings:*

- Lynda Barry, excerpts from *Syllabus*
- Natalie Loveless, "Haraway's Dog" (19-27) and "Discipline(s)" (37-51), *How to Make Art at the End of the World* (Duke UP, 2019).

## **Week 8 Oct 30 Feminist Indigenous Ontologies**

*Readings:*

- Dolleen Tisawii'ashii Manning, "The Murmuration of Birds: An Anishinaabe Ontology of Mniidoo-Worlding"
- Leanne Batasamosake Simpson, "Nishnaabeg Brilliance as Radical Resurgence Theory," from *As We Have Always Done* (2017, 1-25)

## **Week 9 Nov 6 Passion & Pluralism (and Feminist Science Studies)**

*Readings:*

Choose between:

- Ada Jaarsma, "Isabelle Stengers and Passionate Thinking"
- Isabelle Stengers and Didier Debaise, "An Ecology of Trust? Consenting to a Pluralist Universe" (2022)

And watch the three videos from Ada's collaborative research project: ["Cartesianism"](#)

*Optional:*

Eva-Marie Stern, "Art is Patient: A Museum-Based Experience to Teach Trauma-Sensitive Engagement in Health Care"

## **Week 10 Nov 13**

No class: Remembrance Day

## **Week 11 Nov 20 Crip & Trans Thinking/Making/Sensing**

*Readings:*

- “Afterward,” *Crip Genealogies*, by Mel Y. Chen, Julie Avil Minich, Eunjung Kim, and Alison Kafer)
- Talia Mae Bettcher, “How I Became a Trans Philosopher”  
*optional:* Talia Mae Bettcher, “What is Trans Philosophy?”

## **Week 12 Nov 27 Feminist Eating**

*Readings:*

- “Knowing,” by Annemarie Mol, in her *Eating in Theory* book

*Viewing:*

- three episodes of *The Bear* (FX) season 2: episodes 3 (“Sundae”), 4 (“Honeydew”), & 7 (“Forks”)

Due: Making assignment

## **Week 13 Dec 4 Falling in Love/ Art-Making**

*Readings:*

- Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts*

## **Week 14 Dec 11**

Our last in-person class

# Two Facilitations Assignment

Everyone will do two facilitations, during our semester (each worth 15% of the final grade). Why and how?

## Why?

One way that we'll be engaging with ideas and experiences is through interactive lessons that take place within our classroom. We'll want to make sure that these encounters work on many levels, in terms of our varying learning styles and our interests, and so these facilitations will expand the reach of our curriculum, as well as of the *ways* in which we are learning.

Another reason has to do with the joy (which can involve challenges, puzzles, learning-curves, and brand-new insights) of *prepping* a facilitation. It's hard to overstate how deeply we can learn something, precisely by preparing to teach it to someone else. It brings the depth of first-person attention and concentration together with the sociality of sharing, communicating, and "teaching."

## How?

There are two main options for *how* you might choose to do these two facilitations. Choose whichever of these speaks the most to you; you can do both, following option 1, or both, following option two, or one of each.

- 1) choosing something that's already been assigned for our course, focusing on a theme you find exciting and a passage you find enticing/worthwhile:
  - **as a facilitation of assigned readings**, during class time, working in small groups (this means that the prep for the facilitation will be an important and meaningful part of the activity; it also means that you'll be communicating with me about which part of the assigned readings you'd like to take responsibility for, as well as how much time you'd like for this, in class)
  - **as an asynchronous facilitation**, working solo or in small groups (this means that the facilitation of assigned readings will happen as an online experience, through slides or a video or any other medium that works well for you)

For this option: choose a specific passage, from the week that you've signed up for, and do some reflecting on why *this* passage speaks to you. How would you like to share this "speaking" with our class?

Would you like to stage a close reading? This would involve doing something similar to how Ada tends to lead our lessons, anchoring our conversations in quotations that we return to, perhaps several times, as a way to experience a line of thinking.

Would you like to unpack the passage by putting it into conversation with something else? This would involve setting up a back-and-forth, a dialogue that you could enact as a group or draw our class into, through an exchange.

Would you like to lead an exercise? This would involve thinking about how your chosen passage might lend itself to an activity that we do (in class or asynchronously), perhaps something creative or something embodied.



Would you like to raise a question or set of questions? This would be a wonderfully philosophical way to facilitate, given that philosophy first and foremost is an art of question-raising.

**To do:** look over the themes of the upcoming lessons, and choose which lesson you'd like to be facilitating part of. It's likely that groups will emerge, simply by doing this sign-up activity.

- 2) choosing something new, that is beyond what's currently assigned for our readings, focusing on a medium or a theme that you found exciting and meaningful to share with our class:
  - **as a kind of independent fieldtrip**, taking place solo or in small groups  
(this means that an immersive experience will be the main focus of the facilitation, and you'll decide how to "bring" this fieldtrip back to our class, likely as a little report that you share in person or share as an asynchronous report on our D2L site. I'll be posting suggestions on D2L for these fieldtrips, and I welcome additional suggestions. We especially would like sensorial experiences, from going to an art exhibit to attending a concert or a poetry reading).
  - **as a facilitation of a new text** (film, tv episode, article, song, meme), taking place solo either in-class or asynchronously  
(this is especially for those of you who have a lovely background in gender/feminist studies, who are ready for the double-task of choosing a text and then deciding how to facilitate it with our class).

For this option: you will present the experience to the class, either as a report back on your fieldtrip experience or as a facilitated-encounter like the ones listed below (raising a question, for example, or staging a close reading).

**To do:** reflect on art-adventures you might already be planning on doing this semester, and see if one of these might work for a facilitation. Check in with Ada about your ideas and timelines. Likewise, see if something (a site, a video, a track, an essay) is already something that you're compelled by, related to our themes of Feminist Making, Doing, and Sensing, and check in with Ada about your idea and timeline.

# Hands

## Thinking with our Bodies

**key image:** the two halves of an orange

Readings:

- Kristie Dotson, "Concrete Flowers"
- Andrea Kantrowitz, *Drawing Thought* (pp44-45)
- Maurice Merleau-Ponty, excerpt, *The Visible and the Invisible*
- Jean-Paul Sartre, excerpt, *Being and Nothingness*

Audio (optional):

- "Distant Touch," *For All I Care* podcast by Nwando Ebizie)

**keywords:**

gesture; touch; phenomenology

“... an invitation to the Body of Philosophy: what does it mean to think with our hands? How do hands think (with us, for us, as us)? What is the importance of gesture to thought? What is the importance of gesture **to Black feminist phenomenology?**”

—Qrescent Mali Mason

Today's plan:

- a tiny check-in about our first class and our syllabus/schedule
- read our key image, keywords, & epigraph aloud, orienting our collective focus for the lesson
- two exercises, 1<sup>st</sup>, bringing ourselves into the space & the central questions of the lesson  
(you might already be “doing” phenomenology!)  
2<sup>nd</sup>, taken from *Drawing Thought*, experiencing and pay attention to hands and gestures  
(we might come into direct contact with why Qrescent and others are so committed to putting *gesture* right at the centre of thinking)
- Black feminist phenomenology: why does touch matter, literally (and epistemologically) for feminist practices? And why do senses matter? **Can we tune into the feedback loops of the “two orange halves”?**

## 1. Thinking with Gesture

First, an exercise to bring us into our space and time together:

Our key image comes from the final phrase of Merleau-Ponty, in which the act of touching intersects with the tangible world itself, so fully, that it is like “the two halves of an orange.”

With a pen and paper (or fingers and screen), start freewriting about how your own body begins to move, when you are doing whatever most seems to count as “thinking” in your chosen major.

You might focus in on specific bodymind-movements (observing; listening; striding; pointing; building; underlining; drawing or sketching; measuring; compiling; clicking and tapping), and you might also focus in concrete objects that are part of this scenario (keyboards; tables; pens and paper; computers; lab equipment; screens; books; and so on).

Second, an exercise from Qrescent Mali Mason:

What did you discover, from this freewriting, that you can describe to someone sitting beside you? Choose a movement or an object that emerged in focus as you were writing. Take turns describing what you discovered to each other **with your hands tucked under your legs** or otherwise restricted. (Do you notice anything about the restriction of your hand movement and your ability to convey the concept to your partner? Is there anything interesting about what you notice? Write down some notes that can be shared and referred back to).

All together: how do our bodyminds already know, as the citation pasted here below states, that “gesture helps us think”? How have your majors begun to form you as an embodied thinker? (How are our bodies learning to “think” in gestural ways?) How did it feel to speak with hands restricted? Does this bring out a “sense” of gestural thinking for you, in your own first-person understanding?

**“Gesture helps us think....** We may change the way we think just by moving our hands.... Hands sometimes know what words may not yet be able to articulate.”

–Andrea Kantrowitz, *Drawing Thought*, 44.

Our key image of “two halves of an orange” prompts us to consider how movements of thinking affect the tangible world itself, and how the world, in turn, affects our movements. Did anyone discover an example of thinking in which a claim like this one (pasted below) seems to be at play? How might the banishing of gesture shape our world (and then shape our movements, in turn)?

**“Hands cannot contemplate,** and the creation of works for disinterested, hands-off contemplation has traditionally been a central concern of all Modern art production.”

–John Bentley Mays (1986), cited by Julia Halperin, *New York Times* (Sept 11, 2023)

## **2. Touch & Black Feminist Phenomenology (and Philosophy, writ-large)**

*famous phenomenologists:* Edmund Husserl, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Simone de Beauvoir

### **Phenomenology:**

- first-person (as in the humanities & in art, as distinct from social sciences)
- attending to the *interplay* between **sensation** (the world of lived experience) and **perception** (coming to recognize what we are sensing; gaining vocabulary, methods, practices, and explanations to interpret our lived experiences).

A landscape is sensory, and a map is perceptual/conceptual.

A **landscape** is perspectival: its horizon moves, as our body moves,  
whereas a **map** is an abstract system of coordinates, that might have no specified  
perspective at all.

This distinction sounds a lot tidier than it is! Let's reread Merleau-Ponty's excerpt and notice interplays between them.

"How does it happen that **I give to my hands**, in particular, that *degree*, that *rate*, and that *direction of movement* that are capable of making me feel the textures of the sleek and the rough?

"Between the exploration and what it will teach me, between my movements and what I touch, there must exist some relationship by principle, some kinship, according to which they are not only, like the pseudopods of the amoeba, vague and ephemeral deformations of the corporeal space, but **the initiation to and the opening upon a tactile world**.

"This can happen only if my hand, while it is felt from within, is also accessible from without, **itself tangible**, for *my other hand*, for example, if it takes its place among the things it touches, *is in a sense one of them*, opens finally upon a tangible being of which it is also a part.

"Through **this crisscrossing within it of the touching and the tangible**, its own movements incorporate themselves into the universe they interrogate, are recorded on the same map as it; the two systems are applied upon one another, as the two halves of an orange."

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. (Northwestern University Press, 1968, p. 134)

our questions:

Why does touch **matter**? (literally)

How are the "two halves of an orange" intersecting, in the worlds of philosophy? How is it that the very movement of touch (one half of an orange) gets recorded onto the same map as the universe that's being interrogated?

And how can we place our hope in new and other movements?

How are "touch" (and gesture) feminist resources for "doing" philosophy?

How hopeful are we that the landscape and the maps can change?

Is Kristie Dotson's article pointing us towards hope?

If "concrete flowers" were to flourish, "they would produce a different landscape" (Kristie Dotson, 408).

How can we connect what Dotson is meaning by "flourish" in this passage with touch?

Our recommended podcast episode is exploring "how to care more creatively", looking to art, art practices, and arts-based methods. Nwando Ebizie explains, "We all know that **we need touch to care**. We feel the lack of it right now, more than ever. And as social animals, especially, we need it." She suggests, "**Make time to be with your senses**," from the warmth of a bath to the sounds of ASMR (which may or may not be the right sensorial practice for us!).

Claire, an artist who is interviewed in the podcast episode, explains that “once you know that every object in your space can be used to create a soft sound, that can trigger ASMR, your imagination for the world shifts a bit,” and therefore the world itself shifts, as well.

“Touch never exists on its own. It always exists in a sensory system.”  
–“Distant Touch,” *For All I Care* podcast

Can we look to choreography and other crafted ways of shaping movement as feminist resources? And how attuned should we be to already-existing choreographies?

From the episode:

“One thing I’m quite interested in is this issue of talking about touch that gets relegated to the sexual or the erotic. And I think that leads to **a dearth of language related to articulating how something feels, why touch can be positive for us**. I think one of the successes of ASMR was that it managed to slightly change the language around touch....

**“I think that touch can be equally as pleasurable as it can be problematic.** And I think when working with touch, uh, this is always something very important to keep in mind and navigate around. Yes, I strongly agree with you on that, Vera. I mean, we have to really keep that in mind whenever we think about touch.”

From *Queer Phenomenology*, by Sara Ahmed:

“If we start with Husserl’s first volume of *Ideas*, for instance, then we start with the writing table. The table appears, we could say, because **the table is the object nearest the body of the philosopher**. That the writing table appears, and not another kind of table, might reveal something about the ‘orientation’ of phenomenology, or even of philosophy itself.

“After all, it is not surprising that philosophy is full of tables. Tables are, after all, ‘what’ philosophy is written upon: they are in front of the philosopher, we imagine, as a horizontal surface, ‘intended’ for writing.... [W]e might also point to how such writing turns its back on the table. So even when tables appear, they only seem to do so as background features of a landscape, which is full of many other half-glimpsed objects” (3-4, Duke UP, 2006).

From Kristie Dotson’s “Concrete Flowers”:

"Diverse people may or may not come from diverse backgrounds, but they almost always disrupt **the monochromatic profile of the discipline of philosophy** by the questions they ask, the methods they deploy, and the goals of their research" (403).

When Black philosophers finally leave the discipline, Kristie writes, there is a sigh of relief, which "often resembles a kind of grasping for breath that marks the end of tyranny and the beginning of freedom. More often than not, the final realization that serves as an impetus to quit is not, 'I have failed at philosophy,' but rather, 'philosophy has failed me.'" (403).

"Philosophy simply cannot survive as a discipline **without the continuous creation of new ideas**" (408).

Jean-Paul Sartre's passage, in the café, where a man *sees the woman as object*, takes her hand, she decides to leave her hand in his, with Sartre accusing her of "bad faith."

Readings:

- Christina Sharpe, "Lucida," pp 165-232, *Ordinary Notes*

# Photography & the stakes of beauty

“... with beauty, something is always at stake.”  
—Christina Sharpe, *Ordinary Notes* (201)

For this online, asynchronous activity, here are the tasks:

- first, to make sure that you've read our assigned passages from Christina Sharpe's *Ordinary Notes*
  - second, to then read through this handout, paying attention to your own thoughts in relation to the four prompts
  - and third, to choose **two prompts** that you feel like you'd like to delve into more deeply by choosing one or two passages from the reading that you'd like to reflect more on
- You can bring these passages along with you to class, next week, or have them highlighted or bookmarked so that you'll be able to share them with classmates in class.

## Prompts to reflect on

Here's a set of prompts for you to read over. After you've read them carefully, **choose two** that you'd like to spend some time reflecting on. Find one or two passages that correspond with the prompts so that you can discuss them in class next week.

### Prompt 1: A Beautiful Life

It's always interesting to notice when a writer includes an "epigraph" at the beginning of an essay. An epigraph is a special quotation, set off on its own as a way to signal its importance.

At beginning of "Lucida," for example, Christina Sharpe includes an epigraph which is written by Saidiya Hartman, one of the most influential literary critics in the US and a leading thinker of "the after-life of slavery." This epigraph signals one of the key themes of our assigned passages: **a beautiful life**. *Isn't it amazing—almost unthinkable—Saidiya seems to be saying, that in a context of enormous structural violence, it might still be possible to imagine a beautiful life—and to create one.*

This reflection then runs through virtually every one of the "notes" that are assigned for this week: how incredible it is to be able to imagine a beautiful life and also to actually create one.

One of the most generous parts of *Ordinary Notes*, a book that we might read as exemplary in its generosity, is how Christina shares with us many, many examples of artists who imagining and also creating a beautiful life.

In Note 121 for example, she introduces us to a book made up of photographs and prose, published in 1955, that depicts various people who are living in Harlem, in which "the Black life

is the beautiful life.” And in Notes 113 to 118, Christina introduces us to her own mother, through biographical details as well as a photograph that she includes and reflects on, slowly and with great care, and through many additional details, like her mother’s ability to nurture plants and the rituals that she’d create for her children in their home.

As a few more examples, in Note 125, she refers to several Black artists whose work she treasures and learns from, and in Note 138, yet another artist, Glenn Ligon. At the end of that note, Christina writes:

“With beauty, something is always at stake” (201).

Beauty is about presence, and also absence, in this book. One of the motifs of our assigned passage is Christina’s attentiveness to the beauty of her mother’s hands—as they are depicted in photographs, as they moved while she was speaking, and as they left this world when her mother passed away. “We were too late,” Christina confides to us, “to photograph the beautiful aliveness of my mother’s hands” (207).

For this prompt, choose one or two passages that, when you were reading the Notes, seemed to bring this point to life for you: with beauty, something is always at stake.

And you might choose to follow up on one of Christina’s references by looking up a book or an artist or an artwork, as yet another way to engage with this insight.

## **Prompt 2: Reading & the Reading Life**

In the assigned passage, Christina refers to “the reading life, the beauty-filled one” (217). Later in the book, she explains that the activity of reading is so important, as a kind of *making and doing* in its own right, that it can change us into different kinds of beings. She declares:

“We have to function **as a living library**: as an institution” (268).

Imagine what it might feel like, to be so transformed by the regular activity of reading books that you become a kind of “living library.”

We can see these traces of Christina’s own reading life in the Notes that we read for this week. She often refers to the books that she’s read, including interpretations and direct quotations that give us a kind of portrait of her reading activities. (She used to have a habit, she explains, of responding to other people’s questions with quotations from books because “what I wanted to say had already been said and said better than I could have hoped to say it myself” (219). We could even say that Christina herself was functioning like a “living library,” so fully of quotations from other people’s books that they became the very words she’d share with others).

In addition, throughout these notes, Christina tells us about her mother’s love of reading:



“The reading life, the beauty-filled one, was central to the livable internal life my mother tried to carve out for us and to equip us to make for ourselves” (217).

Choose one or two passages that make this phrase – “the reading life, the beauty-filled one” – seem especially clear or compelling to you.

You might think about what books or quotations come to your own mind, as the traces of your own reading life. And you might wonder to yourself: to what degree have I become a living library?

### **Prompt 3: Camera Lucida & the Hand of the Artist**

Something that will be especially useful for us, in our Feminist Philosophy class this semester, is Christina’s close and careful attention to *how* things are created. For example, in our assigned passages, she is reflecting on the workings of the camera lucida, a kind of tracing machine that is used to draw images.

The camera lucida, she explains, is a machine that reveals the hand (166-167), because it lets the artist see, at the very same time, both what they are trying to draw and their own hand that’s doing this’ drawing.

This is a key claim because it lets the artist’s own hand become integral to the art that is being created. Each person’s hand will be different, because each person’s embodied experiences and histories have shaped their hands in specific ways.

And then Christina makes another key claim, by quietly asking this question:

“... what pane of glass [would] make lucid the reflection” of the Black maternal? (167).

In this moment, Christina is signaling that she herself, as a writer and an artist, is also bringing her own embodied experiences and habits and perspective to the task of writing her notes. And Christina’s note-taking runs up against another claim that runs throughout the book as a whole:

“Whether one admits it or not, one is oriented to one’s work from the location of the body and all that that may mean” (114).

This sounds abstract, of course, and as a philosophical claim, it’s beautifully abstract: this is a descriptive fact about everyone of us, as thinkers and as writers. We are each oriented to our work (whether it be writing or drawing or anything else) from the “location” of our own bodies, because of our formative experiences to our relationships and our bodyminds.

But this claim is also tangible and concrete:

Christina is writing about her orientation to her own work, which she lets us get to know throughout her notes. She describes memories of her mother, the photographs that she's looking at (and the details that produce "a feeling of great tenderness" in Christina (174), the facts that's she's learned about her mother's life, and other concrete aspects of her own orientation.

Choose one or two passages that crystalize for you *why* the location of the body matters—whether it be the body of the author, Christina, or the body of the reader (you), or the body of anyone else who's mentioned in the text.

You might think about whether there's a machine that seems especially relevant to *your* own writing body: the laptop, the phone, the tablet, the paper and pen. Is there a machine that, by naming its role in your life, can help you to reckon a bit more sharply with your own orientation/embodiment?

#### **Prompt 4: Intimacies**

Another ingredient that Christina uses in her note-taking is her own intimate relations with family members, her partner Dionne Brand (a famous poet), and friends.

"My mother made joy. She worked hard at it," Christina writes in a letter (231), for example.

And she reminds us of the intimacies that are part of other writers' work. Roland Barthes, for example, turns to a photograph of his own mother as the anchor for his writing about photography. Barthes, however, holds up this photograph as universal in its scope and meaning (183), and he asserts his own practice of looking, Christina explains, as universal (184).

In contrast, in each and every note, in *Ordinary Notes*, Christina reminds us that there is no such thing as a universal practice of looking. Rather, there are the intimacies of our relations, and these can bring us deep joy and also deep grief.

In Note 144, for example, she writes:

"I used to think that if I started crying, I would never stop. That if I allowed myself to cry, the weeping would never end" (208).

And then in Note 150, she adds:

"Maybe there is just too much that I do not know.  
I can only use my own powers of observation. I can only use my own belated, partial understanding.  
I can only extend my deep regard" (214).

And then concludes this section, in Note 163, with this admission:

“I have tried to enter with grace and imagine with tenderness” those parts of her mother’s life that Christina knows next to nothing about “or I have left them alone. I owe my mother that. Regard.” (232).

Choose one or two passages (or even a fragment of a passage) that helps you to understand why these intimacies are so important for the work that Christina’s doing in *Ordinary Notes*. And think about whether you are beginning to gain a sense of what she means by the word “regard.”

### **Prompt 5: violence & the practice of beauty-making**

At one moment in our assigned passages, Christina refers to violence as “material, metaphorical, continuing, and ordinary” (188).

Note 119 is a note that draws us into this fourfold definition of violence, in particular ways. She is providing us with a close reading of a passage by the French theorist Roland Barthes (the very theorist who made the camera lucida a famous motif in literary theory and continental philosophy).

Christina’s close reading of the Barthes passage is a kind of mediation for us, as readers, so that we can begin to connect ourselves with the material, the metaphorical, the continuing, and the ordinary aspects of violence.

In the context of the passage that Christina’s reading, violence is bound up Barthes’s own unacknowledged commitments to colonialism and to the settler-imperialism of the Transatlantic slave trade.

Christina explains that “it is the ordered hierarchy of the plantation that conditions all his seeing,” (178), referring to the utter misunderstanding that Barthes brings to his own interpretations of photography.

Thinking about the fourfold definition of violence, choose a passage from the assigned reading that seems to help you begin to understand why Christina is describing violence with these four different terms: material; metaphorical; continuing; ordinary.

## Readings:

- Christina Sharpe, "Notes 241-246" & pages 341-359, *Ordinary Notes*
- Fern Ramoutar, "The Forecast"

# Beauty

## Is a Method

**key images/phrases:** the weather; the cartographers; the work of words

“Each book produced in me the feelings that I needed to feel.”

—Christina Sharpe, *Ordinary Notes* (289, 295)

Today's plan:

- a tiny check-in our upcoming assignments:

--using our google-doc to sign up for facilitations (and indicate if they are in-person or asynchronous)

--a reminder that our Encounter with the Maker Studio activity happens after reading week

--a reminder that we will begin working on our Notes project

- read Fern's poem together as a class; choose a line that is bringing you in, this afternoon
- revisit our prompts from last week:

--organize into small groups; each person shares a passage; choose one to bring to the class

- facilitation by Eli: Maps & Landscapes

### 3. Fern Ramoutar, "The Forecast"

the first time we changed the weather, noone blinked, because noone knew.

two girls huddled in the back corner of the last car

on the green line.

rolling west.

they wrote slowly into a small, square napkin,

waiting between bumps to add two or three shaky letters

t

to

to a l

to a li

to a line.

it was like the construction of this little verse was the most important task in the world.

and it was,

in the end.

"4 hours to goooo"

the first girl belted out,

side-eyeing the napkin lyrics  
though she knew every word by heart.

"4 hours to goooo"  
sang the second,  
her voice rising quickly to meet her girlfriend's  
in a dark blue harmony.

"if your wash day's only an hoooooour"  
both voices floated together now,  
one quivering boldly above the other,  
insistent on melancholy.

"don't talk to us noooo moooooooooo"  
the train shot out of the tunnel,  
into the severe brightness of a sunny morning.

as their voices lingered on the final note,  
both girls collapsed into laughter and into each other.  
they did not notice what flashed across the sky,  
temporarily swallowing the clouds.

a single sheet of lightning on a clear, blue day.

after that,  
every time after that train ride,  
whenever we put words into the world

(a book an essay an album a script a song a chorus a cheer a chant a "rant" a poem a  
podcast a call for action a call to action a—

you know what i mean right?

the things we produce so brilliantly?

the things we create to reimagine the world?

the things without adequate compensation? without permission or recognition  
or reparations?

so,

i guess what i'm saying is,  
all the things)

the weather changes.

you remember right?

last summer in Flint?

after some residents wrote that book about survival in a state-sanctioned  
genocide?

when it rained for weeks?

and then someone checked?

and all the rainwater was clean?

you remember right?

over winter in Baltimore?

after Nikole Hannah-Jones wrote those essays about how school taught her  
babies the meaning of the word "value"?

by making them wear their coats and gloves and hats and boots and scarves  
inside their schools that noone would heat?

and then a warm wind blew every day until april?  
 but only through the windows of the cold schools?  
 you remember right?  
 in September a few years back?  
 after Solange released her fourth studio album?  
 All the Seats?  
 and the entire country was filled with columns of sun that somehow followed  
 and blessed only the listeners who *understood*?  
 for all the ways this moment seems different,  
 it is probably also the very same.  
 they are still helpfully suggesting that  
 what we should probably do is hold back maybe  
 restrain the output, for now,  
 in the name of "safety" and "mutual respect" and my personal favourite  
 "weather stability."  
 but for all the ways this moment seems different,  
 it is probably also the very same  
 because we still do not believe in lies  
 that seek to outline the shape of our freedom.  
 it's just like that saying  
 you know how it goes:  
 we will never stop building what we deserve.  
 oh—you never heard that one?

#### **4. Photography& the Stakes of Beauty**

Our lesson, last week, laid out five prompts related to Christina Sharpe's *Ordinary notes*:

- 1) a beautiful life: with beauty, something is always at stake/ 2) reading & the reading life: becoming a living library/ 3) the hand of the artist: reckoning with our embodiment/ 4) intimacies: extending deep regard/ 5) violence & beauty-making: violence as material, metaphorical, continuing, and ordinary

With each other, discuss: why did you choose this prompt? What is this prompt bringing forth for you, this afternoon? Choose one passage from *Ordinary Notes* to share with the class.

#### **5. The Map & The Landscape**

--facilitation by Eli

"Note 247

What I saw:

The cartographers busy drawing and redrawing lines through violence.  
Refusals of brutality.  
Mutual aid feeding people in all of their hungers.  
The strange miracle of rhubarb growing.  
The look of the sky, changing and familiar, through the same door over the course of a year" (350).

"My brother Christopher knows that I have a practice I call *beauty-everyday* where I take photographs of flowers, trees, the light, clouds, the sky, moss, water, many things, in order to try to insist beauty into my head and into the world. I post some of them on Twitter" (343).

"Art is argument" (123)

"Imagine: we collaborate with beauty" (261)

From Christina's acknowledgements:

"To Adrienne Kennedy's *People Who Led to My Plays*" and Dionne Brand's *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging*, for models of wayfinding" (366).

An onstage conversation, called "The Work of Words."

"So, my question is, What is the weather that you're working towards?... What is the world you're working towards and what does freedom look like to each of you?" (Fern Ramoutar, cited on 345)

"The room gasped and momentarily we fell silent with awe and gratitude at the sound this young woman had brought into the room. It was a question that she was the answer to" (345).

"Note 245

There is a deep and long tradition of Black arts ranging across continents and archipelagos attendant on the modern and its legacies of transatlantic slavery, colonialism, and racial capitalism. Black artists across form and those whose only form is their lives are engaged in the knowledges produced by these legacies and contemporaneous tragedies. They have always performed, thought, lived, enacted a desire for freedom—they have always fought for and made spaces, imagined ways when there was no way. Every movement for Black liberation, every era of Black struggle, has been accompanied by its singers, its dancers, its poets, its storytellers, its musicians, its artists—its theorists of the possible world, its theorists of the imagined world. These are the tracks we work in – if we are lucky" (346).

# Creativity

## & research-creation

## Readings:

- Natalie Loveless, "Haraway's Dog" (pp19-27) and "Discipline(s)" (37-51), *How to Make Art at the End of the World*
- Lynda Barry, excerpt from *Syllabus*

**key images/phrases:** research-creation; "Haraway's dog"; curiosity; creative pluripotency

“ We cannot know in advance what will ignite our curiosity. **Curiosity erupts.** ”  
 –Natalie Loveless (47).

“ A different story shows up **when [we] do things by hand.** ”  
 –Lynda Barry, quoted in Katelyn Bennett's cartoon-facilitation

“ **We must think problematically** rather than question and answer dialectically. ”  
 –Michel Foucault (2016, 50)

Today's plan:

- a tiny check-in our assignments:

--using our google-doc to sign up for facilitations (and indicate if they are in-person or asynchronous)

--a reminder that the first draft of our Notes project is due (with 3 Notes shared with the class)

--Ada will present the prompts for our second Making assignment next week (based in part on the Encounter activity)

- our questions:

How is research-creation, as a feminist project, different from the Notes-project (inspired by Christina Sharpe)? (Let's turn to our facilitations—on Sharpe; on Loveless—for insights!)

Why is research-creation an important feminist intervention (and what *is* research-creation?)

Why and how is curiosity a key ingredient? (and what is 'Haraway's dog?')

Why is thinking-with-the-body so essential?

- facilitation by Erika: activity

## 1. Research-Creation & "Haraway's Dog"

From Canada's Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council:

**"Research creation:** An approach to research that combines creative and academic research practices, and supports the development of knowledge and innovation through artistic expression, scholarly investigation, and experimentation."

How is research-creation a form of resistance to dominant university practices?

Natalie Loveless: Anecdotally, there is an ideological assumption at play in how universities value different kinds of research: "to make art as an academic is to dabble; to make academic work as an artist is to excel. This has everything to do with the weighted value of 'art making' and 'history/theory making' in the academy" (note 15, pg 116).



The next step, pedagogically and research-creationally, is “to open the university up not only to different *writerly vocalities*, as decades of feminist, literary, Indigenous, critical race, deconstructive, and performance studies (the list goes on) scholars have done, but also **to different tangible forms** (for example, a song, beadwork, a performance, or a video-installation) as valid modes of rendering research public” (24).

And so the methods and skills emerge “*from the question or problem itself*” (41).

In what ways does research-creation *perform* feminist interventions in politics, ethics, relational dynamics?

“... the telling of stories is **a political performative**. A world-making, knowledge-making practice” (21).

How is it that stories matter? What are our “stories that matter”?

(Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, 1993)

Michel Foucault: we must think problematically (not question and answer dialectically).

(Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud)

(Simone de Beauvoir, Angela Davis)

Natalie’s own dedication: “This book is dedicated to the student I was, the students I’ve had, and the university that I fell for.”

## 2. Curiosity: Finding ‘Haraway’s Dog’

Natalie Loveless: “... to do research—of any kind—is not simply to ask questions; it is **to let our curiosities drive us** and allow them to ethically bind us; it is to tell stories and to pay attention not only to which stories we are telling and how we are telling them, but how they, through *their very forms*, are *telling us*” (24).

“... it is *curiosity* that emerges as key to our capacity to make such changes” (22).

Curiosity: “when faced with an unknown that, for whatever reason, emerges as alluring” (48).

“You can’t be curious about something you already know, but you need to know something about it in order to be curious” (47).

And so curiosity has something in common with **the uncanny**, “that *thing* that erupts unpredictably into an otherwise unremarkable moment, defamiliarizing it and rendering the presumed unclear” (46). The very condition of knowledge-making at its best is encountering the uncanny, “feeling displaced (ignorant) at the moment one feels one should be at home (knowledgeable)” (47).

Curiosity also has close connections, etymologically, with **careful** and **curate**, with **care** (47).

And it is, almost empirically, often at play when *form* is surprising, unexpected, and new: “More than the story itself, *how it is told* is what renders it uncanny” (48).

**“The uncanny is never—can never be—constative, predicted, or prepared for”** (51).

“Haraway’s Dog”:

Donna Haraway asks herself: “‘Whom and what do I touch when I touch my dog?’” (25).

“Throughout the semester, ‘Haraway’s dog’ then became our touchstone for developing research approaches and orientations. Sometimes this appeared as a question from one student to another: ‘So—what is your dog?’; sometimes as a description within the classroom setting: ‘For my final project I’ve chosen ‘desire lines on campus’ as my dog; I’m asking: ‘Whom and what do I traverse when I follow the desire lines across our campus fields?’

"Together, we discovered that to frame a research question in this way helped to unpin it from a primarily disciplinary orientation; to frame research in this way foregrounded the researcher's positionality and moved beyond primary accountability to a specific discipline while still keeping the door open to discipline-specific knowledges. **Simply put, it placed the curiosity-driven question first**" (25).

A kind of conclusion:

"As an uncanny practice, **research-creation** threatens us with never fully being at home, disciplinarily speaking, and this anxiety of insufficiency (research-creation's most oft-named peril) cannot help but erupt in the same breath as **the exhilaration of creative pluripotency** (its most oft-named promise)" (50).

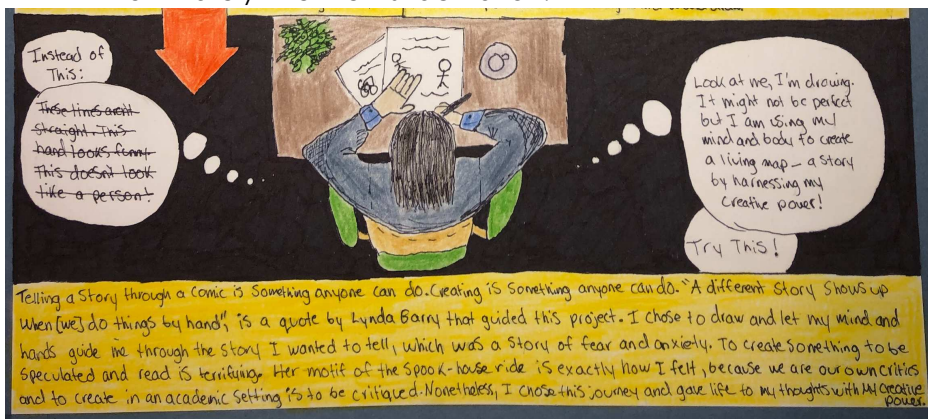
### 3. Learning & Creative Pluripotency

The uncanny (and the emergence of curiosity) is also closely connected with emotional and affective economies (including, perhaps, anxiety) (48): "**the affective discomfort of the uncanny**" (51).

(as opposed to a "pedagogical scene" that is conferred "via prerecorded video sound bites and registered learning outcomes" (50).

And so, there also needs to be something that *pushes back or talks back* or, as in the case of a dog like Haraway's, refuses to comply with what their primate might be asking. Like in our own lessons and learning: in a conversation with Erin Manning, Natalie points out, "Research-creation, at its most exciting, upsets standardizable pedagogy as well as standardized research outputs" (2020, 219).

from Katelyn Bennett's facilitation:



drawings.

"All we did was draw a car, but the room feels like it's on fire. Why?..."

"There is an aliveness in these drawings that can't be faked, and when I look at them, that aliveness seems to come into me. I'm glad to see and feel them.... The pictures you see here were made by 35 adults who were together for one afternoon in the Fall of 2012.... **You power them on**" (Lynda Barry's *Syllabus*).

From Barry's *Syllabus*:

"Let's draw a car, and then let's draw Batman. There is something beautiful in the lines made by people who stopped drawing a long time ago.... [An exercise from Ivan Brunetti's *Cartooning: Philosophy & Practice* called] 'Writing the Unthinkable': Draw a car, even if you don't know how, to see what happens.... Just how scary is this ride going to get? Your car begins to take shape, and **the shape it takes seems out of your control—there is a thrill there**. And a terror, too, when I ask people to stand up and look at each other's

### References

Foucault, Michel. 2016. "Theatrum Philosophicum," *Between Deleuze and Foucault*. Ed. Nicolae Morar, Thomas Naill, and Daniel W. Smith. Edinburgh UP, 38-58.

Loveless, Natalie, Ed. "Research-Creation as Interdisciplinary Praxis: Natalie Loveless in Conversation with Erin Manning," *Knowings and Knots: Methodologies and Ecologies in Research-Creation*. U of Alberta P.

# Feminist Indigenous Ontologies: Making (continued)

## Readings:

- Dolleen Tisawii'ashii Manning, "The Murmuration of Birds: An Anishinaabe Ontology of Mniidoo-Worlding"
- Leanne Batasamosake Simpson, "Nishnaabeg Brilliance as Radical Resurgence Theory," from *As We Have Always Done* (2017, 1-25)

**key phrases:** research-creation (continued); embodied-worldedness & worlding & 'intuition'; the crafting of a research question: the crafting of a story: the crafting of an ethics

“ The tremulous dialogue of **accessibility and unreachability**... disorienting and awakening.... Surely, it is more than I am, and, at the same time, all that I am, when I am most at home, lost to myself.... As my mother says, ‘**We only own what we give away.**’ ”

—Dolleen Tisawii-ashii Manning (156, 172-3, 174)

“ [The Elders] pulled me into an alternative Nishnaabeg world existing alongside the colonial reality I knew so well. This has propelled my life.... **The how changes us**.... Doing produces more knowledge. ”

—Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (17, 19, 20)

Today's plan:

- building on our lesson from last week (“research creation” & “curiosity”, specifically): “what do our hands remember about “learning by doing”?”
- tiny updates: next week, I'll lay out the Making project; you can choose between the two philosophy articles, plus “Making” examples from Ada's collaborative project
- a query for our class this afternoon:

“do you seem to be finding yourself close to or far away from relating: to acts that ‘**change the weather**’ (Ramoutar), to ‘**the uncanny**’ and to curiosity's compelling interruptions (Loveless), to ‘**imagination**’ that conjures another reality (Dion Fletcher), to ‘**intuition**’ that is at the edges or beyond conscious reflection and

## 6. Tiny Review: Research-Creation & Curiosity

Natalie Loveless: how art can imagine otherwise (53).

Vanessa Dion Fletcher: “I knew there was another world, a world with Indigenous languages. I knew that world had existed but did not exist for me. I was told our languages are oral, filled with languages not written down. This world became my utopia, and **I imagined it** as a fictional place because colonialism had made it unreal and unattainable. Like utopia, I have glimpses of this world, **moments where I can almost find it**” (cited in Fletcher & Ferguson 2021, 180).

I. Research-creation as an institutionalized approach to research in Canada

- “an approach to research that **combines creative & academic research practices**, and supports the **development of knowledge and innovation** through **artistic expression**, scholarly investigation, and experimentation” (from SSHRC).
- “... different tangible forms [of art-making] as valid modes of **rendering research public**” (Loveless, 24).

## II. Research-creation as an emergent expression of curiosity

- “We cannot know in advance what will ignite our curiosity. Curiosity ignites” (Loveless 47).
- “A different story shows up when we do things by hand” (Lynda Barry, cited in Katelyn’s asynchronous facilitation)
- Ali Dederick: “After our initial introduction we were handed some clay and told to make a ‘glome’ as Holly put it. I have no idea what a glome is, so I decided to play around with the clay while Holly, myself and another classmate engaged in a conversation. We started talking about experiencing learning and communication with our hands and our mindbodies.... I started making a hand with my clay, **as it felt very glome-like to me** while we were talking about communication, connection and collaboration with.”
- Ayla Coyes: “I **used my hands, imagination, and eyes** to create my creature first in my head, then physically with clay.”
- Ashley Pfeifer: “Upon my initial entry into the Maker Studio, I found myself surrounded by a few fellow classmates. As we engaged in conversation, we embarked on the task of crafting ‘glomies’ as per Holly’s instructions. Initially, there was a sense of bewilderment as we exchanged uncertain glances. However, we collectively decided **to embrace the ambiguity and create without constraints**, a realization that would later reveal itself to be the essence of the exercise.”

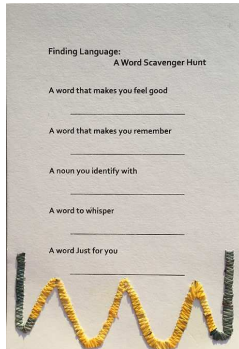
## III. Research-creation as an ethics

- “The crafting of a research question is the crafting of a story that is also the crafting of an ethics” (Loveless 95).
- “... to do research—of any kind—is not simply to ask questions: it is to let our curiosities drive us **and allow them to ethically bind us**: it is to tell stories and to pay attention not only to which stories we are telling and *how* we are telling them, but how they, through *their* very forms, are telling us” (Loveless 24).

# 7. Indigenous Art-Making & “the crafting of an ethics”

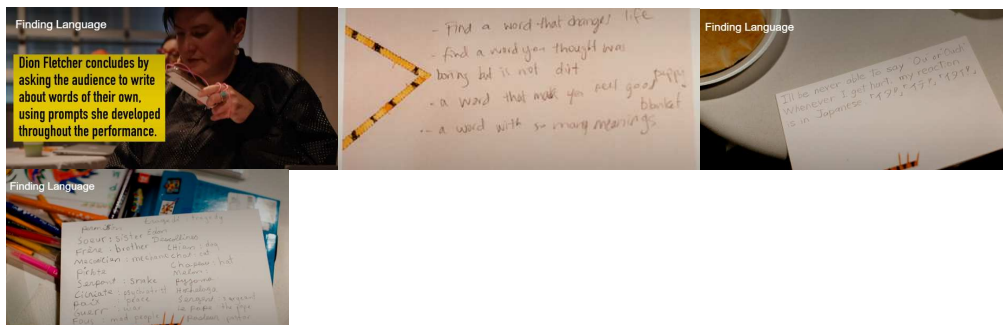
[Finding Language: A Word Scavenger Hunt](#) (2018 & 2019), by Vanessa Dion Fletcher

(funded by SSHRC; performed at a public arts-event; led to open-access feminist journal issue: *Studies in Social Justice* Vol 15, no. 2, 2021, “Cripistemologies of Disability Arts and Cultures: Reflections on the Crippling the Arts Symposium,” edited by Eliza Chandler, Katie Aubrecht, Esther Ignagni, and Carla Rice)



Project Description: “I’ve Lost My Words. Some of Them Are Stuck In Little Boxes In My Brain – Drawers That Won’t Open. Some of Them Are In The Mouths of My Indigenous Ancestors. Come With Me, While I Search For These Lost Words and Find Some of Your Own Along The Way.”

Artist Statement: “I look for knowledge embedded in materials and techniques. Embodiment and visual art **allow a reprieve** from the colonialism and ableism of English. My interest in communication comes from my lack of access to my indigenous languages (Potawatomi and Lenape) and as a person living with a learning disability caused by issues with short-term memory.”



An account of the performance, adapted from:

Fletcher, Vanessa Dion and Max Ferguson. 2021. “Finding Language: A Word Scavenger Hunt,” *Studies in Social Justice* 15(2): 180-83.

*Finding Language* begins with Dion Fletcher **lying** on her back, **listening** to an audio piece in which her grandmother is telling stories and her nephew is singing. After the audio ends, Dion Fletcher **calls into** her grandmother’s hearing aid, which is buzzing next to her ear: “Hello, can you hear me?”

Putting down the hearing aid, Dion Fletcher picks up her English-Lenape dictionary, projecting the opened pages of the dictionary onto a large screen (using the cellphone, hanging around her neck). She **finds words around the room** and then **reads out the Lenape words** in the dictionary, as an ASL interpreter **signs the word**; the word is also **typed onto the projected live captioning**—and then **offers prompts** to the audience members.

These emergent, group prompts include: “find a word that changes,” “find a word that makes you feel good,” “find a word you thought was boring but is not,” and “find a word with so many meanings.”



From the artist's own analysis: "... in the context of crip culture... language does not guarantee smooth and effortless communication and understanding, but rather language is an entry into conversations about 'how we feel about and relate to language' (Fletcher & Ferguson, 182).

the crafting of a research question : the crafting of a story : the crafting of an ethics

## 8. Indigenous Feminist Philosophy

Dolleen Tisawii'ashii Manning: "... the entangled ontology of the North American Algonquian language family" (155). Leanne Betasamosake Simpson: "the gentleness, humility, carefulness, and the ability to proceed slowly" [approaches to education seen as liabilities at university, in which settler modes of perception risk colonizing Indigenous art-practices and ways of knowing]

*mnidoo*: spirit/mystery, potency, potential

"The tremulous dialogue of **accessibility and unreachability** presents the theory of *mnidoo-worlding*" (156), which is disorienting and awakening (172). "Surely, it is more than I am, and, at the same time, all that I am, when I am most at home, lost to myself" (172-3).

*Anishinaabe*: "original person/being," the "identifying term by which the Ojibwe know themselves." In a second translation, which accompanies the first as an "originary sedimented resonance," the term also refers to "**a condition of being attuned** to what there is in the world in a particular way," "**a kind of attentiveness towards** what approaches from a distance or what is apprehended from the corner of one's eye" [citing their own mother here] (157), where "we attend to the sidelong and the circuitous" (169).

"My mother surmised that the closest English term for this dialogue was '**intuition**'. Along with visual acuity, this *intuiting* might also appraise fluctuations in temperature, air pressure, sound distortion, and so on. Yet there are **other registers** that fall outside of conventionally conceived modes of consciousness [perhaps especially in philosophy]... -- it is a question of **accessibility and discernment**" (157).

"**Forever out on the periphery** is where the 'real' of *mnidoo* is most present—that is, just when **that amorphous shudder** begins to take

shape.... from *there* it pressures the *here*, while I am attentive but not directly preoccupied with it" (157).

"... *mnidoo-worlding* also erodes boundaries while paradoxically instantiating them as discernible" (159), "*embodied-worldedness*" (161).

"For Merleau-Ponty, consciousness can only be intersubjectively shared among bodies caught up in the structure of the world.

"He writes, 'The fundamental truth is certainly that 'I think,' but only on condition of understanding by this that "I belong to myself" in being in the world.'

"As for the question of **an other-than-human vital materialism**, particularity with respect to inanimate agency, Merleau-Ponty describes this as '**an absurd undertaking**' (162).

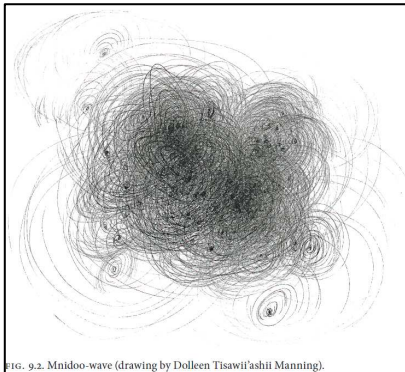


FIG. 9.2. Mnidoo-wave (drawing by Dolleen Tisawii'ashii Manning).

“I contend that **every aspect of existence** (not only sentence) knows itself primordially as **a thing of the world** through the infinite reverberation of mnidoo” (165).

Mnidoo arises as “a teeming flood—mnidoo **potency/ potential/ process**—from which **dissidence** is considered and taken up differently by each pebble that partakes in a landslide” (168-9) and like the starlings flying in a murmuration. Mnidoo presencing “are atemporal memories covered over by layers of embodied and linguistic symbolic histories” (See fig. 9.4) (171), including **sonic memories of ancestors** whittling axe handles (170). “Other-than-human persons—that is, mnidoo ancestors—radiate from every direction as colliding universes” (173).

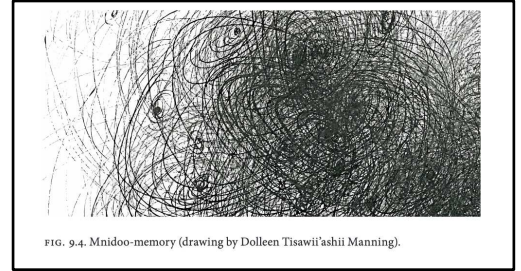


FIG. 9.4. Mnidoo-memory (drawing by Dolleen Tisawii'ashii Manning).

“As I am immanently present within this potency, it is **not immediately present to my conscious thought**. Yet **I have access to the other** through the collision of time-space as simultaneity.

“How else do we account for being struck by alarm, for no apparent reason, in response to a loved one’s misfortune registered instantly halfway around the world?

“Or waking up from a deep sleep to an empathic summoning from someone, at a distance, unconsciously **piercing the veil between** us via the heat of a crisis.

“Entangled exploding microcosms (each aspect retaining a sense of an *isness* and an autonomous *mineness*) collapse time and space into this **silent call**. We converge as simultaneity. My human consciousness is aroused to this always already unending body to which I am infused. This breach, **opened by the call**, provides tenuous access to a larger sense of self as mnidoo indwelling” (172).



# Passion & Pluralism

## Making (continued)

### Readings/Viewings:

- Ada Jaarsma & Suze Berkhout, “Cartesianism” (three videos) & one of the following:
- Ada Jaarsma, “Passionate Thinking”
- Didier Debaise & Isabelle Stengers, “An Ecology of Trust? Consenting to a Pluralist Universe”

### Optional reading:

- Eva-Marie Stern, “Art is Patient: A Museum-Based Experience to Teach Trauma-Sensitive Engagement in Health Care”

**key phrases:** bodymind; “the body keeps the score” & trauma-sensitive education; consent: to feel with or together (Stengers/Debaise 408)

“ *Bodymind* is a term I picked up several years ago **while reading in trauma studies**. According to this approach, because mental and physical processes not only affect each other but also give rise to each other—that is, because they tend to act as one, even though they are conventionally understood as two—it makes more sense to refer to them together, in a single term.... **Bodymind is a materialist feminist [disability studies] concept.**”

—Margaret Price (2015, 269, 270)

Today’s plan:

- our big-picture question: why is “bodymind” such a key phrase in the context of feminist philosophy and feminist making?
- epigraph & first section
- second section: JR’s facilitation and bodymind/ trauma-sensitive education
- third section: bodymind & consent (feminist science studies/philosophy)
- discuss “MakingThinking” assignment

## 1. Feminist Philosophy’s Turn to “Making”

“**Cartesianism**”: a placeholder term for approaches and arguments that keep binaries intact: mind versus body; society/culture versus biology; thinking versus feeling; human versus animal

“**Bodymind**”: a materialist, feminist, disability-studies concept, coming from trauma studies

“Patients’ physically identified complaints are rarely as shamefully hidden or as stealthy as psychic scars, which can appear or linger long after the original wound in indirect and masked ways” (Stern 2023).

examples of bodymind symptoms from the nocebo effect:

affects, past experiences, designs and packaging; even knowledge itself



Eva-Marie Stern, artist and art-therapist, in the video about making this Nocebo animation:

“We all experience relationships and interactions in these profoundly personal ways that are linked to our histories and our expectations.”

“The how changes us” (from our last lesson on creativity):

how is bodymind-feminist-philosophy shaped by the “how” of feminist projects,  
and how in turn does this “how” shape our bodyminds?

What’s at stake in this query:

Rebecca Stevens (this lesson’s asynchronous facilitation):

“why is it that people view the definition of progress differently?”

Isabelle Stengers:



“Whereas we usually have a choice between **looking at the moon** while forgetting the finger pointing at it, **or looking at the finger** and disqualifying what is designated as relevant merely to this designating gesture, the point is to succeed in affirming at the same time both the finger and what this gesture requires and presupposes *and* what this gesture gives us to perceive (Stengers 2011, 248).

“looking at the moon”: isolating out the *body* from bodyminds  
(social sciences & sciences; “essentialist” or “naturalist” feminisms)  
What is “progress” here?

“looking at the finger”: isolating out the *mind* from bodyminds  
(humanities; “constructionist” feminisms)  
What is “progress” here?

Eva-Marie Stern, artist and art-therapist (in the video-conversation about nocebo animation):

“I love that **the way** that you convey something is at least as important as **the what** you convey.”  
Bringing the moon & the finger together: feminist makingthinking  
(and so what happens to “progress” in this context?)

## 2. “Making” & affirming bodymindedness

Facilitation by JR Alsip

## 3. “Consent” in the context of feminist inquiry

Consent as a bodymind concept:

“The term must be understood in its most literal sense: *consentire* (**feel with or together**). It is not a passive agreement but a both willful and transformative acceptance” (Stengers/Debaise 408).

Consent: “allowing oneself to be touched, and **allowing what touches you** the power to modify the way you relate to your own reasons” (Stengers 2021, 86).

For example: “Biologists who today **consent** to the idea of interdependence **consent** to be transformed by what they are dealing with” (Stengers/Debaise 408).

Stengers notes that our own milieu, however, so often “**separates us from the possibility of** honouring and feeding what makes us feel and think.” (2018, 102).

What is the milieu of the doctor who is participating in this scientific study?

How can art & trauma-informed care and education shift our milieu?

Eva-Marie Stern notes analogues between trauma and art.

Like the effects of trauma, she writes, art is often ambiguous: “It can present simultaneous yet paradoxical, non-linear, achronological, multiperspectival, disconnected, or incomplete elements all together in compositions that nevertheless make up a meaningful image” (Stern 2023).

And in a trauma-sensitive educational encounter, “learners would become aware of how trauma affects us all in more or less direct and intense ways and that it need not remain an alienated, alienating condition” (Stern 2023).

(Reminder: there’s an option to go to an art exhibit and use this as the basis for an asynchronous facilitation)

### Setting up our Making assignment:

“Ontology creates obligations and commitments” (Stengers 2018, 95).

“Magic,” Stengers writes, “is one way to name what all creators know, that what empowers their creation is not theirs.” (2009, 54).

Eva-Marie Stern: “In order to teach about trauma, I moved our classes to the art museum.... This process would communicate to the art, if it were sentient, that we had **paid careful attention** to it, that we **were affected** by its qualities, and that we **were interested in learning more**” (2023).

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# Feminist Eating & TV

**key phrases:** disability justice; senses; wonder; affects

## Readings/Viewings:

- Annemarie Mol, “Knowing” from *Eating in Theory*
- The Bear (FX), episode 3 “Sundae”, episode 4 “Honeydew”, & episode 7 “Forks” (season 2)

## Next week:

- Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts*

“ what if **the author** were **an eater**? .... [K]nowing—be it perceiving or sensing—requires **active engagement**.... In the distracting settings of daily life, tasting may easily be skipped over .... Tasting may contribute to improving other things .... The objects of knowledge are formative of the subjects knowing. **They shape their tastes**.... Knowing is altogether transformative.”

—Annemarie Mol, *Eating in Theory* (24, 54, 58, 62, 69, 74)

“ [T]he **sensory turn** crystalized at the same time as two other paradigm shifts—namely, the *material turn* and the *affective turn*. ”

—David Howes, *The Sensory Studies Manifesto* (5)

## Today’s plan:

- 1. check in with our bodyminds: reviewing the disability justice principles (how is your bodymind feeling this afternoon? Which principle is speaking to you?)
- 2. engaging with three qualities of “feminist making”: senses; wonder; affects, in relation to the three episodes of *The Bear*
- small group discussions, and then all together, taking each on its own terms: “senses”; “wonder” “affects”

## 9. Disability Justice: check-in with our bodyminds

Ten Principles of Disability Justice (from the queer disability arts collective, *Sins Invalid*)

1. Intersectionality: “we do not live single issue lives” (Audre Lorde)
2. Leadership of those most impacted: “we are led by those who most know these systems” (Aurora Levins Morales)
3. Anti-capitalist politic: we are anti-capitalist by the nature of having non-conforming bodyminds
4. Cross-movement solidarity, and a politics of alliance across social-justice movements
5. Recognizing Wholeness: each person is full of history and life experience
6. Sustainability, pacing ourselves to be sustained long term, guided by our embodied experiences
7. Cross-disability solidarity, because isolation undermines collective liberation
8. Interdependence, meeting each other’s needs as we build toward liberation (apart from state solutions, that inevitably extend into further control over lives)
9. Collective access, bringing flexibility and creative nuance that goes beyond able-bodied/minded normativity, to be in community with each other
10. Collective liberation, moving together, leaving no bodymind behind

## 2. Three Qualities of Embodied Making:

Annemarie Mol meets *The Bear*

### 1. Senses

*Listen to sonic track in class:*

Syd's episode, "Future Perfect," by The Durutti Column

(from album *Fidelity*,  
1996)

Annemarie Mol: "I am, only to the extent that I exchange stuff with my surroundings" (*Eating in Theory*, 33), and when I eat, "it is the world that moves through me" (49).

**Sensory knowledge** is emerging and emergent, synced with concrete and specific practices undertaken in particular places and spaces.

As opposed to knowledge that upholds binaries like: "I" versus ecology  
individual versus community  
thinking versus sensing  
the present versus the past  
being versus becoming

**Syd's episode, "Sundae":** the book that Syd's dad gave her about coaching; montages of pasta; of wandering the city, Chicago; of many different restaurants; of a mother and daughter; of photos of Syd as a child with her own mother, who has since passed away; more montages of pasta; lots of scenes of eating and also of cooking

Practices of note-taking in the episode: responding to tastes of specific dishes  
sketching a new pasta dish

### 2. Wonder

*Listen to sonic track in class:*

Marcus's episode, "Tezeta (Nostalgia)" by Mulatu Astatke (from album *Ethiopianiques, Vol. 4: Ethio Jazz, 1969-1974*)

Annemarie Mol: "**I learned to wonder** about every situation I encounter: What does it say, what does it remind me of, what does it make me think?" (*Eating in Theory*, 137).

**Wonder** is essential for the kind of knowledge that emerges, thanks to encounters that spark reflecting, querying, remembering, note-taking, and thinking.

As opposed to knowing by way of binaries like: all-seeing authority vs singular bodyminds  
universal versus situated/localized

**Marcus's episode, "Honeydew":** montages of walking through Copenhagen; of buying, eating, and preparing pastries; more walking through Copenhagen; learning to create intricate desserts  
Practices of note-taking in episode: to ponder how pastries are made; to track ideas for desserts

### 3. Affects

*Listen to sonic track:*

Richie's episode, "Love Story (Taylor's version) by Taylor Swift (single, 2021)

Annemarie Mol: To learn is to actively engage with the world: **learning to be affected while also affecting** (*Eating in Theory*, 73).

Affects are at the heart of feminist approaches to knowing and making:

Affects are **bodily insights**, like attachments & feelings & emotions.

Affects are **synesthetic**, bringing differing senses to participate together (Massumi 2002, 35)

Affects are "the flow of forces through bodies outside of, prior to, or **underneath language**" (Schaefer 2015, 3).

Affects are "knotted or condensed '**interpretations** of predicaments'" (Ngai 2005, 3)

As opposed to knowledge that upholds binaries like: "I" versus "the world"

reason versus affective attachments

voluntary choice versus involuntary instincts/desires  
mind versus body

**Richie's episode, "Forks":** a repeated refrain of Taylor Swift (unlike other tracks from the soundtrack, embedded in scenes); repeated scenes of waking up and looking in the mirror; montages of the kitchen; staffing scenes; montages of the clock and the sign, "every second counts"; montages of the city at dawn or at night; meeting Chef Terry

Note-taking: a highly systematic, rigorous approach to managing service

Note-taking: Chef Terry's father's note-taking habit of noting moments to remember

### Engaging with the episodes:

First, choose one of the three episodes you'd like to delve into with classmates.  
(we'll make groups, based on your choices)

Next, read over the prompts for your group, depending on which episode you choose:

**"Sundae":** what do we learn about learning itself, from Syd's journey, in terms of the role of the "senses"?

What about the show's own "Making"-practices lead you to this answer?\*

**"Honeydew":** what do we learn about the nature, the role, and the embodied significance of "wonder" in Marcus's journey?

What about the show's own "Making"-practices lead you to this answer?\*

**"Forks":** what do we learn about "affects" by studying Richie's journey?

What about the show's own "Making"-practices lead you to this answer?\*

Next, read over the quotations and look over the stills from your chosen episode.

And then, in your small group, do some open-ended brainstorming, for a while, feeling free to share your own aesthetic responses to the episode as you work through the two prompts.

Finally, start to prepare a little "philosophy" presentation for the class, with an eye of turning "senses", "wonder", or "affect" into a keyword that you are introducing to the class.

\*"Making"-choices in the episode you might consider:

soundtrack; camera work; dialogue; juxtapositions & montages; setting; casting; performance

### 3. Philosophy & TV: Our aesthetic interests & imaginations

(Setting up our next lesson: "Making" as feminist-philosophy)

Martin Shuster: "We need to understand these shows—**this type of television**—as the emergence of something new *as* television. A medium is here somehow coming to fruition, finally finding itself as **capable of producing serious, sincere, and sustained art**—art, that, in turn, calls for serious and sustained reflection (2017, 2).

"Making the case for the importance – aesthetic, political, or otherwise—of a segment of television is to describe one's own experience *as much as* the possible and actual experience of others; and if potentially there are no others, then it has at least been revealed who speaks for whom and who does not.... **particularity and universality** become more available" (3, 4).

Stanley Cavell explains that the impulse "**to take an interest in an object** is to take an interest in *one's experience* of the object, *so that to examine and defend* ...[one's] interest... is to examine and defend **my interest in my own experience**, in the moments and passages of my life I have spent with them" (cited Shuster, 3).

And so import for feminist philosophy: 1), the "small screen" at home, where one can "explore what is on the screen in the context of one's own fantasies, and with the inherent anonymity that might make possible self-exploration and self-creation" (Shuster 8). And 2), how we might "exercise our imaginative and conceptual capacities in ways that make it



possible to begin to sever these connections [to patriarchy, misogyny, heteronormativity, white supremacy, imperialism, and other dangerous hegemons], to eradicate these hegemonic structures” (Shuster, 202).

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## The Argonauts

### Falling in Love/ Art-Making

#### Reading:

- Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts*

#### Upcoming Deadlines:

- Revision of “Notes” project (due Dec 21)
- Final “Making” project (due Dec 22)

**key words & phrases:** the makeshift; “making” (selves, desire, resistance, queer life)

**key questions:** where is your makeshift? What’s your ‘Argo’? How is “making” about writing, and also about reading?

“ we are at deep play in the makeshift.”

—Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts* (68)

Today’s plan:

- check in with our bodyminds, as we respond to the prompt”  
“This afternoon, my bodymind is feeling \_\_\_\_ and I connected with *The Argonauts* in this way \_\_\_\_”
- keywords, epigraph, & “Argo”/ the makeshift
- *The Argonauts*: five prompts

## 10. Finding “Argo” & the makeshift (conversing, as a class)

The Argonaut renews his ship during the voyage, but doesn’t change its name. And this is like the subject who says, “I love you.” The boat is still called the *Argo*, even if its parts are replaced over time. And so the meaning of the phrase “I love you” is renewed, in every use of the phrase: **“the very task of love and language** is to give to one and the same phrase inflections which will be forever new” (5).

John Cage stated, “Get yourself out of whatever cage you find yourself in,” in response to a journalist who asked him to sum himself up. He knew he was stuck to his name (or it to him), but he still urges out of it. **“The Argo’s parts may get replaced, but it’s still called the Argo.** We may become more used to jumping into flight, but that doesn’t mean we have done with all perches. [William James] *We ought to say a feeling of and, a feeling of but, and a feeling of by, quite as readily as we say a feeling of blue or a feeling of cold.* We ought to, but we don’t—or at least, we don’t quite as readily. But the more you do, the more quickly you can recognize the feeling when it comes around again, and hopefully you won’t need to stare as long” (54).

Language itself can become a way to keep renewing the meanings of phrases like: *I love you*. This is what Maggie Nelson is describing when she invokes the phrase, “specify and pluralize.”

There’s another relation to “making” in the book, of course: Maggie tells her love story in part by dramatizing live disagreements with Harry about language. Through this story, she opens up the question: is queer proliferation rendered viable through the work of sense-making, assertion and prose, as Maggie suggests, or does such work forsake the wildness of art and queer life, as Harry argues (52)? Assimilation or revolution; nonviolence or staying freaky (81)?

Harry contends that words are corrosive to all that is good, all that is real. But words do more than nominate, Maggie responds (4); on her view, “nothing you say can fuck up the space for God (3).

To explain her own stance, Maggie explains that “somewhere along the line, from my heroes, which souls were forged in fires infinitely hotter than mine, I gained an outsized faith **in articulation itself as its own form of protection**” (123).

What is your “Argo,” and where is your makeshift situated?

Do you place your hope (and your “making” projects) in articulation itself, like Maggie,  
or are you so attuned to the corrosive impacts of words that you engage with “making” as something more wild and wildly non-representational?

## 11. Finding “Argo” in *The Argonauts* (four small group convos)

Group prompts: after reading these passages aloud, see if you can discern where the makeshift is emerging. Where are additional examples of “Argo” at play? Is there a binary, or gatekeeper, or oppressive norm, or some other tension that the makeshift is seeking to displace/transform?

### Self-making

Maggie meets Harry after an extended time of solitude and recent sobriety. “But the time for its puncturing had come. *I feel I can give you everything **without giving myself away***, I whispered in your basement bed. If one does one’s solitude right, this is the prize” (5).

Maggie Nelson explains that she is sympathetic to people (she cites Gertrude Stein, for example) who choose not to use established categories in order to make sense of their own love lives (Stein didn’t identify as a lesbian, she notes). Maggie writes: “I get why it’s politically maddening, but I’ve also always thought it a little romantic—the romance of letting **an individual experience** of desire take precedence over a categorical one” (9).

In *The Argonauts*, Maggie Nelson quotes her teacher Eve Sedgwick frequently. Sedgwick was a leading theorist in the area of queer theory. According to Maggie, Sedgwick proposed that “what it takes—all it takes—to make the description ‘queer’ a true one **is the impulsion to use it in the first person**” and that “anyone’s use of ‘queer’ about themselves means differently from their use of it about someone else” (29).

Maggie describes her own path **towards the third-person**: “It took time and trouble, but eventually I learned to stop talking, to be (impersonate, really) an observer” (47).

*“You’re **the only one who knows** when you’re using things to protect yourself and keep your ego together and when you’re opening and letting things fall apart, letting the world come as it is—working with it rather than struggling against it. You’re the only one who knows.”* [Pema Chodron, an American Buddhist teacher]

### Desire-as-making

“Why did it take me so long to find someone with whom my perversities were not only compatible, but perfectly matched? . . . Really, though, it’s more than a perfect match, as that implies a kind of stasis.

Whereas we're always moving, **shape-shifting**. No matter what we do, it always feels dirty without feeling lousy. **Sometimes words are a part of it**" (69-70)

Maggie shares an excerpt from a poem by Michael Ondaatje, not as a portrait of her own serenity but as an aspiration that one day jealousy might recede.

"... We've each had our stomachs  
kissed by strangers  
to the other.

"and as for me  
**I bless everyone**  
Who kissed you here." (6)

And, reflecting on this poem, she asks: **is there a practice** for becoming able to behold the names and images of others "inked onto your skin without disjunct or distaste" (6)?

Maggie used to blush a lot, dizzy with her luck. "*The happiness police are going to come and arrest us if we go on this way. Arrest us for our luck*" (16).

"Can fragility feel as hot as bravado? I think so, but sometimes struggle to find the way. Whenever I think I can't find it, Harry assures me that we can. And so we go on, our bodies finding each other again and again, even as they—we—have also been *right here*, all along" (86).

## Making-as-Resistance

Maggie's mother would much rather hear the weather from a male weatherman, explaining "*They usually have the more accurate forecast*" (38); even if women are consulting the same satellites or reading from the same script, according to this all-too-common assumption, their reports are suspect. Later, when Maggie is reading baby caretaking books, Maggie realizes that all of these books were written by men. She asks, "Am I **unconsciously channel-surfing** for the male weatherman" (44)?

"Words change **depending on who speaks them**; there is no cure. The answer isn't just to introduce new words (*boi, cis-gendered, andro-fag*) and then set out to reify their meanings.... One must also become alert to the multitude of possible uses possible contexts, **the wings with which each word can fly**" (8).

"Visibility makes possible, but it also disciplines: disciplines gender, disciplines genre" (86).

"Why did it take me so long to find someone with whom my perversities were not only compatible, but perfectly matched?" asks Maggie in her reflections on her own love affair (69). While the term "perversity" tends to align with acts that conflict with social norms, Maggie is re-appropriating it. She writes that "any bodily experience can be made new and strange" (73). This is an interestingly universal account of perversity, since the assumption is that *everyone* has their own perverse inclinations. But its universality is juxtaposed here with a radically relativistic ethics (everyone has their *own* perversities).

Maggie herself becomes pregnant, and she finds that everyone is kind to her: “*One must be kind to the future....* So this is **the seduction of normalcy**, I thought as I smiled back, compromised and radiant” (89).

## Queer Making

Dan Savage, the contemporary sexpert, tells us to be “GGG” as lovers: good, giving and game. As Maggie Nelson sums up this “sexpert” advice by Dan: you have to be up for anything. “These are solid guidelines to which I have long aspired. But now I think we have a right to our kink and our fatigue, both” (110).

In her love story, Maggie Nelson describes her marriage to Harry: “Poor marriage! Off we went to kill it (unforgiveable). Or reinforce it (unforgiveable)” (23). According to Maggie’s comedic gloss in this passage, either we strengthen norms by enacting them, or we refute them all together. Of course, life is actually much more complex than such stark oppositions, as she points out: “it’s the binary of normative/transgressive that’s unsustainable, along with the demand that anyone live a life **that’s all one thing**” (74).

“So far as I can tell, most worthwhile pleasures on this earth slip between gratifying another and gratifying oneself. **Some would call that an ethics**” (96).

“I want the you no one else can see, the you so close the third person need never apply” (Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts*, 7).

Standing naked, asked to say her desires aloud: “My whole body struggled to summon any utterable phrase. I knew you were a good animal, but felt myself to be standing before an enormous mountain, a lifetime of unwillingness to claim what I wanted, to ask for it. Now here you were, your face close to mine, waiting. The words I eventually found may have been *Argo*, but now I know: there’s no substitute **for saying them with one’s own mouth**” (70).

## 12. “Making” final project

**key questions:** where is your makeshift? Using Maggie’s vocabulary, what’s your example of ‘Argo’, something that needs to be “pluralized” as well as “specified” so that it retains meaning?

In terms of your own making practice, here are key queries: who’s the ‘writer’, what’s the ‘object’ of knowledge, where is the newness? (Let’s also return to our lesson from last week on *The Bear* for some more insights into the stakes of *who* the creator/maker is).

A brief passage from last week’s assigned reading will help us remember the stakes of *what* we are seeking to study:

“The objects of knowledge are formative of the subjects knowing. **They shape their tastes....** Knowing is altogether transformative.” (Annemarie Mol, *Eating in Theory*, 69, 74)

In addition, let’s reread this passage from *The Argonauts*:



Maggie is recalling an event that she went to in NYC, at which Jane Gallop “was taking on Barthes’s *Camera Lucida*, and the way in which even Barthes—delectable Barthes!—**the mother remains the (photographed) object**; the son, the (writing) subject. “The writer is someone who plays with his mother’s body,” Barthes wrote. But sometimes the writer is also the mother (**Möbius strip**)” (40).

What happens when there is *no* Möbius strip (no engagement with the creator-as-maker)? Maggie writes about this in an earlier book:

“I know what I want is impossible. If I can make my language flat enough, exact enough, if I can rinse each sentence clean enough, like washing a stone over and over again in river water, if I can find the right perch or crevice from which to record everything, if I can give myself enough white space, maybe I could do it. I could tell you this story while walking out of this story. **I could—it all could—just disappear.**”

—Maggie Nelson, *The Red Parts: A Memoir* (2007, 157)

All of our feminist thinkers, this semester, are invested in the stakes of “making”, and they each lay claim to their own capacities to undo the binaries of body/mind, taster/tasted, storyteller/story, teacher/student, subject/object, and other key dualisms. This happens in part by *relating to the creator* as maker.

For example:

“ what if the author were **an eater?**”

—Annemarie Mol, *Eating in Theory* (24)

What if the author were **a mother?** (Maggie Nelson)

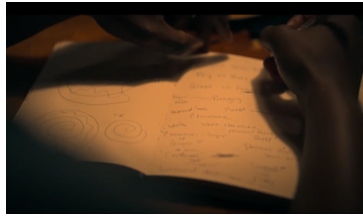
1) What if the author were **a creator?**



Making as “failure” (Syd, in *The Bear*)



2) What if the author were **a student**?

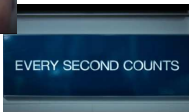


Making as “discovery” (Marcus, in *The Bear*)

3) What if the author were **a convert**?



Making as “transformation” (Richie, in *The Bear*)



**Our prompts:**

**What is your “Argo,” when it comes to feminist making? What did you discover this semester, as a “maker” yourself, about the journey of finding the makeshift?**

This project is an opportunity to identify and explore **your example of “Argo”** that seems especially significant to you as a “maker”. In terms of *yourself* as a maker, is the author an eater, a mother, a creator, a student, a convert, or something else? (How has an “object” turned into an active, inventing, experimental subject?) Taking the place of a take-home final exam, this is a project that brings to life the learning and experiencing you undertook during this feminist philosophy course.

For this final project, you can create a photo-essay (combining photos with prose), or a video-essay (combining video with a script or some other written text), or a self-portrait that combines visual making with a philosophically grounded artist statement.

Make sure these things are explicit, in whatever form most suits your project:

- a journey/arc (leading to failure, or discovery, or transformation (*The Bear*), selfhood, intimacy, interdependence, desire (*The Argonauts*), or something else)
- the kind of “author” that’s doing the making (your own position as the making-self, whether creator or student or mother or eater or something else))
- the binary that’s being undone, in & through your own feminist make-shift work
- the resources that you are drawing on, to speak back to this binary, so that the “story” doesn’t disappear? (what do you place your own makeshift-hopes in? in the **powers of articulation** like Maggie, or **the non-representational** like Harry, or **tasting** like Annemarie Mol, or **bodymind feedback loops** like crip theorists, or **other-than-human encounters** like Dolleen Manning and the Indigenous feminist artists we learned from)? It’s an excellent idea to turn to the philosophical work we did, during our lessons, in order to anchor this project.
- who are your “heroes”, what is your fandom, what “cage” are you getting out of?

### 13. Revising our “Notes” project

Christina Sharpe: “Whether one admits it or not, **one is oriented to one’s work** from the location of the body and all that that may mean” (*Ordinary Notes*, 114). “...any so-called neutral position is a position of power that refuses to recognize itself as such” (123)

“I have **to think on the page** to know what I think. (This is probably true for everyone).”  
(Maggie Nelson, interview, *Asymptote* journal, Jan 2019)

Revising is, itself, an utterly crucial and empowering mode of feminist making: we can discover new things about how we are oriented to our own work, as Christina Sharpe suggests, and we can lay claim to new ideas/questions/insights *by doing the rewriting*, as Maggie Nelson is describing.

For the “notes” revision, make sure to include a statement about what and how you revised the initial draft: did you turn the dial up on a specific motif? Did you decide to incorporate another form (like photos or drawings)? Did you re-order any of the narration? Did you embed additional feminist philosophy or other resources?



# Making: Exploring new methods & practices

**Due: Monday Nov 27**

From our Feminist Philosophy syllabus

**Making & Doing project (inspired by Natalie Loveless):**

Encounters with the Maker Studio (in week 6): 10%

Making: exploring new methods & practices: 15%

Making Final project (inspired by Maggie Nelson): 25%

We are interested, in our course this semester, in how feminist philosophy shifts when undertaken by “makerthinkers” (Natalie Loveless, *How to Make Art at the End of the World*, 37).

And so this assignment is designed for you to explore what it means, from your own first-person perspective and experience, to participate in “a feminist university of creativity” (Loveless, 3).

Creativity is a keyword in this unit, along with curiosity and imagination, as well as the *form* or the *how* of feminist inquiry. As Leanne Betasamosake Simpson writes, “The how changes us” (“Nishnaabeg Brilliance as Radical Resurgence Theory,” 19)—us, as learners ourselves, and us as members of an educational community. This assignment asks you to do two things: to pay attention to the creativity, curiosity, and imagination at play in a “makingthinking” project and to reflect on the “how” of this project that can or will lead to change.

You can decide whether you’d like to engage with someone else’s “makingthinking” project or whether you’d like to act *as* a makerthinker for this assignment. This project will be an important experience for us to draw on, when it comes to our final project.

Choose one of the following three options (and if you have an idea for an alternative option, totally feel free to pitch it as another way to do this assignment):

1. Engage with a “Making Thinking” project in the context of science or social science research that you yourself are interested in.

There are so many examples of research-creation (arts-based inquiry) across the disciplines, and this option invites you to find an example that you find, yourself, to be full of creative interest. This option asks you to turn to the art of dance, and more specifically to the annual competition, *Dance Your PhD*.

After perusing several of the winning projects, choose one of these “dances” for your project: the 2021 winners (in physics, chemistry, social sciences, biology, and covid-19 research), or the 2022 winners (in biology, chemistry, physics, and social sciences).

(You can of course also go farther back in time and look at the 2020 winners, etc).

Here is a bit of background on the “Dance Your PhD” annual competition, if you’d like to have more of a sense of what’s being asked of these graduate students in science.

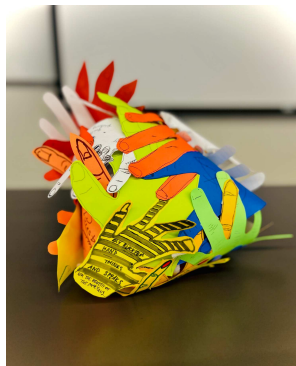
For this option, make sure that you do some exploring about the research-project itself so that you can better tap into what’s happening in the “makingthing” choreography, performance, and overall artistic expression of the dance that you’ve decided to engage. In four double-spaced pages, using links or sources or screenshots from the dance-performance, lay out how this is an example of makingthinking, where embodiment and cognition come together and in which the “how” is itself transformative. These are, of course, completely open for your own understanding: it would be wonderful if the “how” of the dance-project comes into contact in some way with your *own* “how” of relating to the topic or content of this research. (This is why it’ll be useful to choose a dance that has some connection with research that you find fascinating yourself).

2. Develop a “makingthinking” project, out of your Maker Studio encounter.

There are so many ways to become a makerthinker, especially once we land on a form or a medium that excites our creativity, curiosity, and imagination. For this option, choose one of the creations that you made or started to make, during your Maker Studio visit, and breathe life into it *as* a makingthinking feminist project. For this option, you can submit a photo of your creation, as well as a two-page reflection on your makingthinking endeavour, using at least one of our assigned readings for an interpretative framework of what it means to bring “making” and “thinking” together in feminist philosophy. (And you can absolutely read ahead, if you’d like to draw on an assigned reading that is scheduled for one of our upcoming lessons).

3. Become a MakerThinker who is part of the “Feminist Making, Doing, and Sensing” conference in March

The feminist philosophy conference, taking place at our own school in mid-March, is based around the themes of our course. For this option, create a version of the conference artwork that, itself, emerged out of a feminist philosophy arts-based workshop.

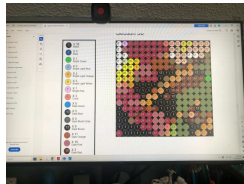


This is the photo that is the initial inspiration for the artwork: it depicts a whole set of construction-paper hands that are entwined together (each hand was created by one of the participants in this arts-based philosophy workshop. Each “hand”, in a way, is an artifact of the makingthinking that took place at the workshop, and this photograph is also an artifact of the collaborations and bodymind-connecting that are essential for feminist makingthinking).

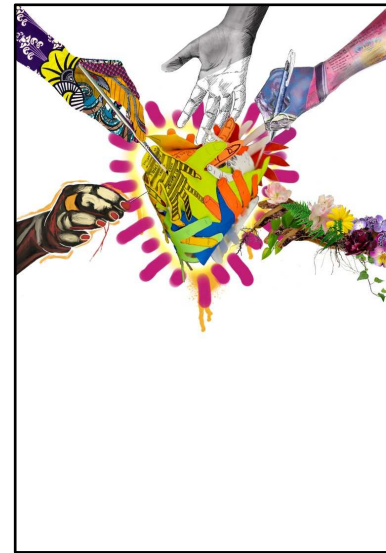
And here is the artwork that one of the philosophers who participated in the workshop, Bailey Szustak, created for the conference's call for proposals. (You can see the motif of hands at play, both in the hands-heart at the centre and in different hands reaching towards the centre).



Bailey, the artist, is now in the process of translating this artwork into lego.



And Ada will be making a version out fabric, over the holidays.



the  
of

What medium or form speaks to you, as a way to embrace your own makingthinking “how” of feminist collaboration? For this option, create a version of this artwork that will be exhibited at the Feminist Making, Sensing & Doing conference (March 14-17, 2024) at MRU this spring. You can treat this as an art-exhibition project, and so you’ll be submitting the artwork, a title, and a brief description that can be part of the installation. If you’d like more time for this, you can submit a “draft” or early version of the project, so that you’ll have time to complete it before the installation of the exhibit in March.

# An Encounter with the Maker Studio

(to do in week 6, the week after Reading Week)

Here's a guiding passage for this experiential assignment:

"Whether one admits it or not, one is oriented to one's work from the location of the body and all that that may mean" (Christina Sharpe, *Ordinary Notes*, 114).

We are interested in experiences that make this "orientation" become much more available for our own reflections and inquiry. Along these lines, this assignment asks you to explore what Christina describes in relation to a device like the *camera lucida*: namely, to play around with what it feels like to "make" or "create" something, while at the same time honing our skills in recognizing how our own body(bodymind) is located in relation to these movements of making/creating.

**Step one:** decide *when* you'd like to go to the Maker Studio, on the first floor of the Library, (sometime during week 6), preferably during one of our designated time slots so that you'll be joined by classmates.

Holly and Audrey are the two artists who work in the Maker Studio, and they have helped to develop this activity for you; they'll help you with any questions that arise during this encounter. Holly is there in the mornings, and Audrey is there in the afternoons.

(*optional*: you can also do this activity in the Audio Suite in the library, and Gabrielle is the audio-artist who would help you in that case. Send me an email if you'd like me to adapt this assignment for the audio suite).

**Step two:** engage with at least two concrete ways of "making" while you're in the studio, paying attention to the location of your body in these two experiences

How to do this:

--touch a machine or two, and then capture these encounters in some way, either through a photograph or by generating an artifact

--try to make something and enjoy whatever "failures" or accidents emerge; capture this in some way, likewise through a photo or an artifact

--and *see* if you can glimpse or sense or intuit what it might mean in each of these two encounters to become a "makerthinker", as Natalie Loveless puts it in an upcoming reading (*How to Make Art at the End of the World*, 37).

--this might involve a pretty fervent "no", in terms of your own *makingthinking* tendencies, or you might be surprised to tune into a flow that you might want to revisit, later in our semester, when we begin "making" in earnest.

**Step three:** send along your “Making Encounter” description to Ada via our D2L site; you can upload things (photos, etc) or simply write a brief description of how it went, what two machines or objects you touched, and what “failures,” accidents, and other discoveries took place.

**Optional step four:** if you find yourself intrigued by the Maker Studio, and by its role in the university and in broader knowledge-endavours, I’ve posted an optional reading on D2L. Here’s a tiny excerpt:

“As social institutions, makerspaces have their roots in guild structures, alternative pedagogical models, DIY movements and artist-run culture because they diffuse particularized knowledge through a shared means of production, shared practice, and collective experimentation” (Sherlock 2022, 126).

For this optional step four, choose one of the words from this excerpt and see how it might connect with your step three description: guild, alternative pedagogy, DIY, diffuse, shared, collective, experimentation. Add just a bit more to your description, connecting the threads between this word and your own experiences at the Maker Studio.

(Reference for optional reading)

Diana Sherlock, “Capitalizing on Community: The Makerspace Phenomenon,” *The New Politics of the Handmade: Craft, Art, and Design*. Ed. Anthea Black & Nicole Burisch. Bloomsbury, 2022.

## Notes assignment (inspired by Christina Sharpe)

### Phil 2237 deadline for drafts: Oct 23

#### tasks:

- reread assigned passages from *Ordinary Notes* that you find especially stirring, paying attention to the "ingredients" that make up the Notes you especially like
- begin drafting a set of Notes
- due on Oct 23 (extensions welcome)
  - In D2L dropbox, submit a set of 13 to 15 Notes (these are just drafts!)
  - Choose three of these Notes to share with the class, and upload them to the D2L discussion board
  - By the end of term, you'll submit a set of ten revised Notes (with an option of sharing them with the class)

### Assignment Overview

We will each be creating our own set of "notes, informed by Christina Sharpe's *Ordinary Notes*. More specifically, we'll draft 13-15 notes, and then choose around three to share with the class. We'll later revise and curate a set of 10 final notes as a final draft, and everyone can decide whether you'd like to share this final set with the class.

Christina's book is called "*Ordinary Notes*," and as you saw in our assigned passages, the book is made up of a series of notes. While each "Note" is unique, there is a real connectedness that we can find between and across the Notes. (Our first set of assigned passages, for example, come together with the connecting thread of photography. Many other connecting threads appear and are woven together across and between Notes).

**The first query** for you is: what holds your deep regard?

Let's turn this passage from Christina into a prompt for our own Notes:

"I can only use my own powers of observation. I can only use my own belated, partial understanding. I can only extend my deep regard" (214).

What powers of observation do you want to draw on, using your own "belated, partial" understanding, in order to extend your own deep regard?

Deep regard towards whom, or what?

**The second query** is: what will you use your powers of observation to observe?

Christina turns her powers of observation towards a variety of things: her own artmaking (her own practice of taking a photo every day), towards memories and diaries and photographs from the past, and towards the books that she loves and learns from. This prompt asks you to curate the ingredients that you want to include in your Notes, through the powers of your observation.

Here's a list of ingredients that we find in *Ordinary Notes*; find at least five that you'd like to work with for your own Note-drafting:

*Ingredients you might choose to incorporate:*

Photographs

Autobiography

Footnotes

Definitions & etymologies (ie. the meaning of "ordinary," page 170)

Including a title or an epigraph for some Notes

Providing instruction to readers

Referring to intimate connections (like Dionne Brand; family members; many friends)

Striking a balance between what is explicit, tacit, and absent  
Naming the forms being used explicitly, like “thinking juxtapositionally” (139) and  
“collecting” (151-2)  
Correcting errors and ignorance  
Expanding or using another’s work  
Finding a balance between the literary and the visual:  
“What I wanted to say had already been said and said better than I could have  
hoped to say it myself” (219).

**The third query** is: what motif is going to be a connecting thread between and across your Notes?

Below, you’ll see the many examples of Christina’s motif, which is the motif of “notes.” For your own set of Notes, you might choose to use a motif that we’ve already begun exploring in our class together: the map and the landscape; the first-person; a living library; the weather; the cartographers. And you might choose to land on an entirely new and unique motif.

### **Notes (Christina’s motif in her set of Notes)**

To hold a note, to be held (4); To take hold (6)  
This Black note (17)  
“To make or have an effect of, a note” (25); A “supertonic note” (62) (silence, threnody)  
“We are called to different things” (66) “Might that not hit a different note?” (66)  
A note as desecration (69)  
“This note repeats into our present” (92) “Some notes arrive from the grave” (113)  
“It is the note that begins the book” (114)  
“Such are the plot notes” (275)  
“The ordinary notes of our use and erasure” (276)  
“Some notes threaten to take over the entire book” (292)  
“Maybe she did not believe that her life could be sounded with a note of care” (136)  
“This note arrives after 25 years” (137)  
... “bending the notes toward and past freedom” (145)  
“These readers continually misread the note” (147)  
“The note that sutures” (115); “the same one-note performance” (155)  
“the note of the romance of empire” (155)  
“Slavery was the note, it was the weather, that conditioned everything” (157)  
“That other knowing, that other note, is **one that we might call regard**” (163)  
... “certain Black notes are unable to register” (304)  
“When some Black notes arrive, they disrupt whiteness; they disarrange it” (311)