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"The *search of research* [is] a process that delays conclusions and allows thought to materialize in concert *with a* world, rather than as a self-conscious projection *onto* the world."

Against Interpretation: Searching Marina Abramović's Face

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In this article, I explore some of Marina Abramović's artworks as a reference point for developing a possible philosophical orientation that privileges lingering in the search of research. Abramović's work eludes conventional interpretation. As such, it provides a potential lens with which to rethink and reorient research practices toward unpredictable and unprecedented ways of knowing occurring beyond the scope of established qualitative methodological research processes. In this article, I attempt to reconceptualize the process of research not by offering yet another process, but by articulating a disposition that allows for the emergence of new concepts of thought that might disrupt interpretation, postpone conclusions, and give rise to novel modes of research.

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Educational research, informed by what St. Pierre (2018) called "conventional humanist qualitative methodology" (p. 603), proposes a general path that, if followed, will produce "recognizable, clear, and accessible" (p. 603) research that is valid.[1] Research grounded in arts practice has been advocated as an alternative approach to conventional qualitative methods (Rolling, 2010; Sullivan, 2006; White, Garoian, & Garber, 2010) with some advocating for greater attention to contemporary art practices (O'Donoghue, 2009), whereas others argue that arts-based research, even in its various forms, does not offer relief from restrictive research methods (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013). St. Pierre (2016) asked, "Does thought need a method to steer it? Does inquiry need a method to control it?" (p. 10), suggesting that we need to unlearn these habits if we are to produce a kind of postqualitative inquiry that sidesteps prescribed methods and patterns of investigation to open experience and thought to new onto-epistemological configurations. Jackson (2017) referred to this as "thinking without method," which "relieves qualitative inquiry from the twin forms of epistemological imperatives of knowledge production and a conventional dependency on procedural method" (p. 666). St. Pierre (2016) and Jackson (2017), who both appeal to Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy, asked how we might work against methodology to think that which falls outside of its procedures to work experimentally "in contact with the real" (as cited in St. Pierre, 2018, p. 604).

The notion of contact is important for rethinking a humanist research disposition. Humanist qualitative research practices are grounded in epistemology, which privileges anthropocentric thought as a path toward knowledge. However, humanist thought conceives the world as concepts that are separate from "the real," which cannot be represented in a concept. "The real" represents the conditions for concepts and the possibility of thought, which is by definition separate from the circumstances that give rise to it. For Deleuze (1988, 1994), thought can conceive of the possible, but this does not necessarily mean that what is thought must be real. For example, I can think what a unicorn is, but I know that they do not exist (Smith, 2012). Yet what we can think as possible is still constrained by language. For Deleuze (1988), beyond the possible is the virtual ("the real") or that which can never be given in thought because the virtual exists as the necessary ground for thought. Thus, contact with "the real"/virtual engenders the potential for unprecedented thought if we resist the humanist impulse to interpret what is given and to allow thought and "the real" to emerge simultaneously. Thinking as such gives rise to provisional rather than predictable ways of being *with* or *becoming*, rather than being *in* the world, to shift focus away from what something might mean toward the conditions for the very genesis of thought, and "to trust that something unimaginable might come out that might change the world bit by bit" (St. Pierre, 2018, p. 607).

I present the artwork of Marina Abramović in light of both St. Pierre's critique and Susan Sontag's 1966 essay "Against Interpretation" as a source for conceptualizing the origins of unpredictable, inventive, and unformed processes of thought that carry the potential to think and understand the world in unprecedented ways.[2] I present a notion of lingering with the event of contact with Abramović's work as a means of articulating what I call *the search of research* as a process that delays conclusions and allows thought to materialize in concert *with a* world, rather than as a self-conscious projection *onto* the world. Deleuze's philosophy of immanence provides a conceptual opening for considering the site of and capacity for lingering. I also turn to Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of "faciality" (p. 115), which requires an abbreviated account of their reconceptualization of signification as a framework, and the "probe head" (p. 191) as a form through which these ideas might be characterized.

Sontag (1966/2013) argued against proscriptive interpretive methods informed by Marxist or Freudian hermeneutics that focus primarily on art's content and displacing the work in favor of a presumed latent meaning. Sontag argued that "to interpret is to impoverish, to deplete the world—in order to set up a shadow world of 'meanings.' It is to turn the world into this world" (p. 14). Sontag (1966/2013) seemed to advocate for a process similar to St. Pierre's (2018) notion of postqualitative research that somehow eludes methods. St. Pierre (2018) stated, "The post qualitative researcher must *live* the theories" (p. 604) to "live in a different world enabled by a different ethico-onto-epistemology" (p. 604). For both Sontag and St. Pierre, conventional interpretation and established research methods displace the immediate encounter with the art or research material in favor of an intellectual reduction of its complexity. Sontag (1966/2013) stated, "By reducing the work of art to its content and then interpreting that, one tames the work of art" (p. 14). Similarly, validity in research emerges from endorsed frameworks of inquiry that are decontextualized from the flow of life and brought under intellectual control.

Both St. Pierre and Sontag suggest that there is more than what can be captured in the reflection of interpretation and the systematic methods of research. For St. Pierre (2018), this excess is the "too much of inquiry" (p. 607), whereas for Sontag (1966/2013), it is the nervous and unfamiliar apprehension that art has the capacity to provoke. To close the gap that separates thought from experience (or concepts from "the real"), Sontag (1966/2013) suggested, "In place of a hermeneutics we need an erotics of art" (p. 20), while St. Pierre (2018) proposed that "inquiry should *begin* with the too strange and the too much" (p. 607). I argue that it is within an "erotics" of interpretation and the "too strange" that escapes capture in research that one might face the very force that arouses new thought; an encounter provoked through lingering might provide a basis for thinking as searching before it is tamed by the interpretive processes of research.

Lingering in Immanence: The Search for New Worlds

Lingering in the search requires rethinking the very notion of a world and recognizing thought as something that emerges along with it and not something that preexists or responds to it. When we consider the world in which we live as something that preexists our presence, we are confirmed as subjects within this world that give it meaning. As such, there is a presupposed distinction between the world, us, and the meanings produced through inquiry, observation, and experience and shared through communicative tools such as language and writing. As St. Pierre (2018) and Sontag (1966/2013) suggest, qualitative research and the interpretation of art, respectively, are constrained

further by external models and methods that legitimate the meanings communicated. These constraints limit not simply how we communicate, but also what we can know, think, and presuppose as both a transcendent subject and a transcendent world of prior and constant forms, which exist as antecedents of thought.

Deleuze's philosophy is one of immanence as opposed to transcendence. Each philosophical approach proposes a different notion of what it means to think. In transcendent philosophies, we are positioned as being in relation *to* the world "as something that we feel we can know, reveal or interpret and which will give us a foundation" (Colebrook, 2002, p. 71). Thought, as such, is representational; it represents, through hermeneutics, the world in analogic terms that presume "all understanding is a matter of interpretation and that interpretation is essentially the personal integration or objects or words into a meaningful whole" (Zimmermann, 2015, p. 36). This is a dogmatic image of thought or an "image that everybody knows and is presumed to know what it means to think" (Deleuze, 1994, p. 131). Deleuze and Guattari (1987) suggested that transcendent thought produces a disease (a dis-ease) they call "interpretosis" (p. 114) that causes us to "imagine that there *is* some meaning or truth awaiting interpretation, revelation or disclosure" (Colebrook, 2002, p. 72). It is against this tendency that St. Pierre and Sontag direct their critiques, and it is within Deleuze's immanent philosophy that we might be able to think beyond "interpretosis" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 114).

Immanent philosophy begins with connection rather than separation. We are not in relation *to* the world outside ourselves; we are a consequence *of* relations *within* a world. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) argued that worlds are composed as "planes of immanence" (p. 255), where "there is no dualism of form and content that must then be related by analogy. There is no transcendence, only immanence" (Adkins, 2015, p. 31). Immanent thought does not begin in the subject to be deployed onto the world. Deleuze and Guattari (1994) put it this way:

> The plane of immanence is not a concept that is or can be thought but rather the image of thought, the image thought gives itself of what it means to think, to make use of thought, to find one's bearings in thought. (p. 37)

The "plane of immanence" represents the imperceptible forces that animate connections and individuate all form. "It is the horizon itself that is in movement: the relative horizon recedes when the subject advances, but on the plane of immanence we are always and already on the absolute horizon" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 38). The "absolute horizon" is the infinite ground of all forces that precede and are the genesis for both the subject and a world. It is a site of pure creativity, of absolute novelty in which forms take shape in unique compositions relative to the particular forces and intensities as an unstable event. Thought and the subject are both emergent qualities rather than presupposed entities. They are the product of a change in speeds producing a fold or accretion in the plane: "There are only relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness between unformed elements, or at least between elements that are relatively unformed, molecules and particles of all kinds" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 266). A fold on the "plane of immanence" produces a tentative and temporary subject enveloped by thought that has emerged simultaneously.

This brief account of Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) immanent philosophy is intended to serve as a functional understanding of its complexities to substantiate my purposeful use of the term *lingering*. To linger is to open oneself to the outside of thought, to the infinite potential of the "plane of immanence." Lingering is becoming not as preformed subject in relation to a world of forms, but as emergent and provisional subject lingering *within* its folds. The inchoate quality of lingering provides

a conceptual foundation for addressing the work of Abramović as well as a potential basis for thinking the search of research. While not intended to be a precise analog, an examination of Abramović's work through the lens of immanent philosophy may provide a preliminary image of the search of research. I analyze her work as a kind of immanent process of inquiry for both the artist and the viewer. I realize that analysis as a written text already presupposes the very separation (subject/object) that the concept of immanence rejects as well as the necessary analogic processes that subtend language. Yet I also accept that this as a necessary, albeit insufficient, way to attempt to articulate these ideas.

Space Between

Abramović's artworks often involved physical risk, which she felt moved her into spaces of unknown experiences (Richards, 2010). In *Rhythm 10* (1973) (Abramović & Kaplan, 2016, p. 60), Abramović knelt on a large piece of heavy white paper unrolled on the floor. In front of her was an array of 10 knives and two tape recorders. Abramović turned on one of the tape recorders, selected one of the knives, and proceeded to stab it in quick succession in the spaces between her fingers until she nicked one of them. She would then switch knives and repeat the process. With the paper stained with blood and the last knife having completed its task, she rewound and played the sounds on the first tape recorder and started the second and repeated the entire process. She tried to synchronize her stabbing to the rhythm of the first recording, trying to cut her finger on exactly the same stroke as before. Once finished, she rewound and played the sound of both recordings simultaneously, stood up, and walked away.

Following the performance, Abramović described how the space between her and the audience collapsed into an amorphous space of total freedom:

> It was as if electricity was running through my body, and the audience and I had become one. A single organism. The sense of danger in the room had united the onlookers and me in that moment: the here and now, and nowhere else. (Abramović, 2016, p. 60)

Not only did the performance unite her with her audience; the event seemed to collapse time into a singular event. Abramović recalled, "I knew I'd succeeded in creating an unprecedented unity of time present and time past with random errors" (Abramović, 2016, p. 48). Here, Abramović was lingering at "an infinite and absolute horizon making possible the consistency that thought requires" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 153) between a past and a future where forces circulate prior to achieving form; imperceptible to herself while becoming a "Marina whom I didn't know yet" (p. 60). The performance itself exists as an event of sensation and intensity bringing forth an alternate experience of time. Her sense of not knowing the self and experiencing the becoming of the event corresponds to Deleuze's description of time as *Aion*, or the time of immanence.

Aion and *Chronos* are coincidental concepts of time within Deleuze's (1990) philosophy of immanence. Chronos composes the sequences of a living present, while Aion sustains this sequence as an infinite time "which divides it eternally into a proximate past and an imminent future" (p. 63). *Rhythm 10* reveals time as Aion where conventional bifurcated notions of self and other, subject and object, outside and inside collapse into an imperceptible living present that occurs as a subdivision of time between "something which has just happened and something about to happen; never something that is happening" (Deleuze, 1990, p. 63). Aion is the time of the search in research; a moment between this world and another, a time of pure variation, of affects where all content as well as the subject is suspended on an immanent plane, present but yet-to-come. *Rhythm 10* produces a site where the transcendent subject and preformed knowledge are

erased by a lingering associated with the becoming of Aion. How are subjects constituted in this "space between"? What are subjects of lingering time?

Cutting: A Subject Yet-To-Come

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) identified another consequential disease consistent with transcendent thought: *significance*, which points to inadequacy of the signifier/signified dyad within immanent thought. They claimed, "It is perfectly futile to claim to transcend interpretation or even communication through the production of signifier, because communication and interpretation are what always serve to reproduce and produce signifier" (p. 114). That is, a signifier effectively arrests the event of becoming, the time of Aion, by fixing understanding and the subject who understands, in terms of an outside analogic form, such as words or even ideas. Indeed, St. Pierre (2016) argued that the very definitions and methods sustaining qualitative educational research limit its capacity to see beyond proscriptive boundaries, "prevent[ing] us from recognizing the exceptional that is always everywhere but outside the narrow groove in which we live and think and do" (p. 7). Deleuze and Guattari (1987) did not discount signification; rather, they focused their attention on the immanent origins of forms prior to their becoming signs.

Abramović used risk in her work as a means of experimentation and a way to move herself into a space of potential failure outside of the "narrow groove" of conventional experience, stating:

> If you experiment, you have to fail. By definition, experimenting means going to territory where you've never been, where failure is very possible.… I love to live in the spaces in between, the places where you leave the comfort of your home and your habits behind and make yourself completely open to chance. (Abramović, 2016, p. 155)

Chance and risk converged in *Rhythm 0*, which was performed in Naples, Italy, in 1974 (Abramović & Kaplan, 2016, p. 70). Abramović asked herself, "What if instead of doing something to myself, I let the public decide what to do to me?" (p. 67).

Abramović stood motionless behind a table containing an array of 72 objects, including a rose, a mirror, a Polaroid camera, a needle, scissors, a carving knife, and a pistol with one bullet lying next to it (Abramović, 2016). After 3 hours, a man from the audience cut her shirt apart and removed it, thus emboldening others who began to write on her body with lipstick, move her body into various poses, and stick pins into her flesh. Eventually, someone cut her neck with the knife. At the end of 6 hours, and in the face of escalating risk, the gallerist declared the piece complete.

We might focus on the objects and the actions that occurred during the performance as signs that, once interpreted, might offer insight into the meaning of *Rhythm 0* or what might be characterized as a transcendent reading. Signs, as such, are the cognitive perceptions reflecting the subject's experience and the language by which this experience has been conditioned, and which preexist and function outside of the event itself. An immanent reading might begin with the cutting as a confluence of forces that trigger a proliferation of intensities, which remain unrepresented until translated into signs.

Prior to cognition is the chaotic force of affects and percepts before they connect up with a subject to become feelings and perceptions "where individual (psychic) and social becomings are entwined, where the relations between 'I' and 'we' are constantly being reconfigured" (Atkinson, 2018, p. 11). These forces constitute what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) refer to as a *regime*, or linguistic stratum, out of which perceptions as signs emerge through translation, and which "should not be understood simply as the ability of one language to 'represent' in some way the givens of another language" (p. 62). That is, the event

of cutting remains immanent with a capacity to determine and reorganize other strata on *its* terms before being coded as a signifier/signified representation (Adkins, 2015, p. 58). For Deleuze and Guattari (1994), art "preserves itself" as sensation "and nothing else: it exists in itself" (p. 164), independent of the creator, and it resists interpretation. Its becoming is outside of the being of the preformed subject. Abramović's work actualizes or expresses the virtual forces that sustain its visible form, and cutting operates within this expression. If we attempt to approach the work at the point of recognition, we obscure the vital forces that have actualized its forms. In effect, we remove it from *its* world to contain it within *our* world—a procedure corresponding to both St. Pierre's and Sontag's critiques. We bring to the object of inquiry a set of perspectives and methods that function as expressions of *our* world and that make sense only within thought's dogmatic image. In short, research reacts and actualizes the object of inquiry, whereas the search of research operates as a counteractualization, a creative rather than reactive operation.

Counteractualizations of the event of Abramović's work, or the event of research, are creative responses of an immanent subject yet-to-come. The contradiction contained within this construction is clear: How can we approach the artwork or the object of research as an unformed subject? Yet this paradox is at the heart of the search of research and is at least approached through the concept of lingering as a means through which to engage a new image of thought. Lingering requires a counteractualization in thought that is conceived as mobile in character. We have established that Abramović's work is an actualization of virtual forces that circulate and reverberate beneath the surface of its expression, and to think this work immanently, we might attempt to move toward this chaotic virtual without the goal of representing this other world in terms of our world. In research, St. Pierre (2016) suggested that we move away from "ready-made research methodologies that guarantee the discipline's researchers will continue to ask questions their methodologies can answer" (p. 7) and that perpetuate "particular knowledges and practices we forget we invented" (p. 7).

Lingering in the event of the virtual forces of an artwork, or the event of research, allows forces to emerge as concepts with tendencies rather than as signs with meaning. These tendencies "are not living presents, but infinitives: the unlimited Aion, the becoming which divides itself infinitely in past and future and always eludes the present" (Deleuze, 1990, p. 5). To linger in the search of research is to enter the time of Aion where the image of thought is "an artistically creative endeavor risking phantasms in order to connect to… pure events, that is to infinitives shorn of their contact to actualities and left only with their mobile relations to all other infinitives" (Williams, 2008, p. 191). The cut on Abramović's body is already rendered an object when it is described and actualized as *a* cut where conventional interpretation takes over. On the other hand, if we address this as *a cutting* or *to cut*, we might linger beneath the veneer of description in the realm of a world of forces subtending the surface as intensities and percepts awaiting the subject yet-to-come that will reconstitute or counteractualize yet another world as the site for novel thought. As St. Pierre (2016) wrote, "I have come to believe that research training too often gets in our way, prevents us from recognizing the 'new' that is always already there in the world, and shuts down futures that might be—an education-to-come we might desire" (p. 8).

Cutting the façade of the actual reveals its ever-present yet imperceptible virtual. Read through the cutting rather than the cut, Abramović exists as an always becoming, never complete subject. Meaning in *Rhythm 0* is neither preordained, nor is it simply meaning that has arrived through interpretation. Her

work represents a counteractualization of infinite movement on the "immanent plane of consistency as it appears on itself in the course of its construction" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 284). The work opens itself as another world producing subjects yet-to-come and appearing as a fold rippling through an immanent plane. Cutting creates an edge, a point of contact, between the surface and the movement of the life forces beneath that sustain the overall body. It is neither the cut (the actual) nor the forces beneath (the virtual) that constitute the form or content of the work. It is a cutting/folding that tears open the surface, producing a border horizon that contains the actual and the virtual, yielding the event of *Rhythm 0*, like a flesh wound that exposes its inside to the outside as a flow of blood.

Art practice can be positioned at the "'seeping edge' between the existing state of affairs and a world 'yet-to-come'" (O'Sullivan, 2006, p. 105). O'Sullivan (2006) also suggested that an event as art is constituted as intuition "incarnated in materials that takes us 'beyond' the actual, plunges us deep into the virtual, before returning with new actualizations" (p. 105). Lingering in the search of research as a subject yet-to-come opens the researcher to another world composed of intensities and infinitives rather than signs and forms where the potential for a concept of research yet-to-come is available. Inquiry, as such, ought to look "for the conditions under which something new, as yet unthought, arises" (Rajchman, 2000, p. 17), where the "focus is not on things already made but on things in the making" (p. 604). How might we conceptualize this space of inquiry as another world we do not yet know; as a not-yet-formed subject without relying on preordained modes of thought and methods of inquiry?

The notion of another world within the context of Deleuze's (1972) rethinking of signification is explored in his explication of the face and its corresponding concept, faciality. It is within this concept that I articulate the experience of lingering in the event of the search and its potential as a productive space of creative thought that cannot be known beforehand but offers the possibility for lines of flight and the creation of new worlds.

Facing Abramović

In the atrium of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, Abramović performed *The Artist Is Present* (Abramović 2010), sitting on a wooden chair facing an empty wooden chair across a small wooden table. Her instructions were simple: "Each person could sit across from me for as short or as long a time as he or she wished. We would maintain eye contact. The public was not to touch or speak to me" (Abramović & Kaplan, 2016, p. 309). Abramović sat motionless for 8 continuous hours each day for approximately 90 days, a total of 736 hours facing all who chose to sit. Some stayed seated for a short time, and others sat for an hour or more. Eventually, she removed the table to "increase contact" (p. 316). Throughout, Abramović was struck by the intensity of the face-to-face encounters as some sitters openly wept.

> The unconditional love of total strangers, was the most incredible feeling I've ever had. *I don't know if this is art*, I said to myself. *I don't know what this is, or what art is*.… But this performance went beyond performance. This was life. (p. 319)

How might one conceptually enter this work? What is the event of the encounter for those sitting and staring at her face and for those witnessing the staring? One may have wondered, "What am I supposed to be doing?," or more generally, "What is happening?," and ultimately, "What does this mean?" Asking these questions presupposes an expectation that one must translate to understand, that there are some signs that might offer insight. Yet the most constant sign in the work may also be the most elusive: the emotionless face of the artist. Deleuze's (1972) reconsideration of the process of signification in his book *Proust and Signs* might offer an alternative

conceptual approach to the production of meaning while lingering in the search of research.

Searching the Face and Falling in Love

Faciality is a concept Deleuze and Guattari developed in relation to the functioning of sign systems and the formation of subjectivity (Bogue, 2003, p. 79). As mentioned above, a regime of signs is an immanent concept that conditions the emergence of signs. Because we too can be understood as emergent, not-yet-formed subjects, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) argued that the face is yet another formulation constrained by the authority of the regime of signs within which it appears. The face, they argue, is not simply an emitter of sound, and the voice is not merely the producer of words and their consequent meaning; "faces and voices are themselves essential components in the functioning of language" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 81). In this section, I extend the previous discussion of regimes of signs to the process of subjectification and the emergent subject yet-to-come through the figure of the face and the process of faciality. By understanding the process of facialization as simultaneously a process of subjectification, we might be able to articulate a concept of an immanent subject more in line with the critiques of both Sontag and St. Pierre.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) conceptualized the process of signification around four general categories of signs, two of which I discuss here: the signifying and postsignifying regimes. The signifying regime, also referred to as the despotic regime, is characterized by a condition in which "every sign refers to another sign, and only to another sign, ad infinitum" (p. 112). Meaning within the signifying regime is composed of interpretations, "there is no bottom, only endless interpretations" (Adkins, 2015, p. 87), and meaning is conditioned by an existing semiotic system that precedes an existent subject who interprets signs to determine to what other signs they refer. The despotic regime operates hierarchically with a central force/face that radiates outward from a static position of authority.

The face speaks, but the words are meaningful not simply because of the codes of language, but because they emerge from a face that is also coded, or facialized, by a regime of signs. The "face" of the signifying, despotic regime is "the Master Signifier" (Bogue, 2003, p. 84), understood as a full-frontal face that operates as the "coded body of authority" (p. 84). This regime could be conceived in terms of the face of a despotic leader whose word is law. In other words, "To break the law is a direct offense against the king. The center must remain occupied at all times. The king is immortal" (p. 85). The signifying regime territorializes and actualizes signs, as well as faces as signs, as representations determined through cognition and presumes a stable transcendent subject. Similarly, St. Pierre (2018) suggested that prescribed research methodologies operate as "a container with well-identified categories into which researchers are expected to slot all aspects of their research" (p. 603).

In contrast, the postsignifying regime, or the subjective or passional regime, "is defined by a decisive external occurrence, by a relation with the outside that is expressed more as an emotion than an idea" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 120). It functions "as a point of departure for a linear series or proceeding that runs its course, at which point a new proceeding begins" (p. 120), and it is conceived as a line of flight that breaks from the despotic controlling structures of the signifying regime. Breaking free from the despot requires a turning away of the face as a kind of betrayal, an action that renders the face insignificant, an outcast. Yet this turn is not defined as a betrayal within the postsignifying regime that it yields. Adkins (2015) described by stating, "Any betrayal in the despotic regime is vilified in the form of the scapegoat. In order for change to be valorized betrayal or turning away must have

a different status" (p. 87). The signifying regime seeks compliance, and the passional regime privileges the betrayal as experimentation that requires not only rejecting the signs that govern the despotic regime, but the very subject, the face of that regime. The passional regime of signs operates within the search of research "where the line of flight achieves escape velocity and constitutes itself as a new people no longer beholden to the [despot's] signifying system" (Adkins, 2015, p. 86). This reconstitution is the very reorganization of thought that might give rise to previously unknown signs and unfamiliar processes for understanding that require a new emergent subject. Whereas the signifying despotic regime territorializes, the passional regime deterritorializes and is consistent with Sontag's appeal for an erotics of interpretation that works outside of the stifling aspects of intellectual interpretation.

The use of the term *passional* carries the sense of intense emotion often associated with inchoate feelings of love, and it corresponds well with a sense of lingering. In his preface to his 1972 edition of *Proust and Signs*, Deleuze wrote, "This book considers Proust's entire work as commanded by an experience of signs that mobilizes the involuntary and the unconscious: whence the Search as interpretation" (p. viii). This search references the thoughts of the narrator in Proust's (1913/2001) *In Search of Lost Time*, trying to recall his past. Through Proust, Deleuze (1972) articulates a process of signification where signs are not merely things waiting to be deciphered, but "are the object of a temporal apprenticeship, not of an abstract knowledge" (p. 4). This apprenticeship enables a kind of lingering within another world or another regime of signs. We search not by asking, "What does this sign mean?," but "To what world does this sign belong?" (Drohan, 2009, p. 28).

The process of signification in the passional regime is like falling in or falling out of love and emerges in the process of trying to understand the face of the beloved. Deleuze (1972) stated, "The world expressed by the loved woman [or man], is a world that excludes us, even when she gives us a mark of preference" (p. 7). The beloved's face is the actualization of a world that has constituted it as a form. Deleuze (1972) went on to claim that "We cannot interpret the signs of a loved person without proceeding into worlds that have not waited for us in order to take form" (p. 6). Apprenticing to the beloved's face involves moving through and beyond it into a world that produces a subject that emerges among the signs of this other world. Here, one encounters another level of signs, or what Deleuze (1972) termed "sensuous signs" (p. 9). Experiencing signs of love opens one to the affective sensations associated with them, initiating a search for the origins of the tendencies, rather than the associated objects, of those feelings. "It is as if the quality enveloped, imprisoned the soul of an object other than the one it now designates" (p. 8).

Read through the passional regime of signs, the face-to-face encounters in *The Artist Is Present* were not ones of recognition, but rather of a kind of ecstatic searching that produced not meaning, but a connection to the affective intensities of this encounter, producing tears, confusion, awe, and even love. The event produced, for Abramović, a kind of "unconditional love" that suggests transference into another world that was opened through a betrayal of the conventions of a signifying regime that had constituted the artist's face and the face of the sitter and reconstituted a new subject among the "sensuous" signs of a postsignifying passional regime.

Conclusion: De-Facing Research and Becoming Probe-Heads

The "face" of the despot can be likened to the "methodologies, methods, and standards we have invented to formalize and validate a particular and privileged kind of 'empirical,'

'data-driven' social science research" (St. Pierre, 2016, p. 6). The face of the subject is merely a re-presentation of the authority of the despot. At the limits of the authority imposed by the signifying regime of standard and preexistent methods is the potential for lines of flight that can escape its authoritative gaze through a partial turn away from the face of the despot. It is here that the passional, postsignifying regime commences, and it is here that I give some definition to the search of research.

In the moment of the turn away from the signifying regime, we are no longer a subject, but a subject yet-to-come. We have rejected, or deterritorialzed, the face of authority. We have de-faced ourselves, or we have not yet territorialized a new subject corresponding to the line of flight conditioned by the betrayal; we are adrift in the search. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe this in-between position as

> *Probe-heads* (*têtes chercheuses*, guidance devices) that dismantle the strata in their wake, break through the walls of signifiance, pour out of the holes of subjectivity, fell trees in favor of veritable rhizomes, and steer the flows down lines of positive deterritorializaton or creative flight. (p. 190)

Bogue (2003) translated *têtes chercheuses* literally as "searching heads" (p. 108). As such, it offers a provocative and productive concept for a disposition necessary to move toward a new and emergent conception of research "in which the conditions of thought are such that neither the subject, nor education, nor science, [nor art] as they are presently configured are possible" (St. Pierre, 2004, p. 294). To become probe-heads, we must linger in the event of the encounter with material, ideas, actions, artworks, and so on under consideration for research, before we have been facialized by the despotic regime of methodological and applicable thought. Perhaps lingering in the search of research is akin to the euphoric haze familiar to anyone who has experienced falling in love or even the sense of aimlessness associated with falling out of love. By lingering with the search, we might find our way clear of premeditated and prescriptive patterns and work against method in an act of love in order "to keep creating the new without method: doing without method by staying on its outside in an act of creative destruction" (Jackson, 2017, p. 674).

Lingering is neither an absence of thought nor merely waiting for or even seeking conclusions. It is an affirmative and productive stance that sets a stage for the emergence of new thought, new conditions for thought, and for a new subjectivity, opening a researcher to an alternative experience of the world guided by a loving openness to the unknown. From this position, we are not yet researcher, artist, or viewer; we are probe-heads present at the becoming of all of these as a passive, yet passionate, witness.

It is in the concept of faciality that we might experience a productive lingering in a search for something else that holds no promise of academic relevance, no expectation of conclusion, indeed no presumption of meaning. The search is not an act of seeking, but an event of lingering. Turning our "face" away from a world already formed toward another without prejudgment and without the impulse to interpret substantiates an event of lingering, a subject-yet-to-come, and the becoming of a new world as a process of "creative destruction" and as an act that de-faces conventional research.

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ENDNOTES

[1] Throughout this article, I have intentionally used the present tense to introduce and reference quoted material to affirm their simultaneity within the context of other ideas (regardless of chronological origin) and my own. I have done this so as not to position the quotes as something "said" in the past, but rather as living ideas in the present with duly attributed origins of these ideas.

[2] References to the works of Sontag and St. Pierre are not intended to draw an equivalency or imply some kind of direct influence on one another; they wrote in different eras and within different disciplines. I have referenced their work as a starting point because each of them reached a kind of impasse in their respective thinking where the conventional ways of knowing through qualitative social science research (St. Pierre) and aesthetic criticism (Sontag) either constrained or simply reproduced existing knowledge. In this way, they serve not as models of alternative practice, but as examples of the value of challenging not just the way we articulate and affirm knowledge, but the potential for new thought and different ways of knowing inaccessible to conventional research practices.