

ON THE CYBERFLÂNEUR: A NOMADOLOGY OF WANDERING

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Abstract

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This thesis is a critical response to Evgeny Morozov’s article proclaiming the death of the cyberflâneur. Suspicious of the superficiality of his argument, I developed a practico-theoretical project to prove that the cyberflâneur is not dead but alive – or, if it were dead, to rescue it from its grave and bring it back to life. In the course of my response to Morozov, I develop a theoretical foundation that allows me to continue thinking about the concept and practice of the cyberflâneur in the context of the Internet. In doing so, I rely on Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s “Treatise on Nomadology: The War Machine” (2011), in combination with a history of the tradition of wandering. We are living in a postmodern-posthuman era driven by the chaotic and confusing forces that are manifested through the Internet. As such, it is no longer enough to be concerned with opening the space where we live, move and think; we cannot retreat to nature, we can’t escape society. However, I see potential in the Internet. The Internet, as a physical and material network, can be actualized as an apparatus of capture. It operates as a medium for accelerating or limiting speed, or as an apparatus for the control of the transmission of information. I develop the cyberflâneur as an aesthetic figure that reveals the Internet’s potential. If these revelations happen to be transmitted, then everyday life can again become an object of dispute, rather than unmeditated habituation.

Keywords: cyberflâneur, wandering, Internet, State, war machine, nomad, aesthetics, research-creation, everyday life.

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Introduction: Cyberflânerie

In 2012, popular media critic Evgeny Morozov wrote a widely read article for the *New York Times* titled “The Death of the Cyberflâneur.” Morozov’s article states that what *Ceramics Today* celebrated as the “The Rise of the Cyberflâneur” in 1998 is no longer possible in the context of an Internet that is designed to “get things done,” dominated by corporations like Facebook. For Morozov the consumerist design of social media obfuscates the possibility for cyberflânerie, since it is no longer an inviting place to aimlessly ‘surf’. For him, “[e]verything that makes cyberflânerie possible — solitude and individuality, anonymity and opacity, mystery and ambivalence, curiosity and risk-taking — is under assault by [Facebook]” (2012). For Morozov, in the ’90s, it made sense to practice cyberflânerie on the Internet, since it was an obscure and unexploited territory. However, with the most popular parts of the Internet being dominated by social media giants that own and control their design, making them uninteresting and generic places to stroll, he announced the death of the cyberflâneur.

This thesis began as a critical response to Morozov’s article. Suspicious about the superficiality of his argument regarding the death of the cyberflâneur, I developed a practico-theoretical project to prove that the cyberflâneur is not dead but alive – or, if it were dead, to rescue it from its grave and bring it back to life.

We are living in a postmodern-posthuman era that is driven by chaotic powers manifested by or on the Internet, an apparatus of control (Galloway, 2004). Now that the Internet is part of our everyday life, and we have the possibility to receive and transmit large quantities of information in short amounts of time, meaning and information exceed our capacities to ‘keep up’ with this machine. We are now producing ‘Big Data,’ an excessive amount of information endlessly archived by corporations and governments, and yet we do not know what to make of it. The Critical Art Ensemble, for instance, is

aware of this issue and expresses its worry about contemporary conditions by claiming that the consistency of meaning that religion or science would bring to human beings is no longer apparent: “The once unquestioned markers of stability, such as God or Nature, have dropped into the black hole of skepticism, dissolving positioned identification of subject or object” (CAE, 1994, 11). It is now, when the “map becomes the territory” and we can no longer distinguish between what is real and what is not, that the figure of the cyberflâneur is so significant for us.

In *The Painter of Modern Life* (1863), Charles Baudelaire describes the flâneur as a type of artist whose craft is to render visible the often invisible and fleeting moments of life as a mirror that reflects an image of that which is in front of it. If the flâneur is a city dweller who works with the street as a medium for artistic creation, then the cyberflâneur is a software dweller who inherits the former’s qualities and reconfigures them into the context of the Internet. In this way, the cyberflâneur is important since his or her gaze can still express what is going on in his or her experience as another citizen who decides to explore this new medium of the Internet feverishly, as Baudelaire the flâneur did when he strolled through the streets of Paris. In times of linguistic confusion, we need the figure of the cyberflâneur and the practice of cyberflânerie since it carries the capacity to open up our daily life and create a reflection for slowing down the speed of the medium. The gravity of the reflection could remind us of the forceful technology that drives and determines our conditions of possibility.

Contrary to Morozov’s argument, if the cyberflâneur is not dead but alive, then the practice of flânerie remains possible. In the course of my response to Morozov, I develop a theoretical foundation that will allow me to continue thinking about this aesthetic concept and practice in the context of the Internet. In the prelude, I work with Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s “Treatise on Nomadology: The War Machine” from *A Thousand Plateaus* (2011), which provides me with a conceptual terminology or language to under-

stand how the chaotic forces of life become expressed through the figures of the nomad and State. In the first chapter, I present a history of the aesthetic tradition of wandering that includes works by Jean Jacques Rousseau (2004), Etienne Pivert de Senancour (1901), Charles Baudelaire (1984), Louis Aragon (1994), and ‘the situationists’ (1995). Finally, in the second chapter I develop a concept of the cyberflâneur based on the insights that are provided in the prelude and chapter 1.

The prelude introduces the concepts of State, nomad, and war machine, three interconnected concepts that Deleuze and Guattari discuss in their “Treatise.” The State is an apparatus of capture, a striating and organizing force that moves towards capturing that which is exterior to itself in order to transform it to the point where it becomes interior to itself or under its control. The State creates a form of interiority or safety, which allows it to deem whether something is or exterior and dangerous to it. Different from the State, the nomad is a smooth, changing, and adaptive figure through which the war machine manifests itself. The war machine is that which is exterior to the State, out of its control, and therefore, it is that which is capable of destroying the State. In the subsequent chapters, Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts allow me to think about the significance of a ‘nomadic’ figure like the cyberflâneur, based on its capacity to create openings in the striated territory of the State.

Chapter 1 presents a brief chronological history of wandering through a series of ‘vignettes’ of wanderers whom I describe as ‘nomadic.’ I begin with Plato’s *Symposium* in which Socrates wanders off of his route, using the anecdote as an introduction to the complexities of the study of wandering. I then move through the *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* (2004), where Rousseau isolates himself from an imperfect society in order to cultivate the study of his soul. It is through a series of solitary ‘walks’ that Rousseau wanders and discovers how his life is negatively affected by the social world in which he lives, transforming walking from an activity to get oneself from one place to the next into

a meditative practice. I then work through Senancour's *Obermann* (1901), which presents a series of letters by a man who has also left society in search of the tranquility that Rousseau attained after 'moving out.' In Senancour's text, we find that despite the way in which Obermann constantly moves in the quest for wisdom and a pure state of nature, he fails to satisfy his desires. However, it is in his act of wandering that we learn that perhaps there is nothing out there but a place from which we can reflect on our daily social life. After *Obermann*, I return to wander through the city with Baudelaire (1986), who writes and embodies a figure that is still isolated from society in that it inhabits the city as an observer of the beauty that springs from within it. The flâneur is a particular artist whose craft is to create a mirror for reflection on the habitual life of the city through poems, sketches, or paintings. The flâneur's mode of being in the city is interesting, as he also discovers a different use that can be given to it, which is that of wandering and contemplating through it. I continue strolling through the Parisian arcades with Aragon, who also embodies the figure of the flâneur. Aragon shows how this practice can be significant in the production of new stories (a history) of a present that has become past, while he is also very critical about the consequences of storytelling since language is a powerful medium that has the capacity to create a static sense of reality that is closed to interventions from without. Finally, I turn to the Situationists (1995). Led by Guy Debord, the Situationist International is born after the isolationist practices of the previously mentioned 'wanderers' stop being useful or forceful as they were in the past. With the 'situationists' we notice a call for collective action that would ideally create openings in the striated cities of the State. This is why the 'situationists' invent a series of playful tactics like the 'dérive' and 'détournement' in order to intervene in the flow of daily life and hopefully change the conditions of possibility.

Chapter 2 is localized in the context of the 'information age,' where power is manifested through the Internet, an apparatus of control (Galloway, 2004). In this chapter I develop the concept of the cyberflâneur. Section 1 of this chapter presents an

account of the Internet as a medium and an era. Here I engage with Alexander Galloway's *Protocol* and an essay by the Critical Art Ensemble titled "Nomadic Power and Cultural Resistance" (1994) in order to re-contextualize some of the ideas that Deleuze and Guattari introduce in their "Treatise" in a more contemporary, technological setting. This re-contextualization of the "Treatise" complicates notions of State and nomad, since the former has appropriated the tactics of the latter in order to extend its domination. Section 2 of this chapter provides a literature review on the concept of the cyberflâneur. Here I engage thoroughly with some of the arguments that Morozov and others have written against the cyberflâneur, even to the point of suggesting that we should "Forget the Flâneur" (McGarrigle, 2013). The third and final section of this chapter focuses on the concept of the cyberflâneur, based on my own research-creation project *FB on FB* which adopts Baudelaire's insights together with those of the wanderers of the second chapter. Since this thesis is mostly interested in the role of the artist in a postmodern era, I also look at other artistic projects that utilize social media as a medium for the actualization of possibilities that differ from those producers prescribe for consumers – projects like *Glitchr*, *Love Machine*, and *Facebook Demetricator*. *Glitchr* is a project based on social media software glitches that has allowed its creator to create unique vistas on the design of Facebook, Tumblr and Twitter. *Love Machine* is an algorithm that automatically "likes" all the Posts that appear in a user's Facebook newsfeed and displays the number of "likes" that it managed to transmit. *Facebook Demetricator* is an add-on that hides all the metrics that the software provides to its users, disrupting the convention these metrics produce and "enabling a network society that isn't dependent on quantification" (Grosser, 2014). These artworks produce what Guy Debord calls *détournement*, calling attention to and subverting the otherwise invisible features of the medium.

This thesis is born as an *Exit to the Posthuman Future* (Kroker, 2014), an exit from the present condition, an opening for the nomadic forces of life to continue finding a medium for their expression:

Perhaps what is also happening here is a fast glimpse out of the side of the digital eye that reveals what happens in the posthuman imagination when the (artistic) brain opens perception to the terrorism and boredom of the code...The tangible presence of the posthuman brain, the artistic brain, is probably what is most disturbing to the powerful alliance of neural networks and software. (Kroker, 41-42)

*Important note to the reader: I do not conceive of writing as merely a tool for simple, clean, or scientific representation. Writing is also an aesthetic venture which implores a capacity for the existential. *When I switch to Italics I, or the self that I am, joins the discussion. My non-italicized self is the formal academic persona, while the italicized self will speak or write with the non-formalized guts.* I believe that it is important to clarify why this italicized, and drunken poet bursts through the formal writing. Again, *I* disrupt the flow of the formal writing for aesthetic purposes; aiming to play with the different intensities and affects that words can provide when I am trying to express something that the formal writing cannot express...

Prelude: Nomadology

This section introduces some of the conceptual tools that Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari provide in their “Treatise on Nomadology: The War Machine” (2011). I borrow concepts like State, war machine, and nomad to analyze some of their particular manifestations. The State includes notions of the Ideological State Apparatus and the Repressive State Apparatus. The war machine is that which is exterior to the State, the chaos that is beyond the State, the natural, cruel, and indifferent forces of the cosmos. Finally, the nomad is that which actualizes the war machine; it is the figure opposite to the State whose aim is to control the expression of the war machine that it actualizes. In this chapter I start by introducing these concepts through examples where the state or government is directly involved, and then I move into more aesthetic examples where fragments from the work of Sophocles and Roberto Bolaños are analyzed in this context. In the subsequent chapters I also rely on and advance these concepts by Deleuze and Guattari: Chapter 1 presents an analysis of the different ‘wanderers’ which I conceive as ‘nomad,’ while Chapter 2 considers the ‘nomadic’ figure of the cyberflâneur in the context of the Internet.

In order to expound my exegesis over the following two chapters I will first provide a prelude. Here I offer a working vocabulary for the reader to reference in what follows. In their “Treatise on Nomadology – The War Machine” from *A Thousand Plateaus* (2011), Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari introduce the concept of the war machine, which is, in every respect, “of another species, another nature, another origin than the State apparatus” (352). The concept of the war machine allows us to conceive of a force exterior to the State, out of its control: *the chaotic forces of life*. The State’s power to regulate, preserve, care, and destroy the life of that which lives within its territory can always be threatened by the war machine. And it is in these circumstances that the defense organs of the State, such as the police or the army, will actively work in trying to fence off whatever may cause

any disturbances to its order. Any number of examples could illustrate the relationship between the State and the war machine. To take one: the war machine was actualized in Mexico City in 2014, when different protestors took over the streets and attacked policemen by throwing rocks, explosives, and Molotov cocktails (Sarmiento, 2014). The assembling of this chaotic event happened because citizens were discontent with the Mexican state, for not giving sufficient importance to the disappearance of 43 students in Aoytzinga, Guerrero. This is a clear instance in which the State and war machine appear in the same plane of immanence, a unifying place and time. Having possession over an army and its weapons, the means of destruction, and engaging in battles against enemies does not imply that the State owns or controls the war machine, but it does imply that it is aware of it and uses all of its efforts to put it off.

Although Deleuze and Guattari oppose the concepts of State and war machine, there are moments in which the war machine expresses itself through the organs of the State. An example of this happened in Toronto, Canada in 2013¹, when a policeman shot 9 bullets in 13 seconds at 18 year old Sammy Yatim. This act was considered excessive and unacceptable by both the police and the broader population in Canada. Much controversy surrounded the policeman who could have avoided shooting so many times, or altogether attacking this young man with a gun, who only carried a knife. Following Deleuze and Guattari, “*The State has no war machine of its own; it can only appropriate one in the form of a military or police institution, one that will continuously cause it problems.*” (355) Here we can see that the war machine is so powerful that it can always sneak in through the repressive apparatus of the State, which is supposed to be in charge of controlling it – but every now and then it fails to do so.²

1 “Outrage in Canada”, 2013.

2 It is worth noting the difference between notions of “the state” and “the State”. “The state” refers solely to the government, the army, police, and public administration (Althusser conceives this as the state apparatus). And “the State” is a more abstract and general conception of any organized body that desires to control the chaotic forces of life. I will mostly work with “the State” as a concept that allows me to reflect on the effect of its striating power over the material world which it claims to be in control of.

The concept of the war machine is paradoxical. “It is necessary to reach the point of conceiving the war machine as itself a pure form of exteriority, whereas the State apparatus constitutes the form of interiority we habitually take as a model, or according to which we are in the habit of thinking” (Deleuze and Guattari, p.354). The paradox of the war machine comes from it being that which is exterior to what is thinkable in our everyday language. In this way, considering the existence of the war machine implies thinking about the unthinkable, or that which is impossible for thought to conceive. This is why it is so complicated for us, who live within the confines of the State, to imagine our habitual life being different than how it is – to imagine life outside the State. It is sometimes even unproductive to linger on the idea that there is an exterior force which carries the potential to wipe us all away in a flash. Deleuze and Guattari describe how becoming aware of the war machine is as overwhelming as thinking about the idea of becoming cruelly affected by its indifference.

Catatonia is – ‘This affect is too strong for me,’ and a flash is: ‘The power of this affect sweeps me away,’ so that the Self (*Moi*) is now nothing more than a character whose actions and emotions are desubjectified, perhaps even to the point of death. (Deleuze and Guattari, 356)

I sadly remember my friend ‘Betito,’ who was driving on a highway in Mexico City, and died from a car accident after one of his tires collapsed when hitting a tiny hole on the poorly maintained pavement that he could not see at night, due to the insufficient amount of illumination in that stretch of the road. The war machine, as a paradox, is that which allows us then to realize that there is something forceful beyond our control. And it is precisely this ‘something’ which is enacted by the nomad.

Although Merriam-Webster defines “nomad” as “a member of a people who have no fixed residence but move from place to place; an individual who roams about; a person who does not stay long in the same place; a wanderer;” Deleuze and Guattari think of it

differently:

we have seen that the war machine was the invention of the nomad, because it is in its essence the constitutive element of smooth space, the occupation of this space, displacement within this space, and the corresponding composition of people: this is its sole and veritable positive object (*nomos*). (417)

The nomad inhabits ‘smooth space’, which can be contrasted with ‘striated’ or sedentary space. The former is an open, formless, temporary space that allows nomads to move around freely (the desert or the steppe are some basic examples of this). The latter is subjected to the organization that the State imposes upon itself (the city, the kingdom, or that which is inside its borders). Smooth space is occupied without being measured or counted, while striated “space is counted in order to be occupied”, exploited, and organized (Deleuze and Guattari, 362).

After considering some differences between these two kinds of spaces we can see how the nomad’s relation to the material world that it inhabits is ‘smoother’ than that of the State, and this is what allows it to produce a war machine. The nomad lives a more open, fluid, and adaptable life opposed to the State’s rigid forms of organization. This is why this ‘figure’ invents its own ways to survive without relying on the care of the State. According to Deleuze and Guattari:

If the nomad can be called the Deterritorialized par excellence, it is precisely because there is no reterritorialization *afterward* as with the migrant . . . With the nomad, . . . it is deterritorialization that constitutes the relation to the earth, to such a degree that the nomad reterritorializes on deterritorialization itself. (381)

When Oedipus realizes that the prophecy that he will kill his father and marry his mother has been fulfilled, he blinds himself, renounces the Theban kingship, and becomes a

nomad who starts wandering through the desert³ until he finds the place of his deathbed at Colonus. It is important to note that as soon as Oedipus transgresses the law when stepping into the sacred grove at Colonus, he is seized by the state, and this binding then obliges him to follow the law in order to be able to enter and stay in that territory. When Oedipus crosses this ‘sacred’ boundary, he deterritorializes a territory that is protected by the state. And when the state captures and identifies him as an outsider – asking him, *Who are you, stranger?*² – we can see that it deterritorializes Oedipus in order to reterritorialize its claimed space. This is what makes Oedipus the nomad become a migrant. Derritorialization is what the nomad enacts to continue moving, while the State performs this movement to recuperate its lost territory.

The nomad’s capacity to create its own form of distribution troubles the State:

In any case, if the State always finds it necessary to repress the nomad and minor sciences, . . . it does so not because the content of these sciences is inexact or imperfect, or because of their magic or initiatory character, but because they imply a division of labor opposed to the norms of the State. (Deleuze and Guattari, 368)

The nomad’s particular field of distribution (*nomos*) can always pose a threat to the integrity of the State (*logos*), since it does not have the access to regulate its mode of operating – and this means that it cannot control the kinds of outcomes that it will produce. For example, the division of labor that was created by the protesters for the case of the 43

3 We can say that Oedipus is a nomad-migrant from the moment he is born. When the oracle announces the prophecy that he will murder his father and marry his mother, Oedipus is given by his parents to a slave-shepherd to be abandoned in the “woody flanks of Mount Cithaeron” (1984, p.219). When the slave-shepherd took Oedipus to the mount, he pitied the little baby and gave him to another shepherd from Corinth. Once the shepherd returned to Corinth, king Polybus took him off his hands since he never had a child, and made him his son. As a grown up, the oracle tells Oedipus the prophecy that he will become the murderer of his father and husband of his mother. This gets Oedipus to go back to the desert and it is there that he confronts his original father (King Laius from Thebes) and ends up killing him. This leads to Oedipus becoming the King of Thebes. At this moment, the prophecy is fulfilled and when he acknowledges this, he ends up blinding himself, desecrating himself, renouncing the throne of Thebes and going to the desert as an exile – becoming a nomad (Sophocles, 1984).

disappeared students in Mexico City is radically different than that of the state. Getting together to assemble Molotov cocktails is something that the state would repress since it cannot control its outcome; it is therefore *outside the law*.

Another example where we can observe the relationship between the State and the war machine comes from Roberto Bolaños' novel *The Savage Detectives*. In the novel we have the "infrarealists," a para-academic group of poets that is completely displaced from any professional field where they could make a living out of the practice of writing (Bolaños, 1998). One of the many characters, a woman named Xóchitl García, works in a supermarket and constantly complains about the problems that she faces in getting her writing transmitted to the broader public. Xóchitl talks about the cynicism of the glamorous State writers, who are praised for the kind of writing that reinforces the power structures that she and other poets are trying to expose, and hopefully overcome through their work. Xóchitl and the other poets are poor and live a very different kind of lifestyle, one that is more mobile and unstable, than that of the State writers like Octavio Paz. From this we can see how these other minor poets who write with the war machine's flesh are excluded from academic institutions and publishing companies of all sorts. This is a mechanism of defense that is actualized by the State in order to cut these alternative thinking practices, which imply a different distribution⁴ than the one that fits its universal mold.

Deleuze and Guattari's essay also meditates on and explicates a notion of thought; what are the ideational machinations and assumptions which anticipate and support the State? For them, "[o]nly thought is capable of inventing the fiction of a State that is universal by right, of elevating the State to the level of *de jure* universality" (375). Thought carries the capacity for the creation of an image that grants the State its fictitious authority. Why fiction? Because for Deleuze and Guattari fiction implies a fabrication of a sense of reality that could be otherwise. "The State gives thought a form of interiority,

⁴ In his book *The Politics of Aesthetics*, Jacques Rancière conceptualizes the State's distribution as the "distribution of the sensible" (2011).

and thought gives that interiority a form of universality” (375). One problem with the creation of these images of thought is that they provide very rigid forms for thinking that could restrict the flow of the exterior forces of life – or the war machine. Thought giving its interiority a universal status propagates a closure that dictates that there is nothing outside whatever is interior to or allowed by the State.⁵ We already know that the production of these images of thought can be dangerous as in the Holocaust, where we had the totalizing image of the Aryan that aimed at erasing everything that seemed exterior to or different from it. And this is the problem of representation, where these (fictional) images are presented to us as truthful configurations of the world. Perhaps a possible way of dealing with the problem of representation is if we acknowledge its paradoxical nature: when we represent we give presence to an absence⁶, we repeat the presentation of something that is already exterior in space and time – something that is absent and that cannot speak for itself as it did when it appeared for the first time. In other words, when we approach a representation we should consider and imagine the distance and the distortions that appear between the original object and its future re-presentation(s) or copies.

Nomad thought implies a significantly different distribution than State thought. In its openness to exteriority, nomad thought carries the capacity to destabilize State thought. According to Deleuze and Guattari:

[State thought is] confronted by counter thoughts, which are violent in their acts and discontinuous in their appearances, and whose existence is mobile in history. These are acts of a “private thinker”, as opposed to the public profes-

5 In “1,000 Political Subjects” (2006) Kenneth Surin describes the problem that Deleuze and Guattari have with certain philosophical systems of thought that endow the state with an absolute power and authority. “The foremost exponent of this ‘thought’ behind the genesis of the state is of course Hegel, who explicitly views the state as the embodiment of the universal, as the realization of reason, and thus as the spiritual community that incorporates all individuals within itself” (63).

6 In “Forbidden Representation,” Jean Luc Nancy writes about the delicate and controversial nature of representing something like the Shoah. In this way, when we represent we must acknowledge that that which we are representing cannot be presented as a full, closed, iconic totality (*The Ground of the Image*, 2005).

sor: Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, or even Shestov. Wherever they dwell is in the steppe or the dessert. They destroy images. Nietzsche's *Schopenhauer as Educator* is perhaps the greatest critique directed against the image of thought and its relation to the State. "Private thinker," however, is not a satisfactory expression, because it exaggerates interiority, when it is a question of *outside thought*. (376)

Nomad thought can always expose the problematic nature of the State since it can reflect on it from an outside perspective. Deleuze and Guattari's oeuvre is an example of this mode of thinking.

In the previous paragraphs, I have been writing about the war machine, the indestructible force that causes the State so many problems. The 'Treatise on Nomadology' is an instance where Deleuze and Guattari reveal some of the fundamental weaknesses of the State by showing the logic by which it operates. Deleuze and Guattari's work provides us with the possibility to continue thinking about the different 'holes' of the state apparatus through which the war machine flows. This thesis is a particular expression of the exteriority that I've been writing about. I do not intend to provide *you*, reader, with a universal order of things, or with the ultimate solution to the problems of the world. But I aim at using the weapon of writing to give way to a war machine that traverses me and animates my desire to write this document. And hopefully these words-arrows will also get to touch *you*, and then inspire *your* future creative endeavors.

Chapter 1: On Wandering: A Brief History and Meditation on the Genesis of the Cyberflaneur

Deleuze and Guattari are not the first to propose the exteriority of the nomad and its thought; having simply given a new name to an old method, or tactic of abdication from the Statist regime of truth. This chapter presents a brief history and meditation on the theory and practice of wandering⁷ through an exploration of different nomadic thinkers and their thought. The subsequent sections are ordered chronologically: starting with a brief instance when Socrates wanders off his route to Agathon's 'symposium' (385–370 BC); then walking 'out' and daydreaming with Rousseau (1776); following and wandering through Rousseau's 'traces' with Senancour (1804); returning to the city with Baudelaire (1863); taking a final stroll with Aragon (1926); and ultimately transforming our environment with the 'situationists' (1960-ongoing). It is important to note that all the wanderers share an isolationist attitude except for the 'situationists', whom I choose to include in this part, acknowledging their rupture with all the other solitary wanderers by rendering their isolationist activities obsolete, and thereby creating a larger social movement that works towards changing our habitual condition of life. In the following 'vignettes', I rely on and advance some of the concepts that have been introduced in Deleuze and Guattari's "Nomadology" through an analysis of different nomad thinkers. In the conclusion of the thesis, I will return to Deleuze and Guattari's *Treatise* and more precisely to their notion of 'nomad thought,' in relation to the work of the following figures. These vignettes work towards developing the concept of the cyberflaneur by cementing the base that will provide a vast toolbox to think about and embody this figure in the context of the Internet.

7 Wandering implies "traveling aimlessly from place to place; moving away from a fixed point or place; or moving or traveling slowly through (over a place or area)". (New Oxford American Dictionary) Wandering can also be applied to the process of thinking when one leaves one's head to think 'freely.' This activity would be similar to Freud's 'free association' method. Letting one's ideas flow smoothly without striating them into pragmatic thoughts. Or in Freud's words: saying "whatever came into his head, while ceasing to give any conscious direction to his thoughts" (1989, p.24).

1.1 Socrates: Where Are You, and What Are You Doing?

Socrates' wandering provides an account of the mysterious and impenetrable nature of this practice. The following excerpt is a brief introduction to the rest of the vignettes that explore more thoroughly the theory and practice of wandering. I start with this because it provides us with a preliminary sense of how to navigate wandering; for it is only discoverable in practice. Wandering is an act that can only be accessed by the subject/individual who experiences it – who in this case is Socrates. As mere spectator of this sojourn, the reader is granted no easy access to the inner workings of Socrates' mind.

At the beginning of Plato's *Symposium*,⁸ Socrates and Aristodemus walk together towards the dinner that is being offered at Agathon's house. "But Socrates fell into his own private thoughts and kept dropping behind as they went along. When Aristodemus stopped too, Socrates told him to go ahead" (5-6). According to Plato, when Aristodemus arrived at Agathon's house, Agathon greeted him and asked:

But what about Socrates – why haven't you brought him along?

When he turned around (Aristodemus said), he saw Socrates wasn't following after all. He explained that Socrates had brought *him* along, and that he was coming to dinner at Socrates' invitation.

'I'm very glad you are,' Agathon said. 'But where is he?'

'He was behind me just now. I can't think where he must be.'

8 This text presents us with an event in which Socrates and others engage in a discussion in praise of Love. When we read the "Symposium", we read a narration of Apollodorus in which he tells the story to an unknown friend that was reported to him by Aristodemus.

‘Go and look, slave,’ Agathon said, ‘and bring Socrates here. And you, Aristodemus, share Eryximachus’ couch.’

. . . [The slave came back and said], ‘Socrates is here; he’s retreated into your neighbor’s porch and is standing there, and won’t come in, although I’ve asked him to.’

‘That’s odd,’ Agathon said. ‘Go on ask him in and don’t leave him alone.’

‘No,’ Aristodemus said; leave him. That is one of his habits. Sometimes he goes off and stands still wherever it happens to be. He’ll come soon, I’m sure. Don’t bother him, leave him alone.’

‘Well, if you think so, that’s what we must do,’ Agathon said.

[...]So they started having dinner, but Socrates still didn’t come in. Agathon kept on saying they should send for Socrates, but Aristodemus wouldn’t let him. In fact, Socrates came quite soon he hadn’t taken too long doing what he usually did), when they were half way through dinner. Then Agathon, who happened to be lying on his own on the bottom couch, said, ‘Come and lie down beside me, Socrates, so that, by contact with you, I can share the piece of wisdom that came to you in the porch. It’s clear that you found what you were looking for and have it now; otherwise you wouldn’t have stopped.’ (6-7)

This excerpt from Plato’s *Symposium* is an instance in which Socrates engages in the act of wandering off the route that he should follow in order to arrive to Agathon’s dinner party. We, the readers and the rest of the characters who are part of this Platonic dialogue, have no way to make sense of whatever he was doing or thinking. We can say

that the impossibility of accessing into Socrates' mind marks a moment of exteriority that produces an ambiguity that is capable of making us, and the characters of the dialogue, feel as if there were something out there which cannot be grasped or attained. *I will leave you with the affects of this ambiguous moment that probably most of the readers of 'The Symposium' ignore or skip as an introduction of the kind of experience that awaits you in the following' vignettes'.*

1.2 Rousseau's Reveries

Written in 1776, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* is Jean-Jacques Rousseau's final book before his death in 1778. The text is written in the form of ten 'walks' or chapters where he engages in 'private thinking'. Rousseau begins the book by saying: "So I am now alone on earth, no longer having any brother, neighbor, friend, or society other than myself" (Rousseau, 2004, p.1). From the beginning of the book Rousseau places himself in a position that is exterior to the social world in which he lived. The purpose behind writing the *Reveries* is no longer to please the audience and publish numerous amounts of superficial texts, like the common writers of the social or the State, but to make himself the subject of his own study – *to write for himself, to fully appropriate a war machine before it is too late.*

Rousseau's 'walks' are not ordinary walks. When we walk, we usually have a specific destination in mind. Ordinary walking implies using our body, legs⁹, feet, heels, as a machine that has the capacity to transport us to whichever stationary place we need

9 In Wanderlust Rebecca Solnit provides with a beautiful description of walking: "Where does it start? Muscles tense. One leg a pillar, holding the body upright between the earth and sky. The other a pendulum, swinging from behind. Heel touches down. The whole weight of the body rolls forward onto the ball of the foot. The big toe pushes off, and the delicately balanced weight of the body shifts again. The legs reverse position. It starts with a step and then another step and then another that add up like taps on a drum to a rhythm, the rhythm of walking" (Solnit, 2001, p.3). Solnit's description of walking is significant since it describes the process of walking, which is something that we barely consider as we walk. Here she performs a reflexive practice that allows for walking to also be an activity that can be used towards the pursuit of something other than what it is supposed to be useful for.

to get to. *Habitually I walk inside my house to go to the kitchen, to go play music, go to my room, go to the living room; When I leave the house I walk uphill to catch the bus, which is capable of taking me to other places where I can continue walking towards my next destination.* Walking can be striated, and subjugated to an end, or it can also be smooth and open for explorative purposes. Rousseau's 'nomadic' walks require him to put himself in a very different mindset than the usual one we are in when we walk. This 'tactical' move makes the act of walking a special one to pay close attention to. For we can learn from it that walking can allow us to do much more than what we can imagine. This implies that if we usually walk or move from one place to the other, and this activity makes part of our being since we always engage in it, then we can radically change our immediate experience of the world by changing or modifying its *telos*.

Having, then, formed the project of describing the habitual state of my soul in the strangest position in which a mortal could ever find himself, I saw no simpler and surer way to carry out this enterprise than to keep a faithful record of my solitary walks and of the reveries which fill them when I leave my head entirely free and let my ideas follow their bent without resistance or constraint.

(Rousseau, 12)

The 'walks' are acts of walking and also acts of thinking. This implies that Rousseau's activity of wandering outside in the countryside produces the memories that he will reflect upon while writing about them. Putting oneself in this 'mindset' requires a doubling in perception, which allows the brain to paint an image that can later become an object of reflection. "[My goal is] to make myself aware of the modifications of my soul and of their sequence" (7). Rousseau's aim is to make the observation of his soul, which is not to be found anywhere 'inside' the social sphere, his final object of study. This makes him like a storyteller of the self, who looks at his own lived memories from the past in order to recount them in the present. Through the written record of the *Reveries* he



positions himself as a witness of the heightened events, both of joy and discontent, that struck his soul during his life. The perceptual doubling that arises when engaging in this particular mode of walking is an act of remembering the past that now conforms part of his soul (part of who he is or what he is). And this doubling is an act of memory, an impossible act, a looking outwards towards the abyss from which Rousseau manages to fetch the already distorted memories of events past and the recollection of that recollection that happened while wandering.

Images can be evocative of all sorts of thoughts and memories. Looking at an image from an event past I thought: *This photograph reminds me of the sweetness of the winter. Wanting to share it I sent that image to my parents who are in Mexico City. The image was taken by an iPhone IV camera on January 28, 2014, at 7:42 a.m., and immediately sent through an instant messenger software called 'WhatsApp'. As soon as the image was sent, I asked myself: Do you really want to live in Mexico City and be with your loved family and friends? Or do you want to stay and rejoice in these sublime encounters with the sunrise, while remembering that a part of you is not there?*

Similar to the previous meditation on the evocative nature of imagery, and memories, Rousseau's reflections allow him to place himself in a position where he can reflect on his problematic relation with society. The problem that the social sphere poses for the individual is a recurrent topic that is treated in the different 'walks'. Rousseau frames this problem by expressing the discontent that was caused in him as a member of society, and explains that this is the main reason why he decides to 'step outside' of it.

For Soren Kierkegaard, one of the main problems of the social or ethical sphere is that it does not allow for the expression of the individual's interiority, since it is incommensurable or exterior to it. Following Kierkegaard, the ethical view of life states that it is "the task of the single individual to strip himself of the qualification of interiority and to express this in something external" (p.69). This means that as a member of society the individual must give up its own interiority through language, something which gives Rousseau trouble since the individual is also constituted by its interiority. This sacrifice of one's own interiority is possible through language or speech. Interiority is something that we relinquish in order to disclose ourselves to society, when we must communicate with others. This sacrifice is not as drastic as Kierkegaard would put it, given that we can always preserve our interiority for ourselves. However, Kierkegaard describes it in such a

way that allows his readers to see how easy it is to forget about oneself for the sake of the other.

On that account, for both Kierkegaard and Rousseau, interiority is a fundamental human quality that we must hold on to, regardless of the fact that society prescribes the opposite.¹⁰ In other words, we can ask: *How is it possible for humans to be human in our society, since they need to give up to that which makes them human?* The impossibility for undertaking the task of studying his own soul is what moves Rousseau to resign from a society which is mainly concerned with superficial matters such as pride and vanity. This

to create a network of other relation that altogether constitutes the intricacies of this concept. and the dandy, in order not allows him to carry out his goal.

The whole present generation sees only errors and prejudices in the sentiments with which I alone nourish myself. It finds truth and evidence in the system opposed to mine (37).

In that regard, it is time to endow and adorn my soul with learning it might carry away with it then, delivered from this body which clouds and blinds it and seeing truth without a veil, it will perceive the wretchedness of all the knowledge our false learned men are so vain about. (40)

Society does not tend to conduce towards the nourishment of one's soul or to-

10 Deleuze & Guattari would agree with this since they conceive of an individual's interiority as exterior to the State. Kierkegaard and Rousseau are both "private thinkers," who privilege the individuals 'interiority' over the exteriority of the social. "Private thinker," however, is not a satisfactory expression, because it exaggerates interiority, when it is a question of outside thought" (376). Since these thinkers take a very 'absolute' or intense position stating that 'interiority' is a fundamental human quality, I would approach this issue from two different perspectives. On the one side, I agree with these thinkers. I believe that it is important to nurture this kind of 'nomadic' attitude in the context of a totalizing state or society, which has no place for the individual's 'interiority.' On the other side, from a Lacanian standpoint which I usually ascribe to, however, that is not the institutional approach that I decided to work with on this thesis; I don't disagree with these thinkers, but I believe that this is part of the fantasy that is also created by language or culture. In conclusion to this argument, I would end up agreeing with these thinkers (Rousseau, Kierkegaard, and Deleuze and Guattari) since they all problematize and therefore, introduce, another model of knowledge that subverts the "universal" one, allowing us to realize that it is impossible to have a perfect paradigm; and that it is possible to imagine a different relation to the world.

wards taking care of the self, since it prioritizes the other – *what are they going to think if I do this or that?* It is also important to pursue the care of the self since it allows the individual to generate an understanding of how society may affect the way they live their lives. Rousseau’s insistence on abandoning society for the study of his soul is both a consequence of the problems he had in his social reality, and a reminder that one cannot forget about oneself – which is something that can happen when one is too immersed in the desire of the others.

In the fifth ‘walk’, Rousseau describes his stay in the “Island of Saint-Pierre in the middle of the Lake of Bienna” (81), as the happiest time in his life. In 1765, this little island used to be very quiet and barely visited by travelers since there were not many proper roads to access it, while today it has turned into a touristic attraction “for those seeking tranquility and natural beauty” and for those who are interested in activities like hiking or mountain biking.¹¹ After resigning from society, Rousseau developed a passion for botany, which is an extension of his desire to return to a ‘natural state’ where he can be in solitude. Rousseau’s description of the Island of St. Pierre makes it ideal for his practices:

[this land is] fascinating for those solitary dreamers who love to drink deeply of the beauty of nature and to meditate in a silence which is unbroken but for the cry of the eagles, the occasional song of birds and the roar of streams cascading down from the mountains. (81)

In 1758¹² Rousseau left the city of Paris in order to live a life closer to nature, and more isolated from society. It is important to mention that in 1762, when his book *Emile; or, on Education* was published, the authorities from Paris and Geneva ordered for his arrest and for his book to be burned.¹³ From then on, he became a fugitive, spending the remaining

11 “St. Peter’s Island” (n.d.), Switzerland.

12 “Years of seclusion”, 2015.

13 The fact that Jean-Jacques was sought after by the State, is another reason why he was so happy and safe in the island in 1765.

years of his life moving from one place to the other.

During his two month stay in St-Pierre, Rousseau spent part of his time studying the nature of plants. This is a scientific practice where:

I did not want to leave even one blade of grass or atom of vegetation without a full and detailed description. [...]every morning after breakfast, [...] I would set out with a magnifying glass in my hand and my *Systema Naturae* under my arm to study one particular section of the island, which I had divided for this purpose into small squares, intending to visit them all one after another [...]. Nothing could be more extraordinary than the raptures and ecstasies I felt at every discovery I made about the structure and organization of plants and the operation of the sexual parts in the process of reproduction, which was at this time completely new to me. (84)

Rousseau's method of distributing the land by parts allowed him to spend a particular 'sweet' moment of joy in the different spaces he laid out for himself inside this ecosystem. He created a grid-like structure by striating his desired area of study, in order to spend time rejoicing at the genesis of nature's species. It is interesting to note that through his particular science, Rousseau generates a possibility for observing nature in a way in which we could learn to preserve and care for it. Creating one's own system, or method, may not sound nomadic; however Rousseau's science is an inventive approach to the subject which realizes movement as that which needs to be performed to depart from the ostensible rigidity of reality. In doing so, one can invent new ways of and find new places for being.

For Rousseau, humans should focus on studying the soul of the plant in order to preserve its essence, the observation of the plant itself as an end. Therefore, his approach¹⁴ to the study of the soul of plants, or nature, springs from witnessing its processes of reproduction and genesis – as a loving and respecting witness who tries to fetch some of the affects of this ‘exterior’ or sublime experience, in order to re-present it so others can continue caring for its future preservation.

When he was not engaged with the rigorous study of nature, Rousseau would row frequently from one island to the other, spending his time wandering through the different islands.

[I also loved] installing myself all alone in a boat, which I would row out into the middle of the lake when it was calm; and there, stretching out full-length in the boat and turning my eyes skyward, I let myself float and drift wherever the water took me, often for several hours on end, plunged in a host of vague yet delightful reveries, which though they had no distinct or permanent subject, were still in my eyes infinitely to be preferred to all that I had found most sweet in the so-called pleasures of life. (85)

This is an instance in which Rousseau provides an impression of his practice of wandering. Laying down on the boat in the middle of the water, without being concerned by the direction that it may take him, is an activity that allows him to get in a smooth mode where he can also start wandering through his thoughts as his body drifts through the river. In the same way that Rousseau does not seem to control or

14 This approach is one that still appears today since there are individuals and scientists who participate in the moral-political debate of how to approach the question of science. The question of science is the question it asks and the question of itself as a forceful organism. Today certain individuals and scientists are activists for the preservation of nature when they express that the capitalistic State is failing to respect our ecology in a way in which it is harming it and destroying it. US based Union of Concerned Scientists and the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPSC), have sent an open letter to Primer Minister of Canada Stephen Harper calling on “the government to remove barriers so that government scientists are able to freely collaborate internationally to help fight major environmental and health threats” (Leung, 2014). This means that science is doing what it is supposed to do, however, there is much more to be done with the scientific apparatus in order to start caring for our environment.

care where the water current will take him, he also allows his mind to think without being bound to think pragmatically about a specific subject.

The *Reveries* is an assemblage, composed of the couplings between walking, wandering, thinking, and writing, that we can take as a model and form for the creation of nomadic thought. The *Reveries* is a gift¹⁵ from Rousseau to other nomad thinkers, a gift that is given to us together with the responsibility for its future continuation. His gift comes in the form of a model that allows us to continue practicing the study of the soul both phenomenologically and metaphysically.¹⁶ This activity implies a special relation to one's own environment which for Rousseau, is not attainable inside the social sphere. But it is attainable when one manages to actualize this 'exterior' thought inside society. *During this section, when I refer to Rousseau, he becomes a signifier that points to ourselves. We are Rousseau, so when he manifests that there is 'something' which rots the State and its society, causing it all sorts of trouble, he screams!!!! And this musical and resonating sounds return like arrows that allow the reader or witness of them to appropriate them in order to sculpt them (again) as a missive to and for their future.*

1.3 Obermann: Letters from the Outside

Written in 1804 *Obermann – Letters to a friend*, by Etienne Pivert de Senancour (1901), is a book consisting of a series of letters that an individual, who moves away¹⁷

15 In his book, *The Gift* (2011), Marcel Mauss describes the reciprocal nature of 'the gift'. "In the distinctive sphere of our social life we can never remain at rest. We must always return more than we receive; the return is always bigger and more costly" (p.63).

16 Perhaps Rousseau's concept of the soul has lost resonance in our present Canadian context. While man used to wonder about the soul, it might be said he now simply desires to be 'hot.' As our relationship to life becomes increasingly facile, so too does our metaphysics; how we question our existence or its ground, our relationship to time-space and the soul. While the soul is shrouded in mystery, and while pondering its existence required a measure of abstraction given to a wandering introspection, postmodernity brings with it a new relationship to reflection. *When a man looks in a mirror, he no longer ponders on his existence but rather ponders if he's hot or not. Whereas Rousseau meditated on the imperceptible soul, 'I lift up my shirt now in this dance club to confirm not my infinity but the corporeality of my abs.'*

17 In the 'letters,' we can see that he kept moving between cities and the uninhabited wilderness of places like the 'Jura' mounts in Switzerland, and France. Different from Rousseau, who found tranquility and joy in his solitary meditations, Senancour ends up moving more frequently between places after not

from society, writes to a friend. In spite of the fact that the sender of the letters is supposed to be a character called Obermann, in the introduction to the text, Jessy Peabody clarifies that: “although Obermann is an internal autobiography of Senancour, we must guard against taking too literally its external details, for the author purposely altered facts and dates in order to mislead the reader” (1901, p. xvii). In this way, Senancour is the writer of the letters within the text, as well as the writer of the text.

As an introduction to the text, Senancour offers us some observations that the reader must take into account prior to reading the text. He states that the ‘letters’ are written by “a man of feelings, not by a man of action” (1901, p. XXXIII). This already places the letter-writer in a position where he will be describing and reflecting on the feelings that were produced after experiencing his reveries. While the man of feelings has a smoother and more open relation to his environment, the man of action is more rigid in his organizational relation to it. In the case of writing, the man of action, would prescribe a plot or narrative to be followed; he would subject the text to an already defined telos.

As a man of feelings, Senancour produces a nomadic book that does not impose any order to be followed. This means that we can choose to read the text either from beginning to end following the order of the pages, or we can freely skip and read through the different letters that may amuse us the most. In this introduction, Senancour also acknowledges that the text carries the capacity to produce either great joy or utter boredom in its readers. This springs from appropriating the war machine which is indifferent to the approval of the crowd.

For Senancour the ‘letters’ are not a novel, but descriptions made to create “a better understanding of natural objects, and throw light, possibly too much neglected, on the relation of man to what he calls the inanimate world” (XXXIV). From this we can see that Senancour’s *Obermann*¹⁸ is similar to Rousseau’s *Reveries*, in that it creates a document

finding a good reason to establish himself in any of them.

18 The figure of ‘Obermann’ can be seen as a personification and projection of Senancour’s life and

which aims at describing his own study of the soul; both of the individual and its surrounding natural environment. Learning from Rousseau that the study of the soul cannot be conducted within the social sphere, Senancour creates this document in ‘private.’¹⁹ As readers of this text, we never get to read the letters that the ‘friend’ sends back to Senancour. This causes an impenetrable silence or break that happens *as a flash* between the letters, producing a *haunting* sense of ambiguity or uncertainty that one can also experience when *sending an email, message, or text*. There is, therefore, an interesting rhythm to the text, a rhythm which oscillates between the light, or poetic images that Senancour paints for us, and the darkness or indeterminate field of possible thoughts that can be actualized before and after reading another ‘letter’. The oscillatory movement that is engendered by this book, is one that results from the attempt of throwing a light to the darkness that we hover in - the darkness of the war machine.

Is Senancour writing these letters to us, the readers or members of civilization? When we read this text, are we supposed to become ‘Obermann’s’ friend? If the ‘letters’ are intended to be read by each individual reader of this text, then Senancour’s writing places us in the position of the ‘friend’, who is responsible for engaging in writing something back in response to the missive that he writes to us. As a consequence of this, Senancour leaves us in a virtual field, which is yet to be distributed (*nomos*) in our future wanderings through the ‘letters.’ This means that we can either decide to stop reading the text by deeming it boring, incomprehensible, or not useful; or that we can take the book as a gift, allowing us to continue moving through an open field of unlimited possibilities²⁰ for interpreting his text,

experiences as a wanderer. Although Obermann appears to be the character who writes the letters, to avoid confusion, I will refer to Senancour as the sender of the letters.

19 In the introduction to Obermann by J.P. Frothingham he writes that Senancour was a romanticist inspired by Rousseau. “We must, in fact, go back to the ideas that formed the spring of the Revolutionary movement and changed the conditions of modern society, to find the common meeting-ground of all the romanticists. Unswerving belief in human nature, desire for the simplification of life and dislike of the complicated social conditions of the old order, passionate love of the natural world, full return to nature as the ideal of life, glorification of savage man, these ideas, formulated by Rousseau, were the inspiration of Chateaubriand, Senancour, and Amiel” (1901, xlv-xlvi).

20 This ‘open field of unlimited possibilities’ is unlimited both due to the subject that Senancour explores and also due to the nature of language. It is important to note that this text does put the reader in

while also making us responsible for giving a future to this particular human activity of writing or creating from without.

Letter I, Geneva, July 8th, 1st Year

Not more than ten days have passed since

I wrote to you from Lyons. I did not mention any new project;

I had none; and now I have left everything behind,

I am in a strange land... (3)

In the First letter, Senancour explains to his friend that part of the reason why he had moved so spontaneously from Lyon to Geneva was due to his pursuit of Wisdom. For him, it is usually best to pursue the unknown path of Wisdom intuitively.

Though instinct may be more dangerous than prudence, it accomplishes greater things. It is our ruin, or our salvation; its temerity becomes at times our only refuge, and its mission may be to redress the wrongs that prudence has brought. (4)

Intuition is one of the qualities of the nomadic thinker, which allows them to continue moving into, and therefore creating, new domains of thought. Senancour's intuition forces him to move quickly from place to place. If we pay attention to the sequence of the 'letters' we will find that they are written from the different places in time through which he moves (first letter written from Geneva, second from Lausanne, third from Cully). We can thus see that there is a writing-model that is consistent throughout the 'letters', which consists of a record of the spacio-temporal locations in which each letter is written, together with a poetic account or description of the reveries.

a position of having to make an effort to generate an understanding of it, since it is not a conventional novel that maintains a rhythm for the reader to follow comfortably. It is also worth communicating to the reader that my stylization of the quotes in this section, is meant to preserve the poetry inherent to the text.

Intuition is the feeling that drives the nomad to continue its movement of deterritorialization. In some occasions, a nomad thinker like Rousseau will deterritorialize the State by describing its contradictions and problems. While in other occasions, a wanderer like Senancour would suggest that intuition can be used to re-configure ‘the wrongs that prudence has brought’. In this way, intuition is that which carries the capacity to affect reason in order to re-shape it or re-tune it. It is also important to note, as Senancour does, that intuition can either accomplish greater things than prudence, or even become more dangerous than it. Intuition’s link to the war machine makes it a double edged sword, which nomad thinkers like Senancour would learn how to use ‘prudently’, like a craft that requires going through a learning experience.

As soon as man reflects, as soon as he
is not carried away by his first impulse,
and by the unconscious laws of instinct,
all morality becomes, in a sense, a matter
of calculation, and prudence lies in
the estimate of the more or the less.

Independent of the world, and in the
silence of the passions, we can study ourselves.

I shall choose a retreat in the calm
of those heights which even in childhood

left an impression on my mind (9).

Obermann offers us a continuation of what Rousseau had already cultivated prior to his death. “Unswerving belief in human nature, desire for the simplification of life and dislike of the complicated social conditions of the old social order, passionate love of the

natural world, full return to nature as the ideal of life, glorification of the savage man” (1901, xlv), are some of the ideas that pave the path that Senancour takes in his wanderings. In *Obermann*, Senancour provides us with an account of wandering that follows the traces of Rousseau. Yet the ‘letters’ are different than the ‘walks’, since Senancour does not seem to arrive to the same pleasurable and joyous resolutions which Rousseau appears to attain.²¹ Instead, he takes a further step by leaving us with a sense of absurdity when reading some of his ‘letters.’²² This means that Senancour’s moving out of society, in order to reflect on nature and on himself, does not leave him at ease – does not provide him with the satisfaction that would allow him to fully renounce to the society to which he belongs. And this is why he maintains a relation to society through the ‘letters’ he continues to write to us, his ‘friend.’

Man grows old, and his slighted
heart grows old before him. If all
that he can love is in man, all that he
must shun is there also. Where there
are many social conventionalities, there,
too, of stubborn necessity, are many
discords. And thus the man whose
fears are greater than his hopes lives
apart from his fellows. Things inanimate
have less power, but they belong
to us more fully; they are what we
make them. They hold less of what
we seek, but we are surer of finding

21 The difference in age and lived experiences is probably what makes wandering so different for Rousseau and Senancour. For Rousseau started doing this in his old age, after suffering from the attacks of a harsh society that did not appreciate his honesty. And Senancour initiated his wanderings at a younger age, after rejecting some of the manners and fashions to which his family and society subscribed.

22 “The brilliant and paradoxical demonstration of *Obermann* is that the self can only be known once it has grasped its own irrelevance. Senancour’s journey is one of ascetic self-distancing; its originality is that it begins by drawing the reader in (the way a *journal intime* would), but makes its message more and more abstract and impersonal” (Van Zuylen, 1995, p.78).

the things they contain. They are
 the joys of mediocrity, limited but certain.
 Passion goes in quest of man, but
 reason is sometimes obliged to forsake him
 for things that are less good and less fatal.
 Thus has been forged a powerful link
 between man and this friend of man... (108-109)

Through *Obermann*, Senancour manages not only to reflect on the wanderings that are born when moving outside of the social sphere, but he also creates portraits which spring from the close contemplation of the natural species that surround him. Senancour's reflections always come back to rediscover that there is nothing outside the human, since all that seems outside is another projection or illusion that we create from the inside. On the one hand, our relation to nature will be dependent on the meaning we project to it. If we position it as sacred, then we will probably try to allow it to remain as it is, but if we pose it as useful, and as that which needs to be mastered, then we will exploit it and destroy it. On the other hand, our relation to society will depend on the meaning that we create of it: one can decide not to think about its relation to society, one can decide to fear its relation to it, one can embrace it, be discontent, or one can decide to write about the expression of these – the broad range of different and contrasting feelings that arise in ourselves (just like Senancour the poet).

Why is Senancour a nomad thinker? Because he manages to wander and reflect on our relationship to our surrounding environment, both social and natural, from a different perspective than the State thinkers. This means that he crafts several missives which impact us like bullets, communicating to us that leaving society, leaving ourselves, escaping this world and returning to a blissful state of nature, is an impossibility that only

death, and perhaps not even death, carries the power to overcome. In this way, Senancour appropriates a war machine that does not allow us to conclude *Obermann* with a sweet end, as a beautiful Hollywood narrative, since it leaves us with an open silence, open for us to continue this smooth practice of giving an expression to the cruel and indifferent forces of life.

What is it I desire ? To hope, and
then to hope no more, is to be, or not
to be : such is man. But how is it that
after the accents of a soul - stirring
voice, after the fragrance of the flow-
ers, and the whispers of the imagina-
tion, and the soarings of thought, we
must die ? . . .

There are two flowers, silent per-
haps, and almost scentless, but which,
by their enduring character, appeal to
me in a way I cannot express. The
memories they bring up carry me for-
cibly into the past as though these links
of time prophesied of happy days.
These simple flowers are the corn-
flower of the fields and the early Easter
daisy the meadow marguerite.

The corn flower is the flower of
rural life. It ought to be seen amid
the freedom of natural ways, hidden

among the grain, surrounded by the echoes of the farm, the crowing of the cocks, in the footsteps of the aged husbandmen; and I cannot answer that such a sight would not lead to tears.

The violet and the meadow-daisy are rivals. They have the same blooming time, the same simplicity. The violet holds us captive at first sight ; the daisy claims our love from year to year. They are to each other what a painted portrait is to a marble bust. The violet tells of the purest sentiment of love ; this is the language she speaks to upright hearts. But this very love, so sweet, so persuasive, is only a beautiful accident of life. It vanishes, while the peace that is in the fields is ours until our last hour. The daisy is the patriarchal symbol of this gentle rest.

If I attain to old age, if one day still full of thoughts, but speaking no more to men, I have a friend beside me to receive my last farewell upon the earth, let my chair be placed upon the grass of the fields, beneath the sun, under the vast sky, and may the tranquil daisies bloom around me, so that

as I leave the life that passes, I may
behold a vision of the infinite illusion. (195-197)

When you finish reading this section, I recommend you to listen to the piece that Franz Liszt composed after having also read Senancour's 'Obermann'. The piece is titled: 'Vallée d'Obermann'²³ from 1855, and it also accompanied my wanderings through the impenetrable but forceful 'letters'.....

1.4 Baudelaire: Painting from Without

Written in 1863 by Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life* (2010) is an essay which presents the concept of the 'flâneur', a man²⁴ who wanders through the city. Baudelaire was a flâneur by way of practicing and writing about this human activity of searching for 'beauty' in the streets of Paris. Baudelaire's focus on the study of 'beauty' resonates with Rousseau's study of 'the soul' in his *Reveries*.

Beauty is made up, on the one hand, of an element that is eternal, and invariable, though to determine how much of it there is is extremely difficult, and, on the other, of a relative circumstantial element, which we may like to call, successively or at one and the same time, contemporaneity, fashion, morality, passion. Without this second element, which is like the amusing, teasing, appetite-whetting coating of the divine cake, the first element would be indigestible, tasteless, unadapted and inappropriate to human nature. (Baudelaire, 4)

23 Liszt, Franz (1956). Vallée d'Obermann. On "Années de pèlerinage" by Sviatoslav Richter. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NI943n8tBxU>

24 When Baudelaire writes about the flâneur, he refers to a male. At that time, the woman was segregated to the private domain of the house. In this way, Baudelaire could not include insights about the woman city-dweller or 'flâneuse' (a now famous concept which writer Janet Woolf produces in her article "Invisible Flâneuse"). In my future, and more extended writing, I plan to develop the concept of wandering through the city from the perspective of both the flâneuse and flâneur.

Different from Rousseau and Senancour who present us with wanderings through nature, Baudelaire is interested in searching for moments of the particular expression of beauty within the city. The ephemeral quality of these moments enables them to happen anywhere and anytime, therefore producing the energy that animates the flâneur's continuous movement through the city. The flâneur can be an observer, philosopher, painter, or poet "of the fleeting moment and of all that it suggests of the eternal" (6).

In *The Painter of Modern Life*, Baudelaire introduces the figure of the flâneur by making reference to a man who "loves mixing with the crowds, loves being incognito, and carries his originality to the point of modesty" (7). His name is Monsieur Constantin Guys (M.G.), who initially requested Baudelaire to refer to his work as if it were created by an anonymous person. I believe that anonymity is an aspect of wandering that is fundamental for the flâneur as it allows him to disassociate himself from the authorship²⁵ of his work. Suggesting that the author does not care that much about the recognition for his work, *aloof from its symbolic world*, because as an artist he needs to spend time working on his particular craft. The flâneur's use of the city as his wandering field is not a return to the social sphere that Rousseau escaped from,²⁶ but a continuation of this mode of being in the world as an outsider who is interested in generating an impression of it so others can continue contemplating the world from that perspective.

Preserving one's anonymity as a nomad thinker is a tactic which provides safety from the State's apparatus of capture. As a flâneur it is important to remain anonymous, since the reflections one produces about daily life, carry the capacity to upset the social order. In the same way Rousseau's reflections on the social order were upsetting because they presented a different perspective on daily life; these 'different' perspectives allow us to see that reality could be otherwise – something which can always be difficult to com-

25 This is something that Senancour also performs in his *Obermann*.

26 Similar to Rousseau, after publishing *Flowers of Evil* in 1857, Baudelaire got in trouble with the State. The "volume proved too 'eye-catching', attracting the attention of the police. The edition was seized and Baudelaire and his publisher prosecuted for 'offense to public decency'" (McGowan, 1998, p.xviii).

prehend since we are used to a normal state of things. The flâneur paradoxically wanders through the crowds, while at the same time maintaining a distance from them as if he were not there. This move allows him to look at the crowd from a different perspective than that of its members, who are usually not thinking about their habitual life, since they keep their minds busy on using the city for more pragmatic purposes like shopping, going to work, or simply going out to be entertained on a Sunday afternoon.

Baudelaire presents M.G. as a traveller who is an expert in creating on-the-spot drawings of life. The flâneur requires a specific sense of curiosity for being in order to observe and capture these moments of ‘beauty’ in the streets. We can even say that M.G.’s medium is similar to that of a ‘smartphone’ which includes a camera that can be used to capture the unexpected and magic moments of life. *On Sunday March 2015 (Peterborough, Ontario, Canada) I was playing football when suddenly a bat intruded the indoor gym where we were playing. This particular instance reminded me of the Eumenides, the furies of nature, which protect the sacred grove at Colonus where Oedipus arrives after blinding himself and leaving Thebes. As soon as the bat came in the room, the game was suspended as the crowd of gentlemen who were playing left the room, fearful as if there were a dark force that this tiny bat carried which could rip out their hearts. Luckily I was able to capture a video of this moment with my iPhone.* The flâneur has a unique fascination with ordinary life, whereas the crowd finds pleasure in the spectacle that allows them to forget. In this way, the contemplation of ordinary life is something that society would find boring. Following Baudelaire, M.G.’s character is one which is animated by the desire to be immersed in the thoughts and feelings that are produced within the crowd. *I remember when I was a teenager, I used to travel by bus to Acapulco, Guerrero in Mexico. It was when I was waiting in line to get on the bus, that time which commonly tends to be permeated with tedium and boredom, that I got lost in imagining and asking questions like: Where does that woman come from, where is she going? What is inside that big yellow bag that he is carrying? What clothes are they wearing? I see a 28 year old guy wearing ‘Salvatore Ferragamo’ shoes who missed his flight; I also see a 45 year old woman carrying several ‘mercado type’ or ‘street market’ bags wearing a household-working uniform. I bet that*

those bags are heavier in weight than the huge flower basket (1935)²⁷ that a working class man carries in Diego Rivera's painting. What is that other person thinking?

In his short piece titled "Crowds", from the book *Paris Spleen* (1869), Baudelaire writes about the singularity of the 'man of the crowd': "It is not given to every man to take a bath of multitude; enjoying the crowd is an art; and only he can relish a debauch of vitality at the expense of the human species, on whom, in his cradle, a fairy bestowed the love of masks and masquerading, the hate of home and the passion for roaming" (1970, p.20). The flâneur is a specialist whose craft is to wander through the crowd in the public sphere.

The product of flâneurie implies an opening for the war machine to shake a social striation. For instance, in *The Flowers of Evil* (1857), Baudelaire the poet is accused for the kind of message that his text produced, which was different than what he intended to express. According to the state's judgment of *The Flowers*:

some of the scenes he presents 'necessarily lead to the excitement of the senses by a crude realism offensive to decency. Baudelaire's earlier intuition that a lesbian subject would shock proved well founded: while anti-religious poems such as, 'St Peters Denial' and the 'Litanies of Satan' were indicted for offense to *religious* morality, Baudelaire was found innocent on this charge but guilty on the other, and the six poems banned by the verdict included two of the three lesbian poems. (McGowan, 1998, p.xviii)

Baudelaire's 'trial' is an instance in which the state manages to striate and control the 'illicit' *Flowers*-war machine from reproducing and distributing itself through its population.

In Baudelaire's words: "The poet enjoys the incomparable privilege of being able to be himself or someone else, as he chooses. Like those wandering souls who go looking

27 This original painting by Diego Rivera is titled "The flower Carrier"(1935).

for a body, he enters as he likes in each man's personality" (1970, p.20). This means that the flâneur can actualize different possible 'actors' or modes of being in a given social network, given that he remains smooth and open to becoming adapted to any situation of his interest or curiosity. In this way, the poet of daily life has the capacity to approach his personality from a rhizomatic perspective, where imagination would be the limit for the kind of subjectivity that he would decide to perform.

Multitude, solitude: identical terms, and interchangeable by the active and fertile poet. The man who is unable to people his solitude is equally unable to be alone in a bustling crowd. [...] The man who loves to lose himself in a crowd enjoys feverish delights that the egoist locked up in himself as in a box, and the slothful man like a mollusk in his shell, will be eternally deprived of. He adopts as his own all the occupations, all the joys and all the sorrows that chance offers. (1970, p.20)

The flâneur is like an archivist²⁸ of life, who is interested in contemplating and preserving the beauty that emerges in its urban habitat. His mode of being in the world is different than the 'common' since it requires him to relate to his environment as if he were an outsider, stranger, or curious traveller, participating in the social sphere as a ghostly observer of it. Baudelaire writes that "our strange artist expresses both the gestures and attitudes, be they solemn or grotesque, of human beings and their luminous explosion in space" (2010, p.24). As an outsider, the flâneur can function as a mirror who reflects the beauty²⁹ that is manifested in the habitual life of the city. Looking at the common habits that are displayed in the city is important since it shines a light on the intricate

28 The flâneur archives impressions of the particular expression of beauty in daily life. These are impressions of his gaze, a critical gaze that he has created by relating to the world in such way. The flâneur also archives, so in the future its messages can tell something about the world that can be discovered through the practice of flânerie.

29 For Baudelaire, 'beauty' is conformed of particular and general elements. When contemplating 'beauty', one can observe the particular expression of the general. Therefore, 'beauty' is manifested when the virtual becomes actualized, and a human observer wanders about the genesis of its expression. Baudelaire's 'beauty' is similar to Rousseau's and Senancour's 'soul'.

nature of the habits that we as a society, have learned and gotten used to in order to navigate through the striated spaces of the city. In this way, almost like an ethnographer, the flâneur gets to observe and experience the plurality of patterns that express themselves as a painting that is composed by the life that emanates from the city. The flâneur's smooth passage first casts the striation of the urban dweller's space into relief and then opens up the possibility of smoothing it.³⁰ Baudelaire leaves us with an archive by which we can re-evaluate and re-invent the practical and theoretical concept of the 'flâneur' in our times.

1.5 Aragon – Strolling through the Dark

Written in 1926 by Louis Aragon, *Paris Peasant* (1994) is written in the form of a novel which aims to:

break all the traditional rules governing the writing of fiction, one that would be neither a narrative (a story) nor a character study (a portrait), a novel that the critics would be obliged to approach empty-handed, without any of the weapons which customarily help them exercise their stupid cruelty... But it was not a question of simply disarming my critics: my task was more difficult than that, for I was writing this novel-that-was-not-a-novel—or at least I thought of myself as writing it—to *demoralize* my [surrealist] friends, who were so busy proclaiming themselves the mortal enemies of the novel... (Aragon, 1994, p.xii)

Paris Peasant appropriates a war machine which shoots some deadly bullets at the striated State of the novel, the newspaper critics, and the surrealists. By naming it a novel, Aragon opens up the rigid qualities that constitute a novel and communicates that there are multiple ways in which novels can be written. Aragon's 'attack' to the critics is a tactic to

30 An example of this can be Baudelaire's 'lesbians', which announced the possibility for the manifestation of a new kind of personification or actor in society.

make them either not write a simplified, categorical, and superficial paraphrasing of the text, or make them have to invent a new way to write about this text – which does not lend itself to be stacked amongst the cannon of conventional novels. Finally, *Paris Peasant* is crafted as a bomb to be detonated in the surrealist house. Although there are multiple explanations of Aragon's break with André Breton and the surrealists, I believe that his discontent with the movement springs from its having become a sort of rigid institution or State – *the surrealist State*. For the surrealists were territorializing the territory of being the official 'enemies of the novel.' And Aragon's nomad thought did not want to be confined to the limits of that kind of organization, since he wanted to keep its movement of deterritorialization. Aragon's text is a nomadic one, since it manages to provide the reader with openings to the medium of the novel itself, the rigid lens of the critics, and the surrealist institution that was being born at that time.

In the first chapter of Aragon's text, we get to read a detailed description of the *Passage de l'Opera*, a Parisian arcade that was later demolished for the construction of the "Boulevard Haussmann" in 1922.³¹ *The Passage de l'Opera* presents us with a mythology of the different places and passages that were contained within this arcade through which Aragon used to wander. By the time that Aragon strolled through the *Passage* in 1924 (Miller, p.15), the arcade was a sort of underground place that included a hotel, baths, cheap erotic services, cafés, a bar, a restaurant, hairdressers, all for the lower and middle classes. Through his writing, Aragon captures the mood of this doomed place by showing us some of the notes that the owners of the businesses and the newspapers were writing about it.

Both the business owners and the newspapers were in discontent with this rather unfair situation. The owner of a bar named the 'Petit Grillon' wrote: "Having been robbed for the benefit of a Finance Company by an expropriation which has ruined the

31 Francois Debret was the architect of the "Passage de l'Opera, " which was built in 1822-1823 (Ayers, p.386) and demolished in 1925 (Pike, p.226).

tradesmen of this passage, and being consequently unable to re-establish myself elsewhere, I am seeking a buyer for my equipment” (Aragon, p.25). Aragon’s novel is a gift, in reciprocation for the possibilities of wandering that the *Passage* had provided to him, a gift which now allows the commemoration of its past. In this way, Aragon paved the way for ‘future mysteries’ to branch from the ruins of his past escapades as a flâneur in the *Passage*. Aragon’s novel is an archive that documents the beginning of an industrialized era which transformed the quality of flânerie.³²

As a document of ‘truth,’ the book’s preface begins by problematizing the notion of truth and certainty. For Aragon, certainty is envisaged “as possessing peculiar and definable characteristics which allow it to be distinguished from error. Certainty is not reality” (6). And this is why we must always question the mechanism of certainty and the realities that it can get to produce. Certainty is not only coupled with the truth that it produces, but it is also coupled with the error to be dismissed.³³ The combination of the three make it a triad of truth, error, and certainty, that is expressed through documents that are certified as ‘truthful’ or that communicate that we can trust their validity. Aragon’s understanding of the mechanisms of certainty allow him to produce a document which functions as a witness of his reveries in that specific location in time.

However, for him what is most interesting and important to study within this constellation of truth-error-certainty is the error which we are constantly trying to get rid off. “But there is a black kingdom which the eyes of man avoid because its landscape fails signally to flatter them. This darkness, which he imagines he can dispense with in

32 In our now globalized cities, we have wide and open streets that are filled with the same American businesses: McDonalds, Starbucks, Subway, and Walmart. These are only some of the multinational corporations that have displaced other locally owned businesses from their territories in order to pave the territory from which it is probably going to be impossible to deterritorialize them. The flâneur has now a different landscape than Aragon’s or Baudelaire’s, a panorama that seems to be the same everywhere one goes. This is part of what Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer describe in their essay on *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception* where they say that: “Culture today is infecting everything with sameness” (2002, p.94).

33 “And anything said about truth may equally be said about error...” (Aragon, p.7).

describing the light, is error with its unknown characteristics, error which demands that a person contemplate it for its own sake before rewarding him with the evidence about fugitive reality that it alone could give” (7). Aragon’s focus on error allows him to understand that the illusion of truth can be very easily transformed, crafted, and shaped, for error is that which produces the flashes of truth that we can barely make sense of. Error, for example, is like the uncontrollable forces of nature that we interpret as such after their manifestation. In conclusion, Aragon suggests that our production of knowledge, archives, or thought, should stop relying on the dialectical machine of universal certainty, by appropriating a war machine that will not only make it stumble, but which will allow for the continual progression of new ways for approaching the creation of meaning. Aragon’s narrative descriptions of his strolls through the Parisian arcades could be seen as a way of addressing the uncertainty that arises when thinking about this triad composed of certainty-truth-error.

Embracing error by focusing on his distraction, Aragon strolls through the *Passage de l’Opera* and deals with this problem. Without being bothered by the desire to produce a certified document of truth, Aragon describes that which distracts him while wandering through this Parisian arcade. When we read Aragon’s *Passage de l’Opera*, it is as if we were walking with him in this now extinguished special place.

Let us take a stroll along this Passage de l’Opera, and have a closer look at it. It is a double tunnel, with a single gateway opening to the north on to the boulevard. Its two arcades, the western one, called the Galerie du Baromètre, and the eastern one, called the Galerie du Termomètre, are joined by two short cuts, the first of which runs across the passage at its northern end, while the second is at the boulevard end, just behind the bookshop and café which occupy the space between the two southern gateways. (15)

Through the Galerie du Baromètre we can find the entrance to the lobby of the Hotel

Monte-Carlo. *I remember when I stayed with my friend 'Vanello' in a hotel that sounds very similar to the Monte-Carlo. Hotel 'Paris' in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. The hotel is in downtown Guadalajara, first one must go through a wooden door that leads to the lobby where one must always pick up and drop his keys before living the premise. In the nights, the lobby is busy with different male, female, and transvestite prostitutes³⁴ who wait for someone to pick them up and take them elsewhere, or to be invited to go to a room inside the hotel. The rates are cheap and flexible as one can always arrange a deal with the man who takes care of the property. I remember paying \$50.00 pesos per night per person. After passing the lobby there was a double sided staircase, just like the staircase at the Castillo de Chapultepec in Mexico City. One of the nights, as we were coming into the hotel, there were two young and drunken gentlemen seducing each other at the bottom of the staircase, almost dancing to the rhythm of a melancholic song by Juan Gabriel that was playing on the background of the lobby. As soon as they saw us entering the place and picking up our keys to the room, they decided to wait, so as we approached the stairs they started following us. Sweat dripped off their chins as if they had gone through the desert in order to get to us. As we arrived at the second floor and started walking towards our room, they kept following us. The walls of the hallway were covered with an old flowery wallpaper that looked as if the walls were sweating too. The flowers were roses, it made sense, since in the past Guadalajara used to be called 'the city of roses.' Still walking through the hallway while the lights were becoming dimmer and dimmer, we started feeling that we were being chased by the furies of nature who wanted something from us. As the lights got darker my friend decided to stop walking and ask....³⁵*

34 In January 18, 2012, some of the sex workers, who were 'hanging out' in the lobby of 'Hotel Paris', were verbally assaulted by a number of elements of the police. The hotel's porter was beaten up because he was the one who allowed them to be there. 'Maribel', one of the sex workers, stated that the policemen treated them as if they were dangerous criminals. She also stated that "this is the way in which they inform us that this is their territory". "Operativo anti trata- en el hotel Paris de Guadalajara" ("Operativo Anti", 2012). It is also worthwhile to point out that Baudelaire and Aragon were also very interested in spending time with prostitutes. For prostitutes were 'outside' in the dark and mysterious places where these figures practiced their *flânerie*. It is important to note that for figures like Baudelaire and Aragon, the prostitute represented something different than what the sex-trade workers represent for us in these days.

35 The reason behind writing about my own experience comes from the fact that Aragon stated that he did not want anyone to paraphrase his words like the journalists who wrote 'reports' about them. These reports are obviously problematic since journalists usually take the position of 'the producers of truth', which is what Aragon, the nomad, desires to dismantle. In this way, I appropriate the medium of Aragon to continue giving a passage to the forces of *flânerie* which were present in Guadalajara. These are some of the words that Aragon dedicated to the journalists that he had so many problems with: "But if one

In the preface of *Paris Peasant* Aragon writes about his high sensitivity that, as a flâneur who strolls through the streets, gets him to wander about everything that comes in his way. “Everything distracts me indefinitely, except from my distraction itself” (p.7). Aragon engages in this distractive mode of being, as it allows him to wander through the mysteries that lay below the surfaces of the city. Although distraction might be undesirable for the ‘common’ pedestrian who walks through the street toward a specific destination, being distracted is the condition for the possibility of Aragon’s strolls. For it allows him to be interested in everything that makes an appearance to his senses. And this is what makes the city dweller different from the ‘common’ pedestrian, who requires to be indifferent to the kinds of distractions that the flâneur is open to. In their wandering, writers like Rousseau, Senancour, Baudelaire, and Aragon, are interested in moments of chance and distraction, which allow for the manifestation of sudden and unexpected insights. For it is in this ‘distracted’ mode of being that all sorts of nuances can come into one’s mind. These daydreaming moments are usually deemed as disruptive and unproductive, since they imply a break in the habitual order of things. And this rupture is a manifestation of the war machine, which calls for the attention of the nomad thinker.

The book’s final section titled *The Peasants Dream*, presents some final reflections that frame Aragon’s practice in a broader philosophical context. Similar to Rousseau, here he manifests that the problem of State thought lays in its telos to ‘succeed.’ “A philosophy cannot possibly *succeed*. It derives its own greatness from that of its purpose, and retains this borrowed greatness in the context of its own failure” (195). If State thought³⁶ subjugates its processes to a desired end goal, then it fails to understand the importance of the process of thinking, as it shapes its produced expressions. Aragon proposes that thought should focus on the intricacies of our cognitive processes of thinking, our preconceived notions of the world, in order to open a field of unlimited possibilities. This is very

day my words become sacred – they are already – then let my laughter echo back from far away. My words will never serve your miserable ends, you who thought to sneer at us, filthy creatures” (Aragon, p.76).

36 Aragon conceives Hegel’s absolute idealism as an expression of State thought.

different from State thought, which desires to close the field of possibilities.

Wandering implies shaping one's medium of thought in order to continue navigating smoothly through our daily life. This is opposed to the activity of an endless and absurd repetition *like that of vacuuming a house several times per day. We repeat because we desire for 'life' to come back to order – we desire for things to remain the same. However, our real material experience is different to this, our bodies are in a constant state of variation out of which we constantly fail to attain a desired end.* “There is no rest for Sisyphus, but his stone does not roll down again, it ascends and must not cease to ascend” (Aragon, p.196). Aragon proposes that we become the nomad Sisyphus that does not cease to move, a Sisyphus filled with the energy to continue acting smoothly towards an indeterminate future.

Aragon is interested in poetry since it implies the creation and manipulation of different images of thought, which produce knowledge of the particular or concrete. According to Aragon, “I seek the concrete... The concrete has no other form of expression than poetry” (p.202-203). Here he contrasts the ‘concrete’ with ‘madness’, which is “the predominance of the abstract and the general over the concrete, over poetry. *A madman is not a man who has lost his reason: he is a man who has lost everything except his reason...*” (Aragon, p.202). This means that in order to attain an impression of beauty, knowledge, or the soul, one has to create its own approach to it through the particular. The wanderer has to produce his own open field (*nomos*) for wandering, and if necessary, it has to create its own strategies to continue moving through striated space. All of the previous ‘wanderers’ mentioned in this chapter rely on the tactic of acting as solitary or ‘private’ thinkers. Their appropriation of the war machine disrupts by opening the limits of their social realities – *going beyond the limits through the limits.* “Force to its farthest limit the idea of the destruction of persons, and go beyond that limit” (Aragon, p.205).

1.6 The Situationists: Imagining a Way Out

Constituted in 1960, The Situationist International (SI) movement is a group dedicated to the creation of strategies for the transformation of the habitual order of things. The SI is a mutation of the previously described wanderers of nature and the city, because their conditions of possibility have changed. If Aragon's account of the last traces of a place like the *Passage de l'Opera* announced the beginning of the 'Haussmanian' industrialization of the city, then the 'situationists' are in a position in which it is no longer possible to gain any satisfaction from wandering around. Considering this, Rousseau's liberating 'walks', or Baudelaire's exciting 'strolls' are no longer attractive and productive, but boring and banal. As a response to this, "The Situationist Manifesto"³⁷ introduces the possibility to imagine and create a different order of things, dream of creating a 'new culture'³⁸ in which ideally we would rid ourselves of the problems of alienation and oppression that poison our social life through the creation of 'situations.'^{39 40}

In his essay titled "Theory of the Dérive" (1956), Guy Debord, one of the main founders of the SI movement, introduces the *dérive*, an important tactic for the creation of 'situations'. "Among the various situationist methods is "the *dérive* [literally: 'Drifting'], a technique of transient passage through varied ambiances. The *dérive* entails playful-constructive behavior and awareness of psychogeographical effects; which completely

37 Situationist International, 1960.

38 The 'situationists' were actively influential in May 1968 during the protests. In the *Situationist International Anthology* (1981), we can find some of the documents of their presence in the protests: "Slogans to be Spread Now by Every Means" (16 May), "Report on The Occupation of The Sorbonne" (19 May), and "Address to All Workers" (30 May).

39 The SI defines the 'constructed situation' as: "A moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organization of a unitary ambiance and a game of events" (1960, p.45).

40 This ideal of creating a new culture is an impossible utopian dream that allows the Situationists to continue pursuing that impossible ideal of creating a 'new culture.' This ideal is not necessarily shared by all the members of the group. In an interview, Henry Lefebvre confessed that he had disagreements with Debord. In an interview, Henry Lefebvre said that around the 60's: "Guy Debord's attitude changed -- he went from Unitary Urbanism to the thesis of urbanistic ideology... The theory of situations was itself abandoned, little by little. And the journal itself became a political organ. They began to insult everyone. That was part of Debord's attitude" (Ross, 1983).

distinguishes it from the classical notions of the journey and the stroll” (Debord, p.50). Dérive can be seen as an offspring or mutation of wandering. Due to the striations of the city, dérive borrows the flâneur’s desire to wander freely in order to develop an understanding of how these striations affect the pedestrian’s experience. This means that dérive looks at attaining a sweetness similar to Rousseau’s. However, the different environment of the ‘situationists’ obliges them to open the city’s organization in order to be able to move smoothly through these spaces. The SI is a nomadic group in charge of creating ‘situations’ that would ideally generate the possibility for citizens to become aware of the psychogeographic effects of the city in which they live. These psychogeographic effects or ambiances are basically produced by the combination of the city’s organization and the pedestrians who move through it.

Dérive or drift can be practiced by solitary individuals or groups who suspend their habitual activities for a day. At first, they choose a specific area of passage where the dérive will be happening. This implies selecting one or several ‘stations’ that one habitually moves through. For instance, choosing the building where one lives, the closest supermarket, and subway station. Second, focusing on the determining psychogeography of that ‘mapped’ area. This implies finding “constant currents, fixed points and vortexes which strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones” (Debord, p.50). Psychogeography would also focus on the feelings and emotions that are consistently evoked within the different areas of passage. It is worth mentioning that “an urban neighborhood is determined not only by geographical and economic factors, but also by the image that its inhabitants have of it” (Debord, p.50). Third, after finding an area for intervention and studying it, an individual or a group can begin thinking about implementing a dérive. The dérive is complicated because it does not only imply changing one’s own experience of one’s habitual environment when becoming aware of its effects, but it implies producing the conditions of possibility for the citizens, who move through these passages, to understand these effects through their playful interaction with the implementation that is

produced by the *dérive*. In this way, the *dérive* can be created in the form of a game that would allow its players to become aware of the often problematic psychogeography of their everyday lives.

For Debord, chance is not as important as it was for the previously mentioned wanderers. Although chance appears to have the quality for producing unexpected actualizations, it is also important to remember that there is a limit in the amount of possibilities that it can produce within a specific area. Therefore, it is important to develop an understanding of chance in order to be able to use it in favor of the *dérive*.

Progress is nothing other than breaking through a field where chance holds sway by creating new conditions more favorable to our purposes. We can say, then, that the randomness of the *dérive* is fundamentally different from that of the stroll, but also that the first psychogeographical attractions discovered run the risk of fixating the deriving individual or group around new habitual axes, to which they will constantly be drawn back (Debord, 1981, p.51) .

It is important to make observations of the *dérive* after its implementation. This would imply writing about it in order to create an archive of it so present and future situationists would be able to learn from this, and take these insights into consideration for future 'situations.'

The use and creation of maps is important for the situationists. Looking at a map before starting the process of a *dérive* can be useful in locating the desired areas of intervention. Maps can also be created before a 'situation' in order to mark the axes of passage, their entries, exists, and the mechanisms that are in place to enforce this; or after a situation, where the map can trace the results of the *dérive*.

With the aid of old maps, aerial photographs, and experimental derives, one can draw up hitherto lacking maps of influences...; the only difference is that it

is a matter no longer of precisely delineating stable continents, but of changing architecture and urbanism (Debord, 1981,p.53).

The map is a medium through which we can not only identify a location in space, but also a medium through which we can also design the plans for intervening in that specific area. The ‘situationists’ are therefore also interested in architecture and urban planning, since both understand the construction of urban spaces which can be re-designed according to their purposes.

So far I have described ‘*dérive*’⁴¹ as a general conceptual framework for the creation of ‘situations.’ Now let’s turn to *detournement*, another tactic practiced by the ‘situationists.’ In “Detournement As Negation And Prelude” (1959), Debord introduces *detournement*, an avant-garde tactic that is also used by the SI. Detournement implies:

the reuse of preexisting artistic elements in a new ensemble... The two fundamental laws of *detournement* are the loss of importance of each detoured autonomous element—which may go so far as to lose its original sense completely—and at the same time the organization of another meaningful ensemble that confers on each element its new scope and effect” (Debord,p.55).

Detournement can be applied in all sorts of mediums that we use for communication – images, text, sound. With *detournement* we get the chance to redirect or recreate an already encoded message in order to subvert it. This means that if we find something like

41 Since *dérive* is a practice that is difficult to be explained through theory, here I will try to describe it through a sequence of steps: First a group of individuals needs to suspend their habitual activities. Second, on a map, the group traces different trajectories or areas to be wandered. Third, the group divides itself so each individual would go stroll a different area for a prolonged amount of time (usually a whole day before the sun goes down). Fourth, by the end of the day the group would get together and narrate whatever they can recall or whatever notes they recorded from their experiences. This narrative would be the psychogeography of that specific trajectory. Fifth, after analyzing the ‘results,’ the group would figure out which is the area that needs to be intervened. Sixth, the group would develop a set of playful tactics to be implemented in that area so its pedestrians become aware of the way in which that precise area determines their experience while they move through it. These tactics will ideally produce situations that would break the habitual rhythm of life, so then both the ‘situationists’ and the pedestrians can get together and change the conditions of possibility of that area of the city.

an advertisement, and feel that something can be done to it so it can unravel some of its problems, then we can re-shape it in order to attain this. It is important to keep in mind that as soon as we transmit our detournement there is a risk for it to lose its intended meaning to the point in which it either gains a new meaning or becomes completely insignificant. Detournement, as a method, necessarily escapes its producer. We may desire to subvert an advertising campaign but the effect of our detournement may result in support for it.

Following Debord: “Detournement has a peculiar power which obviously stems from the double meaning, from the enrichment of most of the terms by the existence within them of their old senses and their new, immediate senses” (p.55). Therefore, the ‘detourned’ object gains its power from the connection that it has with the original source. This means that the ‘detourned’ object is like a bastard offspring of its original image. And looking at both the original ‘mother’ and its bastard ‘child’ allows us to see another possible reconfiguration of the original meaning. Detournement is a nomadic practice which aims at opening the often rigid and problematic realities that images or ‘spectacle’⁴² present to us. Detournement is important since it communicates that there may be a problem with the way in which we organize and represent the world, this allows its spectators to acknowledge the possibility for the re-creation of meaning – communicating that the creation of meaning can, and must always be an object of negotiation and dispute.

In 2012, Montreal based artist-activist Jordan Arsenault created a detournement of a poster that was produced in 1987 by the “Silence = Death” project.⁴³ Arsenault’s

42 In his book, *Society of the Spectacle* (1983), Guy Debord presents a series of aphorisms that deal with the problem of the ‘spectacle’. “The spectacle cannot be understood as an abuse of the world of vision, as a product of the techniques of mass dissemination of images. It is, rather, a *Weltanschauung* which has become actual, materially translated. It is a world vision which has become objectified” (p.5).

43 “In 1987, six gay activists in New York formed the Silence = Death Project and began plastering posters around the city featuring a pink triangle on a black background stating simply ‘SILENCE = DEATH.’ In its manifesto, the Silence = Death Project drew parallels between the Nazi period and the AIDS crisis, declaring that ‘silence about the oppression and annihilation of gay people, then and now, must be broken as a matter of our survival.’ The slogan thus protested both taboos around discussion of safer sex and the unwillingness of some to resist societal injustice and governmental indifference. The six men who

poster re-configures the legend “Silence = Death” into “Silence = Sex.” The “Silence = Death” project promoted the importance of bringing the issue of HIV/AIDS into the public realm. Arsenault’s ‘problem’⁴⁴ with the statement “Silence = Death,” springs from his personal experience as an individual who is HIV positive. This is why he re-configures “Silence = Death” into “Silence = Sex,” signifying that if someone being HIV positive keeps the ‘secret,’ then it will be easier to have sex. Another problem with this notion of having to disclose that one carries the virus prior to having sex is that, like Arsenault himself, there are individuals who carry the virus but are controlled with medications so that they are not ‘contagious.’

In Arsenault’s website we find the following poem accompanying his ‘poster’:⁴⁵

“SILENCE = SEX

“The New Equation”

by Jordan Arsenault

It’s that awkward moment when...

You’re naked in bed with a boy you’ve just made out with on a rooftop.

Looking up at the little toy cross

On top of the big, dark mountain.

created the project later joined the protest group ACT UP and offered the logo to the group, with which it remains closely identified” (Brian Howard, 2005). “Silence=Death”. In Act Up. Retrieved from <http://www.actupny.org/reports/silencedeath.html>

44 Arsenault found a problem in a slogan and campaign by not wanting to identify himself fully with some of the ideas that this campaign promoted. *This is why he ‘tunes’ the original poster into a very different configuration which provokes exterior openings to it. “Detournement is thus first of all a negation of the value of the previous organization of expression” (p.55). Here I have to say that this is when dialectics can become productive in the creation of a non-dialectical approach. When we treat it from a different perspective. Add the negative to the positive in order to create situations based on imagined lacks or desires, so we can then interact with that capitalist desire that is out of our control as if we were individual subjects. Here is where we realize that the aimless wanderings of Baudelaire are no longer possible (negation), and that we must continue to create strategies to try to change the conditions of possibility in our ecology.*

45 <http://postervirus.tumblr.com/post/35974194219/silence-sex-the-new-equation-by-jordan>

That awkward moment where you bring in the Greek chorus
 Of Angels in America characters
 And the dump truck of dead bodies and
 News segments of ashes actions
 And Diamanda Galas howling over Fire in My Belly.

That awkward moment when you decide to cough it up
 To rip the band-aid off the unhealed wound
 And tell him:

I just need to tell you something that's really not easy to say and
 I'm legally required to tell you before we take this any further:

I have been shortlisted for a very special prize.
 I am on the shortlist for those who didn't win the bet.
 I am biopolitically pegged for a lifetime of awkward moments.

There's 50 parts per millilitre of me
 That are Having It Very
 difficult; that are too late for a vaccine,
 That didn't do their due diligence
 And that echo a Harsh Interior Voice
 Saying "stay away,"
 Even though any other combination of bodies in a moment like this
 Would just be getting it on right now.

It's that awkward moment where you look up at the

SILENCE = DEATH poster

On his cluttered bedroom wall

And say the words

I AM HIV POSITIVE

Only to see him freeze, lose his boner, sigh,

And explain trippingly that he has an anxiety disorder

And "just can't take it right now."

It's that awkward moment when you want to rip a hypocritical poster

off someone's wall

Or at least half of it:

SILENCE = riiippppppp crumple crumple

SILENCE =

SILENCE = SEX

All those posters say THAT to me now:

Silence equals sex.

If you just keep your mouth shut

And don't talk about cells and replication and undetectability

And minor cuts or abrasions

And rinsing with lemon juice

And tests every three months

And how you ever got it in the first place...

"Oh," you ask "you were in a video PSA about serophobia too?"

"Yes, I'm sure you are very open-minded.

Thank you for showing me that," you say,

As you put your clothes back on.

SILENCE = SEX

Get used to the new equation,

Cause these bastards just don't know the math."

"The criminalization of HIV+ people perpetuates stigma and prevents HIV prevention. HIV+ people are often caught in a "Catch 22," wherein disclosure is required by law, but often leads to immediate rejection. Inform yourself : overcome stigma and get laid!"

Arsenault's detournement to the original poster "Silence = Death" creates an opening to re-configure the policy regarding this specific problem. The conceptual framework that we inherit from the 'situationists' allows for the invention of new site-specific tactics that we can use to navigate smoothly through an imperfectly striated world. In Arsenault's case, we can see how powerful this tactic can be. Even if it started at a micro political level, it ended up reaching the state. It is worth noting that the way in which Arsenault's detournement re-configured the policy was not by being completely anarchic, since the poster ended up working as a plea to change the law. From this we can see how remarkable the contribution from the 'situationists' is, since they create a constructive and playful approach to the different problems we may experience and want to change. *For the State is not capable, and will never be, of controlling life flawlessly according to its standards and this is why we need to keep pushing to cling into the political. Regardless of our condition where these may be invisible: we cannot forget about the or the owners of the means of production.*

The feature of constantly re-inventing itself as a group is what allows the SI to survive and continue thriving towards that impossible end of creating a new order. The constant re-shaping and re-configuration of the nomad's field (*nomos*) allows it to become a smoother and more adaptable organism that will cause trouble to the State. Perhaps it will never get to destroy the State since the nomadic forces appear as flashes of light, however,

it will appropriate a war machine that will consistently create ruptures through which the new arrives. Today we can think about the strategies that the State is implementing on the Internet as a medium for the creation and dissemination of information. From this angle, the possibility for creating a different ideology can be imagined.

This chapter presented a brief history on the concept of wandering through the analysis of the theory and practice of Rousseau, Senancour, Baudelaire, Aragon, and the ‘situationists.’ The following chapter will appropriate the weapons of speed that are produced by these nomadic figures, and analyze different works of ‘digital’ art or projects with the intensity and the desire to create new strategies to continue actualizing the war machine in the era of the ‘smartphone,’ when we are always connected to the Internet through a piece of hardware. *We are probably going to get to the point when we are always going to be connected and when it will be impossible to disconnect by just leaving our hardware phones at home or simply by turning them off.* When we don’t carry one of these devices, we are not trackable and still anonymous. However, since we have become habituated to this wearable computing technology, it seems that Baudelaire’s time of anonymity and any other form of flânerie are dead (Morozov, 2012). In the following chapter, I will explore the ‘status’ or the current ‘value’ of the practice of wandering in the context of the Internet, and more specifically, the popular social media network of Facebook, through a consideration of the concept of the cyberflâneur.

Chapter 2: Cyberflânerie

This chapter advances some of the notions that were developed in the previous sections regarding nomadic thought and practice. First, let's reflect on our promenade: in the Prelude, I introduced some conceptual terminology from Deleuze and Guattari's "Treatise on Nomadology" – State, nomad, and war machine – that I employ throughout this chapter. Chapter 1 examined the work of wandering within different thinkers whom I conceive as 'nomad.' Now, Chapter 2 bespeaks a future for nomadic practice or expression; now I sculpt the concept of the cyberflâneur. The Prelude and Chapter 1 provided the tools necessary for me to conclude with my re-contextualization of wandering in the context of the "information age," where power is also expressed through this new medium of the Internet.

2.1 The "Information Age"

This chapter is situated in a different context than the one in which the previously presented wanderers lived; today our engagement in the world is partly habituated through the smartphone, as a powerful extension of our body. The 'smartphone' is a mobile and portable computing device that connects to the Internet, offering a variety of uses and possibilities for the human users around it – the owners of the hardware and software corporations and its workers or computer programmers, the users of the service that they provide for its consumers, the government that regulates the interaction among all of these, and the artist or hacker who explores the network as a medium with a spectrum of multiple possibilities for its expression. In this state of affairs, Alexander Galloway

(2004) provides us with an approach to the Internet in terms of its power to produce new matter(ial)⁴⁶ relations. In *Protocol: How Control Exists after Decentralization* (2004), Galloway presents a materialist approach to studying the Internet as a diagram, a technology, and a management style:

The diagram is the *distributed network*, a structural form without center that resembles a web or meshwork. The technology is the digital *computer*, an abstract machine able to perform the work of any other machine (provided it can be described logically). The management style is *protocol*, the principle of organization native to computers in distributed networks. All three come together to define a new apparatus of control that has achieved importance at the start of the new millennium. (2004, p.1)

In the case of my research-creation concerning the cyberflâneur on Facebook, these insights allow me to consider what happens on the website beyond what is visible on the screen while I stroll through it. For regular consumers, Facebook may seem to be a very simple software; however, there are still many complexities behind its working that we do not need to consider in our habitual use of it. If we pose the Internet as a distributed network where its different nodes or users can send information to each other incessantly, then Facebook is also structured like a distributed network providing a sensation of ‘freedom’ in its consumers. In other words, our daily use of Facebook’s distributed network helps our experience of it to feel as if it were open for us to use it as we ‘wish.’⁴⁷ We access the Internet or Facebook through a personal computer or smartphone that connects to it.

46 Galloway’s conception of the “information age” is based on its power to produce and control social and material life. Information can be seen either in the context of the Internet or genetics, where a technical protocol carries the capacity to control the use of information. “The ‘information age’ – a term irreverently tossed to and fro by many critics of contemporary life – is not simply that moment when computers come to dominate, but is instead that moment in history when matter itself is understood in terms of information or code. At this historical moment, protocol becomes a controlling force in social life” (2004, p.111).

47 When we use Facebook, we get the illusion of freedom since it allows us to navigate through it as we wish. However, since Facebook is a software and software is constructed through programming, then when we use it we are not really ‘free,’ because we are navigating through a controlled environment.

And finally, we do not usually need to consider that there is a management style or protocol that designs and controls our seemingly free and comfortable experience of it. This aspect of control allows for the design of pattern recognition algorithms that automatically decide where access to information is allowed or denied, based on the computer's identification number or IP address. From a regular consumer's experience, I can say that these three aspects that Galloway includes in his analysis of the Internet seem to be wrapped up in a magical window that seduces us with the promise that there may be a message or a new notification of our interest waiting for us. It is important to consider Galloway's contribution if we want to consider how power today finds its expression through this apparatus of control.

If the Internet is a medium through which power expresses itself, then we can think about the extent of its power in terms of the amount of time we spend using it without giving it a second thought. Power in this case is seen as positive and productive in determining the kinds of uses we may give to the Internet. *Walking over the bridge at Trent, checking my Facebook Newsfeed, liking Posts, looking at my phone's screen while walking rapidly to go catch the westbank bus towards downtown Peterborough, ON.* As a carefully controlled and designed distributed network, the Internet allows its consumers to attune with it smoothly. This enables our continuous experience of software like Google to be as intuitive and seamless as walking through the streets *seeking the next bar*. It also enables surfing through Facebook's Newsfeed which seems to be simple, continuous, and changing *—like a river—* a visual presentation of information related to our affective links to other sources of information of our choice. While we stroll through our Newsfeed, the only thing that is moving in our body is our thumb while our hand holds the smartphone and our eyes make love to, or become coupled with, the screen.

In *Protocol*, Galloway writes about the principle of continuity that is adapted from film into software production. Continuity allows users of the network to be smoothly

lured into it: “[c]ontinuity, then, is defined as the set of techniques practiced by webmasters that, taken as a totality, create this pleasurable, fluid experience for the user” (2004, p.64). This principle, which is carefully considered by web designers, allows the consumers of Facebook to not have to be concerned with or think about all of that code or the industry that makes way for the pleasingly simple blue and white Facebook display.⁴⁸ When our experience of anything is as continuous as it is now with the Internet, we do not encounter many of the errors or problems that impede us, since we are powerless in solving those problems.⁴⁹ When continuity is well crafted we fail to realize that there may be other software or other experiences out there that are worth our attention, since this one is already so comfortable. *I remember the ‘90s when it was not so seamless, when the Internet was a mystery. It took a long time to connect and it was a complicated task to navigate through different websites.*

As our experience of the Internet is carefully constructed and designed in order for us to navigate through it smoothly, this construction will also determine the ways in which we can use it. There could be a problem with this ‘protocol’ or way of doing things surrounding the Internet that could negatively affect the practice of flânerie or our use and relation to this medium, which I discuss in further detail in the following section of this chapter (Morozov, 2012). This limitation springs from the pragmatic design of daily life use software like Facebook, where the Internet is supposed to be used to get things done – to communicate, to shop, to check bank accounts, and so on. The imbrication of

48 For Galloway, speed is another important aspect which provides the user of the web with this intuitive experience. “Speed means continuity; lack of speed means discontinuity. Speed helps perpetuate the illusion that personal movement on the Net is unmediated, that the computer is a natural extension of the user’s own body” (2004, p.67). In this way, speed could be problematic since it makes it even more complicated for the user to slow the machine down and study it as a medium that mediates its interaction with other users and databases. Speed carries the capacity to interpolate us so effectively that it is almost impossible to develop a critical relation to the medium since it masks its functioning making the user feel as if its relation to this machine were not even mediated, but direct. This could also be a problem towards the future, as the Internet is getting speedier and speedier and we may even lose control of it. *Giving way to the war machine through the medium of the Internet.*

49 In his essay titled “Is Using a Computer Like Driving a Car, Reading a Book, or Solving a Problem? The Computer as Machine, Text, and Culture” (1995), Peter Lyman writes about this issue. When the computer consumer experiences a problem with it, she would say that it is broken. Whereas, when a computer engineer goes through this she would ask: “what is the problem and how can it be solved?”

this consumerist ideology in the design of these ‘instruments’ that we habitually use could end up complicating or even restricting the possibility for other uses of the network to spring into existence – to use it for the sake of an aesthetic, political, or other purpose – any purpose other than the one that this software prescribes for its human users.

Galloway conceives of protocol as an open distributed network that is similar to Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of the distributed field (*nomos*) through which the nomad moves, and it also includes State-like rigidity and control as part of what makes the Internet possible. For him, “protocol is in fact both poles of this machinic movement, territorializing structure and anarchical distribution” (2004, p.64). “The contradiction at the heart of protocol is that it has to standardize in order to liberate. It has to be unilateral to be utopian” (2004, p.95). This is in fact what makes protocological power so complicated to resist for consumers of the Internet. The consumer only navigates in one of the multiple layers of the Internet, the application layer, which is created and designed by its producers who have control over the rest of the layers.⁵⁰ In other words, the consumer uses the layer of the Internet that is like a safe playground designed for children to have fun. Also, since the consumers of the web do not control it, if they do get to become ‘revolutionary’ or ‘rebellious’ within it, then the administrators of the net can always cut their signal, making it impossible to continue planning or working on their ‘transgressive’ endeavors. If Rousseau had been writing the polemic *Emile* in the context of the “information age,” it would have been easier to control its spread to society. “Protocol gives us the ability to build a ‘warm, friendly’ technological space. But it becomes warm and friendly through technical standardization, agreement, organized implementation, broad (sometimes universal) adoption, and directed participation” (2004, p.142).

Our current social condition is liquescent or postmodern, what Gilles Deleuze

50 The Internet has seven layers, each of which performs a different function in order to allow for the transmission of information between its users who only ‘understand’ the ‘application’ layer. The producers of the Internet work with the seven layers as opposed to the one that the users engage with.

terms “societies of control.”⁵¹ Although the distinction between notions of modernity and postmodernity are not the focus of this chapter, it is nevertheless important to provide a basic distinction of both in order to highlight the setting of this chapter. I suggest that the modern State was localizable and visible, whereas the postmodern State is liquid, fluid, moving, adaptable and imperceptible. It is difficult to localize the postmodern State while trying to resist it or deal with it like the previously analyzed nomadic wanderers had done with its modern counterpart. Facebook is a powerful postmodern State that is now in everyone’s mind and smartphone, constantly updating itself, adapting, producing and controlling the social relations around it, yet it is very complicated to avoid or disrupt it. Like the State, meaning was also more stable or static in modernity than in postmodernity, where meaning is constantly drifting and proliferating.⁵² This is an age where the State becomes nomadic, appropriating space in order to smoothen it, thereby creating a new form of control that is simultaneously rigid in its design and smooth on the surface or ‘application layer.’ Today the rigid and controlling force of the Internet remains invisible to its consumers in a way in which we would never suspect there could be something potentially wrong or problematic with these ‘tools’ that allow us to ‘get things done.’

In “Nomadic Power and Cultural Resistance” (1994), the Critical Art Ensemble (CAE) re-locates Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of the figure of the nomad in the context of the “information age.” It is in this postmodern setting that it gets more complicated to distinguish between State and nomad since the former now appropriates the lat-

51 In his “Postscript on the Societies of Control” (1992), Gilles Deleuze distinguishes societies of control from disciplinary societies. Stating that society has now mutated from discipline to control. Disciplinary societies followed a logic of enclosure, a logic of molding places in order to discipline its subjects. Control societies are modular, “like a self-deforming cast that will continuously change from one moment to the other, or like a sieve whose mesh will transmute from point to point” (1992, p.4). Disciplinary societies are easier to make sense of since the molds they create, the architecture of places, are durable and stable. Control societies are more complex since power becomes modular, changeable, fluid, adaptable, and sometimes indistinguishable.

52 This is something that Jean Baudrillard discusses in his book *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994), where language and meaning cease to make sense as they did in other times. Or where the distinction between the representation or copy of an object and the object itself that is represented disappears – when the map becomes indistinguishable from the territory.

ter's qualities in its quest for control over the expression of the war machine. For the CAE, "The location of power – and the site of resistance – rest in an ambiguous zone without borders. How could it be otherwise, when the traces of power flow in transition between nomadic dynamics and sedentary structures" (CAE, 1994, p.11). This diagnosis of the context in which we are now situated resonates with Galloway's in that today power flows through a distributed network making it almost impossible to trace its origins or source, while at the same time power manifests itself as an apparatus of control that also striates or limits our use of the Net through its design.

With the overall 'problem' or context of the Internet described, what is it that we can really do about it? What can we do when the "archaic model of nomadic power, once a means to an unstable empire, has evolved into a sustainable means of domination" (1994, p.15)? This domination occurs in software like Facebook since it is constantly changing, updating, adapting and almost reinventing itself, showing us new information, while at the same time making us dependent on it in a way that it has captured our social relations and inserted them into itself. What can we do about the undemocratic quality of the net? The net is undemocratic since its as-yet human designers do not fully include users in the creative process of its design. What can we do if power now finds its expression through the Internet and we are not working in that industry, or we do not own the corporations that are designing the Internet of everyday life? What can we do as powerless users in the sense that power lays now in the production of the Internet which allows the general population to use it?

In this context of confusion and the undecidability of whether it is worth continuing to think about political action in the form of nomadic power and cultural resistance, the CAE suggests that we should keep pushing regardless of the fact that our efforts might appear to be in vain:

In spite of their awkward situation, the political activist and the cul-

tural activist (anachronistically known as the artist) can still produce disturbances. Although such action may more resemble the gestures of a drowning person, and it is uncertain just what is being disturbed, in this situation the postmodern roll of the dice favors the act of disturbance. After all, what other chance is there? It is for this reason that former strategies of “subversion” (a word which in critical discourse has about as much meaning as the word “community”), or camouflaged attack, have come under a cloud of suspicion. Knowing what to subvert assumes that the forces of oppression are stable and can be identified and separated – an assumption that is just too fantastic in an age of dialectics in ruins. Knowing how to subvert presupposes an understanding of the opposition that rests in the realm of certitude, or (at least) of high probability. The rate at which strategies of subversion are co-opted indicates that the adaptability of power is too often underestimated; however, credit should be given to the resisters, to the extent that the subversive act is not co-optimally reinvented as quickly as the bourgeois aesthetic of efficiency might dictate. (1994, p.12)

This rather chaotic picture that CAE presents could be fine-tuned if we started by letting go of our desire to subvert the macropolitical register and turned to a micropolitics or micro-struggle as we become pleurably asphyxiated by this apparatus of control. This would entail focusing on one’s own daily use of this machine, and reflecting on it, thinking about it so in the future something will hopefully change in the way we relate to the Internet and the world. In other words, we should not forget about CAE’s desire to subvert the web at a macropolitical level, but we have to start by generating particular understandings of its workings so then we can dream the utopian dream of a more democratically designed Internet for all.

In response to this issue we should also ask questions that pertain to our particular relation to the Internet and its daily life software. *What can I do with it other than what it tells me to use it for? What can I do with Facebook other than what its design allows me to do smoothly and continuously, and what happens in my perception during and after I experience a 'break' or discontinuity?* I assumed this reflexive activity from working with Rousseau's *Reveries*, where he changes the purpose of walking as a means for transporting oneself from place to place into walking as a means for wandering and reflecting on the society of his time, and suggest that one of the courses of action to take is to continue this "thinking-practice," reinventing the tactics that, in this case, the previously presented wandering thinkers introduce in their work. I suggest this as a way of dealing with this issue since it can help humans develop a critical voice in the context of the Internet. This is only a suggestion, *an act of memory* not to forget the work of thinkers who have written and reflected about the practice of daily life – *an act of memory so we don't forget about the great human contributions of the past...*

The increasing societal constraints pervading the Internet have led me to develop a project that advances the concept of the cyberflâneur in theory and practice. My work on the cyberflâneur shows how one can still resist and imagine an outside, while at the same time providing an illustration of its value at a societal level. This project may only be a personal struggle against a relentless monster like Facebook, which carries the capacity to control and design our experience, relation and access to information and communication these days. However, the expression of this struggle is significant since it speaks about the possibilities and effects of wandering as an epistemological practice. Now that so many people use smartphones, we can see that the struggle is between the individual and the Internet. Today the struggle goes against a communication apparatus that is part of our daily lives. However, the struggle is not negative or undesirable, since it allows one to invent new and different ways to navigate through a now mobile, liquid, adapt-

able, nomadic State. In order to further contextualize this struggle, I turn in the following section to some of the literature surrounding the concept of the cyberflâneur, and in the final section of this chapter I develop the concept while also looking at other artistic projects on Facebook, including my own.

2.2 What Are Others Saying about the Cyberflâneur?

I am going to start by defining the two words that compose the concept of the cyberflâneur. The prefix “cyber” comes from the Greek *Kı̃bernetes*, which stands for steer, drive, guide, direct, govern, and control.⁵³ Flâneur comes from the Scandinavian *flana*, or *flanta*, which signifies “to gad about,” to move restlessly or aimlessly from one place to the other. At first sight, the combination of the words cyber and flâneur seem problematic since one implies control and the other some kind of free movement. The former creates a network by marking its limits (cyber) and the latter moves through that construction (flâneur). This concept carries the paradox of moving aimlessly in a controlled space, as if one would say that she is moving freely in her prison cell or her psychiatric confine. Skeptical about this paradoxical concept and the possibility for its actual practice, Evgeny Morozov (2012) announces “The Death of the Cyberflâneur,” which makes sense if we follow the logic that it is impossible to wander freely in a controlled environment such as the Internet.

In 2012, popular new media skeptic Evgeny Morozov published a widely read article for the *New York Times* titled. “The Death of the Cyberflâneur.” For Morozov the rise of the Internet in the ’90s brought the possibility for something like cyberflânerie. However, today he views this promise as an illusion. For him, our use of the Internet is mostly driven by practical purposes: it is no longer a place for strolling but a place “to get things done” (2012). Facebook is an example of these coded environments where its

53 New Oxford American Dictionary. Words: “cyber” and “flâneur.”

design ideally⁵⁴ interpellates the user into the software – *as if we were there, inside the screen.*

The interpellation starts when the user signs the terms of agreement, then learns the steps to utilize the corporation's services: to communicate with others, continuously curate her public profile, and surf through her Newsfeed – *as if she were flowing smoothly through the river of her unconscious.* It becomes like an unconscious flow since all the content (image, text, hyperlink and video) that is immediately available to our sight is produced by an algorithm that has recorded our habitual use of the software. Facebook's pragmatic design makes it complicated to wander 'freely' like Rousseau did when he was engaging in one of his walks. However, since Facebook is not yet fully integrated on a chip inside of our nervous system, controlling our consciousness, our brain, or our surrounding environment, then we can still re-imagine and re-invent this practice.

Morozov's claim that the Internet's utilitarian design could interfere with the possibility of flânerie is problematic due to his conception of the cyberflâneur as one who aimlessly surfs the web. It is certainly easy for anyone who has Internet connection to aimlessly surf the web, and this is why it is important to distinguish cyberflânerie from online surfing. For the sake of clarification, we should define the aimless, non-utilitarian, web browsing, as what it is. On the other side, we have the cyberflâneur who is deeply embedded in working with the medium. This does not mean that he has a clear agenda during his online wanderings. It means that he will not only surf and scroll through the web, but will also create a critical reflection of whatever he finds amusing and worth noting through his journey – a reflection which will ideally reveal to the users of the web their habitual use of the medium from a different perspective.

It is important to keep in mind that the 'reflection' is critical since it allows for a revision of those sublime moments that strike *me*, and this act of remembering the past will involve the creation of a future to that practice – a future to the particular expression

54 I say 'ideally' since there can be users of Facebook who use it for other purposes that Facebook does not intend to prescribe for its users to follow.

and contemplation of beauty on Facebook. Morozov does not want to explore the actual practice of cyberflânerie, which would involve getting into that mode, since he is only doing a critique of how the ideal flâneur has no more possibilities to practice flânerie or cyberflânerie in actuality. From this perspective, it makes sense to claim that the cyberflâneur is dead; however, from a practical perspective, there are still possibilities to use Baudelaire's concepts to stroll through a software like Facebook. For instance, one can stroll through any Facebook Newsfeed, find interesting content to revise, and either create new Posts, including this critical revision, or remediate some of that content into other mediums and forms of expression.

Morozov states that Facebook is the Baron Haussmann of the Internet. Chosen by Napoleon, Haussmann was entrusted with the renovation of Paris between 1853 and 1870. He widened the streets to facilitate transportation and demolished 'classical' buildings in favour of creating a more effective city. For Morozov, Haussmann's and Facebook's implementations complicate the possibility of flânerie. I disagree with Morozov: these architectural features only complicate the possibility for the figure of the flâneur to arise, affecting where this figure will eventually appear. The flâneur and cyberflâneur are still there because we are still writing and talking about them, and we are still engaged in flânerie.

Morozov's argument is important since it highlights some considerations necessary when choosing to practice cyberflânerie. Morozov is a critic of our relation to the Internet. His critical lens allows him to look at particular contemporary expressions in comparison to the old and general. However, his transcendental idea of what the flâneur is supposed to be is useful if we actually challenge it and go beyond it. Morozov is also looking at the concept of the cyberflâneur from a desk in his research office, at a distance like a scientist who is supposed to create factual knowledge about something that he does not get immersed in, but studies it from afar *like a negative dialectician*.

We should also keep in mind that Morozov's announcement of the death of the cyberflâneur is precisely what gives birth to the possibility of cyberflânerie. In other words, the acknowledgment of the impossibility of the cyberflâneur is what constitutes the possibility of a cyberflâneur. The fact that it is impossible to become an ideal cyberflâneur opens up the field to invent or construct such a concept. I believe that the cyberflâneur is a fundamental figure that can allow us to navigate through the controlled rivers of the Internet and its social networks in a more reflexive way. This is due to the fact that the cyberflâneur engages in a different qualitative relationship with the new media – different from the state, software engineer, artist, and the common user – and gets to produce a faithfully redemptive reflection that could carry the potential to allow the other users of the medium to think about their relationship to it.

As an immediate response to Morozov's text, John Hendel (2012) from *The Atlantic* wrote an article titled "The Life of the Cyberflâneur." In this article, Hendel disagrees with Morozov:

He makes valid points, especially regarding the monetization of social media, information, and taste itself, but I wouldn't for a second give credence to Morozov's idea that surfing the web in the style of the cyberflâneur, (a conceit tech folks have long toyed with) is dead or dying."

For Hendel we can stroll through the depths of the Internet arcades since there is so much information out there that we can always find deeper and darker 'pathways' or hyperlinks that are not constantly explored. Despite Hendel's claim that the cyberflâneur is alive and living, there is a problem with his conceptualization of this figure. For him the cyberflâneur can be some sort of expert or connoisseur in using Facebook as a medium for strolling and wandering, someone who frequently engages in this mode of using the software. However, his argument falls too short and we require a more profound meditation on the concept, which is what I decided to do in this thesis. He also misses the fact that Baudelaire, as a flâneur, produces reflections about the practice. Hendel is not a

cyberflâneur because he, like Morozov, writes about it from the perspective of a journalist who observes the cyberflâneur at a distance. I would suggest that considering a history of wandering, like in the previous chapter, allows for the continuation of this theory and practice.

There is another article written in this context that follows Morozov's train of thought by Conor McGarrigle (2013) titled "Forget the Flâneur." Since this article is an academic one, and not a popular newspaper article, McGarrigle develops a thorough argument on why we should be forgetting the flâneur and inventing a new practice-concept that would be more active and transgressive than the nostalgic version of the flâneur or cyberflâneur. He is therefore looking for a heroic figure that will effect a macropolitical change. McGarrigle advances Morozov's argument that the changing architecture of the Internet from the '90s to today, with companies like Facebook and Google now capable of monopolizing the administration of its information, leaves the cyberflâneur in the position of a passive consumer (*working for Facebook so I can wander through it*):

[T]he flâneur was essentially a detached observer; he did not engage in the commerce of the arcade, intervene in the streets he traversed, or seek to change society. A cyberflâneur following this model of detached observer, working within existing structures without seeking to change or disrupt them, is essentially a consumer, operating within the logic of their chosen platform. Indeed, for platforms such as Facebook, any possibility for flânerie has been successfully engineered out. The detached passivity of the flâneur needs to be replaced with an alternative model which is of necessity engaged, a disruptive activist who does not merely observe, but actively seeks to create alternative narratives and shape outcomes. (McGarrigle, 2013 p.1)

McGarrigle's article is interesting because it couples itself with Morozov and provides more depth and insights to the death of the cyberflâneur, calling for the action of undo-

ing, and forgetting the flâneur. For him, there is no longer a reason to practice flânerie in any way because it does not diverge sufficiently from the standard use of the Internet: *producing and consuming image, text, audio, and video through sites and services like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp*. After explaining that Baudelaire's experience of strolling through the streets, wasting time, going nowhere, and contemplating daily life resonates with our experience of surfing or scrolling aimlessly through Facebook's Newsfeed, McGarrigle suggests looking at other more contemporary theorists and groups like Michel de Certeau and the situationists, in order to find alternatives to tackle this problem (2013, p.1).

I agree with McGarrigle's observation that the flâneur can be pretty useless for political activism on the Internet, because his activity is as powerless as the regular consumer who is indifferent to these issues. However, I do not think that we need to forget about the flâneur or cyberflâneur. If the flâneur was an active and effective figure in its time, then we need to find ways to sculpt and materialize some of Baudelaire's insights into our times. This is why using cyberflâneur instead of flâneur will mark a historic change in the expression of the spirit of wandering. So now that we couple 'cyber' and 'flâneur,' we have the task of creating a network of other concepts around this practice in order to re-invent it towards the future. This is something similar to what Baudelaire did when he was developing the concept of the flâneur in "The Painter of Modern Life." Coupling it with other figures like the classic artist, the dandy, and others thereby forms a conceptual network or constellation that constitutes the intricacies of this concept.

The death of the cyberflâneur is an idea that provides us with a framework for thinking about the historical transformations and mutations of a concept through time. Morozov's argument is based on the fact that since the Internet's architecture no longer maintains the same qualities and ideas that it did in the '90s, its recent transformation no longer allows for cyberflânerie. Morozov's contribution is important since it provides us with an opening for the creation of something that will re-conceptualize the concept of

the cyberflâneur in order to give a future to this practice. McGarrigle's article on forgetting the flâneur, advances the death of the cyberflâneur suggesting that we should develop new ways to continue this 'nomadic' practice. Now that I have considered some of the common 'problems' with the concept of the cyberflâneur, Hendel's text places us in a position where we can start re-crafting this concept in theory and practice.

2.3 On the Cyberflâneur: Facebook Art

Here, I provide a speculative conceptualization of the cyberflâneur. Prior to beginning this section, I will provide a vocabulary to the reader, who may be unfamiliar with Facebook, which will help to navigate some of the objects in the software that I will be referring to. Outside of Facebook these words would not carry the same connotations.

Post: A Post is a public announcement that one can make on Facebook. This can be through images, text, video, hyperlinks, and sound. When one posts, the Post opens the possibility for other users to Like or comment on it.

Like: Like is a digital-clickable button that accompanies every Post. When a Post is Liked, a tally of total Likes is kept. One can Like and then unlike a Post. Facebook also archives our likes and clicking behavior when we engage with Posts.

Newsfeed: The Newsfeed is literally a newsfeed of posts. However, what we see in our Newsfeed is curated by Facebook's algorithm which customizes the Posts we encounter based on an interpretation of our previous engagements with other Posts.

In *The Painter of Modern Life* (2010), Baudelaire's flâneur is engendered by the "modern" city;⁵⁵ his or her contingent world, the industrial city, plays a role in creating the possibility for flânerie. This implies that the quality of the reflection, painting, or

55 Beginning of modern city life, trains, migration of people to the cities, industrialization of life.

poem that he creates, is also affected by the infrastructure of the modern city. Today we have the cyberflâneur, who is different from the flâneur in that his environment is no longer the city with its noises but a computer in a room with an Internet connection. Ironically, with the technological becoming of the computer into the smart phone or iPad, the cyberflâneur can now return to the streets since these devices can connect to the web in almost any physical space. This means that with such “new” innovations, like the promising “Google Glass,” one can be simultaneously a flâneur in the streets and a cyberflâneur on the Internet.

For Baudelaire there is an important relationship between the modern and the classic artist. Both can exist simultaneously, while also being similar to and different from each other. For the purpose of this argument, let’s distinguish the modern artist as “flâneur” and the classic artist as “artist.”⁵⁶ The former is interested in “minor poetry” where he finds “particular beauty, the beauty of circumstance, the description of manners” (2010, p.1) while the latter is concerned with general beauty. In his essay, Baudelaire constantly refers to M. G., an anonymous flâneur, to shine a light on the concept. For him, M. G “drew like a barbarian, like a child” (p.7), in comparison to the artist – who knows and studies the craft and materials that are involved in the creation of her artwork. At first sight, it may seem that the flâneur has no expertise, or no value, when we compare it to the artist. However, the one is different from the other: the painter of modern life is an expert on quick on-the-spot drawings of life, while the artist spends more time making a painting, *a world of its own, a window to another universe*. The flâneur is interested in the material surface or quality of things and that is why he tends to observe them with joy. *While wandering through the streets of downtown Peterborough, ON, she saw a pile of snow that reminded her of a photograph that her uncle once posted on Facebook. The image that her lonely uncle posted was a ‘selfie’ – he always posts all of his activities on social networks through his iPhone, she said to me after*

56 In *The Painter of Modern Life*, Baudelaire creates this distinction between the modern and the classic artist, and refers to the former as the flâneur. **Posing the flâneur as a modern artist is something that Baudelaire does for the sake of his argument, however, we should note that the definitions of both modern and classic art(ists) would be altogether different and more complex in a wider context outside Baudelaire’s text.**

taking a sip of her instant coffee.' There are instances when the artist and flâneur become indistinguishable from each other. This happens when the artist enters the streets to practice flânerie, or when the flâneur takes one of his sketches and turns it into an elaborate painting.

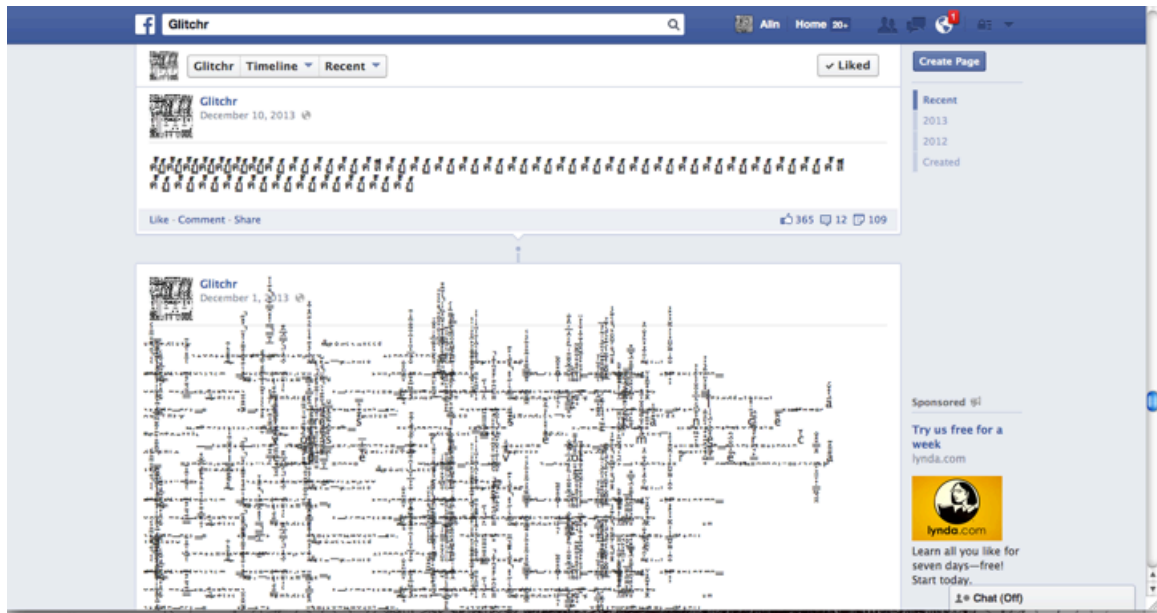
In the time of the Internet, the artist can also become the cyber-artist. This does not mean that one replaces the other, since currently we have classic artists who study degrees in fine arts, such as painting or sculpture, and continue to exercise their professional medium-specific skills. Similar to the artist and the continuation of the study of her craft, we also have new media artists who study their own medium, like the Internet or computer programming, where they can create their artwork.

In the same way that Baudelaire expressed the existence of the artist and the modern artist or flâneur, in our postmodern times we have the cyber-artist and the cyber-flâneur. While the former knows how to use the medium at the level of programming and manipulate it accordingly, the latter is an expert in reflecting on his existence as a habitual user of the network.⁵⁷ McLuhan's work indicates the importance of approaching any medium from the angle of art or the artist: "The serious artist is the only person able to encounter technology with impunity, just because he is an expert aware of the changes in sense perception" (1964, p. 18). Where the producer's goal is to make sure that the medium works smoothly so its consumers can continue using it, and where the consumer's goal is to use the medium to get things done, the artist is comparatively free from these desires and can therefore experiment with the software without a specific telos. The fact that the Internet artist illustrates the hidden potentials of the medium allows me to think about its multiple possibilities for action and resistance – which are significant *political* questions concerning, among other things, the (un)democratic design of the technology we use in our everyday life (Feenberg, 2002).

The cyber-artist arises when Laimonas Zakas enters the streets of Facebook and

57 Although I differentiate the cyber-artist from the cyberflâneur, both are different kinds of artists. This means that both concepts are not mutually exclusive.

becomes *Glitchr*, a hybrid oscillating between hacker and artist. *Glitchr* gets “social” on the media by posting his coded graffiti that seems to spread randomly across the screen when the individual user or follower of his work gets to click “see more” on the webpage (see screenshot below).



Glitchr is not only an artist but also a hacker, since he randomly discovered a glitch in the character set that Facebook uses, Unicode, and decided to exploit it. Since software is inherently incomplete, and hence in perpetual update, Zakas encountered a glitch (by using the ‘style editor’ tool where one can see the written coding of whatever is displayed on the screen), in Facebook’s coding.⁵⁸

The graffiti itself is created through manipulation of diacritics, those accent marks you see a lot in Arabic or words like *exposé*. “Diacritics can be combined to get outstanding results,” Zakas tells Co.Design. “An everyday person can do it by writing an html code and converting it to unicode, or by using apps that convert the text automatically.” (Wilson, 2012)

⁵⁸ The ‘style editor’ tool can be enabled in the web browser. Activating this option allows for users to look at the configuration of the code that produces whatever they are seeing in the website that they are navigating.

Taking advantage of this glitch allows Zakas to create a unique and visually pleasurable graffiti that alters the usual vista of our screen while we, the spectators, engage with it at the website. *Glitchr*'s "hack" of Facebook also teaches us that the hacker is not always (or even usually) attempting to do something destructive. Initially, he has to discover the way in which the coding of the page works so that he can decide whether to do something allegedly destructive (or illegal) like Edward Snowden;⁵⁹ or to create an aesthetically pleasing work of art like *Glitchr*.

In 2011, when *Glitchr* began experimenting with Facebook's code, he had a problem with its software engineers and bots – who may also play the role of private police or security within the corporation. In this incident, the cyber-police of the website disabled *Glitchr*'s account, which contained some of this "hack-work" (Sayej, 2014). Sometime after the occurrence, Zakas contacted Facebook and recuperated his project. Something interesting to keep in mind from this hacker-police encounter is that probably the police was a "bot," a programmed kind of robot that will perform the engineers task of keeping the website functioning according to the precepts of Facebook.⁶⁰ The bot is an algorithm that is programmed by the software engineer. The Internet-bot ends up being some sort of distorted mirror-image of the ideology and laws/limits that Facebook's security team has to follow when programming the tasks of the automated "police." The software architects are in charge of constructing the page and create modifications to it, but they also create "bots" to keep such a busy, and therefore important, site under control.⁶¹

Glitchr is an interesting project since it allows its spectators, who in this case are users of social media, to see one of the many hidden potentials of Facebook. *Glitchr* is

59 In this essay, I am not focusing on the possible emancipatory and political effects of Snowden's project. However, I deem it destructive since that is how the American state interpreted his action.

60 Allowing its users to 'connect with the world,' maintaining the principle of continuity so the software is always available for any of its users to connect to it.

61 It is important to note that the cyber-artist shares some commonalities and differences with the software engineer when relating to Facebook. Both need to know how the coded construction of the website works in order to be able to carry out their respective tasks. The engineer is usually concerned with keeping the website operating "smoothly," while the cyber-artist is interested in creating some sort of artwork out of that operating system. This implies that the former controls the software, while the latter has a more playful and experimental relationship to it.

also a playful and interactive project for it allows users of Facebook to ‘copy’ and ‘paste’ its artworks on their walls. Allowing the users of the software to change it, and play with it. And getting in this activity of playing with it already implies changing one’s habitual mode of using the network.

In the same way that we have the artist becoming cyber-artist, we also have the flâneur becoming cyberflâneur in the times when sociality finds a place in the digital plane of immanence. With the rise of the Internet, and social-media, the society or multiplicity of people who transited the streets of the metropolis finds a digital place where it can continue its practices. Many daily life practices (shopping, banking, chatting with others, meeting new people, and strolling aimlessly like a flâneur) are now possible on the Internet. There is still a difference in the quality of both phenomenological experiences, however: one happens in the actual streets, while the other in front of a screen (computer, laptop, smartphone, or the promising Google Glass). In the case of shopping, when I physically walk into a clothing store, I can still try on the clothes (touch them, feel their material quality, weight). However, with online shopping I do not have those same possibilities but I can shop at any time that I want to – which is something that cannot be done in the physical world since stores also close. On the other side, when I do online banking I do not have to wait in line, since I can perform almost all the processes that I would do while physically present. *E-banking could be specifically beneficial for the Mexican population, since lots of people get robbed in the bank’s waiting line.*

When we chat online, instead of talking face to face, there is the possibility to think about, and therefore control, what we are going to say to the other person. In face-to-face conversations there is also a great amount of uncontrollable excess that can always affect the conversation in multiple ways. *This happens when you sit in a Café in Polanco, Mexico City, where you will be constantly interrupted by the various walking street sellers who offer different products: lottery tickets, candy, gum, cigarettes, guava fruit (guayaba), fake watches, and such artisan products.* In the case of the online flâneur, strolling will happen by clicking hyperlinks and scrolling

through the websites with the mouse. This is very different from the flâneur who depends on his legs or a wheelchair to move from one place to the other. Again, the invention of smart-phones allows for being online and offline simultaneously. This means that we can shop online while we are shopping in an actual store, and we can also stroll around a street while we scroll through a social-media website.

Excuse the digression from the flâneur becoming cyberflâneur to sociality becoming cyber-sociality, but it is fundamental to give a little bit of context regarding how sociality operates online. For Baudelaire, the flâneur is interested in the city and the crowd that inhabits it: “[t]he crowd is his domain, just as the air is the bird’s, and water that of the fish. His passion and his profession is to merge with the crowd” (2010, p.12). If the flâneur is interested in merging with and observing the crowd at the same time, while walking in the streets or sitting at a bar, then the cyberflâneur is interested in looking at and reflecting on what other people and corporations are saying or doing publicly while logged in to their Facebook account. The cyberflâneur is not only attracted to what happens inside the screen or inside the software, but it is also captivated by observing how the people in the crowd relates to the Internet via their smartphones.

Facebook on Facebook (*FB on FB*) is a project that aims at practicing and discovering what would be something like online flânerie. *FB on FB* is the research-creation project that I devised while meditating on the ideas that I discuss in this thesis. Here, I try to invent a practice of cyberflânerie by working with Facebook from the perspective of a regular user who has no coding skills like Zaka’s. Doing this has not been an easy task, since I started by sitting for hours and hours strolling through Facebook having no idea on how to materialize a reflection on it like the flâneur would do while wandering through the streets. As I got used to this practice of wandering through Facebook for extended periods of time, I began crafting different projects as a cyberflâneur. In this section, *FB on FB* is my persona as cyberflâneur since the only way to discover cyberflânerie was by crafting its practice.

Reading Morozov's article for the first time was like an enigma, a starting point for a project that has taken different directions and will hopefully continue in the future; this is a project that is similar to that of each of the wanderers of the first chapter of this thesis, since it weaves its own theory and practice through writing as opposed to being solely a practical or theoretical endeavor (like Morozov's). Each of the wanderers that were presented in the previous chapter, found their own way to continue their projects – *to engage in an impossible practice and write about it*.

The first *FB on FB* project started by strolling through the web reflecting on sports discussions. Now that most websites are connected to Facebook some of them offer the possibility for engaging in a discussion surrounding the news article through one's Facebook persona. There is a poetic "sketch" that the cyberflâneur created while navigating through the ESPN Deportes Facebook chat.⁶² This sketch was born after closely observing the behavior of several users who had posted a similar kind of comment. This means that in the bottom part of an article about the final game of the 2014 UEFA Champions League, in which Real Madrid beat Atlético de Madrid with a score of 4-1, the cyberflâneur found that different users were directing their comment towards Atlético de Madrid's coach, Diego Simeone. Some of them were congratulating him for arriving to the final since Atlético is known to be the "working class" team from Madrid, the antithesis to their royal counterparts, Real Madrid; and others were commenting on the things that he could do to improve the team's performance in the future. The cyberflâneur, merged with the ESPN/Facebook crowd, posted an ironic comment that resonated with both sides. This is the Post in Spanish and English:

62 As with many other websites, ESPN is working with Facebook. Whoever gets to participate in the online public discussions on specific ESPN articles is doing it under their Facebook persona. This means that comment or activity that one engages in while using ESPN will be posted on the Facebook "timeline" or "wall" of that particular user.



When describing some aspects of the flâneur, Baudelaire says: “He, the lover of life, may also be compared to a mirror as vast as his crowd; to a kaleidoscope endowed with consciousness, which with every one of its movements presents a pattern of life, in all its multiplicity, and the flowing grace of all the elements that go to compose life” (2010, p.13). The cyberflâneur’s “sketch” or Post, shares some of the conscious mirror-like characteristics that Baudelaire finds in the flâneur. The Post is a mirror because it mirrors or reflects the interesting mannerism that was displayed on the ESPN conversations, which shows how Facebook users frequently post messages or comments without even thinking about the fact that their messages will never reach their destinations. The “conscious”

aspect of this mirror lays in the addition of the question or the concern of whether the message will ever reach its target.

The second project of the cyberflâneur consisted in asking random people and friends: “What is Facebook?” In some of the occasions people wrote their answers, in others I wrote them myself a couple of minutes after ending our interactions, and in some more extreme cases I ended up remembering the answer hours after hearing a response. Since remembering is also an act of forgetting, because when we remember we are placed in a position of having to re-imagine the past, most of the answers have probably suffered transformations. The only thing that I kept a record of was the place where each person was born. The purpose of this second project was to post the answers on the *FB on FB* page. It is worth noting that when I was asking this question, I only wanted to ask the question for the others to ask the question to themselves and perhaps think about that software that they use in their daily lives. So this was not a scientific project seeking calculated answers, but an endeavor to confound whomever I asked the question to. Some of the answers look like this:

Facebook Stories # 42 - What is Facebook? - Peterborough, ON

“It is a virtual representation of myself.”

Facebook Stories # 41 - What is Facebook? - Coahuila, Torreón

“Facebook es una red social en la que me puedo comunicar con mis amigos/compañeros. Es una red en la que puedo compartir fotografías con otras personas y seguir en contacto con ellas”

“Facebook is a social network through which I can communicate with my friends/mates. I can also share images with other people and stay in touch with them.”

Facebook stories #3 - What is Facebook? - Peterborough, ON


“An ungracefully aging ballerina?”

This questioning machine that *FB on FB* has developed by solely asking “What is Facebook?” is inspired by the arrival of Oedipus at Colonus. Blind, driven by fate, Oedipus arrives at his place of rest and needs to know where he is just to corroborate that he is ‘there.’ Similar to Oedipus, I usually knew the answer, however, the only point was to create a ‘situation’ by asking this question. *Like Oedipus, I am an immigrant in Canada and since I moved here, I started asking the same question: What is this place? What is Canada.*⁶³ The purpose of asking this question is similar to Senancour’s questionings regarding nature and his subjectivity, where he never gets a satisfactory answer but ends up falling into a whirlpool of confusion, leading him to ask more questions. Ideally, this second project would not only engage the users of Facebook with the question “What is Facebook?” but would also allow them to continue asking more questions about it since it is a very complicated issue that is now tangled between our lives.


Although I created more than three projects, I will briefly describe the third. The other projects also include video and sound for *you* to consult at *your* discretion. The third project consisted in wandering aimlessly through my Newsfeed, stopping at random times, when anything would catch my attention – *pattern recognition* – I would stop to observe whatever Post that appeared in front of me and would paraphrase and sometimes even change the meaning of the text, video, image, and write. This usually happened at a very quick pace, not giving time to change and embellish or transform the line that I would write. As soon as the poem or assemblage of text would be put together, I would continue wandering aimlessly downloading one or two images that were later glitched with an image-glitching software called *Image Glitch Experiment*, created by Georg Fischer (2013). Finally these poems composed of image and text were posted on *FB on FB*’s page.




63 What is this place? This was the title of my undergraduate thesis, where I ask questions about Canada and Mexico, and where I meditate on the productivity for storytelling when arriving to a new place and leaving one’s home. This M.A. thesis, including the project *FB on FB*, has similar intentions than my undergraduate thesis in that I am interested in the theme of migration. Migrating not only to a cyborg-like technological world and trying to become fully coupled with the Internet, but also migrating concepts that were created prior to the Internet era into it and thinking about this concept and practice.

Here is an example of one of the many 'poems':

 **FB on FB** added 2 new photos.
April 27 · 🌐

Do and repeat, do and repeat
 New shoes,
 Honey can you.....
 Driving rocks!
 Decent people, decent behavior
 9 AM in Athens,
 Always together,
 Nevertouchtheground#
 We don't love each other,
 Watching the Ted2 trailer
 Demonstrators clash with police officers
 It has not been officially announced,
 Repetition,
 Fly fly fly
 Those are Vans shoes
 Iconoclasm
 Call for submissions!!
 I Facebook, therefore, I am not



 Like  Comment  Share

This ‘poem,’ or the structure that I followed in the third project, was always consistent. The one thing that changed was the content that filled these poems. Aragon’s strolls through the *Passage De l’Opera* inspired this project. It is as if I am trying to create a very solid impression of the experience of strolling through Facebook, so we can remember it in the future. This has been the project that I have repeated the most, and this got me thinking about it. *What is it about these non-sensical poems? What do they do? What do they communicate?* They make visible the invisible surfing and scrolling of Facebook’s user through the Newsfeed. In other words, these poems make visible the seamless and chaotic Newsfeed browsing of its habitual users; an experience with the software and its design.

If the cyberflâneur carries the capacity to produce reflections that would ideally serve as a mirror to show the users of Facebook their habitual patterns of behavior in the network, so they can reflect on them, then the cyber-artist is also capable of doing this through the creation of algorithms that can be activated through the software, producing a ‘reflexive’ effect. *Facebook Demetricator* by Benjamin Grosser (2014) is a “web browser extension that hides all the metrics on Facebook.” Social media websites like Facebook are filled with metrics: how many notifications, how many messages, how many friends, how many people like this Post, how many people like this corporation, etc. Grosser’s intervention is interesting because in providing the user with the possibility to avoid seeing the metrics, he allows people to realize that perhaps those metrics have a great effect on our perception of whatever we encounter when we are using this software. Once we install and activate *Facebook Demetricator*, we can always turn it off so the metrics appear again.

Grosser’s project is also a commentary on the kind of society that is bred from this metric based software design – a capitalist society that is driven by “an innate desire for more” (2014). In the case of a Facebook Post, when one posts or makes something avail-

able for the other users to access. One invites the others to either Like or add a comment on the Post. When others get to see the Post, they also get to see how many people liked the Post or commented on it. In this case, Grosser's point is that when the Post becomes coupled with the metrics, then the significance and engagement with it is going to be different than looking at the Post without seeing any numbers. *Facebook Demetricator* is important since it comments on how the metric-based design of Facebook has an effect on the way we use the network. *I post in order to show the world how special I am so I can get more likes and feel better about myself as a successful social being*.

Another project that carries the capacity to make our often unquestioned habitual use of the network apparent is called [*love Machine*] by Julien Deswaef (2011).⁶⁴ “[loveMachine] is a program (or as I prefer to call it, a bot) that will log into a Facebook account, repetitively click the Like buttons on every possible content shown in the home stream, then post its amazing score as a status and log out” (2011). This artwork presents a criticism on our almost automatic and absurd activity of ‘liking’ on Facebook. The Like button on Facebook is probably what receives most clicks from its users, yet we do not really know what liking means. When we click Like on Facebook, the software collects our ‘likes’ in order to continue providing us with a customized enjoyable experience while navigating through our Newsfeed. In this way, the [*love Machine*] can work as a metaphor for our already automatically absurd activity of ‘liking.’ Or in other words, the *love machine* works as a mirror, which reflects on our often unquestioned and automatic activity of ‘liking.’

The previously presented aesthetic projects *Glitchr*, *FB on FB*, *Facebook Demetricator*, and [*love Machine*] are significant since they communicate that Facebook can be used for many purposes other than those it prescribes for its users. We can say that these projects are ‘nomadic’ for they create openings in the habitual State of Facebook, by showing

64 It is worthwhile noting that [*love Machine*] is born as a response to another project called Web 2.0 Suicide Machine by moddr_ & Francisco Gamba. The Suicide Machine is an algorithm that facilitates the process of deleting one's social media accounts. So instead of having to go through all of the steps to delete an account on Facebook, installing Suicide Machine will save one time from doing it directly through the software (which can always take longer since the software will also do anything to avoid losing another customer).

that one can use the network for other purposes other than “getting things done.” At the same time, by communicating that this software of daily life can be used otherwise, these projects disagree with the way in which Facebook desires to generalize the way in which people communicate through the Internet.⁶⁵

“To hack is to differ,” writes McKenzie Wark in *A Hacker Manifesto* (2004). In this final section of the second chapter I presented my conceptual project of the cyberflâneur, together with other ‘cyber’ works of art. These artistic objects differ from Facebook and the kind of uses that it prescribes for its users. *Glitchr* differs from Facebook in its rigid design by creating a sort of graffiti on its walls. *FB on FB* differs from Facebook in that it uses it as a medium for its own critique. *Facebook Demetricator* differs from the metric based design of Facebook by providing the option to make those metrics invisible. And [*love Machine*] differs by creating an automated ‘liking’ algorithm thereby suggesting that our ‘liking’ behaviour may be so habitual that when we Like stuff on Facebook, we do so automatically. These projects are different in their quality but similar in that they all invent their own purpose for using the software.

Wark’s figure of the hacker allows us to continue thinking about challenging the undemocratic design of a software like Facebook. The ‘hacker’ is a nomadic figure that continues to open up the striations of the State. For Wark the production of knowledge is the production of abstractions. This means that knowledge rises from the particular ‘abstraction’ that an individual or group creates. When we ‘abstract,’ “[w]e produce new concepts, new perceptions, new sensations, hacked out of raw data” (Wark, p.2). ‘Hacking’ raw data allows us to produce another set of data, a bastard of the ‘original’ or raw data. However, as soon as we ‘hack,’ our hack becomes a set of raw data which does not even belong to us, since it is owned by the ‘organism or company’⁶⁶ that provides us with

65 These projects produce the kind of antithesis that ‘detournement’ would produce. Detournement implies a re-purposing of a medium, which shows either its limitations or other possible uses of it.

66 Facebook is an example of this ‘owner-user’ relation. Where the company that provides the ‘essential’ software for human communication uses its users as the workers who produce information through their interaction with system. The ‘archived’ information is then commoditized and exchanged with different companies and the State. In the case of Facebook, it can also continue using the user’s data to

that particular service. *The new* is the future we decide to give to that with which we are habitually entrained. For example, *this section that I am writing now gives a future to the practice of cyberflânerie. It is as if this document would be a new branch of the 'wandering' rhizome, which keeps growing, changing, and re-creating itself.*

further study, control, and manipulate the experiences of its users (BBC, 2014). Hacking Facebook would be important since it allows us to open it up, make it get confused, shake, and allow for more possibilities to experience 'sweet' joy while using it – and allow for others to also get to play with it so they can enjoy from this novel experience.

Conclusion

This research-creation project, completed over the course of two years as a response to Morozov's superficial announcement of "The Death of the Cyberflâneur" (2012), has demonstrated that the cyberflâneur is not dead: it is indeed alive in the Internet era. I have demonstrated that the capacity for the cyberflâneur to continue creating reflections, like a mirror, is fundamental. We have become habituated to the use of social media – and we will soon become habituated to wearable computers – to such an extent that it is almost impossible to critically engage with it (Chun, 2015). As a response to Morozov, projects like *FB on FB*, or practicing cyberflânerie in general, would not be possible without meditating on the contributions from the wanderers of Chapter 1. Concluding this thesis does not mean that this project is over, for this is only the beginning. The next step will be to re-mediate *FB on FB* into the museum or an actual public space. As I stated in the final section of Chapter 2, it is time for the cyberflâneur and cyber-artist to merge forces and collaborate in order to develop a more forceful nomadic weapon that will function both on the level of code and the level of critical theory.

In our postmodern times, when the State becomes imperceptible, we must develop protocological tactics in order to continue moving smoothly through a striated space that gives us the illusion of being an open field of distribution. Both the CAE and Alexander Galloway would encourage cultural producers to focus on the Internet and continue creating openings in it so that we do not become completely asphyxiated by it – a state that will continue working to resist the forces of the war machine through it. In Galloway's words: "I suggest then that to live in the age of protocol requires political tactics drawn from within the protocological sphere" (2004, p.151).

Considering what postmodern allies like Galloway and the CAE communicate to us, we need to focus on the medium of the Internet in order to continue thinking about

political resistance. Set against these postmodern concerns, we should continue to remember the contributions of the thinkers prior to the information age. *We should even think about remediating their 'analogue' thought into the digital.* Finally, I return to Deleuze and Guattari's "Treatise On Nomadology: The War Machine," with a focus on 'nomadic thought,' in synthesis with some concluding observations on the previously presented nomad thinkers of Chapter 1 and the project of the cyberflâneur. "[I]t is the war machine, as nomad, that invents the abolitionist dream and reality" (Deleuze and Guattari, p.385).

In leaving society, Rousseau uses 'walking' as a medium for the study of his soul. When he 'walks,' he allows his mind to wander, so then he can reflect upon and write about his reveries. Rousseau also becomes a minor scientist interested in studying nature. During his stay at St. Pierre he creates a grid that separates the plants, using this map to engage in his reveries and write a botanical monograph. "Secluded meditation, the study of nature, and contemplation of the universe force a solitary person to lift himself up incessantly to the author of things, to search with tender concern for the purpose in everything he sees and the cause of everything he sees" (Rousseau, p.30). *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker* testifies to the notion that we can change the habitual way in which we relate to the world, transforming our activity not only of walking but our embodied experience of the world. Rousseau moves out of society, and intuitively begins to create a different way of relating to himself and his environment.

This contemplative mode of being allows Rousseau to meditate in peace, outside the State. This is a feature of nomad thought, which "does not ally itself with a universal thinking subject, . . . and... does not ground itself in an all-encompassing totality but is on the contrary deployed in a horizonless milieu that is a smooth space, steppe, desert, or sea" (Deleuze and Guattari, p. 379). As a nomad thinker, Rousseau decides not to continue abiding by the laws of the social and academic world in which he lived, which allows him to produce his own private thought, to start thinking and caring for himself, and to

sculpt, re-invent, and re-evaluate his mode of being in the world. As a nomadic thinker, it is important to pay attention to the *Reveries* since it produces the possibility for us to start thinking from without. In other words, Rousseau's text presents us with a medium that we can manipulate so that the war machine will flow smoothly through it, while traversing the barriers of the State.

Inspired by Rousseau, Senancour's *Obermann* is composed of a series of 'letters' written from without. The 'letters' present the constant movement of deterritorialization that he performs through different places and thoughts. Despite of following Rousseau's traces, studying his soul, studying nature, and moving away from society, Senancour's wanderings are different in that he cannot find the harmony that Rousseau found in these activities. This is why Obermann moves continuously from one place to the other, and reflects on these wanderings through his 'letters' to society. "In his own writing and thought . . . [Senancour] assists in the attempt at decodification – not in the relative sense, by deciphering former, present, or future codes, but in an absolute sense, by expressing something that cannot be codified, confounding all codes."⁶⁷

Obermann is not a conventional text that allows its readers to easily codify⁶⁸ and make sense of it. This is due to the constant ruptures that appear as soon as Senancour tries to affirm any of his thoughts. The impenetrability of Senancour's text puts the reader in a position in which she would have to decodify it, having to create a new text or new meaning out of it. When we read the 'letters,' "We embark, then, in a kind of raft of "the Medusa," bombs fall all around the raft as it drifts toward icy subterranean streams—or toward torrid rivers, the Orinoco, the Amazon; the passengers row together, they are not supposed to like one another, they fight with one another, they eat one another. To row to-

67 Deleuze, G. in *The New Nietzsche. Essay Nomad Thought*, (1990, p. 143).

68 Codification is to territorialization what decodification is to deterritorialization, and what recodification is to reterritorialization. When we 'codify', we organize a meaning or truth that we desire to communicate. When we 'decodify', we create an opening to an exterior force which does not for codification. And when we 'recodify,' we engage in codifying that which has been decodified. In other words, recodification is performed by the State thinkers, once their interpretations become decodified by nomad thinkers.

gether is to share, to share something beyond law, contract, or institution. It is a period of drifting, of “deterritorialization.”⁶⁹ When we embark on Senancour’s nomadic thought, we actualize a war machine that causes all sorts of problems to our State mechanisms of coding or understanding since it does not seem to do anything but confuse those who try to generate a general interpretation and classification of his aphorisms.⁷⁰ The slipperiness of the letters imply a constant movement of deterritorialization that is characteristic of his ‘letters’ from without.

Baudelaire presents us with the figure of the flâneur, a solitary wanderer who is attracted to the particular beauty that is manifested in urban life. The city dweller can be an observer - scientist, philosopher, painter, artist, or poet - that positions himself simultaneously inside and outside the crowd. This means that while he is physically present in the crowd, he also wanders through it as an outsider who observes it as if it were a work of art unfolding through the movement of the city. Here we learn that our habitual experience and participation as actors in this world, can be changed so we can re-create our mode of relating to it.

In the same way that Rousseau transformed his use of walking into wandering, Baudelaire changes the common use of the city into flânerie. The flâneur is an anonymous⁷¹ figure that creates impressions of daily life, impressions from the outside where

69 “Nomad Thought.” In *The New Nietzsche*, 1990, p. 144.

70 “An aphorism means nothing, signifies nothing, and is no more a signifier than a signified: were it not so, the interiority of the text would remain undisturbed. An aphorism is a play of forces, the most recent of which—the latest, the newest, and provisionally the final force—is always the most exterior. Nietzsche puts this very clearly: If you want to know what I mean, then find the force that gives new sense to what I say, and hang the text upon it” (1990, Deleuze, p.145). For Deleuze and Guattari an aphorism is also ...”very different from the maxim, for a maxim, in the republic of letters, is like an organic State act or sovereign judgment, whereas an aphorism always awaits its meaning from a new external force, a final force which must conquer it or subjugate it, utilize it...” (*Treatise*, 2011, p.377).

71 Following Deleuze: “There is a kind of nomadism, a perpetual displacement in the intensities designated by proper names, intensities that interpenetrate one another at the same time that they are lived, experienced, by a single body. Intensity can be experienced, then, only in connection with its mobile inscription in a body and under the shifting exterior of a proper name, and therefore the proper name is always a mask, a mask that masks its agent” (p.147). The anonymity of the flâneur enables him with the capacity to displace his signifying mask in order to choose a different mask depending on its context.

one can foresee the possibility for the development of an altogether different, and therefore, smoother relationship to our ecology. “Learning to undo things, and undo oneself, is proper to the war machine: the “not-doing” of the warrior, the undoing of the subject” (Deleuze and Guattari, p.400). “We certainly would not say that discipline is what defines the war machine: discipline is the characteristic required of armies after the State has appropriated them. The war machine answers to other rules. We are not saying that they are better, of course, only that they animate a fundamental indiscipline of the warrior! A questioning of hierarchy, perpetual blackmail by abandonment or betrayal, and a very volatile sense of honor, all of which again, it impedes the formation of the State” (Deleuze and Guattari, p.13).

Similar to Baudelaire, Aragon was also a flâneur interested in both exploring the dark ‘corridors’ of the arcades of the city and the mind, and in the un-doing of reality or the images of thought that we create to make sense of the world. When we read *Paris Peasant* we learn that it is possible to wander through the striated spaces of both thought and place. For Aragon wanders not only through the arcades of Paris but also through his thought, pushing in this way the boundaries of imagination and going further than that. For him we must question and contest our conception of reality, since reality can be something arbitrary that could be imagined and practiced otherwise.

Aragon writes contemptuously about the common man, who lives comfortable without questioning or affecting its world. “Affect is the active discharge of emotion, the counter attack . . . Affects are projectiles just like weapons; feelings are introceptive like tools” (Deleuze and Guattari, p.400). As a nomad, Aragon cannot only be affected by its environment, but has to also affect it in order to deterritorialize it so he can continue its practice. The affects of this kind of wandering practice are weapons and we must continue creating weapons instead of tools, for the State has already inscribed a practical-legal use for them, while weapons are used for the actualization of the war machine which will

cause transformations to the order of things. This is why we must use the weapons that Aragon crafted for us, and use them to elaborate new weapons that can be appropriated by future wanderers.

The ‘situationists’ are a nomadic group which no longer finds in wandering a productive medium to attain the possibilities of relating smoothly to the war machine. The end of wandering is manifested through Aragon’s *Peasant* (1926) where he presents us with a witnessing of the closure of the possible spaces for wandering – *the deterritorialization of the wandering field (nomos) into a more useful territory*. Now urban space is so striated that the SI is interested in the production of strategic ‘situations’ which conform to strategies or weapons based on psychogeographic observations.

If in the 1960s the SI were creating ‘situations’ in the streets of Paris, then today hackers are creating ‘situations’ on the Internet (Wark, 2004). So nowadays, it is not only that we should be concerned with opening the space where we live, move and think; it is not only nature, nor being outside of society, since it is also about the control that the state has on the Internet which is a physical and material network through which it can also exercise its power. The Internet can either be designed to function as a medium for acceleration and speed, or as an apparatus for the control of the amount of speed or the war machine that it may give way to.

Speed and absolute movement are not without their laws, but they are the laws of the *nomos*, of the smooth space that deploys it, of the war machine that populates it. If the nomads formed the war machine, it was by inventing absolute speed, by being “synonymous” with speed. And each time there is an operation against the State – insubordination, rioting, guerilla warfare, or revolution as act – it can be said that a war machine has revived, that a new nomadic potential has appeared, accompanied by the reconstitu

tion of a smooth space or a manner of being in space as it were smooth

(Deleuze and Guattari, p.386)

It is in the context of the Internet that cyberflânerie appears as a nomadic practice that can still reconstitute smooth space and produce intermittent breaks in its “spell.” This happens because the cyberflâneur produces reflections that can disrupt the continuous flow of the Internet that produces the illusion of freedom in its users, when “freedom” is the ideological design of the software that we habitually use. It is important to note that these reflections, which produce something similar to détournement, an antithesis, have not only to be transmitted through the Internet, but can also be transmitted through different mediums. One of my future projects is to print some of the ‘artworks’ that I have created as *FB on FB* for public exhibit. Another future is a book, consisting of a series of quotations from the thinkers that were considered in this thesis, and screenshots of different sorts that were collected while strolling. The more challenging project, which would require getting funding for its actualization, involves re-creating Facebook as an event – an immersive-interactive installation. Imagining the experience of going through Facebook but in a future when it is everywhere in the streets, and providing people with a hyper experience of what that could be like.⁷² Pursuing these projects and re-mediating them beyond the software of Facebook, taking them out to the streets, can always be interesting because of the possible legal issues that can arise from doing this. If the project gets to transgress the law, or the rights of Facebook as a corporation, and gets ‘caught,’ then it can always be useful to go through this process so we can continue participating in the creation of a juridical field that needs to remain open to these kinds of expressions.

We learn from Morozov’s claim that cyberflânerie **does not only need to be imagined** at a desk through writing, but it also needs to be explored through its practice. I

72 FB on FB is therein a redundancy, one which obviates the occlusion of Facebook. My proposed ‘event’ would make this visible by engendering alternative critical relations between the spectator’s body and the software.

wrote less about the cyberflâneur than this specific tradition of wandering because I was immersed in cyberflânerie while meditating on the past that now informs the present of this practice.

The academic future of this project would imply the continuation of the study of wandering, considering other wandering figures that are not French. It would also look at other expressions of cyberflânerie and artworks on the web, and would expand its practical component into other social media networks that are part of our daily life. Nevertheless, in a postmodern panorama it is important to treasure the inheritances of these past iterations of wandering so that we may imagine a future for the aesthetic practices of the cyberflâneur. The cyberflâneur harnesses the power to reveal the aleatory potential of life. If these revelations happen to be transmitted, then everyday life can become an object of dispute. Software such as Facebook, comes to structure habitual practices of life. Facebook saturates our technological milieu by delimiting forms of content expression online; this occurs when we use the actual Facebook site as well as when we encounter its forms and patterns of relations elsewhere online and in reality. An awareness of the limitations inherent to such software is conducive to an appreciation of its possibilities.

Research Project: FB on FB





FB on FB

July 15 · Edited ·

"In spite of their awkward situation, the political activist and the cultural activist (anachronistically known as the artist) can still produce disturbances. Although such action may more resemble the gestures of a drowning person, and it is uncertain just what is being disturbed, in this situation the postmodern roll of the dice favors the act of disturbance" p.12. The Electronic Disturbance



Like Comment Share

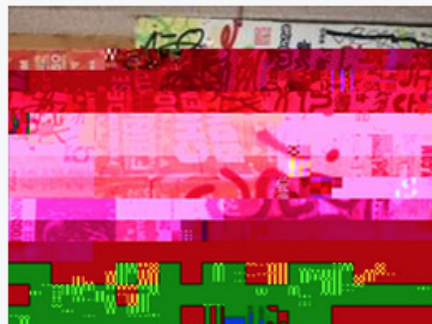
You, Conceptually Vacant, Dalia Vogue, Julio Lorea and 2 others like this. Top Comments -



Write a comment...



FB on FB What's on your mind?




Like · Reply · July 15 at 6:00pm




Conceptually Vacant Can we go to ikea on Sunday?




Like · Reply · July 15 at 6:01pm

 **FB on FB** August 3 · 🌐

Always posting - Always connected

Everywhere we go,
we post,
Bip bip bip bip-bip
Bip bop
Bip bop
Facebok
Facebook
click
long hair
click
Good times
Basically
Purple
Ayudando al cierre
Veld had y'all going nuts
"Working from home"
the pic, the comments, the caption, too muchh man
Haha, so true..
Screens!
click
Bip bip bip bip-bip
Bip bop
Bip bop
Facebok
we don't
post



 Like  Comment  Share

Conceptually Vacant, Dalia Vogue and 4 others like this. [Top Comments](#) ▾

3 shares

FB on FB

July 9 · Edited ·

"Cyberspace is a different form of space to personal space, bodily space, architectural space, or any space that can be conceived or perceived in tangible physical terms. It exists solely as bytes and bits on computer circuits and telephone lines. Cyberspace is Information Space, but is this space imaginary or real?"

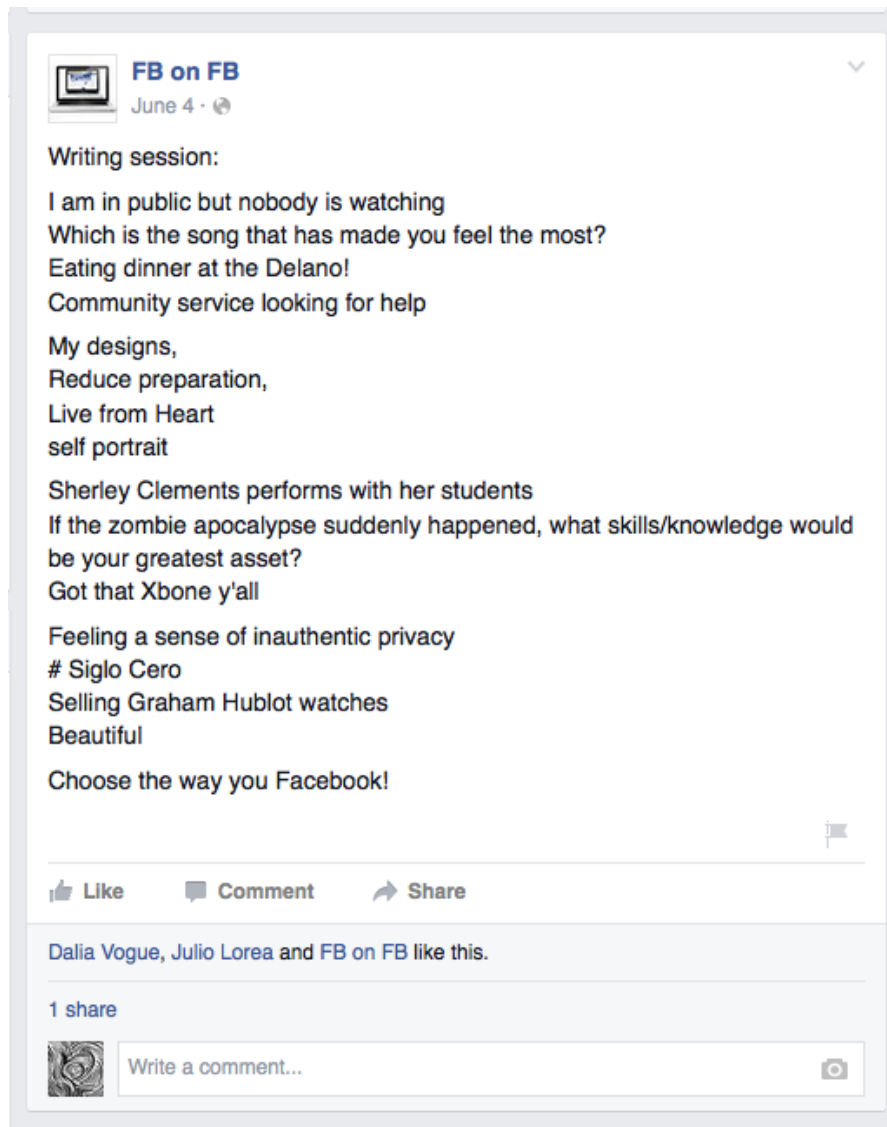
This largely uncharted space is not something that can be measured in centimetres or inches. In a way, it can be understood as a virtual reality, a type of alternative digital world, made by real people that we experience through manifestations on our computer screen. Information Space has become a very real element in our lives. But while it is possible to exchange views on the Internet, order a pizza, play games or do research, there are no real people in cyberspace. The 'inhabitants' of cyberspace have shed their bodies, they have become 'ghosts in the machine'." 'Ceramics Today', 1998 (web)


<http://www.ceramicstoday.com/articles/050498.htm>

Like Comment Share

You, Conceptually Vacant, Julio Lorea and 3 others like this.

Write a comment...



 **FB on FB** June 4 · 🌐



Writing session:

- I am in public but nobody is watching
- Which is the song that has made you feel the most?
- Eating dinner at the Delano!
- Community service looking for help
- My designs,
- Reduce preparation,
- Live from Heart
- self portrait
- Sherley Clements performs with her students
- If the zombie apocalypse suddenly happened, what skills/knowledge would be your greatest asset?
- Got that Xbone y'all
- Feeling a sense of inauthentic privacy
- # Siglo Cero
- Selling Graham Hublot watches
- Beautiful
- Choose the way you Facebook!

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

Dalia Vogue, Julio Lorea and FB on FB like this.

1 share

 Write a comment... 

 **FB on FB** added 2 new photos. ▼
March 2 · 

LIKE CAMPAIGN - FACEBOOK ACTIVISM #1

Likes - Likes for what?

Likes for support, likes for signal transmission, likes for extension, and deterritorialization. Likes for chaos traversing through our ordinary experience of Facebook.

The activity of 'liking' is not only absurd, it can also be strategic. Whenever you actively and genuinely want to support the transmission of something you consider Important on Facebook, like, share and/or comment and engage with whatever 'post' you care about.

Since an active and therefore powerful engagement with Facebook is still possible, we must support whatever we think is significant. We must also work in making connections happen: invite friends to like pages that we consider important, share posts, like posts, re-create posts, etc..



 Like  Comment  Share

You, Conceptually Vacant, Dalia Vogue and 3 others like this.

3 shares



FB on FB added 2 new photos — at Facebook.

July 27 · 🌐

Hybridflaneur:

Voice of the Father: Jampa do not go to the sand, stay away from it.
(Jampa sneaks through her father's back, sits and starts playing with the sand as her family walks away from her).

Voice of the Father: Jampa that is enough, no more playing with the sand, we have to get somewhere. We must continue walking.,,

(Jampa holds hands with her father and they now walk together).

University

Chocolate cake to loose weight

Endless mirrors

Click after Click,

Open your computer

Close your eyes

Promote Page

Navigate through your imagination

Pattern recognition

Find New Customers

Connect

Late night shift

Breathe

24/7

Out of control

Out of control

Out of control

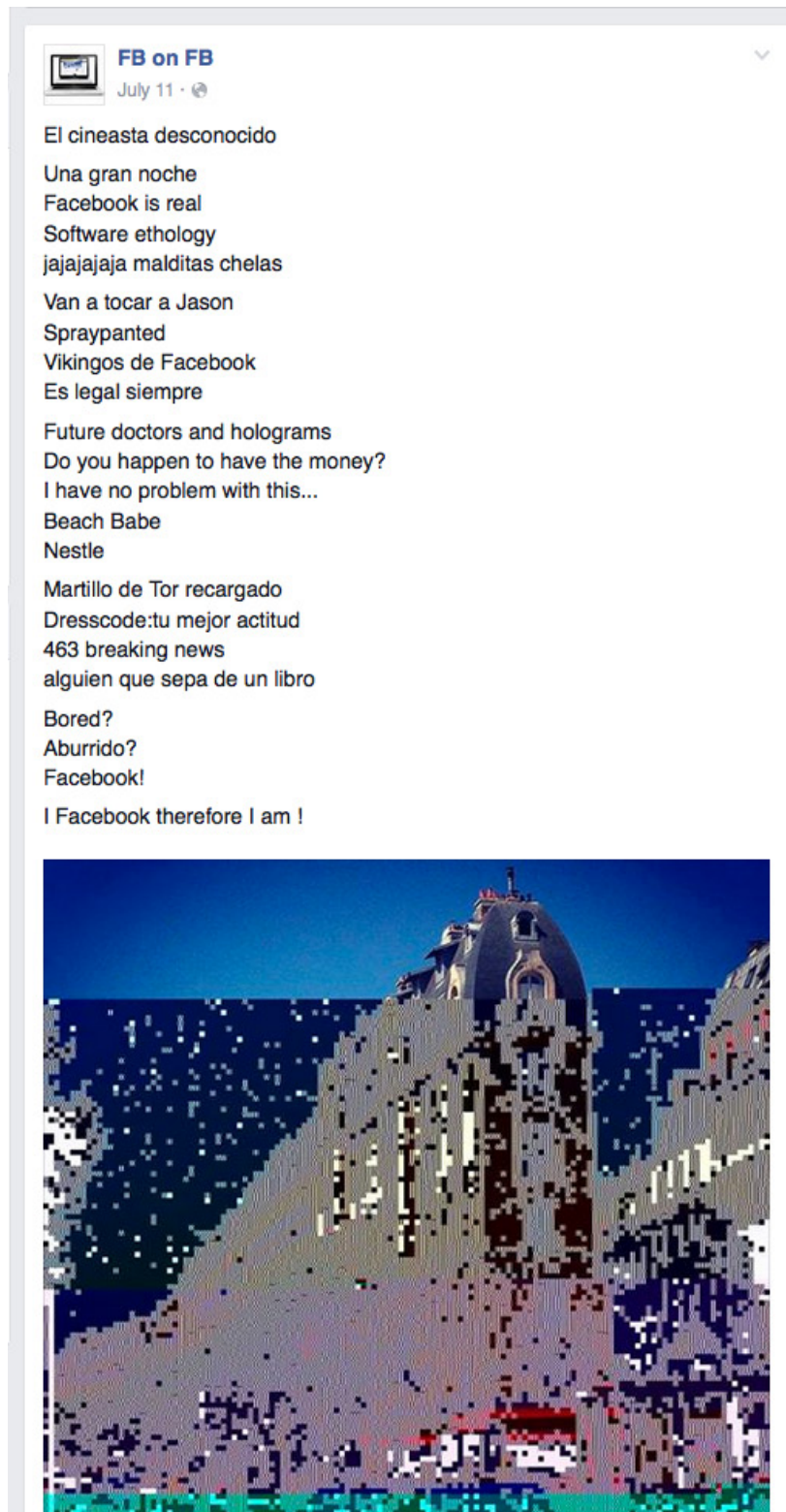
I Facebook, therefore I am not




👍 Like


💬 Comment

➦ Share



 **FB on FB** added 2 new photos.
May 5 · 🌐

Are you bored?
Facebook! Twitter! Instagram!
5 great things
5 de Mayo
[#getyourfactsstraight](#)
Officially listed on AirBnB!!
Reminds me of my ol' pup
Join us on Friday May 22
Tom Hardy wants to play the punisher
Everygirl before a night out
Sometimes I run!
Stop hurting your hands while cutting cheese
Having lots of fun early morning
The Moment You Realize You're a Cat
When I lived in Russia....
Summer is coming!!!!
Ok FKA twigs wins.
I Facebook = I don't get bored





FB on FB added 2 new photos.

March 31 · 🌐

Boring? or Bored?

I am sure that it will be...

I will visit you in jail

That's what I heard too

Utopia?

13 things to remember

Newton's third law

I have always believed that a little stress can be an excellent motivator"

We've entered the CBC Searchlight Contest and we need your help!

You know its a good party

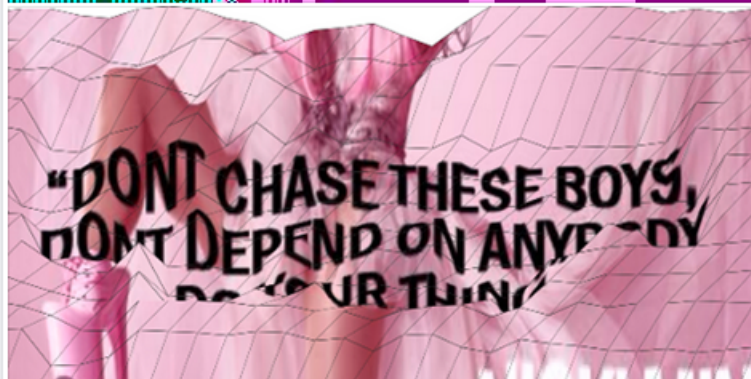
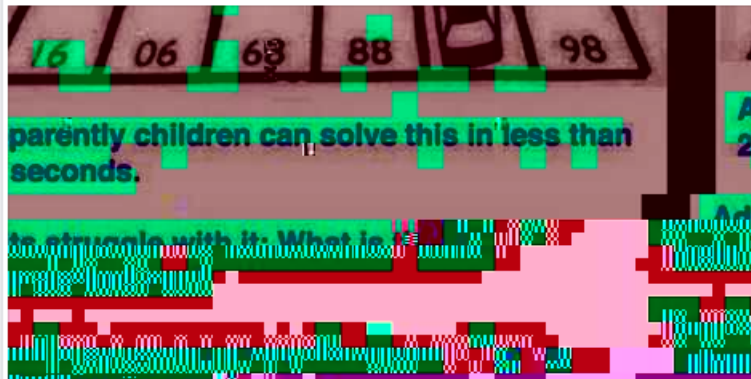
Enough violence and exploitation

WORLD OF TOMORROW

Philosophy explained on 8 bit video games

It took me 30 secs

I don't (h) Facebook



FB on FB added 4 new photos.

February 24 · 🌐


"In the living room the voice-clock sang, "Tick-tock", "seven o'clock, time to get up, time to get up, seven o'clock"! as if it were afraid that nobody would. The morning house lay empty. The clock ticked on, repeating and repeating its sounds into the emptiness. "Seven-nine, breakfast time, seven-nine!" in "The Martian Chronicles" by Ray Bradbury

Like Comment Share


You, Conceptually Vacant, Dalia Vogue and 3 others like this.

2 shares

Write a comment...




FB on FB

February 20 · 

"Pseudo-artificial entities such as robots have been in existence for many years already. The emergence of "artificial life" proper happens as computers shift from being primarily linear calculation machines to being clusters of parallel, distributed submachines" p. 107-108, Alexander Galloway in "Protocol: How Control Exists After Decentralization"


A large blue rectangular graphic featuring the word "facebook" in white lowercase letters on the left and a white thumbs-up icon on the right, set against a dark blue background.

35 Views 

[Like](#) [Comment](#) [Share](#)

You, Conceptually Vacant, Dalia Vogue and 4 others like this.

2 shares



Write a comment... 



FB on FB added 2 new photos.

February 19 · Edited ·

This is the ultimate throwback!

This is a very serious and sad issue:

Mesmerized,

Money cuts,

Now a person let's say is talking with somebody,

At first its all awkward,

I am socially smooth because I am using a cellphone,

You feel socially excluded,

Funding cuts

Keep walking,

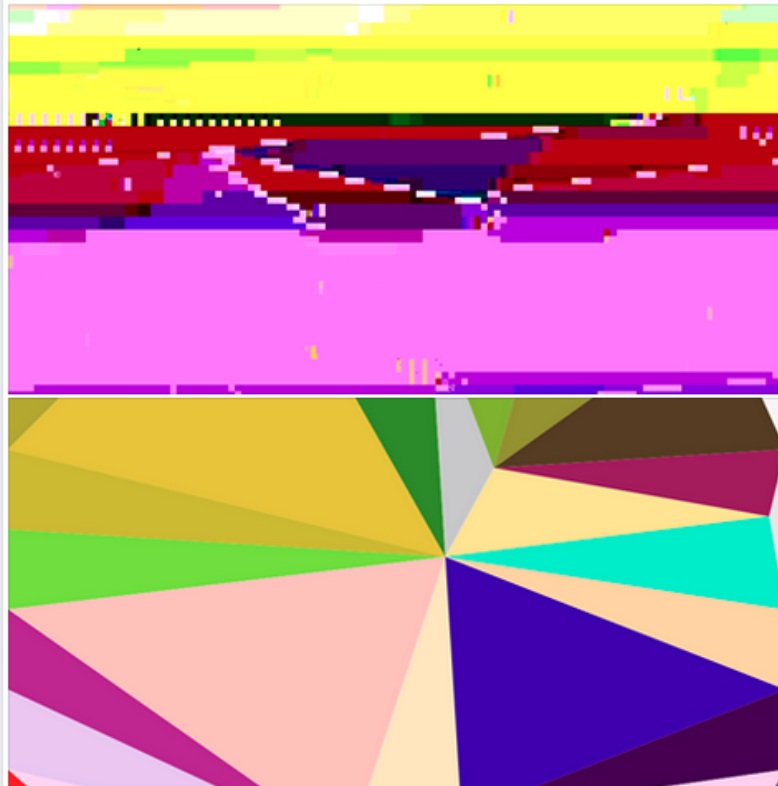
Or stop working and start texting,

Browsing as a productive experience,

Who are we to deserve this?


20 tips to make your life easy

Because we are all tired of his



👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

Conceptually Vacant, Dalia Vogue and 2 others like this.

 **FB on FB** added 3 new photos. ▼
February 13 · 🌐


Wonderful




You shouldn't discuss with men
These teachers cannot sing
Closest planet to the sun
Yay! Amazing.

Keeping her safe
Nice joke
Running behind
Interactive installation

Effortless effort
Desire nothing
Empty gestures
Right tho right?



Wow
Understanding first
Throwback Tuesday!
jajajaja Great!!



 Like  Comment  Share

Conceptually Vacant, Dalia Vogue and FB on FB like this.

1 share

 Write a comment... 

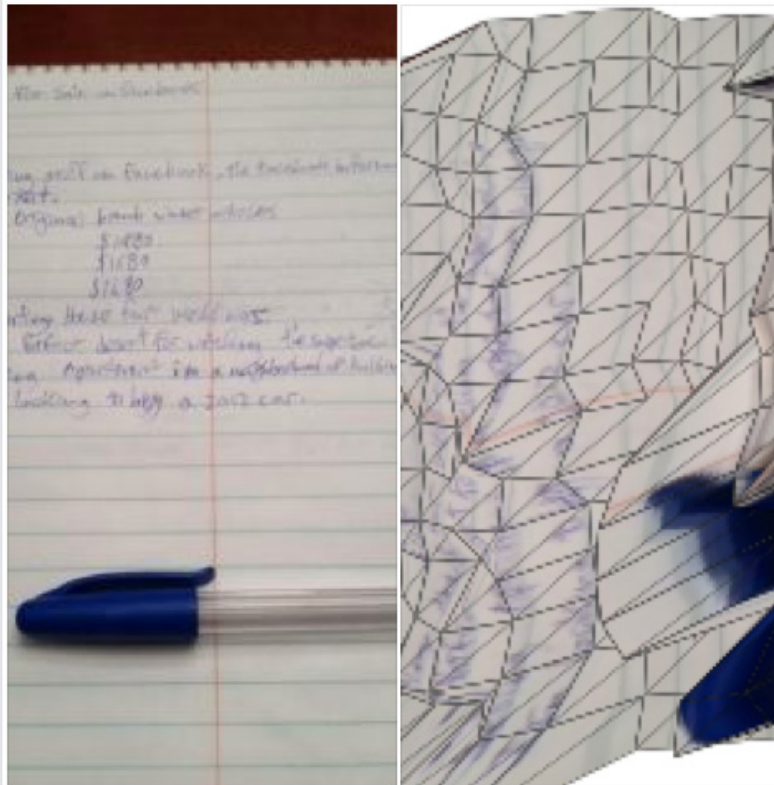


FB on FB added 2 new photos.

January 26 · 🌐

For Sale on Facebook - Selling and Buying Stuff on Facebook - The Facebook Informal Community Market

- Original brand winter articles (\$120-\$140)
- Wedding house for rent
- The perfect pastry for watching the Super Bowl
- Selling apartment in a neighborhood of buildings
- I am looking to buy a 2012 car



👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

Dalia Vogue and FB on FB like this.

1 share



Write a comment...



 **FB on FB**
January 19 · 🌐

Largest picture ever taken
Walk Off the Earth
Blues and Blacks
THE EXTREME!
Like

Seating down and paying attention
Surfing in the river
See Translation
Crash-landed on another planet
Cartuchos para la Intstax mini?
LOL
Whoa

"Temo el día en que la tecnología sobrepase nuestra humanidad. El mundo tendrá una generación de idiotas"
Albert Einstein

Photo Bomb!
Age for awareness
Photo credit
No peace until resignation




 Like  Comment  Share

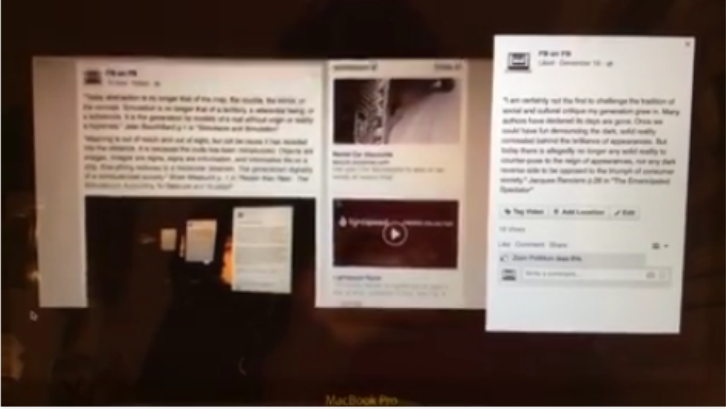
You, Conceptually Vacant, Dalia Vogue, Sarah McNeilly and 2 others like this.

2 shares

 Write a comment... 


FB on FB
 December 21, 2014 · 🌐

"Baudelaire's genius, which feeds on melancholy, is an allegorical genius. With Baudelaire, Paris becomes for the first time the subject of lyric poetry. This poetry of place is the opposite of all poetry of the soil. The gaze which the allegorical genius turns on the city betrays, instead, a profound alienation. It is the gaze of the flâneur, whose way of life conceals behind a beneficent mirage the anxiety of the future inhabitants of our metropolises. The flâneur seeks refuge in the crowd. The crowd is the veil through which the familiar city is transformed for the flâneur into phantasmagoria. This phantasmagoria, in which the city now appears as a landscape, now as a room, seems later to have inspired the decor of department stores, which thus put flânerie to work for profit. In any case, department stores are the last precincts of flânerie." Walter Benjamin p.21 in "The Arcades Project"





66 Views

Like Comment Share

Conceptually Vacant and Dalia Vogue like this.

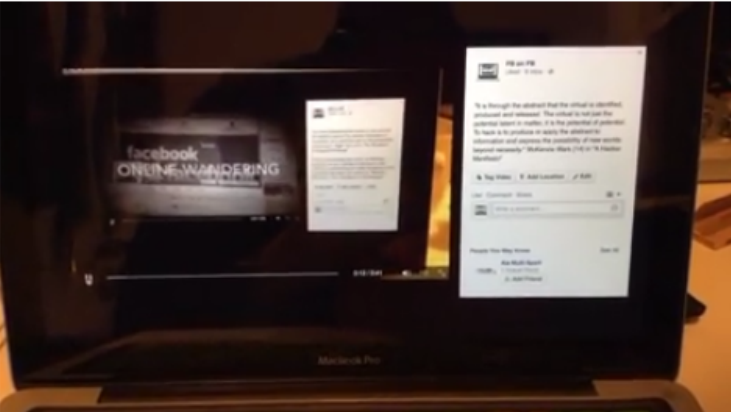
2 shares

 Write a comment...


FB on FB
 December 19, 2014 · 🌐

"A double spooks the world, the double of abstraction. The fortunes of states and armies, companies and communities depend on it. All contending classes, they be ruling or ruled, revere it - yet fear it. Ours is a world that ventures blindly into the new with its fingers crossed." McKenzie Wark (1) in "A Hacker Manifesto"


"My suspicion is that, in this time of accelerated data flows, the appearance of data as an exhausted nihilist is already upon us. In this age of exhausted data, everything counts, everything counts, everything counts precisely because nothing counts but the ersatz nothingness of data itself. Digital trauma." Arthur Kroker p. 59, in "Exits to the Posthuman Future"




39 Views

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

You, Conceptually Vacant and Markus E. Maar like this.





FB on FB

December 16, 2014 · 🌐

Facebook Stories # 37 - What is Facebook? - Park Forest, Illinois

"Connect with people whose distant from you let them know what's going on about you whether you like/ tag something interesting between like minded people. Nothing more nothing less. It shouldn't really affect your well being words are words and it's for entertainment/ learning purposes ever since this website has evolved."

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

You, Dalia Vogue and Raul Rodriguez like this.

1 share

Write a comment...

FB on FB

December 3, 2014 · 🌐

Facebook Stories # 27 - What is Facebook? - El Salvador, San Salvador

"Facebook para mi es lo que uno "es", sus reflejos en el espejo de opiniones, gustos, ideas, fotos y comentarios, quizás la introspección más pública del ser humano. Tan sutil y personal sin que el usuario lo note, hasta que le regresa en su interacción con otros en el mundo (casi como un espejo que corteja y golpea eventualmente). También es un drama muy entretenido".

"For me, Facebook is what one "is": one's mirror reflections based on opinions, tastes, ideas, images and comments. Perhaps it is the most public human introspection. It is so subtle and personal that is difficult for its user to notice it, until his interaction with the world comes back like a boomerang (almost like a mirror that both courtships and punches one). It is also an entertaining drama".




👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share


Dalia Vogue and Raul Rodriguez like this.



2 shares


Write a comment...


**FB on FB**
November 24, 2014 · 
Facebook Stories # 18 - What is Facebook? - Park Forest, Illinois
"It is a means in where you can place letters and colours together, and together you can communicate, express, explore."


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You, [Dalia Vogue](#) and 2 others like this.
1 share
 Write a comment... 

**FB on FB**
November 23, 2014 · 
Facebook Stories # 17 - What is Facebook? - Ajax, ON
"Facebook, to me, is a digital hub for communication, and sharing (and archiving) of content. It is like an interactive, interconnected collection of content and discourse which can be traced back to actual people. Facebook lets you view and affect digital extensions of other people, giving you crafted and mediated windows into their existence."





 Like  Comment  Share
Dalia Vogue and 2 others like this.
1 share
 Write a comment... 



FB on FB December 1, 2014 · 



Facebook Stories # 24 - What is Facebook? - Ottawa, ON


"It is something that allows us to keep in touch with old friends and family. Sharing pictures and information with others".


 Like  Comment  Share

Dalia Vogue likes this.

1 share




 Write a comment... 



FB on FB November 14, 2014 · Edited · 



Facebook stories #8 - What is Facebook? - Toronto, ON


"At best it is a community newsletter. At worst its a vehicle for narcissism and self-consciousness."


 Like  Comment  Share

Conceptually Vacant, Ryan Kirby and 2 others like this.

1 share




 Write a comment... 



FB on FB November 8, 2014 · 



Facebook stories #1 - What is Facebook? - Toronto

"Facebook is the panopticon structure. Tower in the prison, all the inmates looking at each other and the gaze of the inmates making discipline work"

 Like  Comment  Share

You, Erik Majzner and 5 others like this.

1 share

 Write a comment... 

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