READING WITH THE ANCIENTS: EMBODIED LEARNING AND TEACHING TO AN EMBODIED PEDAGOGY?

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Walter Benjamin reminds those of us steeped in the literal and modernist institutional discourses of benchmarks and quality of teaching surveys in higher education that 'the most ancient' reading involves looking to 'entrails, the stars or dances' (1999: 722). This paper draws upon a three-year arts-based research project with two hundred and eighty pre-service teachers (Dixon & Senior, 2009) that sought to explore the nature and quality of the learning experience in teacher education. Arising from that exploration, the possibilities for reasserting the experience of embodied ways of knowing pedagogy became apparent. This paper traces embodied teaching and learning in education and extends these understandings to offer illustrations of embodied pedagogy from the tertiary classroom. Through analysis of image, both reproductive and representational, and alongside the more familiar written language, embodiment is revealed as a generative site of epistemological understanding. The authors further argue that an embodied pedagogy opens up the normalising gaze of teacher reflection or observation to a greater awareness, a reading beyond language.

The work of embodiment in an age of managerial accountability

Our familiarity with embodied pedagogy is immersed in collaborative engagements: *within* learning and teaching (the authors have a history as practitioners in primary and secondary schooling); *teaching about* learning and teaching (as teacher educators); and *writing about* learning and teaching (as educational researchers). Efforts to move our theorising of pedagogy from description to inscription, particularly in our work alongside pre-service teachers in the tertiary classroom, are kindled by van Manen's (1991) assertion that:

> … pedagogy is not just a word. By naming that which directs us and draws us caringly to children [students], the word pedagogy *brings something into being*. Pedagogy is found not in observational categories, but like love or friendship in the experience of its presence—that is, in concrete, real-life situations … In this sense, pedagogy is defined not only as a certain relationship or a way of doing, but also pedagogy lets an encounter, a relationship, a situation, or an activity *be pedagogical* (1991: 31, emphasis added).

Pedagogy that is dialogic, ongoing and attentive to presence is complicated, chaotic and highly contextualised. Ellsworth (1997: 8) further reminds us that "pedagogy, when it 'works,' is unrepeatable and cannot be copied or sold". These complications of knowing and defining relational pedagogy are often glossed over and a reliance on reductionist discourses exemplified

by the 'instructional' shift in education is more commonplace. While discussion of this shift is outside the scope of this paper, as practitioner researchers we are concerned that its impact is to marginalise the contingent nature or the *experiencing* of pedagogy. In confining pedagogical discourse, "sometimes teachers and taught bodies are rendered visible and other times as spectres, as if they do not exist" (Zembylas, 2007: 21). In our work of knowing pedagogy, we endeavour to make it appear to others; in particular we seek to make its workings present to pre-service teachers.

As practitioner researchers, our tertiary classrooms are the site of our research in embodied pedagogy. In our teacher education classes over a three-year period we used an arts based approach to open up the possibilities of bodily engagement with epistemological complexities of learning to teach (Dixon & Senior, 2009). Alongside our pre-service teachers/co-researchers we explored the following:

- What is the nature and quality of the learning experience in an arts-based approach?
- What is made available through an arts-based approach to teaching in teacher education?
- In what way is arts-based research generative for this work?

We taught core education studies subjects about teaching and learning, and curriculum and assessment through art. This approach generated opportunity for students and the authors to engage with each other, with objects, with the spaces of learning and with their own bodies. We leaned into the materials and used each other's bodies to do this. We sought a 'rightness of fit' in the curriculum approach that responded to the shapes of the students and the constraints of the medium. We sought out the nuances of movement and speech, of paint and sand. Our students who are pre-service teachers (cohorts included students from Bachelor of Education and Diploma of Education) choreographed their work, looking for and using light and shade, form and design. They rehearsed and reflected, collaborated and critiqued. The rhythm of their learning space was metered by the disciplined silences and pauses of teacherly talk. They coloured their canvases, layer upon layer. Their bodies moved with the tides of learning all carefully and artfully constructed yet constantly disrupted.

Over the three years of the project we have generated significant data sets including digital photos, emails, student drawings and journal writings. In this paper we take the opportunity to use a selective and aesthetic process to represent student-generated images and text to trace intervals of embodied pedagogy from the data. We include photographs, drawings and visual diary entries.

This paper works across three spaces: the more familiar embodied learning (Probyn, 2004; Leitch, 2006); embodied teaching (Pineau, 1998, 2002; Merleau Ponty, 1962); and finally we consider the usefulness and the possibility of 'embodied' pedagogy by drawing upon that 'femininity' that keeps alive the other. We have determinedly distinguished pedagogy from 'teaching' and also from 'learning'; there is already a literature on embodied teaching and there is much on embodied learning. We value these areas and will draw on them, but wish to take the embodiment discussion along a similar, yet divergent, path. Like Estola and Elbaz-Luwisch (2003: 697), who asked in their work on teaching bodies, "How do researchers find new epistemological commitments and methods to talk about bodies in education?",

we are summoning a language of "pedagogy that is bodily" (Heidegger, 1997: 98-99). The word 'embodied' is often used in this context but is itself problematic. It brings with it an implication of bringing into being, or forming into, a body. It is also used to work metaphor, to give concrete form to an idea or a concept. Educational researchers in the area have various ways, conceptually and linguistically, of coming into and engaging with this complex area of body and pedagogy. We too struggle with this, but use our writing and data to render pedagogy as visible and provide a language of embodied pedagogy available to teachers and researchers beyond the one page statistical analysis of quality teaching surveys.

In the next section we engage with the ways 'embodied' and 'bodily' pedagogies have been made available to the reader in written language. 'Embodiment' is used in a variety of ways revealing multiple meanings. We are concerned with the ways 'bodies' are seen—are understood—and what they are capable of in a teaching and learning context.

Tracing embodied learning

"We study, we learn, we teach, we know with our entire body" (Freire, 1998: xviii).

Predominately, in the embodied learning literature, emphasis is placed on the part played by the body in learning or its part in teaching. Turning attention to the body demands attention to the nature of body and to what is not body. Heidegger offers that we do not "'have' a body rather we 'are' bodily" (1997: 98-99). In being bodily there is recognition of that which is beyond the body—perhaps that which is mind, emotion or spirit. The body, when conceived as wholly mind/body/spirit/emotion, is an initial location of meaning making, of struggle and resistance. Leitch offers a broad-brush entry to embodied knowing: "Embodied knowledge is a way of knowing that goes beyond the intellectual, logical and rational mode of thinking that has traditionally been defined as knowledge to include emotions, culture, physical sensation and life experiences" (2006: 552). For Merleau-Ponty (1962), bodies are lived experiences: "Inside and outside are inseparable. The world is wholly inside and I am wholly outside myself" (1962: 407). Further, Merleau-Ponty (1968) emphasises perception in negotiating such intertwining relations. The "intertwining" (130) of outside and inside, of emotion, mind and body is not to marginalise the body but to bring it back to the centre of the knowing of teaching and learning. In this way the body is the medium for sense-making. We know by touch outside and beyond words; we know by sight and by sense beyond the physical. If we locate learning in this way, then "thinking, feeling, seeing, and acting come together into a vital relationship" (Macintyre Latta & Buck, 2008: 324).

The student body, the learning student body, has been recognised in the primary and secondary classroom. There, attention is given, if somewhat unevenly, to consideration of what student bodies are capable. Constructions of bodies are acknowledged in differences of learning styles (Kolb, 1984; Honey & Mumford, 1992), ways of learning (Gardner, 2006), cultural knowing (Dixon, 2005) and gendered understandings of learning (Butler, 1999). In early years classrooms, the impact of learnings from psychology are most vividly evident—hands on, active learning and problem solving. We learn through our body and the learning is inscribed on our bodies. As van Manen (1994: 144) put it: "A great teacher's influence is sutured into our flesh so that it is now impossible to conceive of our sense of self without this influence. The pedagogical relation is fundamentally a personal relation."

Tracing embodied teaching

Perspicuous argument is made that the body is not distinct from emotion, feeling, spirit and mind in embodied teaching literature. The "intertwining" (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 130), the 'embodiment' is sometimes used metaphorically. Recently, Macintyre Latta and Buck (2008: 316) have argued that the body's role in understanding is "enfleshed" through concrete experiences. They argue that teachers must have an awareness of these experiences. The normalising gaze of educational research has focused on the teacher body with concern for teacher movement and body language. McWilliam (1996, 1999) draws our attention to the performance of the teaching body as she argues that the recognition of the materiality of the teacher as a "body of knowledge" invites performances of teaching and learning as enactments of transformation. In that performance the teacher can be seen to hold the space—hold 'the student' in the space. We draw on the work of Elyse Pineau (1998; 2002) who advocates a body centred experiential method of teaching that foregrounds the active body knowing. Teaching relationships can be constructed in embodied close alignments between student and teacher. They involve listening and noticing, "being in the moment, at the juncture between self and other" (Macintyre Latta & Buck, 2008: 317). Estola and Elbaz Luwisch (2003) call up the teacher body through identifying metaphorical body positions—for example presence, control, love and care, listening to oneself and the position of protection.

This concern for the learning and teaching body has not been widely taken up in regard to the tertiary classroom. For the few writers in the area, attention is largely either on the body of the teacher and/or the body of the students. When Probyn (2004), for example, talks of bringing the body into the tertiary classroom, she refers to asking her students to consider the goose-bump effect, "the moment when a text sets off a frission of feelings, remembrances, thoughts and the bodily actions that accompany them … an embodied acknowledgement" (2004: 29). This engagement is confined to the body of the learner. She does make mention of the role of the teacher's body but that too is confined to the way the students may notice her body. Similarly Elbaz-Luwisch (2004) engaged students in various activities (such as writing life stories and preparing presentations), which incorporated the use of the student body or drew attention to bodily ways of knowing. A disconnect in the literature from embodied pedagogy exemplifies a continued cleave of a theory/practice divide in the academy, particularly within faculties of Education. Macintyre Latta and Buck (2008: 316) go as far as to assert that "teacher education's disastrous disconnect with the body's role in educating teachers" is an issue requiring immediate attention. For the purposes of this paper it is crucial to note the way they then elaborate this point: "… programs emphasizing conceptual knowledge dangerously reduce teaching and learning to methods and strategies alone with little or no concern for perceiving the relational givenness of teaching/learning situations (Macintyre Latta & Buck, 2008: 317).

We have so far engaged with the place of body in learning and teaching and made some allusions to the intertwining of body, mind, spirit and feeling. This is the point at which much of the work in this area pauses. There is a silence. The knowing of that bodily reality goes no further. Entrenched acceptance of a Cartesian dualism and pervasive/persuasive reliance upon psychological conceptualisation in education can account currently for the virtual abandonment of our bodies in pedagogy. Postmodern predilections of understanding in which bodies are repositioned as discourses, and in discourses, are also at work here. For Foucault (1984) the body is experienced through discourses and its materiality is lost. In this way there

is no body outside the discourses. Within postmodern/poststructuralist ontologies, the role of language is privileged as discourses constitute the world and individuals. Butler (1999), informed by Foucault, offers a different meaning of body and mind as alternative surfaces for inscription of identity. Critics of postmodernism have argued that emphasis on discourse has de materialised the body (Zembylas, 2007: 23). However, within the dominant discourses of Cartesian dualism our bodies are abandoned, ignored and even distained.

'Relational Givenness' pedagogy

Through the intertwined work of teaching and researching, we recognised that the research process and the teaching process were more than aligned: the ways of knowing were externalised differently but the link between the body and other ways of knowing were central. As teacher educators we had moved from the academic linguistic discourse of lecture in workshop and discussion mode to teaching in embodied ways of art-making in core theoretical courses (Senior & Dixon, 2005; Dixon & Senior, 2006). This embodied way of knowing was to find its way into the research process through the images taken throughout the year by the research participants. Initially it was the research questions that drove our decision to work with images as data; later possibilities afforded by the images to access embodied knowings became more apparent.

Figure 1: Toby and Sarah at work 'framing the curriculum' in the classroom

We used image and word to find what concepts of the body actually do in the classroom: "To create a map or an abstract diagram, sensation in the smallest interval must be watched in a pedagogic relationship" (Roy, 2003: 174). In the images and the words, between the bodies we discern pedagogical embodiments "from where it is trapped, to trace lines of flight" (Deleuze, 1995: 141). We sought the meaning in the image "produc(ing) a story that we can identify not in terms of difference of the linguistic model—but through the combination of internal elements, and because of intertextual literacies that confirm for us, on the basis of experience, what they mean" (Schirato & Webb, 2004: 65). Seeing involves reading with body and emotion, with the whole body. We are capable of maintaining a "magical attitude" (Mitchell, 2005: 7), or imaginative state of awareness with images, while at the same time a capacity to question their veracity, motives and value.

In the following assemblages of data we strive to make connections across physical bodies, presences and affected bodies. We set the lines free to illuminate embodied pedagogy that "sprout up somewhat by chance, from a trifle" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 223) such as a spectral eavesdropper caught in the periphery of a photograph. We call your gaze back to the symmetry of Toby and Sarah at work (Figure 1), and draw your attention to another silent presence in that photograph repeated below (Figure 2):

Figure 2: A third presence: Eavesdropping on some of the other groups, it may have seemed excessively organised ... we [the students] were the complexity in the chaos. (Rebecca)

We, the nonexistent teacher educators (we are absent as subject and as agent; we did not take the image), were continually called back to this photograph. What did this spontaneous moment want us to see of the actions, affected bodies and pedagogy? Reading the journal entry from Rebecca, a contemporary of Toby and Sarah's class, we glimpse a possibility.

Most commonly educational research draws upon reading and presenting the 'words' of participants as evidence of pedagogy. This is a reductionist approach to engagements with embodiment privileging description over inscription. Mitchell (2005: 7) contends that our responses to images provide the opportunity for a "double consciousness" in which we may suspend ourselves in and amongst visual representations. We are capable of maintaining a "magical attitude", or imaginative state of awareness with images, while at the same time a capacity to question their veracity, motives and value. In an imaginative approach to data generation and analysis we "read what was never written" (Benjamin, 1999: 722): photographs, sketches, scribbles and pauses. Dancing with the stars and responding to Mitchell's (2005) warning against the destructive nature of iconoclastic practice in the analysis of imagery, we asked what the data wanted. Hélène Cixous (in Penrod, 1996) resists theory as a form of idolatry. She acknowledges that we have passed through a process of "systemic theoretical initiation ... we have done this not to be confined by theory, but to appear as what it is, useful and traversable" (Cixous cited in Penrod, 1996: 14). Therefore we resisted getting caught up in what the images meant or

represented. Instead we present data through a doubled representation; Rhonda kept a visual diary of her experiences of the class and we have recreated her images and text: "invented, drawn, without a model and without chance" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 223) as a means of appearing, or drawing out, the experience of learning in the arts-based classroom.

What do the images want you to see of embodied pedagogy?[1]

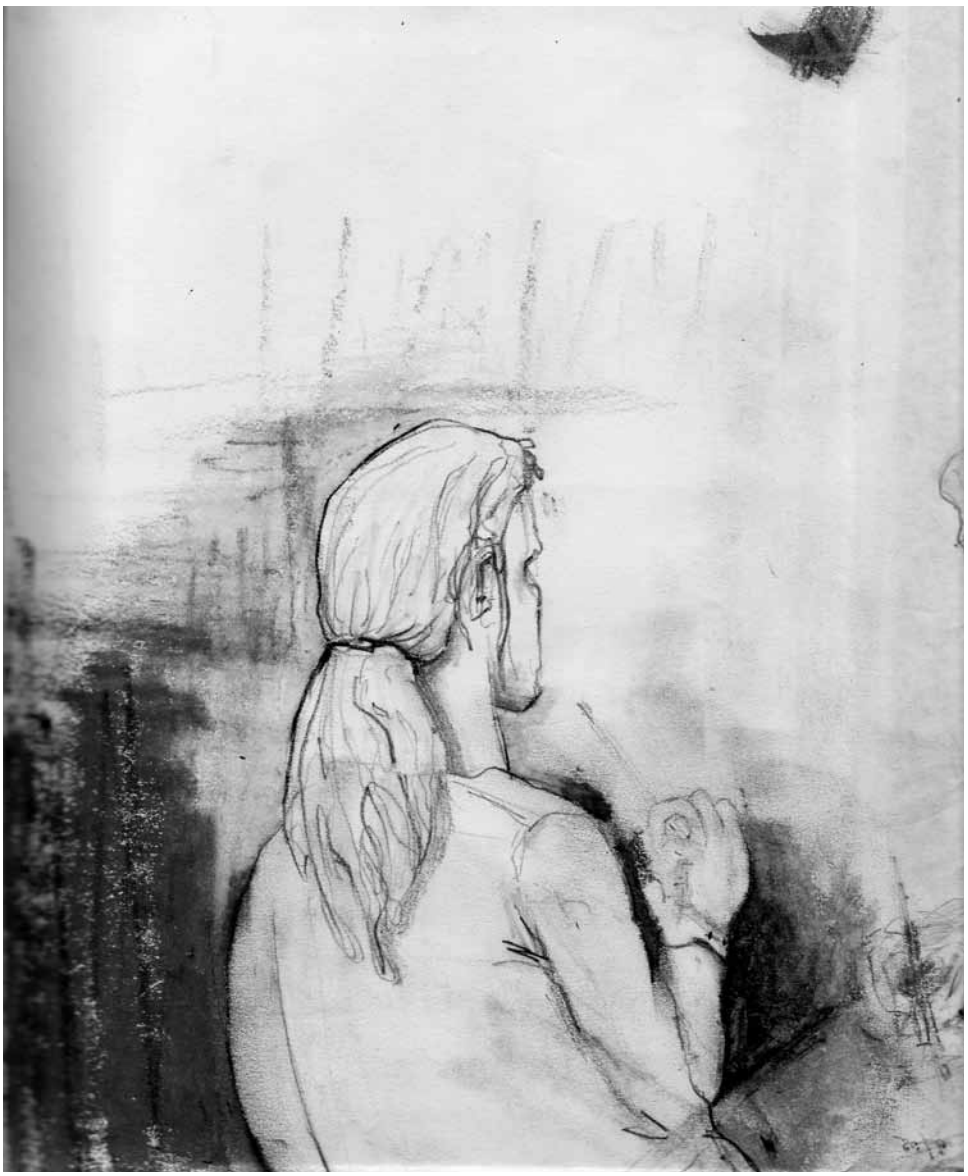

Figure 3: 2nd September ... the moment that our classes became one I felt the shift in the dynamic, it was palpable and disturbing ... 9th September … as part of this expanded group I find it hard to think at all and haven't fathomed my place in all of this ... (Rhonda).

In the final assemblage of data we wander into the space of Aoki's "presence/absence" (Pinar & Irwin, 2005: 426): aware "that language which has served us well to describe the phenomena of the world begins to falter" (400). A majority of the students in our core education studies classes came accomplished, articulate and well versed in the discourses of science, social sciences and philosophy. Discussions in and around the class circulated with Kant, epistemology, Hegel and Habermas, intuition, questions regarding the existence of objective existence and the relevance of subjective experience. Yet, words failed. Often those intimately involved, intimately implicated in the pedagogical encounter struggled when faced with expressing the experience.

'Reading' embodied pedagogy

Other research on embodiment referred to in this paper has used the words of the teacher participants to hear of embodiment. Macintyre Latta and Buck (2008) used field notes, writings and interviews. Probyn (2004) raised various possibilities for evidence of connecting bodies in tertiary classrooms:

> the body fragmented in affect … In gesture, in confession, in papers, in evaluations *they deeply disturb any pretence of privacy of the body that teaches or learns. They* are whispered in the break to me or to others, they are emailed in urgency (Probyn, 2004: 38).

And later when talking of her own body in teaching:

> As I observe an ethology of movements and relations displayed upon student bodies, so do they on mine. My facial ticks, body movements, use of language, eye contact and other elements I am not aware of are often brought to my attention (38).

Estola and Elbaz-Luwisch (2003) use the recognition through written and spoken word of teacher body or student body. They call on the voices of the bodies in teacher narratives and also their own embodied practices in teacher education practice. Their focus is on the teacher's body, their physical work, and how their body is seen by students and the teacher's consideration of student bodies' control "for experienced teachers, control of bodies may be implicit and seem almost 'natural'" (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003: 709). They speak of "relationships [which] are also embodied and teachers carefully read one another's body messages" (710). So the body gives messages to the other to form or position and this is understood in and also through the body: "I sensed it on my skin and saw it on their faces" (710). Although Moje (2000) views embodied relations as an aspect of discursive practice, she finally talks of embodied practices "such as dress, body image, and personal habits" (Moje, 2000: 34) and she recognises an authority in the body: "our bodies spoke what our mouths refused to speak" (35). The evidence of the pedagogical body in these works reverts in unsatisfactory ways to body language and to words about body language and about metaphorical engagements in order to make the corporeal real.

However, in this paper we have used our research data to see and read enfleshment to sharpen focus on embodied pedagogy or the relational givenness of relationships. Embodiment is experienced and spoken of by teachers and students, but critically in this research, and in this paper, it is made available through images and intertextual readings. The intricate relationships of subject/object, dialogue/silence, presence/absence are evidenced in the way bodies inform the experience and understandings of relational pedagogy. This embodiment involves holding and releasing, indwelling, sensing, immersing, leaning into, struggling, supporting, resisting, taking on, and reaching out (and in) with the whole body in teaching and learning spaces. We assert that such readings are

reminiscent of an age that honoured epistemological understandings beyond word. Reading entrails, stars and dances involves a different way of looking and responding: looking into, looking beyond, and responding to the unconscious. *Looking into* data we suspend ourselves in that magical double consciousness auguring lines of inquiry or interest. *Looking up or beyond* we explore and presence ontological understandings that connect mind/body/spirit. *Responding to the unconscious* we 'look' within to admit that which resonates or reverberates a gestalt self. Such 'ancient' readings evoke an age that defies the teleological force of teacher observation or reflective practice.

Iris Murdoch (1997), in her essay *Art is the Imitation of Nature*, notes that Plato objected to art on three grounds: its persuasive power, distraction from rational reflection, and that it was a form of lowly "emotional fantasy" (Murdoch, 1997: 245). She suggests that more than a powerful means of persuasion art has the ability to expose "inconvenient or subversive truth" (245). Fortunately, since Plato, many have questioned and challenged the cognitive and affective divide, but its residual rationalist influence lives on. Teaching and learning has been reduced to a representational practice (Ellsworth, 1997) within the neoliberal discourse that must be ascribed to, and accounted for, in education and governance. The result is an over-simplification of pedagogy in education. The prevailing view is that pedagogy is concerned with the 'delivery' of content through 'effective' teaching strategies: a simple linear transaction from one body to another. Such transactions are epitomised in, and reproduced through, instruments such as quality of teaching surveys in higher education. In teacher education, both pre-service teacher and teacher educator competence and compliance is understood through professional standards or benchmarks that also do little to recognise embodied understanding of learning and teaching. These instruments fail embodied pedagogy. They fail learners and learning.

Kincheloe (2003) asserts that seeking certainty in the social world of education draws the researcher away from asking significant questions and focuses "attention on the trivial—on that which can be easily measured" (Kincheloe, 2003: 142). In seeking to itemise or account for the truth of the teaching and learning experience in educational research or the classroom, embodied pedagogy is abandoned, ignored and even distained. At the conclusion of Murdoch's (1997) essay, she makes the point that in literature authors reveal themselves through the portrayal of their characters. Authors lay before the reader their "discernment, truthfulness" or lack thereof; and it is the reader's prerogative to consider and evaluate the efficacy of their endeavour. In many ways this very onus upon the reader to evaluate or assess the writer's, the researcher's, truthfulness is one of the key objections that Eisenhart (2006) has to postmodern educational scholarship. She is persuaded that "an epistemology that also maintains that one person's view is never trustworthy" undermines the central activity of postmodern researcher's deconstruction of their actions and those of others in the research (Eisenhart, 2006: 578). However, we suggest that this understanding of truth arises from within a Western philosophical binary tradition that one is either trustworthy, or not. Instead, trustworthiness can also be experienced: in the case of this paper, is the presented data generative? Does it invite and *incite* centrifugal questions about embodied pedagogy within the reader?

We need to question the 'illiteracy' and resistance that some in educational research cling to in the face of visual and intertextual work (Moss, 2008: 9). The reproduced and representational images offered in this paper open up pedagogy "cemented deep in the nature of the relationship between" (van Manen, 1991: 31) self and Other. We, the authors, are resolved to imagine some way beyond orthodox language to tell a story of embodied pedagogy in the tertiary classroom and theorise beyond reductionist understandings of embodied learning or embodied teaching.

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Notes

1. This is an indirect reference to the title of W.J. Mitchell's 2005 book *What do pictures want?*