INTRODUCTION

The work portrayed here pulls from my studies at the University of South Florida’s School of Architecture and Community Design, as well as the professional and academic work I’ve done since graduating with my M.Arch. Project one is an essay outlining my award-winning research done in the final year of my M.Arch degree. This research established a foundation for my continued aims, both professionally and academically, as I seek to explore the depths of the creative process in an effort to inform practice and pedagogy. Projects two through six are design projects done while in school that are presented here to show my versatility both as a designer as well as with representational and analytic conventions. Project seven is the highlight of my professional experience thus far: as part of the design team, I worked under direction of the project lead designer to develop a schematic design for an educational facility. Projects eight and nine are student work from the academic courses I have taught since graduating. One is focused on digital techniques and was a mix of lecture and design instruction, while the other was a foundational design studio for USF’s M.Arch program.
In this context, the word device is used with specific intent. A device is that which carries out an action, mediating the space between cause and effect. An encoded behavior, or set of conditions for behavior, enable a device to respond to, and perform, activity which could then in turn elicit further human behavior. A device can be passive or active. It need not be a motorized, mechanized object literally moving through space, in some occasions a device is an abstract set of conditions that trigger behavioral responses. Devices differentiate themselves from tools in the manner with which we engage with them. A tool is used; it requires constant human presence and intent. When a tool is discarded it no longer functions; the contrary, a device continues its behavior in the absence of a user. In this logic, Architecture can be seen as a device, a meditative entity that reciprocally informs and is informed by human behavior. This gives a perturbing implication: that architecture continues its “behavior” in the absence of occupants, illustrating the potential for an architecture without program or occupation.

Challenging the concrete ties between architecture and program allowed for elements of the work to develop independent of the causal relationship priorly employed for navigating from program to architectural condition. Programmatic potential was developed through a meditative drawing on the themes of continuity, finality, and inevitability (which were drawn from a [mis]interpretation of Calvino’s If on a winter’s night a traveler). These themes were used as a foundational generative device which was discarded upon the development of the drawing. This process informed imaginative interventions in the liminal space between the ink and mylar, and between the individual layers of mylar within the drawing. A world was constructed that housed horological devices whose prime focus was relocating ink from upper layers to lower layers, ultimately trapping ink within the cell structure of the mylar. The architectural forms implied by the occupied cell structure of the mylar led to a parallel between these conditions and Borges’ Library of Babel.

The universe (which others call the library) is composed of an indefinite and perhaps infinite number of hexagonal galleries, with vast air voids between, surrounded by very low railings. From any of the hexagons one can see, intermittently, the upper and lower floors. The distribution of the galleries is inexorable. Twenty shelves, five long shelves per side, cover all the sides except two; their height, which is the distance from floor to ceiling, scarcely exceeds that of a normal bookcase. One of the free sides leads to a narrow hallway which opens onto another gallery, identical to the first and to all the rest. To the left and right of the hallway there are two very small closets. In the first, one may sleep standing up; in the other, satisfy one’s fecal necessities. Also through here pass a spiral stairway, which winds absurdly and scarily upwards to remote distances. In the hallway there is a mirror which faithfully duplicates all appearances. Men usually infer from this mirror that the Library is not infinite (if it were, why this illusory duplication?) I prefer to dream that its polished surfaces represent and promise the infinite . . . Light is provided by some spherical fruit which bear the name of lamps. There are two, transversally placed, in each hexagon. The light they emit is insufficient, incessant.

This introductory description of the Library initiates a narrative which instigates discussions of meaning, purpose, artistic intent, and the value of creative endeavors. Utilizing these fertile grounds as a generative device for architectural production, a design developed for the librarians who choose to relinquish their eternal disconnection from experience and instead strive to construct their own narratives through lived experience. Within this opening passage an intrinsic error was discovered which negated the library as it has been envisioned by a majority of readers. The library described has the value of creative endeavors. Utilizing these fertile grounds as a generative device for architectural production, a design developed for the librarians who choose to relinquish their eternal disconnection from experience and instead strive to construct their own narratives through lived experience. Within this opening passage an intrinsic error was discovered which negated the library as it has been envisioned by a majority of readers. The library described has
Taking advantage of this fertile fallacious grounds, a design developed attaching onto this library restructured by error, no longer endless in all direction, the librarians are left with a single seemingly endless stair. The failure of the library to provide an infinite plane of existence triggered a revolt against the unending narrative possibilities promised by the library. Escaping the desire for narrative validation, the librarians sought a phenomenal existence and found this through the lived experience (erlebnis) of the architectural act. The ensuing resultant was a merger of the previously mentioned investigations in [architectural] devices and the literary conditions of the library. The librarians departed their hexagonal cells and became caretakers of an active architectural object that sought to concretize the phenomenal experience of the passage of time as observed through conditions of light. This effort wed together conditions of architecture and device, where the architecture contained a space that created cyanotypes which recorded its own occupation. A space that consecrated shadows.

This process triggered further thoughts challenging the causal relationship between context and intervention. As an architectural condition began to arise out of a series of investigations, a theory developed about a double hermeneutic dialogue between context and intervention. The relationship between the constructs used in the production of the cyanotypes, the topological structure of the surfaces, and the resultant imagery highlighted the multiple layers of designed intent carried within the long-term development of contextual significance as well as within the, by temporal comparison, near momentary act of intervention. A logic of constructive meaning was interpreted from these relationships.

The use of the term constructive meaning seeks to discuss an interpretation of cultural meaning, or contextual meaning, not as an a priori given, but rather a thing constructed over time. The acknowledgment of our entrance into an anthropocene era calls for an evaluation of methods for
Meditative Drawing Exploring Themes of Continuity, Finality, and Inevitability

generating constructive meaning and the role of architecture in this act. This exercise explored the role of the fallacy as breeding grounds for meaning. By starting with an indifferent stance towards conventional meaning, this work ultimately explored methods of making meaning through non-meaning.10 Setting a fallacious axiom (in this case, an assumption of the work completed and an attempt to uncover the implications of the yet unmade thing) allowed for the establishment of grounds for an imaginative investigation that in turn allows for these new constructive meanings.

Due to the exploratory nature of this work, the research has culminated with many open lines of flight for future research paths. Due to time constraints, the articulated architectural product inherited systemic characteristics from prior logics, and did not quite attain the explicit ephemerality of the processes employed. This prompts further study into the relationship between methodologies of process and the systemic character of the resultant architectural work. Furthermore, there is much to be done in clarifying a logic of constructive meaning, how such a thing would be tied to foundational fallacies, and inform methods for imaginative making or creativity bereft of mimesis. Already, the reciprocal constructed-ness of context & intervention has been expanded upon through the design studios taught since completing this research (which will be covered later in this portfolio). Lastly, there remains much space to be traversed in taking these speculative constructs from the realm of objectified devices to a one-to-one phenomenal experience.

Notes
2. Fallacy defined as erroneous or misleading, understood as an indeterminate condition that holds interpretative potential.
3. Proto-Greek root for nascent, in this use seeking to characterize a thing that possesses characteristics of architecture, or characteristics that have architectural interpretive potentials, but doesn't yet assemble itself into a distinct architecture.
6. Erlebnis understood as a phenomenal lived experience in contrast to erfahrung, or intellectualized linguistic experience, see discussion of Gadamer’s hermeneutics in Kara, Levent. (2007).
7. These thoughts were further concretized through later readings of Kara’s Architecture of Discontinuity, which acknowledged the constructed character of the anthropocentric era and described an architecture which acted as a surgical intervention upon context, reacting both to the a priori conditions as well as to the interpreted potentialities imagined within a site, constructing an idea of context that extends beyond what existed as a given prior to an architectural work, and was informed by the intent guiding the architectural act of intervention, see Kara, Levent. (2007).
8. Conventional meaning is displaced upon distinguishing between prior theories and passing theories for meaning, the passing theory is generated through the act of dialogue and is the shared ground through which meaning is conveyed, see Davidson, Donald (1986). A Nice Derangement of Epithets. Philosophical grounds of rationality: intentions, concepts, ends, 157.
9. Modeled after ‘pataphysics, the science of imaginary solutions, which became the foundational logic for major 20th-century art movements, influencing Dadaism, the surrealists, and the situationists, a ‘pataphor can be seen to accept the world of a metaphor as a reality from which to base itself. This extension beyond the already imaginative condition into another further condition allowed for the logic of ‘pataphysics to serve as a model for creative production, see Hugill, Andrew. (2015). ‘Pataphysics: a useless guide. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
Casa Kalif by Alberto Kalach lies atop the crest of a large hill thirty minutes north of San Diego. Along the Pacific coast, this home is a testament to the landscape, terracing across the sloping terrain opening up to views of the ocean. Kalach’s design is a sumptuous residence that provides the owners with everything they could desire out of a house, yet oddly this project was tasked with designing a Mother-In-Law suite. Given the abundance of rooms within the main home, it was assumed that the suite was needed for privacy and separation from the main house. Therefore, this project is situated away from the main house, hidden by, and anchoring itself into, the landscape. The proposed design tethers itself to the views through a series of tracks for glazed sliding doors that frame the landscape through their extension. Containing a single bedroom, a comfortable kitchen, an outdoor dining / living space, and a small altar space, the in-law suite embraces the landscape through formal and operable means. The sliding doors allow for the entire suite to be opened up to the fresh ocean breeze and a deck space extends along the length of the tracks projecting out over the landscape. A kink in the plan opens up allowing the guests to seamlessly enter into a transitory space that bleeds into the kitchen and external dining / living spaces. Passing through the kitchen the path compresses and slightly slopes downward towards a garden space: enclosed within the threshold of the building, yet inaccessible to the guest, the garden provides an end to the corridor, a door on the left opening into the solitary bedroom. Recessed in relation to the remainder of the suite, the bedroom retains a degree of privacy as it overlooks the exterior deck.
Located just blocks from the beach, this site orients itself perpendicular to the coastline allowing for it to take advantage of the airflow caused by the thermal contrast between land and sea. The forms are positioned to allow for pressure differentials to pull air through shaded interstitial circulation spaces, taking advantage of Florida’s tropical climate. This effect can be extended to cool the internal spaces when needed as the glazed enclosure behind the shading devices is fully operable, allowing for the breeze to pass through the length of the project. As the design expands to allow for the shaded paths within, a central courtyard is sheltered within the cradling shading devices. The ground floor is primarily public, with a programmatic bar (kitchen, dining, living, study) along the south side bisected by the central courtyard creating an informal transition between internal and external space. Nestled into a corner of the ground level is a guest suite afforded privacy with an entrance tucked away from the activity of the rest of the house. The upper level holds a master suite and two smaller bedrooms as well as a shaded external spaces that allow for residents to take advantage of the Florida weather.
The Morgan Library & Museum located in Manhattan houses a collection of rare books, manuscripts, drawings, and other art works. Although recently expanded with an addition by Renzo Piano unifying the three existing buildings, much of the Morgan Library’s collection remains in archives, only available via appointment. The project brief given asked for a proposal for an annex to the existing library, allowing for a greater public accessibility to the great collection. The annex would be located along the Highline, at the intersection with West 26th St. In somewhat polemic move, the design proposed severed the mass of the highline, allowing for only the most delicate of bridges to pass over the gorge in made into the block by the building. This void space, carved out of both the highline and the earth below, becomes a sculpture garden, passed over and through for the two modes of entry. After the void, the building expands out over the highline, cradling it, to embrace the flow of pedestrians meandering along the highline. Alternatively, one could enter into the Annex from ground level, passing over the sculpture garden on a bridge that parallels the path above. Both of the lobbies, as well as elements of the library and museum, are interwoven spatially, with internal voids carving out the spaces within allowing for a phenomenological overlap of programs. The main galleries of the museum reside at the extremities, embedded in the earth and elevated into the sky, encasing within them the libraries and reading room. The walls of the library and reading room consist of glass bookcases, which become integrated into the curtain wall system. As the reading room projects out over the highline, the views up and down the length of it are filtered by the books stored within. A perforated facade system contrasts the heavy masses of the circulation cores.

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The New World Symphony in Miami, FL houses one of the nation's premier orchestral academies. Hosting fellows from around the world, the school strives to be a "laboratory for the way music is taught, presented, and experienced." The program brief given asked for the design of a space for an esteemed fellow to reside and perform, bringing the culture of the symphony into a narrow site that serves as a pedestrian threshold between Collins Ave and Ocean Ave. At this site, the grid of the city shifts, mediating between the spaces of South Beach and City Center to the North. The project primarily sought to address the inherent expression of class strata found within the symphony culture, accentuating the diversity of listeners, as well as encouraging discovery by projecting the performance through the skin in a manner that seeks to create localized emulation of the projections done at the existing New World Center to the North. Four types of occupants were distinguished from one another: the performer, the socialite, the connoisseur, and the dilettante. These characters allowed for a series of spaces to be designed that allowed varying degrees of engagement both with the music and the architecture. The performer's space was designed by cutting a grand void in the building bringing light down to the stage; the socialite space is removed from the music, yet elevated allowing for the socialite to maintain a false sense of superiority whilst simultaneously establishing a degree of separation between their incessant chattering and the music; the connoisseur's space is simple, yet provides the best seating for those who truly wish to hear the music; lastly, the dilettante who knows little of the art is engaged through the public amenities in the hope that their understanding could grow if they stop for coffee or lounge on the minute lawn watching the projections or listening to the faint sound of music within. The abode of the resident fellow is accessed by a circuitous stair that circumnavigates an immense light chasm opening above the stage, allowing for the performer to engage with the performance space as they descend. In addition to the fellow, the program also called for a caretaker who would reside more permanently and whose responsibility it would be to manage the establishment. The design also provided social amenities, both public and private, in the form of a pedestrian coffee bar, and a wine bar within the space of the socialite. Nestled into an alley, the design positioned itself to maintain and enhance the existing pedestrian thoroughfare connecting Collins and Ocean. The translucent skin was developed to allow for diffused light to filter into the tight spaces below while cutting the harshness of the Florida sun.
The project brief called for a mixed-use development nestled alongside the Northwest edge of Downtown Seattle, just South of Lower Queen Anne, arguing for an expansion of urban scale density along the peripheral of the core of the city. The project serves as an annex to the SAM Olympic Sculpture Park which is directly adjacent to the Southeast, thus the design proposal elevated the buildings off the ground to preserve the urban flow from the water through the park, maximizing the area available to the annex. The masses of the elevated buildings were curved to respect flows of movement below allowing for light to filter through to the park, and creating a dynamic architectural canyon overhead. The dynamism of the forms above necessitated a careful design of the structure anchoring the buildings to the ground, thus the columns were assigned to a grid of points at their origin and termination and then shifted to create a matrix of lines of flight energizing the sectional space between the park and the elevated buildings. Select columns were deleted in order to open up the plenum space between the landscape and the masses above which in turn caused the remaining columns to thicken, compensating for the loads carried by their discarded counterparts. As the circulation cores rose up and granted access to the towering forms, a means of anchoring the structure was created; allowing for columns to reflect off of these data, projecting lines to the cantilevering extremities of each building. Tying everything together, the entire structure within the floor plates of each building combines with the encasing skin system to form a structural girder that ties back to the columns and cores giving rigidity to the elevated spaces. As the nature of the upper buildings became more realized, the ground plane began to evolve as well. The act of lifting up all of the buildings created a vacuum which inherited the nature of the neighboring Sculpture Park, allowing for a seamless continuation of the slicing and slanting patterns present within the adjacent landscape. This created a peeling and folding landscape that inherits much from Parent and Virilio’s theories of The Oblique Function, which seeks to activate visceral experiences with tilted surfaces. Throwing the body into conflict with gravity, the oblique causes one to either exert force while climbing or accept force while descending the slope. Beneath the annex to the Sculpture Park, the landscape peels back to reveal programmatic assets within, providing retail and commercial space, as well as several bars and restaurants all helping to encourage urban activity. Furthermore, nestled amidst these programs are the access points granting entrance to the cores that transport people from the surface to the worlds above. The Southeastern-most of the upper buildings are residential towers due to their adjacency to the park and accessibility to the running paths and bike trails that run along the waterfront. Centrally located facing the water is the Museum of Liminality. Dedicated to the exploration of the intangible space within a line, this museum would showcase an evolving display of investigations in mathematics, architectural drawing, contemporary art, and experimental music that all grapple with this theme. Northeast of the museum is a Class A Office tower, with sculpted interior public spaces that provide an intriguing respite from traditional working atmospheres. The two buildings located to the Northwest link together to form an Arts and Music School that harvests the spirit of the museum and provides a cutting edge facility for the cultivation of creativity. Remaining solitary at the extremity of the site, is the reflection space. Reached through an extensive pilgrimage, it provides a unique vantage point for looking back at the project as a whole.

Team: Christopher Weaver, Gadiel Marquez
This design is for the new home of USF Honors College. The project was led by Dr. Levent Kara, and I was able to assist on the design team; working with the client to program, develop and document a schematic design for the project. All of the graphics shown were generated from the digital model that I produced based upon sketches and discussions with Dr. Levent Kara. I personally made all of the sections, elevations, and perspectives, oversaw the production of the plans, and assisted with the assembly of the physical section model developed from the digital model. Project brief written by Dr. Levent Kara:

Honors Colleges are gaining prominence within universities nation-wide as centers of cutting-edge higher education. The Honors College equips gifted students with critical thinking and leadership skills that bridge between and go beyond various traditional academic disciplines. Not only are they becoming important nodes in the recruiting apparatuses of universities, with the close-knit educational environment they offer, Honors Colleges more and more shape the intellectual outlook of the institutions they are part of.

The design responds to the challenge of developing a non-traditional education environment by offering a wide range of possibilities for formal and non-formal social and educational interaction. Comprised of a diagram of three bars around a main vertical section, the proposal creates a hierarchically clear distribution of programmatic elements. While the bars themselves house formal spaces such as classrooms and administration offices, the main section houses social spaces designed for communal events, interactive informal study spaces and group and individual study areas. The main sectional space is defined by a play of translucency and transparency with varying degrees of enclosure. The rigidity of the three bar diagram is broken with multiple autonomous volumetric objects that help shape a fluid interior with a multiplicity of scales calibrated for different degrees of social and experiential encounter. Spaces that cut thorough the vertical space create a dynamic interplay of visibility and movement that contributes to the “tight-knit intellectual community” of the institution defined by “intellectual curiosity” and “communication”.

Anchoring the North East corner of a new residential and social complex on the northern edge of USF Tampa Campus, the building is situated at the intersection of two pedestrian axes, thus the ground level opens to a public plaza and green space that pulls the campus into the building. A plastic vertical datum created by a dynamic wall section creates the entry along with a grand stair that pushes out the envelope. This dynamic interaction hints at the public character of the ground level that houses a main event space and lounge areas. The openness of the ground level emanates into the main section and characterizes the social and intellectual significance of the Honors College with an intricate play of scales, volumes, and surfaces.

In addition to its institutional and social proposition, the building speaks to the heritage of Florida architecture by its elevated mass, a perforated envelope system that shades the building while enabling control over degrees of transparency and visibility, a shaded roof terrace that allows for unobstructed campus and city views, and the North light that fills its main vertical space through large light wells and a highly transparent North facade.

The project is currently progressing through an early design development phase as myself and Dr. Levent Kara work with prospective builders to confirm that our team’s design fits within the budget.

Team: Dr. Levent Kara, Christopher Weaver, Gadiel Marquez, Claudia Parros, Alexander Giraldo
This course aimed to introduce students to the fundamentals of working with digital media and how these techniques pertain to designing architecture. Over the course of the semester, students worked with a variety of software with a prime objective of establishing a digital methodology that takes advantage of the specialization of technique available within different applications. From the outset there was an emphasis on simultaneously understanding multiple platforms, and developing an understanding of how a single project can develop through different software and formats. The primary media were Rhino 5, AutoCAD, Photoshop, and InDesign, with each task involving a mixture of these programs.

I designed the curriculum with an understanding that a majority of the enrolled students were in the pre-architecture program with little to no design experience. Furthermore, I knew from experience going through the school myself that the coursework of the M.Arch program (which the students were applying for) encourages students to explore analog methods of making in the entry design studios. Thus, after being exposed to these digital tools, the students would not utilize them for at least another year. Therefore, I chose to emphasize a methodology of how/why the different software can be used with one another, and I designed the assignments in ways that I hoped would facilitate student success in the hope that it would ignite a passion for the media that would allow for the skill-sets gained to carry through to the later stages of the students education. The hope was that if they didn’t develop that passion they would at least have a heavily ingrained logic of the applicability of each program.

The course was taught through a variety of formats. Day-to-day activity was primarily lecture driven, however due to a moderately small class size of seventeen students, I was able to devote a lot of one-on-one time to students which greatly assisted with accommodating the variety of skill levels within the course. Additionally, I assembled PDF tutorials which walked students through what was done in class and what was needed for each assignment. The assignments all contributed to one continuous project. Students began by collaging selected drawings from Rob Stratton's Creating Civilizations series, then reconstructed this drawing as a vector image which they then used to generate a civilization of their own, a quasi-urban context which became the site for a more detailed architectural intervention.

Retrospectively, I feel the assignments were too open-ended for the students (given their lack of design experience), and next semester in teaching it again I intend to have more structured miniature exercises instead of the long-scoped multi-week assignments I gave them this past term. Furthermore, I am investigating other ways of utilizing the PDF tutorial series as I feel that once the students grew to expect a handout containing all of the day’s lesson, they stopped paying attention as much to the lectures.

Core Design 1 is the entry graduate studio for USF's School of Architecture and Community Design. The program structure is a 2+4 year M.Arch track resulting in this studio having a mix of students ranging from fresh out of high school (having done a dual enrollment associates in architecture) to students who received an undergrad degree in the past and are returning for a professional degree after years in the field. A majority of the students are the equivalent of college Juniors, and this is their third design studio. The course work for the semester is a continual development, where each successive project serves as a generative device for the next. Recurring themes revolve around tectonic systems, phenomenological experience of space (i.e. performative space), and the relationship between context and intervention. The students work almost wholly via analog means, only using software for laser-cutting large contextual elements for their designs. The general conditions of the three projects were designed by the professors teaching the other sections of the course, but the specific requirements and pedagogical methods were developed by me in response to the students development.

The first project begins with drawn compositions that seek to extract architectural conditions from a film. The film, *The Return*, is intentionally selected due to it’s evocative filmography, the manner with which it frames space via the camera, and it being in Russian (urges the students to attend to compositional conditions as opposed to narrative). These compositions then become the groundwork for a series of constructed surfaces (exercises in the tectonic makeup of surface), which are then intersected in the x-, y-, and z-plane to create volumetric space. This constructed volume is then inserted into a contextual wall which is informed by the matrix of the construct.

Photographs of this first project are printed out and used as a generative device for sectional studies initiating the second project. This next exercise, entitled *Machine de Phenomene* is a study in the experience of vertical space, circulation, and thresholds of view/movement. This project is the first at a defined architectural scale, challenging students to consider occupation. Further, it is modeled and drawn at 3/8” scale, which poses another challenge in having to consider the tectonic makeup of their project at a high level of detail. There is a strong emphasis on developing a relationship between the various systems defining boundaries both horizontally (i.e. floor, ceiling) and vertically (i.e. wall, skin). This time, the contextual element was developed in response to the project’s emphasis on section, and consisted of intersecting acrylic planes with embedded tonal and annotative information. This information sought challenge the students to bridge between representational and analytic techniques, and expressed both quantitative (dimensions, angles, scale) and qualitative (phrases suggestive of program) information. The materiality of the model remained highly abstract with the prime conversation at this point being on opacity, translucency, and transparency.

Upon the completion of the second project, the three sections of this studio collectively traveled to Savannah, GA and Charleston, SC. With the school’s university being based in Tampa, FL, this trip exposes students to the experience of a city with a dense walkable urban character. The methodology for making these projects required students to construct an urban context, tectonic in character and both informed by and informing the design of an intervention. Shifting back and forth between the design of context and intervention, the third project continued the students’ introduction into working with program and tasked them with designing a space for the *flaneur*: the urban wanderer. The specific nature of the behaviors housed within the spaces was developed individually with each student, essentially challenging them to design both the program and the architecture that supports it. Students were encouraged to invent fictitious programs, a move that sought to prevent students from reverting back to prior conceptions of “buildings” as this third project becomes more explicitly “building”-like. This project incorporated the prior lessons on experience/occupation/circulation/tectonics, and contextualized it within an urban realm challenging students consider various scales of public and private spaces. Furthermore, the conversations on designed materiality expanded as students had to utilize a color of their choosing and justify it with an architectural intent.

Students: Jason Barker, Dannii Bartoletta, Martina Ciccia, Aaron Faticone, Alexandra Gershon, Scott Gossen, Abby Keil, Sean McGuire, Jonathan Milford, Ankita Patel, Ashley Pryke, Andi Serranillos, essay Thompson